

Personality Seminar Handout

I. Understanding Personality.

A. Human characteristics contrasted.

1. Personality: a configuration of habits that uniquely identifies a person.
2. Temperament: inborn predisposition to certain habits.
3. Talent: inborn predisposition to a certain ability.
4. Skill: ability brought to maturity by practice.
5. Experience: situations that have enabled practice of skills.
6. Character: adherence to moral standards.

B. Biblical critique of Jung/Myers-Briggs personality theory.

1. Unbelievers can discover truth because of common grace.
2. Unbelievers do not see the same things believers do.
3. Conclusion: unbelievers are an important source of truth, but it must always be evaluated by the scripture.
4. Even when unbelievers accurately understand truth, they are unreliable as interpreters.
5. I find the Myers-Briggs theory an accurate description of human personality.
6. It only partly explains how to live more godly.

C. The Myers-Briggs Theory.

1. Source of energy.
 - a. Extroverts: people.
 - b. Introverts: solitude.
2. Focus of attention.
 - a. Senses: material world.
 - b. Intuition: ideas.
3. Manner of thought.
 - a. Thinking: merits of the facts.
 - b. Feeling: views of others.
4. Decisiveness.
 - a. Judging: push toward a decision.
 - b. Perceiving: relish the possibilities.

D. Temperament.

1. Four classical types.
 - a. Sanguine/Artisan.
 - b. Melancholic/Guardian.
 - c. Choleric/Idealist.
 - d. Phlegmatic/Rationalist.
2. Thus we are denying the uniformitarian or blank slate views of Freud, Maslow, Sullivan, Adler, etc.

Temperaments:	SP – Artisan	SJ – Guardian	NF – Idealist	NT – Rationalist
<i>Life goal</i>	Impact	Belonging	Romance	Achievement
<i>Motivation to act</i>	Impulse	Authority	Intuition	Reason
<i>Emotional state</i>	Excited	Concerned	Enthusiastic	Calm
<i>Preoccupation</i>	Technique	Morality	Morale	How things work
<i>Immediate quest</i>	Stimulation	Security	Personal identity	Knowledge
<i>Secret ambition</i>	Virtuoso	Executive	Sage	Wizard

II. Four Classic Temperaments.

A. Artisan – SP.

The Artisan is your classic “life of the party”. He lives for fun, and everyone around him has fun, too – at least on the surface. It is more accurate to say the Artisan’s life is controlled by the drive for impact. Often this takes the form of entertainment – especially in social settings where impact is measured by popularity. But in any situation the Artisan seeks to make his mark. Thus Artisans gravitate toward performance occupations where performance is validated. When impact is not forthcoming, the Artisan may become inwardly depressed.

Artisans impulsively act. It doesn’t matter so much what he is doing, as long as something is happening. If nothing is happening, the Artisan will create some action. Thus while other temperaments may achieve greatness by patient practice, Artisans hone their skill simply by living life to its fullest. An artisan may become so lost in his action, he has no idea he has been “practicing” his craft for hours.

With their focus squarely in the present, Artisans can be unreliable in following a plan of any length. Caring little about the past, traditions are less significant to them than to other types. This willingness to dispense with conventions makes Artisans premier trouble-shooters.

B. Guardian – SJ.

The Guardian is the loyal “company man”. He is faithful because he knows it is right – but more because he is unable to be otherwise. As the Artisan is wired to act, the Guardian is wired to conform. The Guardian’s deep drive is to belong – and he will seek belonging in family, church, company, clubs, etc. He is highly impressed by authority figures, and tends to believe whatever they say. Guardians live in a state of perpetual concern (or worry) about everything. This is not so much a choice, but a state of being which is tied into their psyche.

The Guardian lives in the past. He admires the great men and women who preceded him and longs to live up to their standard. He fancies he can do this most effectively by being in charge, so Guardians tend to seek opportunities to control the groups they belong to. This can produce resentment from others in those groups who do not wish to be controlled by the SJ’s. With proper balance, a Guardian can be an excellent executive, but he will be weak at innovation and will tend to stifle creativity. Schools, with their rules, meritocracy, and clear hierarchy are the natural breeding ground for Guardians.

C. Idealist – NF.

For the Idealist, life is a romantic quest. He lives for the discovery of his own true self and the wonders of those around him. He naturally forms a close bond with friends, which is usually welcomed, but can become smothering. The Idealist is constantly interested in his own inner life of thoughts and feelings. He assumes others share this view, and never quite recognizes that other personalities are perfectly happy not knowing how they are feeling at the moment. But this characteristic makes him extraordinarily sensitive. No one can comfort someone as deeply as the Idealist.

More than other types, the Idealist is prone to living in his own world. He tends to see others in black or white terms. If you have offended an Idealist, you can do no right. If you have won his heart, you can do no wrong. Evidence to the contrary, he is incapable of thinking otherwise. This makes him an easy target to be taken advantage of.

D. Rationalist – NT.

Rationalists are the calm, competent, reasonable ones – so much so they can appear cool and unfeeling. But underneath that calm exterior is the drive for achievement. The Rationalist must know how things work, and must accomplish something of enduring value with his knowledge. That may take the form of a book, an institution, an edifice, etc. The Rationalist sets high standards for himself and has little tolerance for underperforming. This, coupled with his analytical bent, makes him an excellent problem-solver. Rarely will someone discover flaws in his thinking. This can make him appear arrogant and unyielding to people accustomed to a more collegial approach to life.

The Rationalist measures life by reason, including the opinions of so-called authorities. This alarms the Guardians, who implicitly trust authority. But unlike the Artisans, he is unwilling to change just for variety. Any move must be calculated to accomplish the larger goal. It is the constant focus on the larger goal which makes the Rationalist the “Big Picture” guy. He excels at understanding the whole and knows how various elements contribute or distract from the goal. On the other hand, he is chronically poor at managing the details of life.

III. Putting Personality to Work.

A. Getting along with people.

1. Distinguish between moral failing and differences in orientation and ability.
 - a. Refrain from condemning others who are different.
 - b. Learn to bear patiently with those who do not have your own strengths.
2. Don't make personality an excuse for irresponsible behavior on your part.
3. Collaborate with others who complement your own strengths and weaknesses.
 - a. Enlist others to assist you in your areas of weakness.
 - b. Willingly help others who are weak in your areas of strength.
4. Appreciate differences.

B. Leading and following.

<i>Temperaments:</i>	SP – Artisan	SJ – Guardian	NF – Idealist	NT – Rationalist
<i>Strength</i>	Tactics	Logistics	Diplomacy	Strategy
<i>Weakness</i>	Diplomacy	Strategy	Tactics	Logistics

C. Mating.

1. SP – Artisan: Playmate.
2. SJ – Guardian: Helpmate.
3. NF – Idealist: Soulmate.
4. NT – Rational: Mindmate.

D. Parenting.

1. SP – Artisan: Liberator.
2. SJ – Guardian: Socializer.
3. NF – Idealist: Harmonizer.
4. NT – Rational: Individuator.

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