

How God Works Through Your Personality (Psalm 139)

October 5, 2014

Each of us has a unique personality. Each of you is an original, a one-of-a-kind creation of God. There never has been and never will be anyone else just like you. God made us all different. These personality differences can become sources of conflict in a family, in a workplace, and, yes, even in the church.

Some people are very structured and organized like my wife; they have everything in its proper place in files, in cabinets, or on computers. Other people are like me—AN ORGANIZATIONAL MESS. I actually have Attention Deficit Disorder. I have piles everywhere—in my office, in my car, in my bedroom, you name it; I'm a piler. My wife doesn't believe it, but I know what's in each of my piles. Once without consulting me, she went through some of my piles and tried to organize them for me. To this day I still have not found some of the things that were in those piles. I have learned to be organized just enough to get my work done. The good news is that Jane and I have finally found a way to deal with this significant source of conflict in our marriage. We have agreed that I will put all my piles in a downstairs bedroom, that the door will always be shut, and that I have full responsibility for cleaning that room.

Structured people prefer to plan and bring order in the lives. When they go on vacation, they know where they're going, the roads they'll take to get there, all hotel reservations will have been made beforehand, and every day is planned. Unstructured people, on the other hand, simply say, "Let's just pack the car and go. We'll go as far as we want and stop whenever we want. Let's just be spontaneous."

Some people are task-oriented and want to start working through the agenda at the appointed hour of a committee meeting. Others are more people-oriented; they want to talk and catch up first before getting into the agenda. It isn't that task-oriented people don't value relationships. They just prefer to talk during breaks or after the meeting.

What is PERSONALITY? It is our unique set of personal traits and preferences. It's how we react to things, how we do things, how we relate to people, and how we prefer to live. Personality is who we really are and what we're really like; it is our personal uniqueness.

It was God's plan to design each of us differently. There is no right or wrong personality. God made you to be you, and me to be me.

But along the way most of us learn behaviors and styles that are inconsistent with our innate personalities. For example, I am left-handed; but as an adolescent, I learned to play golf right-handed. Why? Because my father only

had right-handed clubs. **Some people will try to push you into being somebody or doing something that you're not, so you need to be on guard against this.**

Similarly, don't play BLM. Do you know what I mean by BLM? It's BE LIKE ME. It's that myth that if everyone would just be like me, the world would be a better place. Opposites tend to attract and get married. Marital conflict flares up when people try to remake their marriage partner into their own image. Even if you could do this—which you can't—you would become bored very quickly, because you would no longer find your mate very interesting.

My life became so much happier when I made the decision some years ago to start accepting other people for who they are (that is, unless they're homicidal or suicidal). I finally realized that I couldn't change anybody. I have a hard enough time trying to make needed changes in my own life.

Let me also say that your innate personality does not justify wrong behavior. Personal style may explain our behavior, but it doesn't excuse it. Just because you're unstructured doesn't mean you can ignore deadlines. Just because you're structured doesn't give you the right to be insensitive to the needs and feelings of others or to be inflexible. The Christian is always called to do the right and loving thing in every situation.

For thousands of years now, there have been people who have studied human personalities and tried to classify them into personality types. Hippocrates, considered the father of medicine, was among the first to do this. In the 1920's and 1930's, William Marston developed the DISC model of human behavior.

Some psychologists say that there are four basic styles of personality:

DOMINANT, RELATIONAL, STEADY, AND DETAIL PERSONALITIES.

- DOMINANT personalities like to be in control
- RELATIONAL personalities like to be with other people and are fun to be around
- STEADY personalities are dependable workers and good listeners
- DETAIL people like to do things right.

We need all kinds of personalities in order to accomplish all kinds of things.

Rick Warren, author of The Purpose-Driven Life, believes that there are four kinds of personalities—TALKERS, FEELERS, THINKERS, AND DOERS. TALKERS love to talk; they are important because COMMUNICATION is very important in life. FEELERS feel things very deeply; they are important because COMPASSION is so important in life. THINKERS are analytical people who like to think through things; they are important because REFLECTION is so important in life; we need people who can think through complex issues. DOERS are get-er-done people;

they are important because life works best when things get done. Are you primarily a TALKER, a FEELER, a THINKER, or a DOER?

A woman named Katherine Briggs was trying to figure out why her daughter Isabel's new husband (whose last name was Myers) was so different from the rest of the family. She read a book entitled Personality Types written by Karl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist who was the son of a Reformed pastor. She felt that she had found the answer she was looking for. Isabel joined her mother in an intensive study of human personality over many years. The result was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the most often used personality test today. Katherine and Isabel defined 16 different personality types.

The handout you will receive when you leave today is a shortened form of the Myers-Briggs Personal Style Inventory—developed by Craig Hogan and David Champagne. I encourage you to answer the questions honestly, and then score it yourself at home this week. Your highest scores will reveal your personality type. On the back page of the handout you will find descriptions of the 16 different personality types, all of which are designated by four letters. Who knows? Maybe you'll get to understand and know yourself better.

My wife and I and our children have taken this personal style inventory. We have found it to be very helpful in better understanding ourselves and each other.

On the Myers-Briggs scale, I have the same score on E-Extroversion and I-Introversion, but I am strongly SFJ. This means I prefer to deal with facts and people and make decisions on the basis of personal values. I have a strong sense of duty and loyalty. I am driven by a need to belong and to be of service to people. I am concerned about how other people feel, and I dislike confrontation and conflict. These are some things that this personality test helped me to understand about myself. It's not that these things are necessarily good or bad; it's just who I am, what I'm like, and how I tend to react in different situations.

Once someone asked me, *How would Jesus have scored on the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory? What personality type was He?* Now that's a good question. I believe he would have had the exact same score on each of the different personality indicators. Jesus was a truly BALANCED personality. He could be both firm and loving; prophetic and compassionate

Some of you are thinking, *Why is Roy going into all this psychology stuff and encouraging us to take a personality test?* There are several reasons: (1) Your personality is a big part of who you are and therefore affects everything in your life; (2) Understanding yourself better will make you more appreciative of the differences in others; and (3) Your personality is one of the five indicators of God's unique purpose and calling in your life.

Your personality helps you to know HOW God wants you to serve Him. Your personality is not meant to box you in. It is your uniqueness. God didn't make you to be a clone, that is, to be like somebody else. Don't even try to be like somebody else! He wants you to be YOU—to serve Him in the unique way He has designed you to serve Him.

The KEY is TO FIND A PLACE AND WAY OF SERVING GOD AND OTHERS THAT NEEDS SOMEONE WITH YOUR PERSONALITY--to find a way of serving God and others that fits your personality. For example, a shy introvert probably shouldn't be the main greeter at the front door of the church on Sunday mornings.

Trying to serve God in a way that is inconsistent with your God-given personality can be very frustrating. It's like trying to write your name with your left hand if you're right-handed (or vice versa). You can do it, but it's difficult; it takes more time; and you the quality of your writing is poor.

When you sand wood, it's always best to sand with the grain. Likewise, we all have ingrained personality traits that make us better suited for doing some things than others. It's a part of God's plan.

To discover God's unique calling in your life, you must find a way of serving God and others that suits your personality. EXTROVERTS, outgoing individuals who draw energy from others, should be serving God by working with people in some way. On the other hand, INTROVERTS with the gift of administration might plan a mission trip or a children's activity but not necessarily lead or participate in it.

The BOTTOM LINE is this: God made YOU to serve Him in a unique way. After coming to faith in Jesus Christ as the Way of and to God, the most important thing in your life is to discover and do what God has uniquely created you to do for Him in this world. As the Bible says (Ephesians 2:10), "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Prayer: WOULD YOU BOW YOUR HEAD NOW AND PRAY THE FOLLOWING PRAYER WITH ME SILENTLY? *Dear God, thank You for making me ME. Forgive me for comparing myself with others and trying to be somebody I'm not. Lord, I want You to use the personality You've given me to know You and to love You and to serve You. I want to be the unique expression of what You have made me to be. I pray in the strong and loving name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior. AMEN.*

Invitation: The Bible says that when you become a Christian, you become a new person inside. What does this mean? It certainly means that your past is forgiven and that you have a home in heaven. It also means that you have a new reason for living = SERVING GOD AND OTHERS IN THE UNIQUE WAY THAT GOD HAS SHAPED YOU.