

Discovering Your Prayer Personality

Different Prayer Forms For Different Personality Types

Prepared for the CCCA National Conference by Tara M. Owens, Anam Cara Ministries, 2012

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Our temperaments affect how we see the world and interact with one another relationally. In the business world, we are used to understanding one another and interacting on the basis of personality type, which makes our relationships smoother and easier to negotiate without misunderstanding or miscommunication. While personality typing, including the Myers-Briggs personality typing, can box us in and create stereotypes or assumptions that hobble relationships, in general personality typing provides a useful tool for understanding how God made us and how we each view the world. Personality types should never be used as an excuse not to grow, or a rationalization for refusing to love others (“I’m just that way,” “I’m an introvert, I don’t want to,” “I just don’t think like that”). That said, personality types are invaluable for understanding that God made us with different dominant modes of interacting, and that there are forms of prayer that will help us to connect with, feel loved by and understand God much more deeply than we had ever imagined.

The forms in this handout are based on the 16 Myers-Briggs personality types. For more information about these types, or to find a simple personality type test, please go to <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/> (for more information) or http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html (for a very basic personality inventory).

A Few Personality Types in Scripture

While none of the Biblical figures would have identified themselves by personality type, and they may have had radically different personalities in person, writers over

the years have taken the personality characteristics evident in Scripture and matched them with their closest type. More for interest than study, these are a few of the ascribed personality types of Scriptural figures:

St. Peter	ESFP
St. Paul	ENFP
St. John	INTJ
St. James	ISTJ
St. Matthew	ESTJ
St. Mark	ESFP
St. Luke	INFP

The Four Dominant Pairs

In Myers-Briggs typology, there are four dominant pairs of personality traits. SJ is Sensing-Judger, SP is Sensing-Perceiver, NF is Intuitive-Feeler and NT is Intuitive-Thinker.

The SJ Temperament – Ignatian

Temperament Characteristics	Spirituality Characteristics	Prayer Types & Guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deep sense of obligation ▪ Want to feel useful ▪ Givers rather than receivers ▪ Charity and service oriented ▪ Committed to caring for those in need ▪ Practical 	<p>Ignatian spirituality is a carefully organized regime of drawing closer to God in relationship, which his good for SJs.</p> <p>It is important for SJs to see continuity between the tradition and history of the church and today's</p>	<p>Ignatian prayer both commemorates and projects. In Ignatian prayer, through sanctified imagination, we attempt to project ourselves into the original events so that we become a part of them, and God speaks. Use all five senses to experience</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong work ethic ▪ Strong sense of tradition and continuity with the past ▪ Like group-identification ▪ Like order and hierarchy ▪ Like ceremonies and rituals ▪ Conservators and stabilizers of society ▪ Often over-worked ▪ Suspicious of change ▪ Careful, accurate, thorough ▪ Take deadlines seriously ▪ “Always be prepared” ▪ Lean toward pessimism <p>Scriptural Figure: St. James</p> <p>Part of the Eucharist that appeals most: Commemoration</p>	<p>practices.</p> <p>Journeying with Christ through His life is important to SJs, as they follow the journey of the Christian faith.</p> <p>The SJ person employs his senses to relive in imaginations and by observation the Scripture stories and then with his own innate sense of duty follows the admonition to draw practical fruit from this study in service to others.</p> <p>Liturgical piety is important to SJ personalities.</p>	<p>the Scripture.</p> <p>In Ignatian prayer we do not attempt to find application, but read Scripture with our sense and imagination, entering the scene and observing it in new and dynamic ways.</p> <p>Ignatian prayer is also possible when praying for others, by entering imaginatively into the circumstances of the persons’ life, and imagining the salvific work of Christ transforming the situation.</p>
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Prayer Suggestions:

1. **Luke 10:38-42** – Imagine yourself a friend and fellow-villager of either Mary, or Martha, or Lazarus. You happen to meet one of them in the village, and you are told that Jesus of Nazareth is coming to visit in Bethany. You express an interest in meeting him, and you are invited to come the next evening to have dinner with them and Jesus. Close your eyes and try to relive in your imagination, with as many vivid details as you can, what your meeting and the ensuing conversation with Jesus would be like. Draw some practical fruit from it.

2. **Mark 10:46-52** – Think of yourself as the blind Bartimaeus who hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing. “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” Jesus calls you over and asks: “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabboni, I want to see.” “Be on your way, your faith has healed you.” We all are spiritually blind. We so often miss the obvious. We are blind to the needs of others. We are blind to our own faults and sins. Say to Jesus, “Rabboni, I want to see.” Jesus lays his hands on you and you experience healing. Your eyes are opened, and you see that to which you have previously been blind.

The NF Temperament – Augustinian

Temperament Characteristics	Spirituality Characteristics	Prayer Types & Guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creative ▪ Optimistic ▪ Verbal ▪ Persuasive ▪ Outspoken ▪ Good and both writing 	Need to find meaning in everything. The NF needs to know that they are uniquely loved by God, that they are important, and that they are accepted	NFs continually search for deeper fuller meaning, which makes Augustinian prayer particularly important—this is the prayer of transposition.

<p>and speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great need for self-expression and communicate with others easily ▪ Good listeners, good counselors ▪ Good peacemakers ▪ Hate conflict, unable to operate in times of tension ▪ Enjoy face-to-face ▪ Read and accurately interpret non-verbal communications ▪ Deep feelings ▪ Don't handle criticism well ▪ Need acceptance, support and prefer cooperation to competition ▪ Committed to helping others ▪ Enthusiastic, insightful, full of empathy, understanding and compassion ▪ People-oriented 	<p>by God as they are now, sins and all. NFs need to be assured of this daily.</p> <p>NF is keenly interested in the future (sanctification and glorification) and heaven.</p> <p>A key word for the spirituality of NFs is anticipation.</p> <p>They best understand the use of symbol in prayer and liturgy. Symbols are the way God speaks to us; and we, to God.</p>	<p>In Augustinian prayer, NFs open themselves to their creative imagination and feelings, allowing the penetrating wisdom of the Scriptures to come to bear on present situations.</p> <p>A spiritual journal is a great help to an NF in prayer, as they take the revelation of the Holy Spirit and bring new insights to bear.</p> <p>NF prayer must be a dialogue between God and oneself, best accomplished using the four steps of <i>lectio divina</i> (listening, contemplating, applying, meditating).</p> <p>NFs should also endeavor to create good, loving relationship with each person of the Trinity.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constantly searching for meaning, authenticity and self-identity ▪ Urge for perfection ▪ Idealistic ▪ Hunger for integrity ▪ Natural rescuers ▪ Giving and receiving of spiritual direction is a high priority ▪ 12% of the population, but 50% of those who go on retreats, read and write about prayer 		
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Prayer Suggestions:

1. **Read Is. 43:1-5.** Change the words, “Jacob” and “Israel” to your own first name. Try to imagine the Lord speaking these words directly to you. What meaning would they have for you in your present situation? Try to transpose the message from God to yourself today. What is the Lord talking about when He tells you, ‘Fear not.’ What fears do you have, presently? Water and fire were the two great dangers which aroused the fears of the ancient people; what are the greatest dangers you face in your life? What is the Lord telling you to do in time of danger? Imagine Jesus saying to you now, ‘You are precious in my eyes, and I love you.’ ‘Fear not, I am with you.’ How do you see this to be true in your own situation today?

2. **Matt. 7:1-5.** Imagine Jesus speaking these words to you today. How far do they apply? What is he asking of you? What changes is he asking you to make in your life?

3. **John 8:1-11.** “Has no one condemned you?” “No one, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and sin no more.” Think of the faults you still have, consider them one by one. Think of the things that others criticize and find fault with you. Imagine them bringing you to Jesus to have him condemn you. Instead he says to you: “Neither do I condemn you. Go, sin no more.” How would this make you feel?

The SP Temperament – Franciscan

Temperament Characteristics	Spirituality Characteristics	Prayer Types & Guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Free ▪ Unconfined ▪ Able to do whatever their inner spirit moves them to do ▪ Impulsive ▪ Dislike rules ▪ Love action ▪ Easily bored ▪ Crisis-oriented, good at unsnarling messes ▪ Able to get things moving ▪ Good trouble-shooters, negotiators, diplomats 	<p>SP spirituality is the spirituality of the people—a simple, plain-acting spirituality for those who want and need to do things for others.</p> <p>For SPs, prayer is lived out in free-flowing service to others, rather than rigid prayers. Franciscan spirituality is light-hearted and sees the goodness of God, His beauty and love,</p>	<p>Franciscan prayer is free-flowing, makes use of the five senses and will be extremely flexible, often called “spirit-filled prayer.”</p> <p>SPs in prayer can see God in the whole of creation, able to make a fruitful meditation on the beauty of a flower, lake, mountain, etc.</p> <p>SPs in prayer through</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unlimited energy as long as the crisis exists ▪ Work best when it is necessary to respond quickly and dramatically ▪ Flexible ▪ Easy to get along with ▪ Open-minded ▪ Adaptable ▪ Live in the present, without concern for past or future ▪ Always looking for something new ▪ Dislike practice, want to perform ▪ Thrive on excitement, adventure, risk, challenge ▪ Hunger for activity ▪ Want enjoyment ▪ Optimistic ▪ Cheerful ▪ Light-hearted ▪ Witty ▪ Charming ▪ Bring a sense of excitement ▪ 'Life of the party' 	<p>everywhere.</p> <p>The whole of God's creation is a Bible for SPs—God speaks through every sense impression: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell.</p> <p>SPs connect well with the Incarnation, because Jesus was a sensing, touching, feeling, tangible presence of God.</p> <p>SPs have a tendency toward the “grand gesture” of devotion toward God.</p> <p>The SP does not respond well to the symbolic but is primarily interested in the real and literal. They are capable of great and heroic sacrifices for a worthy cause.</p>	<p>Scripture will be more concerned about the <i>events</i> of Jesus' life rather than the teachings of Jesus. Fruitful areas of contemplation are his birth, his hidden life, his baptism, his miracles, his passion, his death and resurrection.</p> <p>For SPs, their work <i>is</i> their prayer most often, and it is important for them to feel free to put 'feet' to their prayer and not feel trapped into certain styles of praying.</p> <p>SPs should be encouraged to experiment in prayer, and are often most comfortable in prayers of <i>celebration</i>.</p> <p>SPs should look for short-term prayer/service projects that allow them to find immediate connection. Rigid</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good entertainers ▪ Only temporarily defeated 		<p>structures will not work well for SPs, and they will often become discouraged or despondent— journaling is often extremely difficult and fruitless for an SP.</p> <p>Focusing on the Jesus prayer, breath prayers, or a simple repeated prayer will be beneficial for an SP.</p>
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Prayer Suggestions:

1. **Go outside.** Look for two trees. One which resembles the kind of person you would like to be or your goal in life, another which expresses in some way the kind of person you see yourself to be now. Decide what you need to do in order to change from the way you now are to the way you would like to be or the way God would like you to be.

2. **Read Daniel 3:26-90.** Spend the remainder of the half hour composing your own canticle of praise of God for all the beauties of His creation. Include the beauties of the inner world of the Spirit, of one’s own nature, of friends, as well as of the physical world.

3. **Plan an act of charity** for someone in need; then endeavor to carry it out, either alone or with the help of others.

The NT Temperament – Thomistic

Temperament Characteristics	Spirituality Characteristics	Prayer Types & Guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Logical mind ▪ Gravitate to anything complicated, exacting or challenging to the mind ▪ Thirst for the truth and freedom that flows from it ▪ Desire to understand, comprehend, explain, predict, and thereby control the realities with which they live ▪ Want mastery and to excel at what they do ▪ Compelled to rearrange the environment ▪ Usually leaders ▪ Perfectionist ▪ Alert to own failures and failures of others ▪ Hate to repeat an error ▪ Ruthlessly criticize 	<p>NTs will set goals for themselves spiritually and will systematically proceed with them.</p> <p>Very focused on self-discipline and learning how to grow closer to God through the act of will—they want to center their lives completely on God and loving service to others.</p> <p>NTs prefer neat, orderly forms of the spiritual life.</p> <p>Spirituality centered on the transcendental values: truth, goodness, beauty, unity, love, life, spirit.</p> <p>NTs often set holiness as their personal goal and</p>	<p>NTs are best guided and sustained in logical, rational, discursive meditation where the intellect leads one from one proposition to another until a logical conclusion is reached.</p> <p>All four steps of lectio divina should be used in Thomistic prayer, with a special focus on the meditation (what does this mean or apply to me?) portion of the prayer.</p> <p>The passage for lectio for the Thomistic does not necessarily need to be Scripture, but sometimes one of the virtues or a fault that is revealed by the conviction of the Holy</p>

<p>themselves and others that do not live up to their standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subject to self-doubt ▪ Workaholics ▪ Competitive ▪ Impersonal in relationships with others (sometimes) ▪ Straightforward ▪ Sometimes oblivious to others feelings ▪ Need good liturgical celebrations ▪ Future-oriented ▪ Fascinated by power ▪ Compulsion to improve 	<p>strive daily to attain it.</p> <p>A seeking for total union for God, leaving no stone unturned in their desire for the spiritual life.</p> <p>Often drawn to St. John's Gospel.</p>	<p>Spirit.</p> <p>Thomistic prayer, the consideration of God's works or Word, uses the seven auxiliary questions: What, why, how, who, where, when, with what helps.</p> <p>A focus on the Word, and logical learning and discovering from the Word is important in Thomistic prayer.</p> <p>An NT praying for others will pray practically and with straight-forward leadership toward an answer.</p>
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Prayer Suggestions:

1. **Luke 1:39-46.** Consider the ministry of Mary toward her cousin Elizabeth. Without any thought of herself, Mary unselfishly hurried to the aid of an old woman having her first baby and remained there until after the birth of John. Mary may be seen as the first "Eucharistic Minister" bringing the flesh and blood of Jesus to the home of Elizabeth and Zachary. What might we do to

minister better to the needs of others?

2. **Matt. 6:26-34.** Study carefully each verse of Jesus' teaching about Divine Providence. With what of it do you agree? What do you consider not applicable to your present way of life? What justification can you make for the verses you are unwilling to accept literally? What changes do you need to make in your life in order to follow Christ's teachings here?

3. **Mark 9:33-37.** Spiritual childhood: virtues of simplicity, trust, charity, purity of intention. What does Jesus mean when he says that we must become as little children if we wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? What are the qualities of a small child that are especially needed in our relationship with God? Which of these qualities do you need to intensify and develop at the present time in your life? If possible, read the chapter on "Spiritual Childhood" in *The Autobiography of St. Therese, the Little Flower*.

Adapted from *Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms For Different Personality Types* by Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrissey (1991).