



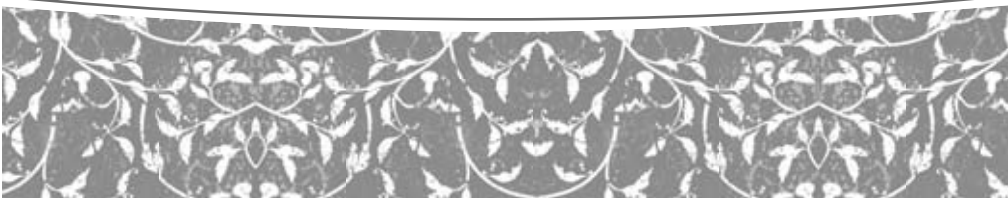
Spirit- Controlled Temperament

The Best-Selling Classic on Who You Are
and Who You Can Become

TIM LAHAYE



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
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Spirit-Controlled Temperament

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Introduction



There is nothing more fascinating about people than their inherited temperament! It is temperament that provides each human being with the distinguishing qualities that make each as individually unique as the differing designs God has given to snowflakes. Temperament is the unseen force underlying human action, a force that can destroy a normal and productive human being unless it is disciplined and directed.

Temperament provides both our strengths and weaknesses. Although we like to think only of our strengths, everyone has weaknesses!

God has given Christians the Holy Spirit, who is able to improve our natural strengths and overcome our weaknesses—as we cooperate with him. That’s the basic message of this book, first published twenty-six years ago.



The Making of a Best-Seller

No one was more surprised than I when *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, my first book, became a best-seller. It has now

sold more than one million copies—just in English. It has also been translated into more than twenty languages, for which I am particularly grateful. It is a special privilege to be a writer, as the written word allows you to minister to people you have never met—all over the world.

Actually, I originally had no intention of this material being published as a book. It started out as printed notes of a series of Sunday night sermons delivered in 1966 to my congregation in San Diego. The series was designed to help them see how the Holy Spirit could strengthen their natural weaknesses.

Well, it was one of the most practical and best received sermon series that I delivered in my twenty-five years at that church. Many parishioners testified that God used it to transform their lives. I had noticed that the attendance was better when I printed my messages, and for this series—one of my first—we broke all previous attendance records.

In the providence of God, John Lindscott, the manager of the Campus Crusade bookstore in Arrowhead Springs and a former member of our church, “happened” to be in San Diego and hear the last of these sermons. Looking over the eleven messages, he said, “Why don’t you put these together and put a cover on it so I can try selling them in our bookstore?”

Wondering if anyone outside our church would read them, I asked, “How many should I send?”

“Three hundred,” he said.

Well, my high-school children collated the printed notes and glued covers on them. Then I took them to a printer to cut them properly.

Three days later John called and said he wanted twelve hundred more! It seems he had given one to Hal Lindsey, teaching for Campus Crusade at the time, and asked him to recommend it. Hal crawled into bed that night and read it before he went to sleep. The next morning he held it up

in class and said, “I just read the neatest little book. You ought to read it.” The first three hundred were gone in one afternoon. Thus the call for twelve hundred more. My second “private” printing was for three thousand, which I assumed would last the rest of my life.

About that time I preached this series in Phoenix. It had the same effect on those people as it had had on my congregation. The hundred copies of the book I took with me quickly sold out. About the time we needed a third printing, our children were getting tired of collating “Dad’s books.”

One day as my wife, Beverly, dropped me off at the airport to fly to Chicago, where I was to speak at a Sunday-school convention, we stopped and prayed that God would raise up a publisher for this little book. Little did we know that he had already prepared the ground.

John Lindscott had given Bob Hawkins, the marketing genius of Ken Taylor’s *The Living Bible*, a copy and said, “Bob, you ought to publish this book.” It seems that Bob had put it in his briefcase and hadn’t read it until his wife, Shirley, had got hold of it and said, “Bob, Tyndale House ought to publish this book.”

With those recommendations—from John Lindscott and Shirley—Bob came to hear me speak in Chicago. Afterward he introduced himself and invited me out for dinner to the famed Jim Diamond’s Steak House. What he said that night changed my life: “Tyndale House is going to branch out into book—as opposed to Bible—publishing, and we would like to make *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* our first book.”

And that is how my first book became the first book published by Tyndale House.

In a vital sense *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, with its down-to-earth practical message on how we can strengthen our weaknesses through the Holy Spirit, reflects God’s gracious, strengthening work in these three principal parties. Now, twenty-five years later, Tyndale House is a major

Christian publisher with one of the most complete lines of helpful biblically based materials in the country; Bob Hawkins has founded Harvest House, publisher of hundreds of good books; while I have written thirty books to date with more than 9 million copies in print worldwide.

When I first wrote *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, I was excited about its potential for helping people who yearned for a more consistent Christian life. Its concepts had already changed my life, and through my extensive counseling ministry I was witnessing similar transformations in the lives of many others.

From the thousands of letters and personal testimonials I have received in response to my teaching this material in more than eight hundred Family Life Seminars around the world, I have become even more convinced of its relevance. So when Tyndale House asked me to revise the book, I gladly accepted the challenge.



A Brief History of the Four Temperaments

The theory of the four temperaments is not perfect; no theory of human behavior is. However, it is the oldest on record, going back more than three thousand years: In Proverbs 30:11-14 the wise man saw four kinds of people. About five hundred years later, the four were given names by Hippocrates, said to be the father of modern medicine. Galen, a Greek doctor, came up with a detailed list of the strengths and weaknesses of the four around A.D. 200. This has remained pretty much intact throughout history and is still the prevailing position in Europe.

Unfortunately, Sigmund Freud and his unscientific theories that based human behavior on environment and background rather than on inherited tendencies became the predominant view in America.

Shortly after it was published in English, I read *Tempera-*

ment and the Christian Faith by the Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby. This book about the four temperaments gave me new insight into why different people seemed beset by different sets of weaknesses. Hallesby suggested that we receive our natural tendencies for good and bad from our temperaments.



My Contributions to the Study of the Four Temperaments

Spirit-Controlled Temperament was the first book on the subject of temperament written in English and for Christians. Since then I have written *Transformed Temperaments*, a biblical study of Peter the Sanguine, Paul the Choleric, Moses the Melancholy, and Abraham the Phlegmatic. My wife, Beverly, has written two books on the subject, *Spirit-Controlled Woman* and *How to Develop Your Child's Temperament*. Between us we have been privileged to popularize this ancient concept in the Christian community.

It is said that copying is the highest form of praise. Several others have since written on this subject, evidencing that it is a helpful tool. Some have presented it as personality traits, others in terms of animal traits, and still others have developed personality tests based on the theory. This wealth of material only testifies to the enduring nature of the theory as a people-helping tool.

In the twenty-six years since I wrote this material, the concept has been confirmed hundreds of times in the counseling room, through administering the LaHaye Temperament Analysis test to more than twenty-seven thousand people, including many counselors who in turn use it in their work.

While I didn't originate the idea of the four temperaments, I have made three contributions to the field.

1. Temperament blends. Some people reject the theory

because they observe at least two temperaments in people. I acknowledge such “primary” and “secondary” temperaments. This new edition contains a whole chapter on twelve blends of temperament.

2. The enemies of anger and fear. All of us have one of two primary emotional enemies that if left unchecked will seriously limit our lives: anger or fear. (Some people, because of their mixture of temperaments, have both problems.) The good news is that the Holy Spirit is able to give Christians victory over these life-limiting emotional problems.

3. Opposite temperaments attract in marriage—but that’s not the end of the story. If used properly, this can be a great advantage. If not used properly, it can turn love into hate. I discuss this idea thoroughly in *I Love You, but Why Are We So Different?* One of the most exciting discoveries I have made as a pastor-counselor is this: In the nine fruit of the Spirit-filled life as described in Galatians 5:22-23, there is a strength for every weakness. Whatever our backgrounds, temperament combinations, or habit patterns, Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit can give us victory over “the sin which so easily ensnares us [causes us to stumble]” (Heb. 12:1).



A Theory That Works

The temperament theory is not the final answer to human behavior, and for these and other reasons it may not prove satisfactory to everyone. But of all behavior theories ever devised, it has served me as the most helpful explanation of why people act the way they do and what their principal weaknesses are.

Since the original publication of this book, I have seen nothing that has shaken my confidence in this old theory. On the contrary, I have had many experiences that con-

firmed my conviction that it is the best explanation of human behavior available today. And while it is not specifically taught in the Scriptures, when used with the Scriptures to show the power available to us in the indwelling Holy Spirit, it is the best tool for helping people ever devised.

I have found the four temperaments to be a tool to help people reach their maximum potential. Among the many different behavior theories—from Transactional Analysis and Freudian theory to the Myers-Briggs sixteen types—I consider it the best and the easiest to understand and use for self-improvement.

After examining the Myers-Briggs system of sixteen categories, I prefer the temperament theory for three reasons. (1) It is easier. With temperaments you have to learn only four names that are descriptive of the action they represent. The twelve blends are mixtures of the four temperament names. (2) The Myers-Briggs system, like the Taylor Johnson test, offers no remedial help. As we shall see, the temperament theory lends itself to effective change by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (3) The twelve blends of temperament are true to life. It isn't perfect, no human system is, but it does not contradict Scripture, it parallels several scriptural principles, and it has a track record of helping many people, to the glory of God.

Some think the temperament theory is “too simplistic,” but that may be part of the key to its popularity; people can understand it. Still others have tried unsuccessfully to tie it to the ancient signs of the zodiac and the horoscope. In so doing they make a drastic miscalculation—of nine months! How? The horoscope is based on one's day of birth, which in reality has nothing to do with temperament. As we shall see, your temperament was determined at conception by the combination of the genes of your parents. And temperament characteristics illustrate the biblical truth that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14)—“made” or

“created” with both strengths or talents, which God wants to use, and weaknesses, which he wants to strengthen by the Holy Spirit.

My intent in this book is to help you understand how the Holy Spirit can enable you to overcome your weaknesses. It is not automatic! You must cooperate with the Spirit of God to effect lasting change in your life.



Credit Where Credit Is Due

I am in debt to many people in the writing of this book. I have combined my extensive reading on the temperaments and in psychology in general with my observations of people—observations made as pastor and counselor for more than thirty-three years. I’ve gleaned much from the speaking ministry of the biblically based Christian psychologist Henry Brandt. I also drew extensively from *Temperament and the Christian Faith* by the late Norwegian theologian Dr. Ole Hallesby.

You're Born with It!



“Why is it that I can’t control myself? I know what’s right and wrong. I just don’t seem to be able to do what’s right!” This frustrated plea came from a fine young businessman who had come to me for counseling. It wasn’t the first time I had heard that plaint in one form or another; in fact, it is a very common experience.

The apostle Paul no doubt felt that same way when he said, “To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Rom. 7:18-20).

Note that Paul differentiated between himself and that uncontrollable force within by saying, “It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” The “I” is Paul’s person, the soul, will, and the human mind. The “sin” that resided in him resulted from the natural weaknesses that he, like all human beings, received from his parents.

At the moment of our conception we all inherited a basic genetic temperament that contains both our strengths and

our weaknesses. This temperament is called several things in the Bible: “the natural man,” “the flesh,” “the old man,” and “corruptible flesh,” to name a few. It is the basic impulse of our being that seeks to satisfy our wants. To properly understand the temperament’s control of our actions and reactions, we should define three terms and carefully distinguish among them: *temperament*, *character*, and *personality*.



Temperament

Temperament is the combination of inborn traits that subconsciously affects all our behavior. These traits, which are passed on by our genes, are based on hereditary factors and arranged at the time of conception. Six people contribute through the gene pool to the makeup of every baby: two parents and four grandparents. Some authorities suggest that we may get more genes from our grandparents than our parents. That could account for the greater resemblance of some children to their grandparents than to their parents. The alignment of temperament traits, though unseen, is just as predictable as the color of eyes, hair, or size of body.

It is a person’s temperament that makes that person outgoing and extrovertish or shy and introvertish. Doubtless you know both kinds of people who are siblings—born to the same parents. Similarly, it is temperament that makes some people art or music enthusiasts, while others are sports or industry minded. In fact, I have met outstanding musicians whose brothers or sisters were tone-deaf. I think of one professional football player whose brother has never watched him play a game because, as he tells it, he “just can’t stand to watch violence.”



Character

Character is the real you. The Bible refers to it as “the hidden person of the heart” (1 Pet. 3:4). It is the result of your

natural temperament modified by childhood training, education, and basic attitudes, beliefs, principles, and motivations. It is sometimes referred to as “the soul” of a person, which is made up of the mind, emotions, and will.

Character combines your temperament, training, moral values, beliefs, and habit patterns. It is indeed the net result of all the influences and religious commitment on your life. It is what you really are when there is no one else around. What you do when you have the freedom to do what you want to do is an expression of yourself.



Personality

Personality is the outward expression of oneself, which may or may not be the same as a person’s character, depending on how genuine that person is.

Often personality is a pleasing facade for an unpleasant or weak character. Many are acting a part today on the basis of what they think they should be as a person, rather than what they really are. This is a formula for mental and spiritual chaos. It is caused by following the human formula for acceptable conduct. The Bible tells us, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7), and, “Out of it [the heart] spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The place to change behavior is inside man, not outside.



Summary

In summary, temperament is the combination of traits we were born with; character is our “civilized” temperament; and personality is the “face” we show to others.

Since temperament traits are inherited genetically from our parents, we should keep in mind some of the natural factors that influence them.

Certain temperaments tend to follow certain gene pools. While on a missionary tour to Mexico, I noticed the vast differences in the tribes that I observed. The Sapotaco Indians impressed me greatly. Many tribes had been shiftless, indifferent, and careless in their mode of life. The Sapotacos, however, were a very industrious and often ingeniously capable tribe. In one city we visited, they actively pursued the technical trade of weaving, and their sense of responsibility was in sharp contrast to anything we had observed in other tribesmen. The skills were learned, but the adaptability and desire to learn them were so universal throughout the tribe that it could only be an inherited trait.

A person's gender will also affect his or her temperament, particularly in the realm of the emotions. Women often tend to be more emotionally expressive than men. Even the hardest of women will weep at times, while some men never weep. Men and women may have the same temperament, but the extent of emotional expression may vary.

Temperament traits, whether controlled or uncontrolled, last throughout life. The older we get, however, the softer and more mellow our harsh and hard traits tend to become. People learn that if they are to live at peace with their neighbors, it is best to emphasize their natural strengths and subdue their weaknesses.

Many successfully develop their characters and improve their personalities, but it is doubtful that any are able to change basic temperament. Yet it is possible to modify it to such a degree that it almost seems to have changed—as we shall see in the next chapter.

❧ Study Questions ❧

For group study, see questions at the end of chapter 2.

Study Questions

These questions cover the material presented in chapters 1 and 2.

1. What is temperament, and where does it originate?
2. If temperament is God-given, is basic temperament, aside from the influence of original sin, “good” or “bad”?
3. What is character and how does it differ from temperament?
4. Is character God-given?
5. How can character be changed?
6. What is the influence of original sin on character?
7. What is personality?
8. Some people put on a “face” that repels other people. Why might such a personality develop?
9. Discuss the possibility of someone changing personality without changing character. Why would someone do this?
10. What takes place when someone is born again? Discuss this question in light of these three passages: (a) Romans 6:1-7; (b) 2 Corinthians 5:17; (c) 2 Peter 1:4.
11. What part of a person is most affected by the conversion experience—one’s temperament, character, personality? Explain.
12. If the Holy Spirit can transform the weaknesses of our temperament, why aren’t all Christians transformed?
13. Read John 15:1-14, considering the meaning of “abide in me.” What does it mean to abide in Christ?
14. Finally, read Ephesians 5:18. What further light does Ephesians give to the idea of abiding in Christ?

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