

GOD CREATED YOU

A Temperament Guide

By

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CHAPTER ONE

Why People Do People Things

Ever wonder why people do what people do?

Boy meets Girl. They date. They like one another. They fall in love. They get married. After a period of time, they have a child. As this child grows up, he seems to be the perfect child. He is not rebellious by nature. He is obedient and respectful. They teach him to say “yes sir” and “no ma’am”, “please” and “thank you.” He does well in school. He does his homework without being yelled at and turns it in on time.

This child is not a troublemaker. He does not hang out with the wrong crowd. He adheres to the morality and ethics of his parents and his environment while growing up. Even during his teenage years, he does not get involved with gangs, drugs, partying, alcohol, smoking or sex. Once he is old enough to drive, he does not drive wildly or recklessly. He does not get tickets or in wrecks. He graciously runs errands for his parents.

He is the one all the parents wish their daughters were dating. He attends church with his parents without argument. The teachers rave over him at parent/teacher conferences. Parents tell their children, “Why can’t you be more like him?” He seems to be the prime example of great parenting all the years he is living at home. His parents are proud of him. Everyone who knows him thinks he is the model child.

Then this young man graduates from high school (with honors of course) and goes off to college. Suddenly a whole new lifestyle emerges. Reports begin to float home about him partying at college. Smoking and alcohol are becoming the normal part of his daily life. When his parents have the opportunity to question him about his newly found behavior, they find he is lying. There may even be rumors of experimentation with drugs.

Before long, this young man has moved in with his girlfriend and is openly involved in all the activities he previously stood against, and even promised his parents he would never be involved in. The parents are devastated. “Where did we go wrong?” they ask themselves. “How could he become like this? How could he do this to us?” Friends of the family are shocked at his behavior. The people who were a bit jealous of his behavior all those years developed a gleeful, “I told you it would not last” type of attitude.

Why? Is it the rotten college atmosphere of permissiveness? Were his parents too strict bringing him up? Was he simply pretending to be a wonderful child all those years? Is his “true” self now coming out? Why is this happening? Temperament.

Boy meets Girl. They fall in love. They are married. After a period of time, they have several children. The oldest boy is a “strong-willed” child. He is always challenging authority – at home, at school, with the pastor and even with God. He is always dominating his brother and sister. They have to do everything his way. Play what he wants to play when he wants to play. The whole universe has to run by his rules. This is not limited to those younger than he is. He is

always telling teachers, his parents, and adults what he is going to do and not do or what they should be doing and not doing. When people do not adhere to his rules and ideas, he is angry and threatening and even violent. Wherever he goes, it is like a little tornado of trouble blowing through. Life is far more peaceful when he is not around!

His parents are constantly thinking, “What are we going to do with this kid?” Talking with him does not work. Reasoning with him does not work. Every kind of intelligent discussion ends in arguments. Discipline and punishment only bring about limited results – and never long lasting behavioral changes. He will not listen!

They do not have any of these problems with his younger sister. The worst punishment she received from the crib to adulthood was a stern lecture – and the problem never came up again. It is like she anticipated what her parents expected out of her and lived accordingly. Ask her to do a chore, and it was done without argument or any sign of contempt. To get the oldest boy to do any task involved a fight, an argument or at the very least body language of disgust. His younger sister would go out of her way to be helpful. Many times she did not even have to be told, she saw what needed to be done and went ahead and did it.

The oldest boy never did anything except to greatly benefit himself and no one could remember when he took the initiative to do an act of kindness for anyone else. His ways, his rules, his ideas, everyone else serving him seemed to be his number one rule in life. The little Pharaoh – his rules did not even apply to himself, only when they benefited him.

The middle boy was unlike either his brother or sister. He seemed to do what was expected of him, for the most part. There were no outin-the-open acts of defiance or rebellion, not like the oldest boy. Momentary “kid’s stuff” from time to time. An occasional chore left undone or forgotten. An infrequent “I’m not going to do that”, which the parents relegated to being around his older brother too much. The second son looked like a pretty good kid. His parents did not have to punish him much. A lecture or light, short-term disciplinary action was all the parents ever had to do to straighten out poor behavior. Or thus it seemed.

Behind the scenes, when the parents were not looking, it was a different story. This second son was consistently involved in behavior strongly disapproved of by his parents. But they never, or seldom, knew of it. He was great at participating in activities he knew were wrong, but by such means as to rarely get caught. It was years after he was grown and out on his own before his parents heard the stories of his youth. He set his own rules and lived by them, but without the open rebellion or defiance of his older brother.

How could these children come up in the same environment, from the same gene pool (there were probably people who wondered if they did, maybe even their own parents) and end up being drastically different? Is there any help available for parents to know what their children are like and methods of instruction and discipline to help them turn out to be decent human beings? The answer to both questions is: Temperament.

What causes a person to be the “bum magnet?” A young girl begins the journey from childhood to adulthood. (This is not limited to females. Many a male can be put in a group of people they do not know, and in 10 minutes they will automatically pick out and become friends with the worst of the lot). She begins noticing boys. Boys begin noticing her. She starts having boyfriends. Her first one is a bad choice. He treats her poorly. She hangs on to him too

long, but finally they break up. The parents are relieved! The next boyfriend – jeez, another bad choice. Again she is being treated poorly, maybe even abusively. Finally, they break up. Mom and Dad keep trying to help her make better choices. But then comes the third boyfriend, a carbon copy of the first two.

Somewhere along the line, she ends up marrying one of these boys. After marriage, the relationship deteriorates. Now he is more uncaring, more insensitive, and more abusive. After several years, and usually a child or two, the marriage ends in divorce. Everyone who knows her, her parents, family and friends, is hoping she has learned by now. However, the next boyfriend and the next husband end up as a carbon copy of the former ones. Her life has been a series of bad relationships.

How come she cannot find the right guy? How come she does not recognize a poor relationship until it is too late? Is there a reason she is prone to picking the same kinds of men to have these abusive relationships with? Yes, temperament.

God created each of us uniquely special. While we think everyone else is basically the same – like us – the truth of the matter is we are all uniquely different. We think differently about the same subjects. We respond differently to the same circumstances. What causes one person stress gives peace and tranquility to someone else. There are people who love to be around people, even forsaking tasks and duties. Sundry people are task-oriented, not desiring many close relationships and not necessarily interested in a lot of socialization. There are people who are goal-oriented to the extreme – they use and abuse people to obtain their objectives.

Temperament is what makes us uniquely different, uniquely special. Temperament is our God-given, inborn nature; who we are on the inside. Temperament determines if we are relationship-oriented or task-oriented or goal-oriented. Temperament determines if quiet alone time gives us peace and tranquility or causes us stress and frustration. It is temperament driving us to be with people, or pushing us away from people.

Take two children, conceived with different temperaments, born to the same parents and raised in the same environment. Both have been bad and are sent to their separate bedrooms for an hour of punishment. No TV, no radio, no talking on the phone, and no making noise is the parent's plan – go contemplate your behavior. To the one child, this is almost an answer to prayer. This child has been known to go his room often without being punished to play alone. He considers being by himself peaceful and relaxing. This is hardly punishment for him. Punishment for this child would be to force him to go to a party, to be around people for a long period of time with the understanding he was to have fun.

However, to the other child being grounded to her room is bordering on torture. She does not even make it to her room without an emotional outburst. Excuses and proofs of innocence begin to freely flow in a loud verbal display. When her excuses do not work, promises of never doing it again and “I'm sorry” come forth in abundance. All this before she has made it up the stairs. For the next hour, the parents have to ignore noise, questions, “Mom, can I talk to you for a minute?” and weird sounds coming from the room. What is the difference? Each child's temperament – their God-given, inborn nature – who they are on the inside.

As we begin to understand temperament, we begin to understand how we can interact with the people around us and our environment and our world with less stress, less anxiety, less problems. Understanding temperament allows us to enjoy a happier life, at work, at home and

at play. Temperament gives us answers to perplexing parenting questions, to complex personal questions, and to frustrating life-in-general questions. I am convinced temperament holds the answers to every relationship problem. Have you ever wondered what you could do before your kids drive you crazy? Or wondered why your job stresses you out? Or wondered why your spouse is angry all the time? Or wondered why you are easily motivated by guilt? Temperament holds the key to these questions and more.

Temperament can help you better understand yourself and identify your individual needs. When your temperament needs are not being met, it will cause stress and anxiety. When your temperament needs are being met in ungodly ways, it will cause stress and anxiety and additional problems. Additional symptoms of not getting temperament needs met in healthy and godly ways include: depression, dissatisfaction, loneliness, fear, frustration, anger, marriage and family problems, poor work performance, exhaustion and inter/intra personal conflicts. Do any of these problems sound familiar? Then understanding temperament will benefit you and those around you. Understanding temperament will help you to be less stressed and less anxious. It will also help you to enjoy a happier life. But first, we need a better understanding of what temperament is.