

ON HOLISTIC INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

A SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT OF THE FOUR HUMAN TEMPERAMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Every human being has been uniquely created, possessing certain genetic predispositions to make them look like, function and behave in certain ways. First described by psychologists and philosophers using the four the temperaments concepts, humans often tend to behave in ways depending various situational and contextual factors. The four temperaments of sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric, while not explicitly taught in scripture, could still offer some advantage as they may help people recognize and identify certain predominant negative traits they may be exhibiting, so they can improve upon themselves and their social relationships.

Keywords: Temperaments, sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Evidence from nature shows significant variations in all living organisms. The biblical creation account clearly shows how the Created made variety among the major taxonomic groups of organisms including viruses, bacteria, fungi, plants, and animals (protocists, ciliates, euglenoid flagellates, sporozoans, apicomplexans, arachnids, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals)¹. The first man is said to have first provided common names to all living things² meaning that biological nomenclature is a concept as ancient as the origin of man but later discovered by Carolus Linnaeus, who went a step further to develop the binomial system of nomenclature.

Not only did God create enormous variety amongst the lower forms of life, but he also created humans essentially male and female³, with the genetic capacity for procreating the current diversity of human races we have and might ever have on the face of the planet.

Ancient psalmist, military officer and Jewish King David several centuries after God had created composed a song to raise and honor the Creator for His wisdom in making each humankind unique:

[Psa 139:14](#) I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

¹ [Gen 1:11](#) And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

[Gen 1:12](#) And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

[Gen 1:21](#) And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

[Gen 1:22](#) And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

[Gen 1:23](#) And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

[Gen 1:24](#) And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

[Gen 1:25](#) And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

² [Gen 2:19](#) And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

³ [Gen 1:27](#) So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

[Gen 1:28](#) And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The word translated fearfully, is the Hebrew word *yare*, meaning reverence and while the word reverence was translated from the Hebrew, *palah*, meaning to set difference to make unique, to set apart, or to create variation. In effect, every human being was created by the God to be different, unique attracting special reverence and honor.

Scientists explain the unique differences amongst living organisms using the laws of genetics first discovered by Gregor Mendel. Charles Darwin also explained variations within species of organisms using his so called evolution by natural selection. It must be stated, however, that Darwin's theory of evaluation by natural selection cannot account for the origin of life, and that is not the focus of this paper but it does, so some extent explain variation amongst species of living organisms.

Humans, like all other living organisms are uniquely different from each other and this is supported not only by the biblical explanation but also by genetics. The term Race therefore evolved as a concept used in the categorization of humans into groups, called *racess* or *racial groups*, based on combinations of shared physical traits, ancestry, genetics, and social or cultural traits. Although such groupings lack a firm basis in modern biology, they continue to have a strong influence over contemporary social relations. There are different races of humans including blacks, whites, Asians, Caucasians etc., although not everyone subscribes to this kind of classification system. The most important oint however to note is that everyone is different and unique in their own right.

Psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, in trying to understand these unique differences in personalities amongst individuals came up with the concept of temperaments. The word temperament refers to the combination of mental, physical, and emotional traits of a person; natural predisposition. It represents an unusual personal attitude or nature as manifested by peculiarities of feeling, temper, action, etc., often with a disinclination to submit to conventional rules or restraints⁴. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, *temperament*, is related to the noun *temper* (which most often refers to a person's tendency to become angry, among other meanings). The word *temperament* traces back to a Latin word, *temperare*, which means "to mix or blend." The *a* in *temperare* lives on in the modern spelling of *temperament*. The word *Temperament* is an old word (it dates to the 15th century) with multiple meanings, but in modern use it typically refers to the usual attitude, mood, or behavior of a person or animal⁵.

Every human being may possess one or more or multiple combinations of each of these temperaments. And because they affect ones behaviour, mood, attitude and relationships with others, it is important for everyone to know who they are in terms of the temperaments.

⁴ Retrieved from: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/temperament>, 8 Jan, 2018.

⁵ Merriam Webster. Retrieved from : <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/temperament>, 8 Jan, 2018.

2.0 THE FOUR MAIN TEMPERAMENTS

Four temperaments is a proto-psychological theory that suggests that there are four fundamental personality types, sanguine (enthusiastic, active, and social), choleric (independent, decisive, goal oriented), melancholic (analytical, detail oriented, deep thinker and feeler), and phlegmatic (relaxed, peaceful, quiet)⁶. However, we must note that most formulations include the possibility of mixtures of the types where individual share two or more temperaments. However, for the purposes of simplicity, this paper just reviews the four traditional temperaments. Below is a summary of the key characteristics of the four temperaments.

3.0 ADVICE ON THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS SYSTEM

1. Temperament lists may never be complete and exhaustive

The lists found in Tables 1, 2 and 3, below, are in no way exhaustive. Moreover, as the theory has been passed down through the centuries, the descriptions of each type have been modified and expanded. Descriptive terms for each type are not always consistent among those who use the four temperaments system. For some, a particular characteristic, such as *leadership*, would be used to describe the Choleric; for others it would describe the Sanguine. Thus, the lists are not hard and fast. They vary according to the person who is presenting them.

2. Temperament categories are very broad and general. They are not specific.

Therefore, readers should never be deceived by other authors into thinking that the temperament descriptions are always very specific and exact.

3. The four temperament descriptions are never to be exalted above the Bible

Readers must note that each of the four temperaments has positive and negative characteristics. Positive traits are called "strengths" and negative ones are called "weaknesses." Thus, the idea is to help people understand themselves and others through identifying positive and negative traits. The four temperaments theory also gives an illusion of truth. One can apply all descriptive traits to all humans to a greater or lesser degree. Therefore, when temperament characteristics are placed in categories, people can easily see themselves because of the universal nature of traits, such as friendly, confident, sensitive, dependable, and so on. Then, when people are told that they may be a combination of the four temperaments, they can easily fit themselves into a classification. That does not mean the four temperaments are in themselves accurate or helpful. It only means they consist of universal traits and that people can identify with them to some degree. The four temperaments are broad, arbitrarily defined categories of universally applicable descriptive words that apply to large numbers of people. They must never be exalted above the word of God. The words sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic or choleric are not found in the Bible. Neither does the scriptures specifically describe any believer by these temperaments. However, for practical purposes, the four temperament classifications could help us identify certain traits unique to ourselves so we can amplify our strengths, work on our weaknesses and better improve upon our lives and relationships with others.

⁶ Retrieved from : <http://www.thetransformedsoul.com/additional-studies/miscellaneous-studies/the-four-human-temperaments>, , 8 Jan, 2018.

Table 1: The Four Temperaments (1st set of Traits)⁷

Choleric (Elephant)	Sanguine (Butterfly)		Phlegmatic (Turtle)	Melancholic (Beaver)
Dominating Directing	Influencing Interacting	KEY WORDS	Supporting Stabilizing	Complying Cautious
GET IT DONE	HAVE FUN	BASIC AIM	TAKE IT EASY	DO IT RIGHT
Task (results)	Relationship (interaction)	PRIORITY	Relationships (friendship)	Task (process)
Productivity Power Control	Variety Popularity Recognition	SEEKS	Harmony Appreciation Sincerity	Order Accuracy Predictability
Active Assertive Straight-forward	Enthusiastic Gregarious Impulsive Reactive	BASIC STYLE	Controlled Disciplined Friendly Low-key	Logical Precise Reserved Sensitive
LOSING CONTROL BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF	LOSING STATUS SOCIAL DISAPPROVAL	FEARS	INSTABILITY CONFRONTATION	IMPERFECTION EMBARRASSMENT
Sarcastic Blunt Critical	Superficial Unrealistic Inconsistent	UNDER PRESSURE	Grudge holder Submissive Indecisive	Critical Strict Buck-passer
Challenges Freedom Power Rewards Results	People to talk to Positive conditions Freedom from details Recognition Variety	MOTIVATION	Appreciation Low profile Structure Time to adjust Friendliness	Exact job description No sudden changes Support Time to check

⁷ Source: https://images.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=iamegs+Four+temperaments&fr=yhs-iry-fullyhosted_003&hspart=iry&hsimp=yhs-fullyhosted_003&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fs-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fe6%2Ff0%2F1a%2Fe6f01a2ee4f09fc393796f429ad3c339.jpg#id=3&iurl=https%3A%2F%2Fpahomov.files.wordpress.com%2F2012%2F09%2Fscreen-shot-2012-09-04-at-10-08-48-pm.png&action=click, Jan 8, 2018.

Table 2: The Four Temperaments (2nd set of Traits)⁸

Wet: Short-lived response		Dry: Sustained response		
<p>“Socially Useful” type</p> <p>Sanguine</p> <p>Roles: Actors Salesmen Speakers</p> <p>Air</p> <p>Hot: Quick response</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sociable -charismatic -outgoing -confident -warm-hearted -pleasant -lively -optimistic -a fun lover -spontaneous -a preventer of dull moments -a quick apologist -an easy friend maker 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -impulsive -chronically late -shamless -forgetful -a compulsive talker -too loud -sometimes too happy -distractible -not interested in following through with tasks that are boring -self-absorbed -an exaggerator -someone who appears unauthentic 	<p>Choleric</p> <p>Roles: Leaders Producers Builders</p> <p>Fire</p>	
<p>Cold: Slow response</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Roles: Diplomats Accountants Teachers Technicians</p> <p>“Getting” type</p>	<p>Phlegmatic</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -relaxed -quiet and calm -content with themselves -kind -consistent -a steady and faithful friend -accepting -affectionate -diplomatic -peacemaking -rational -curious -observant -an easy friend maker 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sometimes shy -fearful of change -prone to laziness -stubborn -passive-aggressive -indecisive -permissive -not goal oriented -unenthusiastic -too compromising -undisciplined -sarcastic -discouraging -non-participative 	<p>Melancholic</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -thoughtful -considerate -cautious -organized -an excessive planner -schedule oriented -detailed -highly creative in poetry, art and invention -independent -good at preventing problems 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -obsessive -too cautious -prone to depression -prone to moodiness -perfectionistic -pessimistic -difficult to please -deeply affected by tragedy -a person with tunnel vision -sometimes a procrastinator -discontent with themselves and others -prone to play the martyr <p>Earth</p> <p>Roles: Artists Musicians Inventors Philosophers Doctors</p> <p>“Avoiding” type</p>
<p>original: hidingplaceblog.blogspot.com extended: theboywhodrewrats.com</p>				

⁸ Retrieved from : https://images.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=iamegs+Four+temperaments&fr=yhs-iry-fullyhosted_003&hspart=iry&hsimp=yhs-fullyhosted_003&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fs-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fe6%2Ff0%2F1a%2Fe6f01a2ee4f09fc393796f429ad3c339.jpg#id=0&iurl=https%3A%2F%2Fs-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fe6%2Ff0%2F1a%2Fe6f01a2ee4f09fc393796f429ad3c339.jpg&action=click, Jan 8, 2018.

Table 2: The Four Temperaments (3rd set of Traits)⁹

Sanguine	Choleric	Melancholy	Phlegmatic
Cheerful	Optimistic	Melancholy	Calm
Friendly	Active	Sensitive	Dependable
Talkative	Confident	Analytical	Efficient
Lively	Strong-willed	Perfectionistic	Easy-going
Restless	Quick to anger	Unsociable	Passive
Self-centered	Aggressive	Moody	Stubborn
Undependable	Inconsiderate	Rigid	Lazy

Source: Martin & Bobgan, D. (1992). *Christians and the Four Temperaments* Published by EastGate Publishers Santa Barbara, California.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Every human being has been uniquely created with certain inherent genetic predispositions to make them look like, function and behave in certain ways. Psychologists and philosophers first attempted to describe this phenomenon using the four the temperaments concept, which tries to account for why humans often tend to behave in ways depending various situational and contextual factors. Although not explicitly taught in scripture, knowledge of the four temperaments- sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric- could still offer some advantage as they may aid people recognize and identify certain predominant negative traits they may be exhibiting, so they can improve upon themselves and their social relationships. It must be emphasized that the four temperaments theory cannot and should not be used as a standard authoritative system by Christians in identifying their true identity. Christians must make the Bible the standard of authority over their lives, and the finished works of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament epistles, the basis of their true spiritual identity. Nonetheless, the four temperaments, it must be admitted, offer some general guide to helping people better know and understand the psychological basis of their behaviour.

⁹ Retrieved from : https://images.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=iamegs+Four+temperaments&fr=yhs-iry-fullyhosted_003&hspart=iry&hsimp=yhs-fullyhosted_003&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fs-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fe6%2Ff0%2F1a%2Fe6f01a2ee4f09fc393796f429ad3c339.jpg#id=0&iurl=https%3A%2F%2Fs-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fe6%2Ff0%2F1a%2Fe6f01a2ee4f09fc393796f429ad3c339.jpg&action=click, Jan 8, 2018.

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