

# **Your Personality Tree**

by Florence Littauer

Reviewed by William Gross

We need to have an honest look at ourselves before we can effectively and compassionately consider others. We need to value ourselves before we can learn to value others for who they are. Other people are not pawns in some game of life. They don't live to serve us. These people who share our life, and those we meet on the street, have their own thoughts, feelings, and dreams. They enrich us just by being. They are sources of great delight, insight, variety, and contrast. This book will help us discover all that and more. We're going to learn about our roots that nourish us, and our fruit that nourishes others.

We're going to meet the beaver, lion, otter, and golden retriever --- descriptions which I prefer to Florence's melancholy, choleric, sanguine, and phlegmatic. These animal descriptions come from Gary Smalley's books. Once you know your own personality, and you have the tools to identify other people's personalities, you can actually enjoy meeting them and intelligently speaking to their areas of interest. If we can make meeting people fun and rewarding, our Christian walk will become a piece of cake.

We're going to see if the person looking at us in the mirror is the real us, or just a mask we put on. We're going to surgically remove the mask if it's there. I hope you savor the book. It's a life-changer.

## **Personal Worth**

Everyone has value. Everyone has been called for such a time as this to use their unique gifts and experiences to serve others and to serve God. But what are those gifts? And which experiences in particular? Some things we were born with. Other things we acquired. As a result, we all have a bent - a tendency to respond to our world in a way that characterizes both our personality and our background. Florence identifies 4 primary personality types. Each personality type has its own strengths, and of course its own weaknesses. We want to know what traits belong to each personality type. That helps us understand other people - and perhaps be more forgiving of who they are and how they behave. For ourselves, we want to grow in the direction of our natural personality, emphasizing its strengths and minimizing its weaknesses.

Here are the four personality types. I'll use Florence's descriptions, but I've added the animal descriptions to help us get a better mental image of the type.

**Sanguine - The Star of the Show - Otter:** cheerful, bubbly, happy-go-lucky. Avoid chores but always find friends to bail them out just because they're so likeable. Everything they say is funny. They get good marks in school in everything but conduct and penmanship. They hate to practice because their chief aim in life is to have fun. A talker, optimistic, animated and excited, undisciplined, forgetful, and eager for credit.

**Choleric - The Director - Lion:** Love to be in control. Know exactly what they want and are perfectly willing to let everyone else know it too. They sense instinctively which people know what they're talking about and which ones don't. They get their work done quickly and can't understand why others are unable to duplicate their efforts. They tend to be the captain of the team and president of the club. A worker, controlling, dynamic, decisive, ambitious, goal-oriented, bossy, impatient, and domineering.

**Melancholy - The Producer - Beaver:** Sensitive to their surroundings and tend to be moved to tears. They alphabetize their bookshelf, ensure that everything on a table top is squared, centered, and evenly spaced - silverware, napkins, food, etc. Tend to be compulsive. They love lists. They get their work done on time and then do extra research projects. They practice until they drop to ensure everything is perfect, but they hate to show anyone what they've done for fear of failure or rejection. They are compassionate and support the underdog. They get discouraged when everything doesn't turn out as they planned and no one else seems to care. They dream the impossible dream of a perfect world. A thinker, deep and purposeful, sensitive, talented and creative, analytical and orderly, moody and negative, too introspective, socially insecure, and easily depressed.

**Phlegmatic - The Backstage Crew - Golden Retriever.** Tend to be passive and understanding. They love to help other people, but don't ask them to take control. They obey all the rules and never give anyone a hard time. They do their school work on time but they never do more than what's necessary. They get nominated for various projects, but don't mind if they don't win. They try to keep everyone happy - peace at any cost. Mediator, easy-going, calm and relaxed, patient and inoffensive, quiet but witty, unmotivated, unenthusiastic, indecisive, and eager to rest.

None of us fits exclusively into one category. We tend to be combinations and mixtures. But one of these is going to be your dominant personality. You should be able to spot it right away. It's what you were born to be. Relish it.

## Temperament – So What?

*Balance.* What we strive for throughout our lives is balance. We want to avoid the extremes in our experiences and in our emotions, in our activity and in our rest, so that we achieve balance. We want to be able to pay the bills, but not be so driven for money that we become greedy. We want to be helpful, but not so bound by our obligations to others that we ignore our own needs. We want to love our friends and family, but not be so loving that we ignore bad behavior. We want to have nice things, but not be so compelled to buy them that we wind up in poverty. Balance.

To become balanced, and to understand the tensions that exist in all people, we need to have a tool. We need a mirror to help us see ourselves and assess others. This personality tree is the best tool I've found to provide that insight into myself and others. What it does for us is identify the dominant quadrant that people fall into. And what that enables us to do is recognize our need to adopt some of the positive habits and behaviors of the other 3 quadrants. That's how we pursue balance. That's our personal use of the tool.

When we deal with other people, and we're in a people business, we use the tool differently. We don't want to balance them, unless they are young children. We want to understand what motivates them or inhibits them in their pursuit of a better life. We don't want to trigger their fears, and of course, each quadrant has its own fears. Instead, we want to stimulate their drives, and each quadrant has those too. When we learn how to do that, we aren't "manipulating" them. We are freeing them to pursue their goals and dreams. Yes, it is intentional on our part. But it is also compassionate and empowering. We don't coerce. We encourage.

The book is filled with descriptions of real people, in real situations, living life according to their temperament. If you don't have the book, then you'll be missing out on 90% of its value. I'm not going to repeat what she's written other than to show how to make use of it. The terms she uses (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholy) come from a previous time and are unfamiliar to the modern ear. I won't go into what that says about today's world. They go back to Hippocrates in ancient Greece and they were clearly understood right up to WWII. I would like to repeat their meaning here.

Temperament means mixed in due proportion. What is mixed is fluids. The ancient world believed everything was comprised of water (fluids), fire, earth, and air. So we're talking about water, or "humors," when we talk about temperament. "Humors" refers to moisture (like a humidifier). "A person with a lot of red blood coursing through his veins was Sanguine: cheerful, outgoing, and optimistic but not very serious or organized. The original Choleric had too much yellow bile making him 'bilious,' short-tempered and ill-natured, but giving him a dynamic desire for action. As his *chole*, Greek for "bile," was 'mixed in due proportion,' he charged into leadership positions. Too much *melas*, Greek for "black," and *chole* added up to Melancholy: deep, sad, and depressive, but also a thoughtful, gifted, and analytical genius. *Phlegm* was a cold, moist humor which caused people to be slow and sluggish, but enabled them to stay calm, cool, and collected under pressure and heat."

If you have too much of any one humor, you are unbalanced. You have deficiencies that need to be compensated for. Unless you take the time to assess yourself, you'll never know where you come up

short and so you'll never be balanced. Socrates said, "The unexamined life probably isn't worth living." I'm not trying to waste your time. This isn't just an interesting idea. It is critical to our success in life as well as in the church. We need to learn to use it.

## Basic Desires

Each temperament has its own set of underlying needs. If we acknowledge them, and accommodate them, then we can stop struggling with our own expectations, and begin meeting the needs of the other person. So let's lay out what each temperament expects out of life. Remember that each of us has a dominant quadrant, but we may also be a mix of two or more. When someone is balanced, we will have a hard time spotting which quadrant hits their hot button.

The **Sanguine Otter** wants to have fun, be the center of attention, and have everyone's approval (so he tends to avoid responsibilities that might offend someone). He flits from relationship to relationship just for the excitement and the stories he can tell, and cannot seem to get organized. So a sanguine drives the orderly melancholy nuts. He frustrates General Choleric who insists on order and discipline. And the phlegmatic wall-flower (Golden Retriever) refuses to dance with him.

The **Choleric Lion** wants to have control, issue decrees, and set the agenda no matter what anyone else wants, and then he wants to be appreciated for what gets accomplished even though everyone around him is bruised and battered from the experience. He just can't get the sanguine to follow orders, and the melancholy is always second-guessing him. The phlegmatic follows orders, but you have to keep kicking him to get him to move...

The **Melancholy Beaver** wants to have perfection, create lists, and categorize everything - all of which leads to tears because it's an imperfect world. No one else seems to know how things are supposed to work... and he won't tell them. He figures they should know and so he expects sensitivity. The choleric is anything but sensitive; the sanguine can't make a list to save his life, and the phlegmatic can't see the point because things seem just fine to him...

The **Phlegmatic Golden Retriever** wants to have peace, stay out of trouble, and avoid change (aka avoid decisions). They love to help and are crushed if they don't get respect and a sense of worth from their efforts. The melancholy sees the benefit in the phlegmatic's activities, but insists on criticizing the end-product because it's just not good enough. The choleric ignores what he's done because the phlegmatic was only following the choleric's orders anyway. And then the sanguine thinks how marvelous it is that there's all this stuff to play with, but he has no idea who to thank for putting it all together for him... Party time!

What's wrong with this picture is that each temperament is looking to satisfy its own needs, and each fails to meet the basic needs of the other temperaments. If they knew what the others wanted, they could meet their needs even if they couldn't identify with them. That's called "charismatic" or other-directed. It's a very winsome way to live; and popular; and attractive. Hint.

## Temptation and Loyalty

The actual chapter title is just about temptation, but the benefit we're going to derive is how to avoid betrayal and elicit loyalty from the people around us. Do you want to get married? Do you want to stay married? Do you want obedient children? Do you want loyal friends? Do you want cooperation at work? These relationships don't just happen. They are built and nurtured by addressing the basic needs of the people around us.

If a husband needs control, and the wife insists on undermining his authority, the marriage is in trouble. If a child needs to have fun and the parents insist on checklists and performance criteria, the child is going to hang out at his friend's house. If a wife hates change, and the husband insists on getting new jobs or moving every year, she is going to become unsettled and suspicious. If every time an employee

has a new idea, you choose to pick holes in his thinking, those innovations are going to wind up in the hands of your competitor.

The bottom line is this: if you don't give your spouse, your children, or your friends what they need and want, they will go somewhere else to find it. That means you will drive them to adultery, cause them to spend too much time at the office, or force them to run away from home. It leads to abandonment, withdrawal, or forgetting to give you an invitation to the party. For yourself, you can spell that l-o-n-e-l-y. You will become jealous of their other relationships. They obviously enjoy them more than the one they have with you. At the dinner table you'll hear about all the fun they had at work, the concern someone else had for them, or the accolades they received someplace else. So if you want loyalty from the people in your life, you need to meet their basic needs, at home, at work, with you. You need to be loyal to get loyalty in return. Loyal means being faithful to another person's needs. It means knowing their *character* so you can give them the kind of support that actually helps them, and the kind they will appreciate.

We heard all this in *Being Happy, Confidence and Power*, and *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. But we never had a useful tool to help us identify people's expectations. Now we do. You see, everyone isn't the same. We're all unique. But there are general behaviors, trends in thinking and responsiveness, that can help us get a handle on how to deal with other people and learn how to compensate for some of our own deficiencies.

**I'll use myself as an example to try to show how to use this tool.** This is extra material to flesh out what's been said. Use it if it helps, but it may be more than you wanted to know about me...

I'm a Melancholy-phlegmatic (the big letter is the predominant trait). That's a challenging combination. It means that I'm never satisfied because I'm a perfectionist, but I'm rarely willing to do anything about it because I detest change. My desire for perfection tends to show up as a critical attitude - that can be misinterpreted as being choleric which has a desire to control. My wife is finding out that my tendency to undermine someone else's control is not the same as wanting that control myself. That's the second-guessing that I mentioned yesterday. I have a sense of how things ought to be, and the "right" way to do things. If someone doesn't exercise control according to my checklist, I give them a litany of why it won't work - only don't ask me to take over.

On the positive side, I'm usually correct because I've done the work (I'm the beaver). I've analyzed and gathered the information necessary to come to the right conclusion. I've figured out how to make it happen successfully. I like order and discipline, protocol and procedures. Once I've laid out how things need to be done, I have high expectations that things will go according to the plan. Plan your work, work your plan. Right?

My phlegmatic side then turns over control to the choleric to make it happen, and some other phlegmatic to help get it done. After all, I did my part in the planning. Why should I have to implement it as well? Don't mistake a phlegmatic's passiveness for laziness. They simply want someone else to make the agenda and *ask* them for help. In return for laying out the bank-job, I want a share of the proceeds in the form of respect, admiration, and gratitude. My melancholy side expects folks around me to be sensitive to my need for encouragement (without me saying anything of course), and my phlegmatic side absolutely needs to hear it.

Yet, when folks see my perfectionist bent they translate it as ego. So rather than feed it, they downplay it to avoid giving me a swelled head. They figure I'm self-contained, strong, and independent. I don't need any of that stuff. That really frustrates my phlegmatic side which needs feedback. In the background, my phlegmatic side is trying to tell itself, "Well, I'm just helping out, so I don't need the applause anyway." That ensures there is no discomfort by demanding attention. But my drive for respect still needs *something* - even if it's just a quiet word of recognition on the side, or a short note in the mail. Surely *someone* saw and appreciated what I did...

My melancholy side knows people probably don't like me because I'm too demanding and intellectual, but my phlegmatic side has this overpowering desire to be accepted. So I don't believe I can be successful at meeting people and building a relationship with them, but I want desperately to have a large group of friends who are glad to see me. Sounds silly, doesn't it? We're all just a bundle of needs and conflicts.

OK. There's my introspection for the day. Now, how do I balance my competing needs and make life easier for myself and those around me? I really think that if everyone except sanguines tried to adopt some sanguine characteristics (glad-handing, back-slapping, fun-seeking, bubbly, good-humor types), the whole world would be a happier place. And if sanguines could adopt a little more self-control, they'd get a lot more done and be less likely to frustrate their family and friends.

For me, that means I need to let go of perfection and begin saying to myself, "that's good enough." Pursuit of excellence is one thing, but pursuit of perfection is quite another. I think I've made great strides in that area. I also need to learn to have fun, and seek out other people to have fun with. The melancholy is a recluse by nature. Yet if I'm no fun to be around, then seeking out other people is going to be a very disappointing venture for me. I have to *make* myself delight in other people instead of living in my head where I only *think* about delighting in them.

On my phlegmatic side, I need to get more ambitious and stop being so passive. There's nothing quite so pathetic or conflicted as a lazy beaver. I need to let go of my desire for positive feedback and realize that other people may be too busy to notice or take the time to thank me. In fact, what I think is helpful may not be helpful at all... so why *should* they thank me? Were my motives coming from my melancholy side which insists on telling people what they need, or did my motives come from my phlegmatic side which only wants to help? It never hurts to ask why we are doing something...

I hope this little jaunt into the hidden recesses of my mind starts you thinking about which traits are your own - and how to compensate in your weak areas. Have you actually taken the time to categorize those around you? Who are you? If you're not sure, ask me. My melancholy side is more than willing to tell you. But don't take offense or my phlegmatic side will be crushed.

## Depression

As you know, we never want people in our family or our church to become confused or depressed. Both of those lead to withdrawal and inactivity. That's guaranteed to bring disunity to the family and stagnation to the Body. "Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from depression." We all have needs. When our needs aren't met by those we love, we either find someone else to meet them, or in retaliation we refuse to meet their needs. That leads to a downward spiral of anger, bitterness, and depression. It is self-defeating. And yet we all have a tendency to show them our disapproval, or make them jealous for how they've treated us. In my best melancholy tone let me say, that's a foolish thing to do. And yet I do it. It takes sensitivity and a sheer act of will to choose not to do that.

- Sanguines need attention and approval. Never criticize them in hopes of changing their behavior!
- Melancholies need order and sensitivity. Don't create chaos in the home by leaving things in disarray!
- Choleric need appreciation for everything they do. If you are ungrateful, you will drive them away.
- Phlegmatics need respect and a sense of worth. If you ignore them, they will withdraw.

The most aggravating phrase I've had to listen to over the past twenty years is, "That's *your* problem, not mine." It has become a national incantation. It's a way of saying, "It's all about me, so why should I have to accommodate anyone else?" That's how we turn into a passive manipulator. We make sure that everyone in our life has to meet our needs because we are certainly not going to meet theirs. It's the height of selfish behavior. It's mean-spirited. It destroys relationships. And it cripples the people around us. "Why should I have to change? It's their fault for expecting me to be different."

If that is your attitude, then you're missing the whole point. They don't want you to change. That's your perception of what's going on, and you're just flat wrong! What they want is for you to accept *them*

for who *they* are. You're the one expecting everyone else to change when you refuse to meet their needs. This is about kindness and consideration. This is about being observant and caring. This is about making an effort to build a relationship. We cannot be passive about other people, and then expect them to like us for it. All that leads to is self-imposed isolation. And guess what? When that happens, we become depressed. "Nobody likes me. I don't feel like I belong. No one understands me. I don't know what they want from me. People are ignoring me. Nothing is working out right. Everybody else is getting what I want. I'll show them..." That kind of self-talk is an ambition-killer and a dream-stealer.

We "seek first to understand, and then to be understood." The first move begins with us, not with them. That's a rule of life. Take it to the bank.

I'm going to take a couple of days on this topic. Let me ask you, how have you been doing with *correctly* identifying the personality traits of your family and friends? What about yourself? Have you asked for feedback from other people so you get a more objective view? If you don't have the book you're going to find it impossible to do that kind of assessment except in a general way. The book has extensive examples from real life; there are charts, questionnaires, checklists, etc.

Let me repeat a fundamental truth for all of us. I need to hear this over and over. *This is the entire key to the Christian walk. If we get this right, we win.* The walk is about the heart, not the mechanics - the attitude, not the activity. The heart and the attitude are what drive the activity.

Lynn and I are having a challenge over whether I'm more choleric than phlegmatic for my second mix, and whether she's more melancholy than choleric for her second mix. You'd think that after nearly 30 years of marriage, we'd know, wouldn't you? If we're having trouble, I know you must be challenged too. This isn't easy. Don't assume or quickly leap to some conclusion about this. We're going to get into how we mask our personality a little later - how we fake people out, including the one in the mirror. We'll be looking at how we compensate for our fears and weaknesses by imitating but not really becoming stronger in the other quadrants. There's a world of difference.

For today, let's all make the effort to meet the needs of those around us, including strangers - selflessness instead of selfishness. We need to be intentional about how we live, in all things. And we need to *practice* it daily. There are going to be a number of opportunities for each of us today. Let's make the best use of them.

Let's go a little further into what depresses each personality type, how to spot it, and what to do about it.

**Melancholy** types are naturally depressed, so when their needs aren't met they are classic examples of the depressed person. They sink into deep depression and withdraw. They usually take up a solo or repetitive activity that has clear rules - role playing games, cards, software programming, shooting hoops, bouncing a ball off the wall, artwork, music, writing, acting sick for sympathy, etc. They exhibit suppressed anger, or what energy they have dissipates and they mope. Melancholies live in their head and that's where you've got to get to them. Logic. Problem-solving. Analysis. Outcomes. Strokes. Talk it out. A choleric is great for that. If the melancholy is moping around, then they need someone with high energy to get them out of their malaise. A sanguine is perfect to distract them from their introspection with a fun activity - preferably something with no rules or you'll only feed their frustration.

**Sanguine** types may be bubbly, but when denied their needs, they have their own displays. Instead of withdrawing, they tend to compensate with headaches to get attention, over-eating to get attention, drugs to get attention, and spending sprees - to get attention, even if these are negative. They need a change of pace, something fun to do, and something with lots of interesting personalities to talk to. They crave approval, energy, and distractions. Tell them they look great; the dress or tie is perfect! Head for a restaurant, a show, the ball-game, an amusement park, party - or begin planning some future event like a get-together of some kind, or a trip. Head for the mountains or lake, someplace interesting.

**Cholerics** need to have control, and so they settle into depression when they find they cannot control outcomes and people, or when they can't get things done either for lack of money or lack of

choice. What they exercise control over is their activity, so they get lost in a hobby, a sport, clothing and makeup, or a bottle of booze - something that they have 100% control over. They tend to be the cry-baby or the self-sufficient macho type. Find something they **can** control that isn't destructive to them - follow the leader, king of the mountain, sledding, bike-racing, bumper cars, go-carts, etc. If it's got some risk that's even better because they need the sense of challenge, competition, and accomplishment. Give them the strokes that tell them they're virile, attractive, effective, etc.

The **phlegmatic's** desire for peace and stability is severely challenged in an argumentative relationship. They tend to seek out friendships with anyone who will give them peace, stability, and respect: gangs, clubs, church activities, organizations, etc. Or they can slip into adultery, or get a string of boyfriends and girlfriends - it looks like a sanguine, but they're actually just cycling through to find anyone who will give them respect. Another coping mechanism is to become manipulative, exercising a different type of control than a choleric. They are not heading for a destination by holding the reins and cracking the whip. Instead they are driving to stabilize their environment - remember, they hate change and uncertainty. They demand the respect that they aren't getting elsewhere by ensuring everyone knows who is in charge. Regularly give them an award, a thank-you note, a party, a gift, or one-on-one time - a special night out for example (a date night).

One thing you should have seen is that every one of these personality types, when depressed, goes for *control*. What is different is the form that the control takes. There are two primary issues in life: the first is survival, and the next is control. Don't be misled. A choleric wants control to achieve; a sanguine wants control to get attention; a melancholy wants control to ensure perfection; a phlegmatic wants control to ensure respect. It is a dominant drive in a choleric, but only incidental in the others.

## **Wearing Masks**

The chapter on masks is pretty long. The topic can be confusing so I'm going to reduce it to a very simple idea. Everyone falls into one of three categories as far as living out their true personality: they are either a **dominator** who forces everyone else into their conception of who they should be, a **hole-filler** who takes on an unfamiliar role because someone else is either not filling it or forcing them to fill it, or a **true-blue** meaning they are blessed enough to remain true to themselves and confident enough to let others be themselves too.

In my home growing up, I had a couple of dominators, and so I became a hole-filler to ensure there was peace, and that things were taken care of. Somebody had to do it or it was all going to come apart. There was a lot of pressure on me as a young child. Everyone thought I was the strong one. Everyone thought I was the happy-go-lucky one. But those were masks. When I grew up and went in the Navy, I was able to exercise some of my natural personality. But when I married and had children, I boomeranged. I became the dominator and refused to allow my wife or my children to be who they naturally are. As you can imagine, we've been pretty messed up for a long time. We're confused about who we really are. We're bucking against the harness. But we're working on making it right.

The same may be true of you. Happiness and freedom come to us when we realize who we were designed to be by God. We can finally savor life when we begin to live it in harmony with our natural personality. The pressures disappear, and we get to the point where we actually like ourselves - and as we've learned before, that enables us to like others too.

Every temperament has strengths and weaknesses. Some of us lean toward the weaknesses. We don't take advantage of the strengths that are naturally ours. I'm convinced it's because the household environment established by the dominant personality in the home forces out competing temperaments. The dominated temperaments are not permitted to exercise the strengths of their personality, especially if they compete with those of the dominant personality.

We can't really change our basic personality, so we find ourselves conditioned to over-emphasize the weaker aspects of our personality type. We become misshapen. It is aberrant, and it is pathological. Forcing someone else to live out a false identity is definitely unloving. In one way or another we all

influence those around us to behave in a certain way, but when it moves toward the extreme we have violated them.

That's the bad news. Here's the good news. Another word for conditioned behavior is "learned" behavior. That's good because it means we can unlearn it. We can be "re-conditioned." We can finally accept ourselves for who we are, discover who those people are that we've been living with all these years, and we can begin to enjoy each other without manipulation or compliance.

### **Identifying and Removing the Masks**

So, how do we know if we're wearing a mask, or what our natural personality really is? Great question! First, only we will know - not our spouse, our parents, or our children. Second, all we've got to work with are a couple of indicators. In other words, we're going to have to be completely honest and objective about this and get in touch with how we really feel about things. One indicator, but not the determining factor, is whether the results of the test put us in two opposite corners of the quadrant.

Let's look at the quadrants. Going clock-wise, let's put Sanguine in the upper right, Phlegmatic in the lower right, Melancholy in the lower left, and Choleric in the upper left. Those on top (choleric and sanguine) are extroverts. Those on the bottom (melancholy and phlegmatic) are introverts. Those on the left (choleric and melancholy) are active, those on the right (sanguine and phlegmatic) are passive. Those on top are optimistic; those on the bottom are pessimistic. Got it? If we show up with competing combos on the test, like sanguine-melancholy, or phlegmatic-choleric, then we may be wearing a mask.

How do we tell? Are most of the characteristics in the opposite corner the negative aspects of that trait? You may have the negatives in both quadrants. If so, you are probably wearing a mask in those quadrants to suppress your true personality. You may be taking on the opposite traits because that's where you found control. You need to look at whether a dominating personality in your family had the strengths of the quadrant in which you evidence the weaknesses. If so, that's a pretty good indicator that you're wearing a mask, and it is probably your dominant trait.

What if my parents and my spouse were wearing masks? That's irrelevant. The only issue is what kind of environment they created, not why they did it. What if I have the negatives of both quadrants, and my parents were in each quadrant, and they were both dominators? Which one is my true self? Ooooooh. Tough question. Now we go to common sense and personal emotion. Which positive aspects do you actually enjoy in each of them? When do you feel most confident and secure? When you're acting out the positive traits of the one, or those of the other? It is unlikely you like them both because they're opposites. There's your answer. Now relish who you really are, and develop the strengths of that quadrant, striving for balance in the others.

Keep in mind that these quadrants are not points on an X-Y graph. They are more like rooms in a house. The house is incomplete without all 4 rooms. We hang out in our favorite room, but we walk through all 4 of them as the occasion warrants. When we stay in our room and refuse to leave it, we are going to have relationship challenges. One last thing. Florence gives us the most common masks for each personality type. See if they fit you:

1. A false sanguine wears a mask of an overly exuberant personality (forces it) or the mask of a clown who is making fun but isn't really funny.
2. A false melancholy wears a mask of perfection demanding that things be done according to Hoyle but not knowing why, or the mask of pain like some kind of martyr.
3. A false choleric wears a mask of power exercising overbearing authority, or a mask of anger trying to bludgeon people into submission.
4. A false phlegmatic wears a mask of wanting peace but doesn't really want to reconcile people, or a mask of apathy in which they clam up and give up - that's not phlegmatic, it's just denial.



## Going Walkabout

I suggested earlier that once we identify our dominant quadrant, we need to balance ourselves by developing the strengths of our own quadrant, and by adopting some of the traits of the other quadrants. Let me clarify that. We don't have to become something we're not. I said that the quadrants were more like the rooms of a house. When adopting some of the other traits, all we're doing is walking into the other rooms of the house to find the people who live there and meet their needs. We don't have to become like them; we simply meet them where they're at; we set aside our own needs *for the moment* (that's leaving our room); we focus on them; and we supply their needs.

People on the bottom half of the chart (melancholies and phlegmatics) tend to have lower energy than those on top. If we're in the bottom half too, then to meet the needs of another person in the lower half we may need to raise our energy level to get them moving in the direction of their dreams. If we're in the top half, then to meet the needs of another person in the top half, we may need to give them rein instead of holding onto control ourselves; or we may need to help them exercise self-control which isn't part of our natural makeup either.

Let me repeat: we don't have to change our basic nature. We just have to meet the needs of other people. We can't do that if we don't recognize, acknowledge, and understand what our own needs are. And we certainly can't do it if we don't examine what those needs are in someone else. *We'd better know what role those needs play in our motivational makeup.* Did you catch that? I hope so, because it's not stated clearly in the book. We must know what role our needs play in our motivational makeup. If we don't know what we crave, we won't change to get it. That's true for dealing with other people as well. We cannot motivate another person. But we can create an environment in which the other person becomes motivated. The way we do that is by ensuring that their needs are being met by their relationship with us.

Hey, wait a minute! I can't be all things to all people. Well, I'm not sure that's true, but let me suggest that the church as a whole can be. This is team-play at its finest. We share a common vision, a common enterprise, a common set of values, a common purpose, and a common commitment. Within that common set of attitudes and activities, we have a tremendous variety of personalities and personality mixes. There's something here for everyone. That's why association is core our success. Until we are individually capable of being all things to all people, which is a growth curve, we allow the church Body to fulfill that role. Until we are willing and able to go walk-about in the other rooms of the house, we introduce people to other moving-on people in the church who go walk-about every day. That's what creates the motivational environment for other people.

Church participation in ministry, worship, and small groups is as important for other people as it is for us. These are the primary components of the association that influences all of us to become who we need to be. Reading God's word, and books like this one, provides a mirror and a light that help us move on down the road to a different future than what we currently enjoy. All of these are tools that we need to become skilled at using. If we don't *use* them, our newest brother and sister won't use them either. We won't grow, and they won't either. Point.

## Encouraging a Sanguine –

We're going to take the 4 personalities, and address them one at a time for the next 4 days as to how to meet their needs. This part of the book is directed toward your children. Naturally this first one is a little longer as I lay the foundation.

When we evangelize, we ask the types of questions that help us identify the predominant personality. Once we know that, we understand their needs better, and we can address those needs when we present the gospel. I'm going to hammer it again that this is not for the purpose of manipulating them. It is for the purpose of helping them. You don't tell a melancholy or phlegmatic how much fun they're going to have by meeting all kinds of new people and having all kinds of new experiences. They are introverts. You

don't bury a sanguine with facts and theology. You don't encourage a choleric by telling them they're going to be herding cats. You tailor your presentation.

The Sanguine is driven by a need for fun and approval. These needs result in a chatter-box with lots of creative ideas, someone who performs for the crowd, who has little patience for study, spews endless excuses to regain your approval, and has an unreasonable desire to fit in with whomever they're with at the time.

For our *sanguine children*, that means:

1. get them tested to find out their special talents, encourage them in those by expressing approval for every little success, and never criticize their failures.
2. guide them away from bad relationships and toward good ones to ensure they aren't seeking approval from the wrong crowd.
3. develop a sense of independence to stiffen their resistance to bad influences by instilling a conscience in them, and letting them know they need to listen to it.
4. give lots of physical affection, hugs, kisses, etc.
5. *teach* them, don't just tell them, how to handle money, get organized, and be neat (expect to follow-up).
6. understand that lying and story-telling is to get approval, not to avoid consequences, so give them approval where and when you can to take away the compulsion to fib.
7. find at least one thing they can do well and encourage, encourage, encourage - that's really hard for a melancholy or choleric parent who normally says things once.
8. exercise the positive approach to discipline because any type of negative will crush a sanguine and force them to hide their behavior.
9. never condone bad behavior just because it's funny or cute - you'll only emphasize the weak and negative aspects of the sanguine because you're giving them the attention they were after by rewarding bad behavior.

### **Encouraging a Melancholy –**

Now here's a challenge for the encourager. Try to get a melancholy up for the game. The melancholy is naturally negative, depressed, withdrawn, introspective, analytical, critical, and insightful. If there's a picture, a play, a paint-job, or a piece of furniture that is gorgeous but has just 1 flaw, that is a mere 1% off the mark, the melancholy will spot it immediately and build an entire conversation around it. More than that, he's going to point it out to you, and to anyone else who walks by. Perfectionists are just plain tough to be around. On the other hand, they are passionate about a lot of things. Remember, they're on the left side of the chart and tend to be self-motivated. They're meticulous. They're finishers; and they never leave a job half-done. They are your scientists, composers, artists, poets, writers, mathematicians, accountants, and book-keepers.

They seem to be self-sufficient, but what they want is lots of sympathy - someone who understands them and recognizes their needs without being told. They are like that because they see so much that other people ignore. Why wouldn't the rest of the world be as sensitive and observant? And when they discover that indeed the rest of the world is not that way, they whine and moan and insist on reading you their personally written book of Lamentations. They drive a sanguine batty by their lack of fun and spontaneity. They frustrate a choleric no end because instead of doing something about it, they get stuck on lecturing why it won't work. They get a phlegmatic agitated because their passion disturbs the peace, and they hint that all may not be right with the world - in other words, change is coming and it ain't gonna be pretty. I think the ideal occupation for a melancholy is building bomb-shelters.

Your *children*:

1. Get them tested early to see if they have an artistic or intellectual gift, then stimulate them in the area of their interest.

2. Shelter them from depressing and traumatic books, music, events, and movies. They react more strongly than the other types, and are impressed more deeply. Freddy Krueger is not good for them - or anybody else - but especially not a melancholy. No killer rap, no stalking movies, no horror flicks. They sometimes have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality so keep them grounded firmly in reality.
3. Teach them to be grateful and positive. They won't see the positive naturally, so you've got to instruct them in how to think and what to look for. Keep pointing to the glass half full, not half empty.
4. They are moody and easily depressed. You've got to get them to express their emotions so they can deal with them rationally. This is the type you play 20 questions with, and you've got to be very specific when you ask them. They tend to generalize their emotions instead of telling you exactly what's wrong. This is a guessing game to them. They will test you to see if you were really watching and listening; you won't catch them giving the answer away. This is your proof to them that you care about them. Silly, but true.

### **Encouraging a Choleric –**

Let me start off with two observations. The word "encourage" does not mean making someone feel good about their current behavior, although that may sometimes happen. It means to strengthen them in their resolve, to give them hope and confidence, to help them overcome fear, or to stimulate them. For purposes of this book it means developing the positive aspects of their natural personality type, and an understanding of the needs of the other types.

The second observation is that when we hear a gospel presentation at church, we are listening to something that we won't imitate until we're evangelizing ourselves. The preacher is either trying to hit all 4 quadrants so everyone gets something, or he is revealing his own personality type knowing that if we don't identify with him, we may like a guest preacher better. The speaking schedule naturally rotates speaker-types so everyone gets a range of preaching. Either way, it is not the gospel presentation we should be giving. What we are listening for is an approach, an example, a dream, a fact, a joke, or perhaps a style that we can add to our own tool-bag. We don't pull everything out of the bag every time we do a gospel presentation. We only pull out what the person on the other side of the table needs to understand what the Christian life can offer them.

Now for the Choleric. This is the strong-willed, dynamic individual who is an over-achiever by nature. They need to exercise control over some aspect of their life, and often over some aspect of yours. They need rewards (medals), lots of them. They are compulsive, decisive, confident, aggressive, and self-reliant. They can also be impulsive, brash, dominating, insensitive, and unforgiving. This is your natural born leader, but like any wild horse they need taming before they can become productive. This is the tank that wins the battle, but don't get in front of them or they'll run you over.

Your *children*:

1. Give them challenge and change. Get them puzzles and other educational toys. Let them play games that allow them to exercise leadership: king of the mountain, follow the leader, Simon Says, and if gifted athletically, put them in races and other competitions.
2. You've got to learn to break their will, but never their spirit. That's a really hard thing to do. The "Self" in self-willed is big
  1. and needs to be encouraged to look at the needs of others. The discipline must be consistent and persistent to ensure they understand their proper role.
  2. Keep them busy. They tend to be a bundle of energy. Get them involved in service chores where they get a reward for helping others and they have charge over how it will be done: mowing lawns, shoveling snow, taking out the trash, etc.
3. When challenged, never say "Do it because I said so." Bad maneuver. This one needs explanations: reasoned and reasonable.

4. This one has the potential to be the judge, the referee, the cop. So be sure you're following the rules and that you are absolutely fair in your treatment or they'll call you on it. It involves treating them with respect, a hot-button for them.
5. You need to teach them and show them that failures are a part of life. They are invaluable to growth and learning. Failures help us be compassionate toward others who may fail from time to time. Teach them mercy, forgiveness, tenderness, and understanding. These are foreign concepts to them.

### **Encouraging a Phlegmatic –**

Here's our Golden Retriever: good natured, helpful, loyal, easily entertained, calm, cool, collected, peace-loving, an excellent listener, and in dire need of respect. They are the tortoise in the story of the tortoise and the hare. They are steady instead of being hot and cold. They choose peace at any cost, and effort as a last resort. They can be finger-pointers and procrastinators. They tell you things are fine, couldn't be better, no need to rock the boat. They advise you not to rush to judgement, think this through, get another opinion, consider the alternatives, and weigh the consequences. It seems like they'll do anything to delay the final decision that spells change. Some might call it terminal excusitis. And yet these are the ones that avoid those impulsive decisions that can lead to disaster.

Because they are so easy-going, and seldom the squeaky wheel, they tend to be ignored. They require the exact opposite. They need us to make a conscious effort to notice them and their contributions. If we don't, they'll withdraw and sometimes become the saboteur in the group through gossip, character assassination, and rumor-mongering. They always feel like the outsider, an after-thought, despite your best efforts to include them. A choleric is great for taking them under his wing and introducing them around with a word of praise about them to everyone.

*Your children:*

1. Because nothing really excites them in the moment, these are the toughest ones to figure out what their interests are. Give them the whole spectrum of experience and listen carefully to find out what they talk about the most .
2. They tend to lack imagination, choosing instead to be led by the imaginations and energies of those around them. To stimulate them, get them to play make-believe, what-ifs, and read them lots of fantasy and fiction.
3. Get them involved in sports to boost their energy level. Teach them to take on their responsibilities in team play.
4. Lying to you is their desire to please you, to avoid punishment, and to stop a conflict. They need to be shown how to resolve conflict constructively, and how to be honest about what happened. They won't be if you blow up at them. So you've got to control yourself before you can expect them to express themselves fearlessly.
5. Decision-making is difficult for them. You need to help them through the process of making choices. Don't tell them what they should eat, wear, say, etc. Ask them to choose for themselves.
6. They cannot express their anger and frustration easily. As a result, their anger tends to find an outlet in sarcasm, dry humor, and manipulation. You need to teach them that teasing and sarcasm are destructive behaviors that ruin friendships.

### **Case of Mistaken Identity –**

I really hope you've found this book helpful in your personal life as well as providing an excellent tool to help you analyze who you are in the eyes of God. I'm going to leave the final chapters to your personal study. They deal with healing old wounds.

Remember when I said that I am Melancholy-phlegmatic? I just took the test and scored zero on phlegmatic. When I wrote the email, I was basing it on my childhood when I was shy, indecisive, always wanting the gang's respect, unambitious, passive, easy-going, helpful, dutiful, obedient, slow, sensitive,

insightful, and compliant. I procrastinated all the time - always the last one done in class. I followed anyone with high energy levels, and I wanted someone to tell me what to do and who to be. That changed in Law School when I finally decided that I was tired of doing what everyone else expected me to do.

When I got to the chapter on masks, I couldn't figure out whether I was wearing a phlegmatic mask as a child or a choleric mask as an adult. So if you got confused, you're not alone. The test says I'm almost as much a choleric as a melancholy (18 vs. 22). I selected the characteristics based on who I am today. I didn't know whether I turned into a choleric as an adult, or that was my natural bent as a child. How could I tell?

Remember the test I suggested? I had the negatives of the phlegmatic as a child - that's the first clue. Phlegmatic is in the opposite corner from the choleric - that's the second clue. And I had 2 choleric parents who would have driven me to the opposite corner - that's the third clue. Therefore, wearing the phlegmatic mask as a child rather than the choleric mask as an adult makes the most sense. It appears that I'm driven to lead and to win, but my dominant melancholy side doesn't want to make any mistakes or wind up in the spotlight. As a result, I tend to avoid leadership, and I often decline to even enter the contest. Then I beat myself up for wimping out. We're funny creatures, aren't we?

### **Parting thoughts –**

We went to a meeting where a husband and wife were speaking about personal growth. It was an extraordinary, life-affirming event. I've never seen a better gospel presentation, never heard a better seminar, never laughed harder nor been moved to tears more quickly by a speaker. The wife spoke about *The Personality Tree* and understanding how crucial relationships are to success.

The husband is a Sanguine/choleric. The wife is a Melancholy/phlegmatic. They are two strong-willed individuals who have been able to set aside their need for control to become equally-yoked in their marriage and in their business. It was inspirational. The husband pointed out something I wanted to share with you. It is very easy to conclude that only Choleric are dynamic leaders. He is predominantly Sanguine, and yet he was very dynamic on the stage. Leadership is not restricted to any particular personality type. Neither are intellect, ambition, athleticism, humor, understanding, insight, caring, or wisdom. We are all special, all gifted, all necessary, and all unique.

We all have a God-given destiny to fulfill. And we must not be slow or hesitant to fulfill it. That would be sin. I think of God's anger rising when he told Moses to go to Egypt to free his people. All he got from Moses was a series of excuses why someone else would be better suited for the job. We, no less than Moses, or David, or Paul, are God's chosen vessels to do his work in this world. We cannot hide from Him or shirk our responsibilities. There are so many hurting people, abandoned children, and despondent parents who need our help - maybe you're one of them. I kick myself every time I say "tomorrow Lord," or "later Lord." By hesitating, I fail to realize my destiny, and I miss out on my rewards. God has blessed each of us, and shaped each of us to be just the way we are. He only asks us to submit to His will and be obedient servants. He enables us, strengthens us, guides us, and empowers us to do that will. All we have to do is say, "Here I am" and present ourselves to Him for *reasonable* service.

So many of us feel guilty for not doing something. We refuse to seek the counsel of others. We avoid them for fear of reprimand like a child expecting a ruler across the knuckles. In what other area of life would you feel guilty about something you didn't do? Don't feel guilty. You haven't done anything! Remember that your brother in Christ is the other guy in the foxhole with you. He wants the best for you. He wants you to succeed and to prosper. He's there to guard your back, not to attack you. We're in this *together*.

What an honor, what a privilege to be in Christ! What an opportunity to associate with such men and women and learn from them as they learn from God. May God bless and keep you this day and always. May the light of his glory shine in your life, and give you peace. Good Sabbath to you.