

Maximizing Your Personality
Everybody's Normal
October 29, 2017

PRE-SERVICE VIDEO

**Worship Song – Endless Praise / Good, Good
Father / Prayer**

**Feature – I Wanna Talk About Me
Video – Behind the Scenes
Drama – Debating Spaces**

Good morning everyone.

I think that skit is a good way to kick off this series because it illustrates so well what we're going to be talking about over the next five weeks:

- How God has “wired up” each of us with a unique set of preferences – different ways of both perceiving the world and acting in it.
- And how that wiring – *our personality* – can

be (as we just saw) both a blessing and a curse ... especially when it comes to our relationships with others.

Of course some might say “but, Rick, the Bible doesn’t say *anything* about personality and personality types. I mean, there’s nothing in there about Myers-Briggs or DISC profiles or Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, etc. So why is this worth talking about in church? Aren’t we getting a bit off the track?”

I can understand why a person might wonder that. In fact, I can remember having similar thoughts the first time this concept was introduced to me by one of our associate pastors in the early days of NHCC (which would have been the mid-90s). He wanted to have our entire staff take the DISC personality test and then talk about it together.

Even though I agreed and we did it, I secretly thought it would turn out to be a waste of time.

By the end of the process, I had learned two things:

1. Sometimes you should trust the ideas of people who work for you because ...
2. I was wrong.

Not only has learning about “personality” and “personality types” turned out to be extremely valuable to us as a staff and a ministry, it’s also extremely biblical ... even though Jesus and the leaders of the early church never use that terminology.

Why This Matters

Here’s why I say that; three reasons why this “personality stuff” is an important tool for those who follow Jesus.

And by the way, I know that not everyone here or

watching online is a believer in and follower of Jesus, so what I'm about to say isn't really directed at you. You're welcome to embrace it and try it out in your own life but this is really about the expectations and desires that Jesus has for those who belong to Him.

So here is reason number one.

1. The scripture is very clear that we (if we follow Jesus) are to do whatever it takes to love people well.

Let me just read to you a few examples. Listen closely.

*All of you live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers [and sisters], be compassionate and humble. 1
Peter 3:8 (NIV)*

*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
Romans 12:10 (NLT)*

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you ... Romans 15:7 (NIV)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

“Make every effort,” the Apostle Paul says.

And part of that effort includes *understanding*.

- Affection and honoring, if it’s going to be genuine, requires that we understand the person.
- Sympathy and compassion and acceptance – same thing. You can’t do those things without understanding.

And knowing about personality types helps you to

understand.

Many years ago, Jetta and I and our youngest daughter, Janelle, had an experience that vividly (and unexpectedly) illustrated how this works.

We'd taken a trip to Mexico to visit our middle daughter, Katie, who, at the time, was attending a missionary training school in the little town of Tlaxiaco ...

(Pic of town) Tlaxiaco is up in the mountains about three hours northwest of the much larger city of Oaxaca (population of about a quarter of a million).

As you can see, it really is a *little* town.

(pic of KT) We stayed for five days ...

... which was long enough for us to get a taste of what Katie was experiencing every day – the

people, the school, and the mission work. It was just a wonderful time.

(pic of family) Everyone we met was incredibly warm and friendly.

We had dinner with several families in their homes and we were treated like royalty. At times, it was almost embarrassing.

But I'm not exaggerating when I say *it was a different world* for us.

(pic of market) Saturday morning we went to the city market ...

... and when I say “city market” I mean *city market* – the whole downtown of Tlaxiaco literally turns into an outdoor marketplace. I bet we saw a thousand people that morning ... and of all those people, *we were the only Caucasians!*

At one point, a little kid – maybe 6 or 7 years old – came up to me, looked me right in the face and

said, “Gringo!”

Katie said he’d probably never seen a white person before.

(PIC) One evening we had dinner with Eduardo and Carmen and their daughter Ruth.

They knew that Katie was far from home, so they had sort of “adopted” her which meant that we felt a great sense of appreciation for and connection with them.

At one point in the evening, I took out my cell phone and shot a video of the interaction between us and them. The picture turned out terrible (this was back before smartphones were commonplace) but the audio is great.

As we watch – sort of – listen closely to the dialogue.

Video – “Dinner Conversation” (1.1 min)

<<SLIDE SET 2>>

Did you get all that?

Neither did we!

And every day in Tlaxiaco was just like that. 98% of the time we were clueless of what was being said by people around us!

On our own, we would have been totally lost and unable to communicate. But we *weren't* on our own. We had Katie! She was the translator. She was the go-between.

More precisely, what she was doing was to connect people of one language and culture to people of another language and culture and enabling them to communicate with and relate to one another.

And that's what understanding "personality" does – or can do, if we allow it to.

It helps us to connect with people who, as the four in our drama illustrated, *might as well be* from different parts of the world and speaking different languages ... because they are wired up from birth with a particular way of understanding and relating to the world and a particular way of relating to and communicating with others, i.e., a *personality* ...

... which is why this is a valuable tool to those who are called by Jesus to love people well. You can't love well without understanding and, like a good translator, knowing about personality types helps you to do that.

Reason number two why this “personality stuff” is an important tool for those who follow Jesus ...

2. We are to understand the unique way in which God has “wired” us.

In his letter to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote ...

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment ...
Romans 12:3 (NIV)

In other words, “take stock of yourself. Can you accurately describe who God had made you to be?”

Then he continues:

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.

So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you.

If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well.

If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching.

If your gift is to encourage others, do it!

If you have money, share it generously.

If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.

And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Romans 12:3-8 (NLT)

Now, Paul is talking here about what's known as "spiritual gifts" but the point applies to our personality as well. There is value in understanding how we're wired up.

But why? Why is it so important?

3. Because (and this is reason number 3) the scripture is also clear that God expects us (if

we're followers of Jesus) to make the most of what He has given us.

Again, dealing with the issue of spiritual gifts, the Apostle Peter writes:

God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you.

Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you.

Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies.

Then God will be given glory in everything through Jesus Christ. All glory and power belong to him forever and ever. Amen. 1

Peter 4:10-11 (NLT)

Jesus also expressed a similar goal ...

"I chose you and appointed you to go

*and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit
that endures.” John 15:16 (GNT)*

God expects us to make the most of what He’s given us – and part of what He has given us is our personality; the way we’re wired up.

So, in case you were wondering, that’s why we believe this “personality stuff” is an important tool for those who follow Jesus, even though He and the leaders of the early church never used that terminology.

Personality Types: The Basics

Now, as I said earlier, there are lots of systems out there designed to define and describe personality types. You’ve probably been exposed to one or more of them at some point.

We’ve used several in our history but the one that

has stuck with our leadership and our staff was the very first one we encountered: the DISC Model of Human Behavior. As a result, whenever we talk about personality types we most often speak in terms of “D” “I” “S” and “C” (or combinations thereof).

And that’s the system we’re going to be using throughout this series.

DISC is a simple four-quadrant model that identifies very basic preferences and goes a long way towards explaining “why are we the way we are.”

Here’s how it works:

On the horizontal axis, there is a continuum that goes from task-oriented on one end to people-oriented on the other.

Would you rather be getting a task done (or thinking about how you’ll get it done) ... or would you rather hang-out with people? Are you more

interested in results or relationships?

You can plot your answer somewhere on the line.

On the vertical axis, the continuum goes from “passive” on one end to “active” on the other.

Would you rather think about getting tasks done or hanging out with people, or would you rather jump at the first chance to do either? Do you like to maintain the status quo or do you want to shake things up?

You can plot that somewhere on the line, too.

Now, the theory is that once we plot out our predominant preferences in these things on this little graph, the intersection of the two gives us a pretty accurate understanding of our personality type – how we like to relate to our world and communicate with those around us.

For instance, those whose preferences place

them in the top left quadrant (i.e., those who are task-oriented and active) tend to be dominating, directing, decisive, even demanding. These are the “D” personalities.

Often you will hear them say (in word or deed) “let’s do it my way.” And, then, if you *don’t* do it their way, you’d better watch out!

In our drama, Don was obviously the “D” personality.

Those whose preferences intersect in the top right quadrant (people-oriented/active) are called “I” personalities because they tend to be inspiring, influencing, impressing, and interactive.

These are the folks that we refer to as “the life of the party.” If there’s a party somewhere, they’re probably at it. If there isn’t one, they start it.

In the drama, Iris was the “I” personality.

Those whose preferences plot out in the lower right quadrant (people-

oriented/passive) are known as the “S” personalities because they’re usually stable, servant-hearted, and a little on the shy side.

If you were going to label this type overall, you’d call it “steady and supportive.”

In the drama, Sarah was the “S” personality.

Finally, those whose preferences intersect in the lower left quadrant (task-oriented/passive) are known as “C” personalities because they tend to be conscientious, contemplative, concerned with competence, and a little on the cautious side.

Their motto might be “keep it between the lines.” And if it’s not clear where the lines are, these folks will get serious about determining where they should be.

In the drama, Clark was the “C” personality.

Now, two quick observations about all of this ...

Observation 1. Most often, people fall into combinations of neighboring quadrants (“D-I” or “C-S” for example) and they tend to shift a bit within a range of that combination.

It’s very rare, for instance, to find someone who is a total “C” personality-type who never deviates from that.

For example, my basic type is the Dominant “D.” That comes as a shock, I’m sure.

But when I’m under stress, I tend to pick up “C” characteristics, so my type is a “D-C”. When I’m relaxed, however, I tend to drift the other way. I become more of a “D-I” combination.

Observation 2. When you see it plotted out like this, it’s clear that everybody’s normal.

Well, almost everybody. There *are* some really disturbed people to whom this probably doesn’t apply, but the overwhelming majority of the folks we relate to are normal.

- You know that guy who drives you crazy because he can never give you an answer right away?

He isn't weird or necessarily trying to be a pain. That's just the way God wired him up. And, get this: close to a fourth of the human race is just like him. *He's normal.*

- You know that gal who frustrates you because she always wants to know what's next on the schedule?

She's not weird. That's just the way God wired her up and about a fourth of the human race is just like her. *She's normal.*

See, once we understand someone's type, it's a lot easier to accept that they're normal. And we have a pretty good idea of what to expect from them, what will energize them, and what will wear them out.

In addition, once we understand *our own type*, it's a lot easier to accept that *we're* normal. And we have a pretty good idea of what to expect of ourselves, what will energize us, what will wear us out and ... how *we* can wear *other people* out.

I think you can see why this is such valuable information both relationally and personally. And, over the next four weeks, we'll go into it in detail for each basic type.

But, in typical “D personality” fashion, I’m giving you an assignment that I expect you to complete before next Sunday. And if you don’t, well then, don’t come back.

Just kidding!

Let me slide over into more of a “D-I” style ... it would be extremely beneficial to you if you would take a few minutes between now and next Sunday to complete an assignment that furthers your understanding of how God has wired you up.

And isn't that what you really want? Of course it is!

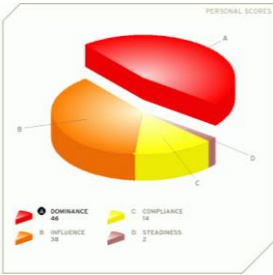
Go to <https://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/>

We'll leave that slide up for a minute so that you can write it down. We'll also post it on our Facebook page.

That link will take you to an online test that will take less than ten minutes to complete. You won't have to download anything, and it's free, although for \$14.99 they will sell you a much more detailed analysis.

But, for our purposes in this series that's not necessary.

Here's the result of one person's test.



It gives you a number for each of the four types. Take the two highest numbers, and that's your combination.

In this example, the person who filled this out is a "D-I" combination.

There are other test sites out there, too, and you can feel free to use them but what's important is that you know your type/combo (and also the patterns of your family members) as we continue in this series.

Test-Taking Tips

Now, one of the things we've discovered over the years is that people sometimes struggle with

nailing down exactly what their type is.

For instance ...

- “Sometimes I act like a D-personality but other times I’m more like an S.”
- “I used to score as a C-personality, but when I took the test recently, it says I’m something else.”
- “I scored pretty evenly on all four types. Which one am I?”

So let me give you two tips on how to take the test. You have to keep two things in mind as you do it.

1. Answer based on your *natural* tendency; not learned or forced behavior.

Sometimes people answer based on expectations they feel they must meet instead of what they’d prefer to do.

For example, you might be in a job that requires you to be in charge – directing people and activities – and that might make you think you are a “D”. However, you could really be an “S” personality who’s expected to be dominant in that situation.

That doesn’t mean that you can’t do it and do it well. It just means that you are an “S” who is having to stretch.

And stretching is not a bad thing. In fact, that’s kind of the goal of this series; why we’re calling it *Maximizing Your Personality* instead of *Understanding Your Personality*.

And that does happen. For me personally, over the years, I’ve actually learned how to think and act more like an “S” personality type in situations that require it. But my natural tendency – my first response – is pretty much the dominant “D” type. I’m a “D” who is being transformed beyond my

natural self.

I'll say more about that in a bit, but here's the second tip on taking a personality test:

2. Answer based on what is typically most energizing to you.

For example:

- If you were well-rested and not under pressure would you rather be hanging out with people or working on a task?
- Would you rather be adaptable towards your environment, or would you rather be shaking things up, rearranging the furniture, etc.?

All things being equal, what is most appealing to you? What jazzes you? That's the key to understanding your natural wiring and that's what your mindset should be when you take a test

...

... which, of course, you *will* do before next Sunday
... because it's good for you!

Ground Rules

Now, with all that said, I want to wrap this up with four ground rules for using this kind of information.

And this is probably the most important part of my talk this morning, because if we don't use this tool in the proper way, not only we can get messed up ourselves, we can mess up others, too.

Ground rule 1. No personality type is better or worse than any other.

Sometimes when people start learning about this stuff they say, "I wish I had *that* personality type instead of the one I have."

For example, personally speaking, sometimes I wish I wasn't so much of a D-personality. I wish I was more people-oriented by nature. I wish I was more of an "I" personality because I think more people would be drawn to me and like me.

Of course, I know some folks with I-personalities who wish they were more like me!

But you know what? *God is the one who created us – in his own image no less! He's the one wired us up to think and be who we are. And, in His mind a "D" is as good and necessary to this world as a "C" or an "I" or an "S."*

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He said ...

The body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the

body because I am only an ear and not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body?

Suppose the whole body were an eyeball—then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

Therefore ...

The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. 1 Corinthians 12:14-17, 21-22 (NLT)

Again, this passage refers to spiritual gifts, but the principle clearly applies to our personalities as well. Some of the types that, to us, seem to be the weakest and least important might really be the most necessary in our lives.

Every D needs an S to keep them balanced. That's why opposites attract and why, so often, you find spouses are the exact opposite type.

Ground rule 2. Beware of the tendency to reduce people to a set of letters.

I learned this the hard way with our daughter Katie. When it became clear in her teenage years that she was a very strong “life of the party” I-personality, I began to label her and describe her actions in those terms.

She was highly offended. I still remember what she said to me. “I don't care about your stupid personality system. I'm *me* not an I.”

Now, as she's matured she's mellowed on that, but her point was well-taken.

So, as you become conscious of the personality types of those around you, remember that the letters just describe their predominant characteristics and preferences, not the person

themselves.

Ground Rule 3. Your personality type is not a valid excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Sometimes when people learn about personalities, they start saying, “the reason I tend to act this way is because I’m such and such a personality.”

And that’s OK. That’s a sign of self-awareness which, as we’ve seen, is a good thing.

But sometimes people will say: “Look, dude, this is just me. This is just how I am by personality. Deal with it.”

The apostle Paul once made an interesting statement about that kind of attitude.

He wrote ...

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I

reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 1 Corinthians 13:11NIV

When each of our daughters was born, it was pretty much a “deal with it” proposition in relating to them.

- They slept when they wanted
- They ate when they wanted
- They pooped when they wanted
- They cried when they wanted

And Jetta and I had to deal with it – well, mostly Jetta – because they were babies and that’s what babies do.

But as they got older, they gained some control over themselves. They put their childish, self-centered ways behind them. They learned how to adapt themselves to the situation. They matured.

That’s the goal when it comes to our personalities

– to put the childish “this is me, take it or leave it” attitude behind us and move into maturity ... maximizing our personality.

And that leads to the final ground rule.

Ground rule 4. God’s goal is to maximize our personality (if we’re believers in and followers of Jesus) by producing “the fruit of the Spirit” in our lives.

It’s true that God created us and gave us our personality. And, it’s true that he wants us to get the most out of what He’s given.

However, it’s also true that we have a problem that keeps us from being all we could be. The Bible calls it *sin*, which we most often think of as our inborn tendency to reject God and His ways and to go off on our own. But another way to think of sin is what happens when our personality type keeps us from being who God calls us to be in a given situation.

For example, as a D-personality, it's pretty easy for me to walk in faith and take a risk when God says to do so. That's how I'm wired.

But when God says "slow down and spend more time with Me or with the people you love and care about" it goes against my nature as a task-oriented activist.

If I choose to walk in that nature then, in that moment, I am following the way of the flesh, as the Bible puts it, and that's sin.

However, if I choose to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit, God does something in my life. I still have all the positive qualities of a task-oriented activist D, but God begins to develop other characteristics in my life that are not natural to me.

Paul puts it in these terms:

When the Holy Spirit controls our

lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:22 (NLT)

And I think you can see that some of those characteristics are a lot more natural to “S” or “I” or “C” personalities than to my natural “D” tendencies.

And that’s the goal in all of this – to develop into the person God wants us to be in addition to who we already are naturally (and sometimes *in spite* of who we are) ... which, again, is why we’re calling this series *Maximizing Your Personality*.

We’re not aiming for mere “self-discovery that leads to self-improvement” but an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit that, over time, transforms us to look more like Jesus than ourselves.

Conclusion

So, those are the ground rules:

- No personality type is better or worse than any other.
- Beware of the tendency to reduce people to a set of letters.
- Personality type is not a valid excuse for inappropriate behavior.
- God's goal is to maximize your personality by producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

And he will do that. And we'll talk about *how* in the weeks to come.

But right now, we're going to ask the ushers to come forward to receive the offering during this next song.

Also, put in baptism sign up card.

Let me pray for you as they are coming.

<Prayer for transformation>

- Move beyond “deal with it.”
- More than who we are.
- But not just self-improvement. HS work.
- Hope for a new beginning.

Feature – Day One / Offering

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. “D” personalities next week along with Baptism.
2. Time change!

Endnotes