

Understanding yourself and others

(The Four Temperaments, Part 1)

INTRODUCTION

Are there people who really get under your skin, rub you the wrong way? Do you ever wonder why people act the way they do? Or maybe you wonder why you can't seem to be like someone else you admire. God has made you a unique individual. And He has created all of these people around you uniquely. But as you observe people you'll begin to see that people have a lot of things in common. Certain people always respond in the same way.

This was observed and written down already 2400 years ago by a man named Hippocrates. He divided people into four different categories of temperament, and although others have used different terminology, these four groups still are basic. What Hippocrates attempted to do was to describe temperament. These are traits that we are born with. They are inherited from our parents and grandparents. We are going to talk about these today: what they are, strengths and weaknesses, and how God wants to use them.

As we go through these you will begin to see a picture of yourself, you will begin to understand some of your struggles, and we hope that you will see what God can do in your unique situation and life. And you should begin to understand people around you, and be more effective at working with them, under them, or over them.

I. THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS

There are four basic temperament types: sanguine, choleric, melancholy, and phlegmatic. As we go through and describe these you need to realize that most people are a combination of two or more of these types, so you may identify with more than one type.

A. Sanguine

The sanguine is the person who is the "life of the party." Want to hear a good story? He has one. Sanguine babies play with anything they can find, laugh and coo, and love to be with people. Who was the most popular kid in school? Sasha Sanguine. He has a way of making you feel like you are the center of the world when he focuses on you, and then he quickly moves on to the next person, and they become his focus, and respond to his open sincerity. He finds it easy to weep with those that weep and laugh with those that laugh.

Life is fun. A sanguine is bubbly and has charisma. He loves to be the center of attention. He thrives on people and hates solitude. Sasha Sanguine is warm, buoyant, lively, and cheerful. He always volunteers enthusiastically, thrilled at every opportunity. He responds to the moment, so, he often forgets the promises he made. He may sign up to take a course in the excitement of the moment, and after the first meeting you don't see him again.

Sasha Sanguine is a thrilling storyteller because his warm, emotional nature almost makes him relive the experience in the telling of it. He tells stories dramatically and with a lot of color. Sometimes he gets carried away with the story until it may sound like lying. He loves to be where the action is.

Sasha Sanguine's noisy, blustering, friendly ways make him appear more confident than he really is, but his energy and lovable disposition gets him through the rough spots of life. People have a way of excusing his weaknesses by saying, "That's just the way Sasha is."

The world is enriched by these cheerful, sanguine people. They make good salesmen, hospital workers, teachers, actors, public speakers, and occasionally are good leaders.



B. Choleric

Our second temperament type is choleric. Kostya Choleric is the hot, quick, active, practical and strong-willed temperament. He is often self-sufficient and very independent. He tends to be decisive and opinionated, finding it easy to make decisions for himself as well as for other people.

Even as a baby a choleric child will show a take-charge attitude. He will look out through the bars of his crib and plan how soon he will take over from mother. He will let his parents know what he expects out of life, demand rights very early, and, if allowed, will use a loud voice or temper tantrum to gain control.

Kostya Choleric thrives on activity, and this is not aimless activity, because he has a practical keen mind and is capable of making sound, instant decisions or planning worthwhile, long-range projects. He does not give way under the pressure of what other people think.

He is not frightened by adversities. They have the opposite effect on him. Nothing is impossible. He has dogged determination and often succeeds where others fail, not because his plans are better than theirs, but he is still pushing on when others have given up in discouragement. Mr. Choleric is the born leader. He is quick to recognize opportunities and equally as quick at diagnosing the best way to make use of them. He has a well-organized mind though details usually bore him. He is not given to analysis, but rather to quick, almost intuitive appraisal. Therefore He tends to look at the goal without seeing the potential obstacles to that goal. Once he has started toward his goal he may run roughshod over individuals that stand in his way.

He does not sympathize easily with others, nor does he naturally show or express compassion.

Cholerics are similar to sanguines in that they are both outgoing and optimistic. Kostya Choleric can communicate openly with people, and he knows everything will turn out all right—as long as he's in charge. He gets more done than the other temperaments and he lets you know clearly where he stands.

Many of the world's great generals and political leaders have been cholerics. He makes a good executive, idea man, producer, sports coach. Basically he rises quickly to the top of whatever profession he chooses.

C. Melancholic

Our third temperament is Misha Melancholy. He is the richest temperament because he is an analytical, self-sacrificing, gifted, perfectionist type, with a very sensitive emotional nature.

Even as a baby the melancholy appears to be thinking deeply. He is quiet, undemanding, and likes to be alone. He follows schedules right from the beginning and responds best to a parent who is well organized. Noise and confusion bother him and he doesn't adapt well to changes.

In school the Melancholy enjoys term papers and research projects and prefers to work alone because conversation only slows progress. They like topics they feel have never been investigated properly, and they respond well to a teacher who is organized and keeps the day going in a logical fashion.

Misha Melancholy is usually an introvert, but his feelings predominate so he is given to a variety of moods. Sometimes he will be in a state of ecstasy and act more extroverted. However, at other times he will be gloomy and depressed, and during these times will be withdrawn and even antagonistic.

Misha Melancholy is a very faithful friend, but unlike Sasha Sanguine, he doesn't make friends easily. He is very dependable because his perfectionistic tendencies do not permit him to let others down when they are depending on him.

He thrives on detail because of his exceptional analytical ability, and therefore he is able to diagnose accurately the obstacles and dangers of any project he has a part in planning. This is in sharp contrast to Kostya Choleric who rarely anticipates problems or difficulties, but is confident he is able to cope with whatever problems arise. Misha Melancholy can rise to a mood of emotional ecstasy or inspiration and produce some great work of art or genius, but after this accomplishment he usually falls into a period of great depression.

While Sasha Sanguine is in pursuit of fun, Misha Melancholy is looking for order. He can't thrive with a messy office or apartment. Everything needs to be organized and orderly. You will see this on his person. He will be meticulously groomed, every hair in place, shoes polished. His life motto is: If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right! It's not a matter of how fast he can do it, but how well. Quality is always more important than quantity.

D. Phlegmatic

Now we come to the fourth temperament, Philip Phlegmatic. Here is the fellow who is so calm and easy-going that he never seems to get ruffled, no matter what the circumstances. He is the easiest of all the temperaments to get along with. From the beginning a phlegmatic baby is a blessing to his parents. He is delightful to have around, happy wherever he is, doesn't mind a change in his schedule. He likes to make friends but is also happy alone. Nothing seems to bother him and he loves to watch people pass by.

Philip Phlegmatic has plenty of friends because he enjoys people and has a natural dry sense of humor. He's also a good listener because he doesn't have a need to talk all the time.

He tends to be a spectator in life and tries not to get too involved with the activities of others. In fact it is usually with reluctance that he is ever motivated to any form of activity beyond his daily routine. This does not mean that he cannot appreciate the need for action and the difficulties of others. He and Mr. Choleric may see the same social injustice but their response will be entirely different. One will get a campaign going to rectify it while the other will say, "That's terrible. Why doesn't someone do something?"

He is kindhearted and sympathetic but seldom shows his true feelings. Once he is roused to action he is a most capable and efficient person. He will not seek leadership but when he gets it he proves a capable leader. He is a natural peacemaker.

The world has greatly benefited by the gracious nature of the efficient phlegmatic. He makes a good diplomat, accountant, teacher, leader, scientist, or other meticulous-type worker.

That is an overview of the characteristics of each of the four temperaments. Now we are going to look specifically at the strengths of each temperament.

II. TEMPERAMENT STRENGTHS

God has blessed every temperament with their own unique strengths and this is often what draws us to a certain person, especially if that strength is missing in our own lives. You will see this often with married couples. They have married an "opposite" because they feel this need in their lives. When you are looking for leaders and students you need to be able to see what some of their strengths are so that they can be developed and encouraged in that area.

A. Sanguine strengths

1. *Talkative storyteller*

The most obvious way to spot a Sanguine is by listening in on any group and locating the one who is the loudest and chatting the most constantly. While the other temperaments talk, the Sanguines tell stories. Children love Sanguines because of their story telling abilities.

2. *Life of the party*

Sanguines have an inherent desire to be the center of attention, and along with their colorful stories, this makes them the "life of the party." They will liven up any group. People are drawn to them because of their zest for life. They have an innate sense of the dramatic.

3. *Memory for color*

While Sanguines are not good at memorizing names, dates, places, and facts, they do have a unique ability to hold on to the colorful details of life. They may not remember what the message was but they remember the dark blue suit coat with gold buttons, a tie with red stripes, and unpressed pants.

4. *Optimistic and enthusiastic*

Sasha Sanguine easily forgets the past so his mind is never fogged by the memory of heartaches and disappointments. Neither is he frustrated and fearful from worries about the future, because he doesn't give the future that much thought. He lives for the present so he tends to be very optimistic.

Because of this optimistic attitude, he is also very enthusiastic about everything. Whatever you bring up, he wants to do, and wherever you mention going, he wants to go. He is easily inspired to engage in new plans and projects and his boundless enthusiasm often carries others along with him.

5. *Creative and colorful*

The Sanguine is always thinking up new and exciting ideas. With each day come new challenges to create colorful activities. In any committee meeting it is Sasha sanguine who dreams up the ideas, gets the vision for decorating the hall, and chooses a unique and exciting theme for the project.

6. *Friendly*

There are no strangers to Sanguines because when you say hello, they become your friends. While others hesitate or hold back Sasha Sanguine opens conversations with anyone available. His outgoing, handshaking, backslapping customs basically stem from his genuine love for people. He really enjoys being around others, sharing in their joys and sorrow, and he likes to make new friends. It distresses him to see someone who does not enjoy himself and he will frequently go out of his way to include this type of person in a group. His love for people is almost invariably returned. His friendliness is hard to resist.

7. *Compassionate*

One of the greatest assets of Sasha Sanguine is that he has a tender, compassionate heart. No one responds more genuinely to the needs of others than he does. He literally is able to share the emotional experiences, both good and bad, of others.

The sincerity of Sasha Sanguine is often misunderstood by others. They are deceived by his sudden changes of emotion. They fail to understand that he is genuinely responding to the emotions of others. No one can love you more nor forget you faster than he can. He lives in the present.

B. Choleric strengths

Now let's turn our attention to the strengths of the choleric temperament.

1. *Strong willed and decisive*

Kostya Choleric is usually a self-disciplined individual with an ability to make quick decisions. He is very confident in his own ability and very aggressive. He is a man of "continual motion," but unlike the Sanguine, his activity is well planned and meaningful. Whereas others can't make up their minds, Kostya Choleric will decide instantly. They solve problems and save time, although not everyone appreciates their decisiveness.

2. *Practical*

The Choleric temperament is given over almost exclusively to the practical aspects of life. Everything to him is considered in the light of its utilitarian purpose and he is happiest when engaged in some worthwhile project.

3. *Born leader*

Kostya Choleric has strong leadership tendencies. His forceful will tends to dominate a group; he is a good judge of people and is quick and bold in emergencies. He not only will readily accept leadership when it is placed on him, but will often be the first to volunteer for it. He is typically known as the "take-over guy" and if he does not become too arrogant or bossy others respond well to his practical direction.



The Choleric is so leadership oriented that he can run just about anything, whether or not he has any knowledge of the actual organization. He is quick to perceive how things could be operated more efficiently, just by the instinct of his temperament.

4. *Optimistic*

Kostya Choleric's outlook on life, based on his natural feeling of self-confidence, is almost always one of optimism. He is adventuresome to the point of even leaving a secure position for the challenge of the unknown. He has a pioneering spirit. When he appraises a situation, he does not see the pitfalls or potential problems, but merely keeps his eye on the goal. He has the unshakeable confidence that no matter what difficulties arise, he will be able to solve them.

5. *Organizes well*

Kostya Choleric has a natural gift for organization. When he looks at any task, he sees instantly how it should be handled, and he divides the project into mental chunks of work. He knows what assistance he has available, and he quickly portions out the chores among the group. He is not above giving responsibilities to idle bystanders as he assumes anyone would rather work than sit around. He knows what the goal is and how to get there in the most efficient way.

6. *Thrives on opposition*

Kostya Choleric not only likes to achieve goals, but he thrives on opposition. If Sasha Sanguine sets out to accomplish a task and someone says it can't be done, he will thank the person profusely—and

quit. Misha Melancholy regrets the time he has spent in planning and analyzing the situation, and Philip Phlegmatic is grateful it can't be done, because it sounded like too much work in the first place. But tell Kostya Choleric that it's impossible, and it just whets his appetite.

Many Cholerics become professional athletes because they love the challenge of defeating the opposition. While other temperaments might be fainthearted, they get excited in the heat of the battle. Whether male or female, a Choleric has the desire to beat the odds that catapults him or her to the top. They are not discouraged by criticism or daunted by the disinterested. They put their eye on the goal and thrive on opposition.

7. ***Excels in emergencies***

Some of the other characteristics of the Choleric cause him to love crises because he is so well suited for them. The ability to make quick decisions, to organize effectively and the challenge of the impossible all help him to excel in any emergency.

C. Melancholy Strengths

Now we will turn our attention to a temperament which is very different from these first two—the Melancholy.

1. ***Sensitive***

Misha Melancholy has by far the richest and most sensitive nature of all the temperaments. He is genius-prone, that is, a higher percentage of geniuses are Melancholy than any other type. He particularly excels in the fine arts with a vast appreciation for life's true values. He is emotionally responsive and, unlike the Sanguine, is motivated to reflective thinking through his emotions.

He has a deep concern and compassion for other people. He is willing to listen to people's problems and feels their emotions very deeply himself.

2. ***Perfectionist***

Misha Melancholy has strong perfectionist tendencies. His standard of excellence exceeds others'. This is why he can spend hours practicing the piano, or doing the same scientific experiment over and over until every little detail is exactly right. This is also why, with God-given talents, he can become a world-known musician, scientist, writer, or artist. He has the ability to strive for a standard of excellence that no other temperament has as much patience for.

3. ***Deep, thoughtful, analytical***

Misha Melancholy is an introvert and is deep, quiet, and thoughtful. He has a pessimistic nature and foresees problems before they happen and counts the cost before building. He always wants to get to the heart of the matter. He doesn't take things at face value, but digs into the inner truths.

While Sasha Sanguine is *talking*, Kostya Choleric is *doing*, and Philip Phlegmatic is *watching*, Misha Melancholy is *thinking, planning, creating and inventing*.

4. ***Analytical and detail conscious***

Misha Melancholy is an expert at keeping track of detail. And because of this he loves lists, charts, and graphs. He can spend hours organizing data into a graph or chart and analyzing it. Misha Melancholy is a real asset on a committee because he asks questions overlooked by the others, such as, Can we afford this project? How much will it cost to rent the hall? How many people do you think will come? Do you realize the dates you've chosen are on Easter weekend? He can take any project being suggested and analyze it in a few moments and pick out every potential problem they will encounter. He often appears to be against things by his constant reference to potential problems, but they are real to him. Without this balance others in a group would go wild with enthusiasm without counting the cost.



5. ***Orderly and organized***

Misha Melancholy must have things organized or he can't function. If you open his desk drawer you will see everything carefully lined up and in its place, with a place for everything. If you need to borrow a pen, he always has one. When he comes to class all of his homework assignments will be done, he will have his notebook, pen, and everything that is needed. He pursues order and cannot work in a messy atmosphere.

6. ***Faithful friend***

Those blessed with the Melancholy temperament do not have to strive to be faithful; with them it is natural. Misha Melancholy does not usually attract a large number of friends as does Sasha Sanguine, but he will keep those he attracts and would literally “lay down his life for his friends.” He makes friends cautiously, to see if people measure up, because he would rather have a few faithful, devoted friends than an abundance of acquaintances, as does Sasha Sanguine. He has a deep concern and compassion for people. And if he makes a promise, he will keep it. He will always carry his end of the load.

7. *Serious and purposeful*

Misha Melancholy rarely seeks to be in the limelight, but prefers to do the behind-the-scenes task. He is a serious person who sets long-range goals and wants to do something that will serve mankind. He knows his limitations and rarely takes on more than he can do. He is prone to be reserved and rarely volunteers his opinion or ideas. When asked, however, he almost always has an opinion and when it is offered, his answer indicates that he has analyzed the situation quite deeply and offers an opinion well worth hearing. He does not waste words, but is usually very precise in stating exactly what he means.

D. Phlegmatic Strengths

And now we will look at the strengths of the Phlegmatic.

1. *Witty*

The unexcited good humor of Philip Phlegmatic keeps him from being intensely involved with life and things so that he can often see humor in the most mundane experiences. His dry sense of humor evokes peals of laughter from others. He seems to have a superb inborn sense of timing in the art of humor and a stimulating imagination.

2. *Calm, cool, collected*

One of the most admirable traits of Philip Phlegmatic is his ability to stay calm in the eye of a storm. Where Sasha Sanguine becomes hysterical, Kostya Choleric lashes out, and Misha Melancholy sinks down, Philip Phlegmatic is cool as a cucumber. He backs up and waits a minute, and then moves quietly in the right direction. Emotion doesn't overwhelm him; anger doesn't enter his heart. “It's just not worth getting upset over,” he muses.

3. *Easy to get along with and easygoing*

Philip Phlegmatic has many friends because he is so easy to get along with, and all the other temperaments need such companions. He is easygoing, relaxed, calm, cool, well balanced, patient, consistent, peaceful, inoffensive, and pleasant. What more could anyone ever ask in a friend? He always has time for you. A Phlegmatic friend will drop everything when you come and sit down and relax. He will give you his total attention. As children and teenagers, Phlegmatics are the ones who seldom give a mother trouble and who are joys to have around.

4. *Happily reconciled to life*

Philip Phlegmatic doesn't start out with great expectations and is, therefore, more easily reconciled to the ups and downs of life. He has a basic pessimistic nature that does not depress him as it does the Melancholy, but keeps him “realistic.” He doesn't expect sunshine every day, so when rain falls on his parade he can keep on marching. He accepts life as it is without complaint. He doesn't have high expectations of what life should offer, so he isn't disappointed.

5. *Has administrative ability*

Philip Phlegmatic is a competent, steady worker. His ability to administer is based on his desire to get along and not rock the boat, as well as his objective overview of people, without having to get involved. He can follow orders, work patiently as he moves up the ladder, not panic under pressure, and doesn't need to be creative or have his own way. A recent statistic says 80 percent of all people fired from jobs are relieved of their duties because of their inability to get along with people rather than incompetence. Bearing this in mind, it is clear why Phlegmatics have an edge over the other temperaments in steady, competent employment.

6. *Dependable*

Philip Phlegmatic is dependability itself. Not only can he be depended upon to always be his cheerful, good-natured self, but also he can be depended upon to fulfill his obligations and time schedules. Like Misha Melancholy, he is a very faithful friend and although he does not get too involved with others, he rarely proves to be disloyal. Even under stress he produces consistently and can always be counted on.

7. *Peacemaker*

There is some kind of conflict in every area of life: parent/child; coach/student; pastor/elder; boss/employee; friend/friend. While the other three temperaments are struggling and straining with all of these conflicts, or creating them, Philip Phlegmatic tries to keep peace with everyone. As men struggle on choppy waters, Philip Phlegmatic lifts his head and calms the seas. As others fight for their own way he can sit back and give an objective opinion. Every home and business needs at least one peacemaking Phlegmatic to look at both sides and mete out a calm, cool, and collected reply. He doesn't cause trouble; he gets along with others; and he doesn't have enemies.

E. Summary

The variety of strengths provided by the four temperament types keeps the world functioning properly. No one temperament is more desirable than another. Each one has vital strengths and makes a worthwhile contribution to life. Someone compared the four temperaments in this humorous way: "The hard-driving Kostya Choleric produces the inventions of the genius-prone Misha Melancholy, which are sold by the personable Sasha Sanguine and enjoyed by the easy-going Phillip Phlegmatic."

The strengths of the four temperaments make each of them attractive, and we can be grateful that we all possess some of these strengths. But—there is more to the story! As each temperament has its strengths, each one also has its weaknesses. You may have decided what temperament you are, and when we talk about the weaknesses, suddenly decide that you aren't that after all! None of us like weaknesses, not in ourselves or in others, but we need to face them directly so that God can do something special in our lives. Remember the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *"But he (God) said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."* So keep this joyful encouragement in mind as we now cover weaknesses.

III. TEMPERAMENT WEAKNESSES

We will start again with the sanguine temperament.

A. Sanguine weaknesses

How could anyone so loveable as Sasha Sanguine have weaknesses? I'm sure you will begin to identify some of them as we go along.

1. *Restless*

When we look at it very carefully, the boundless activity of the Sanguine temperament proves to be little more than restless movement. He is often impractical and disorganized. His emotional nature can get him instantly excited and, before really analyzing the entire picture, will have him running off in the wrong direction. He does not often make a good student because of this spirit of restlessness. This carries over into his spiritual life, where he finds it difficult to concentrate on reading the Word of God. His lifelong pattern of restless activity in the long run usually proves unproductive. Sasha Sanguine seldom lives up to his potential. Frequently his life is spent running from one tangent to another and unless disciplined, is not lastingly productive.

2. *Weak-willed*

Sasha Sanguine usually gets by on the power of his dynamic personality. But that dynamic personality is often a facade that covers a weak character. His greatest basic problem is that he is weak-willed and undisciplined. If he can discipline himself, there is no limit to his potential in life.

He is a great one to start things and never finish them. If approached to lead a group of unbelievers or take a position in the church, his instant response is 'yes.' Thinking the matter through in the light of his time, abilities, and other responsibilities is not a part of his make-up. He loves to please. He doesn't know his limitations, and although he functions well in starting things enthusiastically and motivating others, he finds it very difficult to methodically carry through on anything.

Without meaning to do so, he easily forgets his resolutions, appointments and obligations. He cannot be depended upon to keep a time schedule or meet deadlines.

Perhaps the most dangerous result of his weak will is that he is prone to modify his moral principles to his surroundings and contemporaries. He is not a man of resolution or loyalty.

3. *Egotistical*

Sasha Sanguine's pleasing personality, which often makes him appear more mature in his youth than his contemporaries, gives him a prominent position early in life that can magnify his natural egotism. He can go overboard and become obnoxious by dominating, not just the major part of the conversation, but all of it. He also, through the years, has a tendency to talk more and more about himself and be occupied with things of interest to himself and think others are equally interested in them.

4. *Emotionally unstable*

Even though Sasha Sanguine is usually upbeat and positive, he can get discouraged easily and can drift into a pattern of excusing his weaknesses or feeling sorry for himself. His warm nature can produce spontaneous anger, and in a sudden outburst he can 'fly off the handle.' However, after he has exploded he will forget all about it. This emotional instability makes him feel genuinely sorry for his explosive outburst, and he will readily apologize. He can move very quickly from one emotion to another depending on his surroundings. Repentance comes easily, but is also quickly forgotten.

5. *Lustful*

No one type of temperament has a greater problem with lust than does that of the Sanguine. Since he is emotionally receptive, he can be tempted more easily than other types, but he is also equipped with a weak will that finds him frequently giving in to this temptation. His ability to live in the present is a danger in this regard, since he has a tendency to think more of the immediate temptation than of the wife and children at home.

B. Choleric Weaknesses

The admirable characteristics of Kostya Choleric carry with them some serious weaknesses.

1. *Unsympathetic*

The Choleric has a serious emotional deficiency. Christian compassion is foreign to his nature, and he tends to be think-skinned and unsympathetic toward other people, their dreams, accomplishments, and needs. He has no patience with people's weaknesses and feels that if they were like him they could get on with life. He finds it hard to put himself in the other person's shoes. His opinion is "either get moving, or get lost."

2. *Hot-tempered*

Much of the energy that propels the Choleric toward the attainment of his goal is generated from his hot-tempered disposition. He can become violently angry, and even after exploding his wrath upon those objects of his displeasure will continue carrying a grudge. He has been known to be very revengeful, going to almost any lengths to repay someone for an injustice done him. This angry disposition causes him much discomfort in life and can make him an undesirable person to be around.

3. *Cruel*

There is a strange streak of sheer cruelty in the choleric temperament that can cause him to run roughshod over the feelings and rights of others in his effort to achieve his purpose. Unless he is given a strong moral standard, he will not hesitate to break the law or resort to any crafty means necessary to succeed.

4. *Impetuous*

Kostya Choleric's ability to be decisive also produces an impetuous tendency that causes him to get into trouble and launch programs that he is later sorry for. However, because he is so proud, he stubbornly and tenaciously sees them through. It is very difficult for him to apologize, and many times he will blurt out cruel, blunt, and sarcastic statements. It is very difficult for him to show approval, and in marriage this is often one of the causes of heartache on the part of his companion. He may have so much self-control that even in his hottest fits of anger he will not strike his wife but instead use the more devastating club of disapproval. There is nothing more devastating to a person's self-respect than being disapproved of by the person he loves most.

5. *Self-sufficient*

Kostya Choleric's strong tendency toward independence and self-confidence makes him a very self-sufficient individual. A state of success can make him very proud, haughty, and domineering to the point where he becomes obnoxious. He doesn't need anyone, and feels that he always knows best so people get frustrated because they feel they can never please him.

This spirit of self-sufficiency carries over into the spiritual realm, and he does not feel that he needs man or God. He has a tendency to look at his accomplishments as good deeds that more than outweigh

his bad deeds performed on the way to accomplishing his goals. Even after conversion to Christ, he has a difficult time realizing that he must depend upon the Lord. When he tries to read the Bible and pray, his active mind easily leaps to planning his day's activity. And somehow, unless he is deeply impressed by the Spirit of God and sees the power of the supernatural, he looks on a regular devotional life as being somewhat impractical and a waste of his time.

C. Melancholy weaknesses

The melancholy temperament probably has the greatest strengths and potential, but it is also accompanied by what seems to be the largest of potential weaknesses.

1. Self-centered

Even though all temperaments can be self-centered, Misha Melancholy is especially vulnerable because he is so given to self-examination. He is always dissecting himself and his own mental conditions. This constant self-examination is not only unfortunate, it is harmful. He can easily drift into a morbid state of mind. And he is not only concerned about his spiritual state; he is also unduly concerned about his physical condition. Everything that touches the Melancholy is a major concern in his eyes, and he can easily become a hypochondriac.

This self-centered trait in Misha Melancholy, if not corrected, can actually ruin his entire life. Combined with his sensitive nature, his self-centeredness makes it very easy for him to be offended or insulted. He is prone to be suspicious. If two people are talking in whispers, he is almost certain to jump to the conclusion that they are talking about him. This type of thinking can lead, in severe cases, to a persecution complex.

2. Pessimistic

Because of his perfectionist and analytical traits, Misha Melancholy is prone to be pessimistic. He not only can see the ultimate end of a project, but what is more real to him, all of the problems that will be encountered. Many times these problems in his mind far outweigh the good accomplished in the whole endeavor. Not only that, he is sure that the end result will not be nearly as good as promised, and since he has been disappointed in the past, he is sure to be disappointed again.

This pessimistic outlook makes him indecisive and fearful of making decisions because he doesn't want to be wrong and fall short of his own perfectionist standards.

3. Critical

No one can be more critical than the Melancholy. He has the tendency to be unyielding in his expectations of other human beings and cannot happily take less than their very best. Many a perfectionist has ruined a normally good marriage because his partner measured up to only 90 percent of what was expected of her. The small part of error is looked at through his magnifying glass of perfectionism, and instead of seeing all the good, he sees an amplification of the bad. This criticism, if not spoken, is often conveyed through a proud, haughty sometimes arrogant attitude because he looks upon people who do not share his perfectionist standards as being inferior. It should be borne in mind that he is just as critical of himself as he is of other people.

When it comes to marriage, the Melancholy often has a most difficult time making the decision to take "the plunge." He is prone to idealize a woman from a distance and then when he gets to know her, as lovely as she may be, he finds that she is after all only human and also has weaknesses. Many times a Melancholy will actually love the woman in spite of her weaknesses but hesitates to marry her because of them.

4. Moody

Frequently, Misha Melancholy will be found to be very gloomy, depressed or going through a period of great despair. This moodiness causes a vicious cycle. His friends become annoyed with him when, for seemingly no reason, he is going through a gloomy period. They may avoid him and his sensitive nature will immediately pick this up and plunge him into greater depths of gloom. This one trait alone can wreck the entire life of a Melancholy person unless he turns to Jesus Christ for the joy and peace that He alone can give. The gloomy moods of Misha Melancholy often lead him into a habit of escaping present reality through the practice of daydreaming. Because he is so dissatisfied with the imperfect present, he has a tendency to look back on the past, which becomes more pleasant the farther it gets from him. When he tires of thinking of the past, he dreams of the wonderful future. This type of thinking that lets him escape from reality is dangerous. It totally paralyzes his will and energy.

5. Revengeful

Another characteristic of the Melancholy temperament is that he is prone to be revengeful. In himself he finds it very difficult to forgive an affront or an insult. He may harbor this animosity and desire for revenge for many years even if he never acts upon it. This unforgiving spirit may cause him to make decisions on the basis of prejudice. He may try to destroy a very worthwhile project with which he is basically in agreement, simply because the person leading the project has at some time in the past offended him. Although he does not usually erupt in violent anger, if he harbors this anger long enough it may cause him to lose complete control of himself in a fit of rage.

D. Phlegmatic weaknesses

And now we turn to the peaceful phlegmatic temperament, and this mild-mannered fellow also has his share of weaknesses.

1. *Slow and lazy*

The outstanding weakness of Philip Phlegmatic is that he is prone to be slow and lazy. He often appears to be “dragging his feet,” because he resents having been stimulated to action against his will. His lack of motivation tends to make him a spectator in life and produces the inclination to do as little as necessary. This characteristic keeps him from initiating many of the projects that he is thinking about and very capable of executing, but to him they just seem like too much work.



2. *Tease*

Because of his keen sense of humor and his ability to be a detached observer, he finds it easy to use his witty ability to tease others that annoy him or threaten to motivate him. If he chooses he can even use his humor and wit as a tool to get others all stirred up and angry while he himself never loses his composure or becomes excited.

3. *Stubborn*

Philip Phlegmatic often finds himself in stubborn opposition to change of any kind. His reason is that it will get him too involved. He wants to be conservative, particularly in conserving of his own energies. As he matures, he can often learn to disguise his stubbornness through his easy-going good humor, while becoming even more stubborn. Each time he is forced into projects and activities that turn out poorly, he becomes even more resistive to future suggestions. This stubbornness has a tendency also to make him stingy and selfish, for his first thought usually is, “What is this going to cost me?” or “What will this take out of me?”

4. *Indecisive*

The Phlegmatic often becomes more indecisive through the years. His practical insight and calm, analytical ability can usually find a better method for doing something, but by the time he comes up with it, one of the activists already has the group moving on their program. Therefore he only half-heartedly enters in because he feels his plan was better. His slow thinking is not a lack of intelligence, but just the deliberate way he goes about things.

Another thing that makes him indecisive is that even though he can analyze a situation and come to a practical method for achieving it, he will often weigh the method against whether or not he wants to get “involved.” Thus he tends to vacillate between wanting to do something and not wanting to pay the price. This indecisive practice can soon become a deep-rooted habit that outweighs his naturally practical turn of mind. The third area that creates indecision in him is his desire to make peace at all costs. He can spend so much time weighing out the pros and cons of a decision and how it will affect the primary people in his life that he is left without a decision.

E. Summary

In each one of us are good and bad traits — we have traits that are positive and traits that produce negative responses in others. Quite often the same characteristics can be both a plus and a minus, according to degree, and many positives carried to extremes become negatives. This has not been a comprehensive listing of all the weaknesses, but has covered some of the basic problem areas. Think about the positives and negatives:

Sasha Sanguine's great ability to carry on a colorful conversation whether on a trolleybus or in a group is a plus envied by others; *but* carried to extremes he is constantly talking, monopolizing, interrupting, and straying too far from the truth.

Misha Melancholy's deep analytical thinking is a genius trait, much respected by those of lighter minds; *yet* carried to extremes, he becomes brooding and depressed.

Kostya Choleric's gift for quick, decisive leadership is desperately needed in every phase of life today; *but* carried to extremes, he becomes bossy, controlling, and manipulative. Philip Phlegmatic's easygoing nature is an admirable combination that makes him the favorite of any group; *yet* carried to extremes, he doesn't care about doing anything and is indifferent and indecisive.

As we look at each one of these temperaments with an eye to examining ourselves, we should note those attributes that cause positive responses in others and lift our self-image. We should reflect on these characteristics. Then we should pay special attention to those extremes of behavior that are offensive to others and to God, and dedicate ourselves with God's help to overcoming these problem areas.

In our second lecture on *The Temperaments* we will focus on overcoming some weaknesses and help you to grow into the Image of Jesus.

Then in our third lecture in this series you can learn *How to get along with others*.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Look at the temperament that you feel you are strongest in. Examine yourself and note those attributes that cause positive responses in others and lift your own self-image. Reflect on these characteristics. Then focus on the extremes of behavior that are offensive to others and to God. Dedicate yourself with God's help to overcoming these problem areas. Pick one area in particular which you are going to focus on.

