

Finding your type
A Holy Habits Series Sermon
Jubilee Mennonite Church
May 5, 2019

Purpose: To explore the spiritual types that comprise us and make us who we are.

Message: We are invited to come to God as a for who we are, knowing ourselves and the way that we connect to God. As a church we celebrate the variety of ways we meet God.

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-25 (I will read); 1 Corinthians 12:1-12 (Please read)

Synopsis: We are created to connect with God. But not always in the same way as one another. Most of our habits are designed for a narrow bandwidth of intellectual and symbolic ways of connection. But what about the other ways of connecting? Our holy habits ask us to use our traits and abilities and lead us toward connecting with God. As such they object is not to find the RIGHT way to be, but the right way FOR US to connect. As a church we must grow with and learn from the traits of those around us.

I will be using the traits as outlined at the focused ministry retreat:

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A response activity will invite people to self identity within these categories.

Galatian 5:16-25

My counsel is this: Live freely,
animated and motivated by God's Spirit.

Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness.

For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us
that is at odds with a free spirit,
just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness.

These two ways of life are antithetical,
so that you cannot live at times one way
and at times another way
according to how you feel on any given day.

Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit
and so escape the erratic compulsions
of a law-dominated existence?

It is obvious what kind of life develops
out of trying to get your own way all the time:

repetitive, loveless, cheap sex;
a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage;
frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness;
trinket gods;
magic-show religion;
paranoid loneliness;
cutthroat competition;
all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants;
a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved;
divided homes and divided lives;
small-minded and lopsided pursuits;
the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival;
uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions;
ugly parodies of community.
I could go on.

This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know.
If you use your freedom this way,
you will not inherit God's kingdom.

But what happens when we live God's way?
He brings gifts into our lives,
much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard
—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity.

We develop a willingness to stick with things,
a sense of compassion in the heart,
and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.
We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments,
not needing to force our way in life,
able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Legalism is helpless in bringing this about;
it only gets in the way.

Among those who belong to Christ,
everything connected with getting our own way
and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities
is killed off for good—crucified.

Since this is the kind of life we have chosen,
the life of the Spirit,
let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads
or a sentiment in our hearts,
but work out its implications in every detail of our lives.

That means we will not compare ourselves
with each other as if one of us were better and another worse.

We have far more interesting things to do with our lives.
Each of us is an original.

So I have to start here: I have a fairly profound allergy to typologies. You know, those tests and analyses where you take a quiz and fill out some forms, and presto change-o, out pops a perfect description of who you are and why. Yeah those. I don't much like them. Call it a basic mistrust of anything or, for that matter, any one who would seek to nail me down to any particular location on any spectrum, be it what it may. Call it a stiff-necked mistrust of anything or any one who would like to explain me by a single category—it gets my hackles up and I get ready to fight. So with that said guess what we are doing today—we are working with categories, seeking to find our spiritual temperament as individuals and as a church. We sat with this somewhat at the retreat last week, and I thought it would be something 1) to bring to the whole congregation to consider and 2) could use a bit more unpacking than what we had time for here.

One of the consistent barriers that I have encountered in my own spiritual life was that I am continuously convinced that I am simply doing it wrong. Every time I take on one of the traditional Spiritual disciplines per se, my rather undisciplined personality takes over and submarines my better intentions fairly quickly. A confession: the pastor standing before you today has never read his Bible cover to cover as a single exercise. I have started any number of times, and once I made it out of Exodus (which is a feat right there) but hit a wall with the rest of the law and Torah. Perhaps it was because I was never really bible school fodder, or just lack the biblical stamina for all that begetting, for whatever reason it has never worked for me. In saying this (and believe me—there is more I could disclose if you wish), I think I name one of the most prevalent notions that reside in our heads when we by our own will try to discipline ourselves to the holy habits we think we OUGHT to be doing (the stuff held up as good churchy stuff). I think most of us come to church and church life with a little voice in our heads, perhaps that sounds like a parent or a pastor or some other figure of our lives who keeps coming and saying “You're doing it wrong...” Because for many of us, our spiritual lives may not be as neat and tidy as we would love them to be.

But this is where I think some consideration of spiritual temperaments come into play. Our assumptions of what proper spiritual behaviour looks like is primarily based on a traditional way of thinking about Church—that by forming the right ideas in our heads (gaining the right intellectual knowledge) that it automatically follows that an understanding of God follows after. Most of what we think of as spiritual disciplines, the holy habits we are lead to and are formed

by, operate in those bandwidths—what we know and how we feel about what we know. And when we come from a different place of how we connect with and live out of our life with God. If we are wired differently from where the programming typically is, or find ourselves out of step with traditional ways of doing our spiritual lives, we can easily slip into the notion that somehow or another we are not connected to God or that we can't connect with God. Sometimes we can even lend ourselves to judgement of other disciplines and of other people because they don't seem to do God in a way that we understand, let alone appreciate. Like Paul is advising the Galatian church in outlining the fruits of the Spirit, the point is that we see the fruit of the spirit—the increase in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I think a basic test would be this: does the practice you have in mind increase your capacity for these things? If so, great—keep doing them. But when not, perhaps there is a bigger conversation to be had.

So with that said, let's go through the 7 inclinations that we sat with at our retreat last weekend. Think of the one or two that most closely resonate with you and why. We are not looking for the one and only one right answer here—most of us have elements of many of these traits, but find one or two as our primary home (which is a better way to think of it really). Also, I tend to think that there a couple missing here. There are a number of lists out there that also includes being an ascetic who likes to be alone with God, and a sensate who is looking for stimulation specifically through the senses. These have some overlap with contemplatives and traditionalists, so we will let the 7 stand from last weekend. Besides, I could only find so many jelly bean types. Let's go through these briefly and see where you might stand. I am going to name the attributes and a potential extreme downfall of each type (because our strengths are also our failings).

- **The Traditionalist:** I think this name is a bit poor. We don't think too highly of traditional folks, and it could be easy to think that these are the people who are a stick in the mud and never want change. But what this is referring to are the folks for who symbols and rituals speak loudly, move them deeply, and help them connect with God. Yes; there is a traditional aspect to this—the stuff that makes Christmas Christmas might be very important to you. You also might be looking for ways that these rituals might work for you now. At your worst you are unwilling to bend to find anything new.
- **The activist:** The Activist is drawn to discipleship as an enactment of the Kingdom come. Voicing the needs of those who are marginalized is central as an expression of the work of Christ. Can get frustrated when barriers and process can stand in the way of

speaking boldly. Confronting Social ills is the natural and native call of the church and of disciples. At the extremes the cause can overcome the inspiring spirituality of the cause.

- **The caregiver:** Feels closest to God when engaging in service toward those who God loves. Is ready to have an incarnated sense of the Kingdom now, and naturally is drawn to ways of putting love into action. These are the folks who take Matthew 25 and the call to see Jesus in the marginalized at the seat of judgement. Caregivers struggle to know how to receive care when their time of need comes, and is stressed by saying no.
- **The contemplative:** Needs space and time with God. Meditation techniques and way of praying are important as is the personal encounter with the mystery of God. Contemplative are looking for time and space to consider themselves in the midst of God, to discern what God is doing and where God might be moving. In the extremes, this can be paralyzing as the process of discernment continues indefinitely.
- **The enthusiast:** Is looking for an emotional experience of God, often where they can express the joy of the Lord. They value the experience of worship and how it makes they feel. Prioritizes celebration and Joy. God is exciting and is meant to be worshiped. Can find stayed styles of worship stifling, and hopes to capture the high moments as much and as often as they can.
- **The intellectual:** Is drawn to learning about God, the church and Christ, trying to understand more. I am looking for mind stimulation and to have the big questions before us. It is important for us to know what we believe and why. At the extremes, learning can supplant the relational and application aspects of faith
- **The naturalist:** Sees God best in nature. Is best ministered to on a soul level by having exposure to the natural world and creation. I prefer to be doing something creative in my world and if possible, in the natural world as an encounter with the creator. In the extreme, the experience of nature can be as important as the experience with God.

Identification Poll Activity

We know that the kingdom of God, in the end looks a lot like this—all well mixed with all sorts of different colours shapes and sizes. This goes for our spirituality as well as who we are. As individuals, we do well to know ourselves on the way to finding the way of connecting with God that is right for us, adapting our activities and our holy habit to resonate with the way God finds us. As a church we need to hold the fact that while we have a balance across these areas, we also need to recognize where we gravitate toward and who we are moving forward. The point of a holy habit is less “Are you doing it right” as if one size fits all, but do you recall why you do what you do as a point of growth for you and your God.