

## CHURCH GOERS

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[Assignment: Although you may well be using other strategies in the paper, your emphasis is to be on classification; it must focus the essay, use a single rule of classification, and have some significance. Whatever your subject, it must be one from which you can develop at least three categories (factors, traits, qualities, causes, etc.)]

(1) Regular attendance at church is considered very important in my hometown congregation. After each service, the women sit around the back table drinking coffee and discussing who was absent from church that day. They sit there for an hour or so brewing up ideas (and even once in a while a real fact) as to why so-and-so didn't make it to the service that day. Casually eavesdropping on their conversations and making my own deductions, I have come up with three basic categories of church attenders. They are the Regulars, the Occasionals, and the You'll-see-Me-In-Hell-Before-You'll-See-Me-In-Church people.

(2) The Regulars, obviously, are those who attend church every week. From my experience, Regulars are generally families and the elderly members of the church. The Regulars can be divided into two groups, the Bible Bangers and the Normals. The Bible Bangers are those Christians who live and breathe their religion. I call them Bible Bangers because they might as well be up there at the pulpit preaching in place of the minister. They often are seen with their Bibles in purse or pocket, ready to give inspirational advice by quoting from the Bible. Bible Bangers' houses are like shrines with religious pictures and crucifixes scattered throughout. An example of Bible Bangers would be my grandparents. Raised in the Bible Belt South, they are totally devoted to their church and have missed only two services in the past thirty years. The Normals, on the other hand, are those who attend church weekly but aren't as radical as the Bible Bangers. I call this group the Normals because they are normal Christians who have well-balanced lives. Normals aren't as fanatical as the Bible Bangers. They tend to be quieter and more reserved about their beliefs but won't hesitate to discuss religion with others. My mother and I fit into this category. We both attend church regularly but we do not allow our religion to overwhelm our lives.

(3) The Occasionals are those who attend church every once in a while. Their faith is not as strong as that of the Regulars; nevertheless, religion is important to them. The Occasionals often show up for the major religious holidays and then fade into the background until another holiday comes around. The Occasionals can be divided into two groups, the Circumstantial Christians and the Crisis Christians. The Circumstantial Christians are those who attend church services if circumstances allow them time. They tend to be very busy people who are often too wrapped up in the other aspects of their lives to go to church. The Circumstantialists are those who wake up on Sunday mornings and ask themselves if they really want to go to church today and usually decide negatively. A couple of years ago, I was a Circumstantial. To me, going to church was a chore and, in my rebellious stage, I would refuse to go unless it was a big holiday and I knew my friends would be there. Back then, the Sunday

Morning Matinee movies with Shirley Temple were more important to me than attending church. The Crisis Christians are those who attend church in a time of personal crisis. These people come to church for religious assurance and when they get it they leave, not to be seen again until they encounter another hardship in their lives. In this group, I also include those who come to church to silence their guilty consciences because they have not been to church for such a long time. Stacy, a friend of mine, falls into this category. She seems to feel that the only times she needs to go to church are times when she needs God's guidance the most. When she is going through a crisis in her life she can always be seen in church.

(4) My last general category is the You'll-See-Me-In-Hell-Before-You'll-See-Me-In-Church group. This group consists of those who currently never attend church. This is the hardest group for me to describe because I have no real understanding of their ways of thinking. My assumptions have led me to two sub-categories within this group, the Non-Practitioners and the Lost Sheep. The Non-Practitioners are those who have a religious affiliation but do not practice their religion. These people feel they do not need to profess their beliefs to others because their God is a personal God whom only they understand. The Lost Sheep are those who have lost their faith and are wandering around searching for meaning in their lives. My sister falls into this category. She always attended church; then she went through a very emotional period and couldn't make heads or tails of her life. When God didn't give her answers immediately, she turned her back on the church and hasn't attended since. There is hope for the Lost Sheep. I believe with guidance and help from others, they can renew their faith and start anew.

(5) These categories are generalizations that aren't meant to be definitive, but to make one think about the reasons why people choose to attend or not attend church. I believe that once you know why someone is a Regular, Occasional, or You'll-See-Me-In-Hell-Before-You'll-See-Me-In-Church church goer, you will have greater insight into that person.