

BE042708

WHO DO YOU LOVE?

8. Style

Perhaps you've been to AC3 for only a short time, and you're considering leaving the church. And it's not because you don't like the church, you do. You just find yourself slack jawed at how often AC3'ers call people terrible names. Like maybe you overheard someone say, out loud, to someone, "that's because you're a golden retriever!" And you're thinking,

"they just called that poor woman a dog – to her face!"

Or maybe you even heard my wife last week call some of you a hairy rodent with a fat tail! How rude! And if you hang around here even longer, the name calling gets even worse. AC3'ers seem to name each other after grotesque mythical beasts, like, "you're an otter lion!" What kind of a menacing put down is that? How offensive!

Of course, those of you who HAVE been to AC3 for any length of time, know that we're not calling each other names. When we throw these animal names around, it's become our shorthand to identify **personality types**. We've taught on this enough that it's just become like a second language that we all understand. So for those of you in the know, what follows is some helpful review. And for those of you new to AC3, welcome to the ZOO! You will soon be initiated into our fellowship of strange and wonderful animals.

Now, WHY would we talk about personality type at church? There are no scripture passages about personality types. Ah, but there are many scriptural principles that require us to understand and apply the lessons of the animal types. Such as:

- Rom 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you
- Rom 12:10 Honor one another above yourselves.
- Titus 3:1-2 Remind the people to ...be peaceable and considerate , and to show true humility toward all men.
- Rom 12:16 Live in harmony with one anotherDo not be conceited.
- Rom 14:13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another .
- 1 Cor 13:4-5 Love is patient, love is kind. It ...is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking

Why are these principles of respect, consideration, acceptance, selflessness, harmony, and humility so difficult to put into practice? I'll give you the reason: because other people aren't like YOU. How many times haven't you looked at someone and thot:

Why can't you just be more NORMAL, like me!

Well, friends, we can't love the church well with this attitude. Why not? Because God is much more comfortable with diversity than we are. Heck, he made 50,000 different types of beetles! And he made many, many different types of people. He's OK with not making clones. He doesn't have one perfect style template. He loves our diversity of

styles, skin colors and spiritual gift mixes. In fact, the Bible directly addresses the diversity of spiritual gifts in this way:

(1 Corinthians 12:4): There are **different** kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are **different** kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are **different** ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us.

We're going to learn about these spiritual gifts in-depth in Network class on May 25th. But the principles that Scripture gives regarding the differences of spiritual gifts are totally transferable to style. Style or temperament is my unique approach to things like:

- Communication
- Relationships
- Tasks
- Leadership
- Change
- Planning
- Creativity
- Groups of people

The combination of our approach to these things is different and differences creates friction and conflict. In Corinth that church was struggling to get along because they expected that everyone should just be the same. They should all have the same spiritual gifts. And because they weren't all the same, they struggled with spiritual jealousy and pride.

Just like that, some of you will struggle with Christian community and getting involved in service and being fruitful and fulfilled in a calling God has on your life, because of three things:

- You don't know how God made you
- You don't know how God made others around you
- You don't know how to accept yourself and interact with others.

So as a helpful and simplified tool, we use these animal stereotypes to illustrate different human personality types. To use one word descriptors, we say:

- **POWERFUL LIONS,**
- **PLAYFUL OTTERS,**
- **PERFECT BEAVERS,**
- **PEACEFUL GOLDEN RETRIEVERS**

Now some of you don't know about this labeling stuff. That's OK, that means you're a Beaver – they're naturally suspicious of being pinned down by a label. This isn't about pinning you into a box, but giving us helpful categories that bring understanding about ourselves and others and to use this tool to grow up and grow in community. Who doesn't want that? Well, Golden Retrievers... But right now, some of you are wondering where these categories come from.

They actually originated with Hippocrates, a Greek physician four hundred years before Christ who is often called the father of modern medicine. (Hippocratic oath comes from him). He noted that people seemed to fall into four main patterns of thinking and relating. He called them

- the Melancholy, (BEAVER);
- the Sanguine, (OTTER);
- the Phlegmatic (GOLDEN RETRIEVER);
- and the Choleric, (LION).

Now why did we pick these animals to go with these personalities?:

- We imagine a BEAVER as perfect. That is, very exacting and conscientious in order to build the dams and lodges that he does. Human Beavers are those folks who are committed to detail, to order, to process, to doing the **right things** in the **right way**. They live by a schedule and are perfectionists. They are introverted and very thoughtful, tend to love quiet, and alone time, are artistic, analytical, idealistic and very sensitive.
- We imagine an OTTER as playful. You look at them on National Geographic films and you swear they should starve because you never see them doing anything but running, jumping, swimming and playing tag. Human Otters just want to have fun – and they would starve if they weren't so gosh darn cute and could get the Beavers to do all the work. They are outgoing, talkative, enthusiastic, personable, and friendly. Otters are carefree, optimistic, tend to be forgetful, **live in the moment kind of people** who love constant change.
- We imagine a GOLDEN RETRIEVER is peaceful. A friend of mine has a pet of this breed and she just stood there while I watched little toddlers jumping on it, pulling her hair. Human Golden Retrievers are big on stability, low on emotion. These folks are low key, calm, easy going, efficient, and always under self control. They make great diplomats because they don't hold terribly strong opinions about anything and they like to avoid conflict. They're dependable, but they're almost impossible to get excited about anything.
- We imagine a LION is powerful. His image as the king of the jungle comes through with pictures of him standing over a kill, presiding over his Pride, and vanquishing rivals. Human Lions are born leaders, they are strong-willed, competitive, decisive, confident. These folks love to build things, give orders, be in control. They don't have a high degree of empathy for others feelings, because the goal is always most important. They see a problem, they fix, and fix it NOW.

Now perhaps you're seeing yourself in more than one description and you want to ask: is there such a thing as a crossbreed? The answer is most definitely yes. While most of us will have one dominant temperament, we are all a mix of a least two animals.

For example, a common mix is the BEAVER/GOLDEN RETRIEVER. The BEAVER part of them is introverted and particular, while the RETRIEVER part of them is low key and wants to avoid conflict. So this hybrid is always asking,

“I have to do this right, but if I push I hope I don’t make anyone mad...”

Then there’s the RETRIEVER/OTTER combo. These people combine the fun loving nature of an otter with a laid back attitude of the retrievers. These are some of the most well liked people we know. But, while they get along great with people, they may avoid involvement or follow through.

Then there’s the LION/OTTER combo. This person likes to have fun while getting the job done. They’re impatient leaders but they try hard to not make enemies.

Then there’s the LION/BEAVER combo. This person wants things done perfectly - right now! Hard to deal with, but they get amazing results.

You note that I didn’t mention OTTER/BEAVERS or LION/RETRIEVERS. The reason you don’t see these combinations much is that they are total opposites.

- You don’t see too many playful/moody people.
- And you don’t see too many take charge/lazy people.

But you do see them. The reason is that despite being opposite traits in many ways, in other ways, they are the same personality type just flipped, introverted or extroverted. For example,

- OTTERS and BEAVERS seem opposite but they are both emotional and creative. One is introverted and pessimistic the other extroverted and optimistic.
- LIONS and RETREIVERS seem opposite but they are both unemotional and strong willed, one just is extroverted and optimistic and the other introverted and pessimistic.

LOVING THE CHURCH

Now, church is the place like a zoo where species need to co exist (without eating each other). So what happens in marriage or in friendship or in small groups or in ministry or on a leadership team when you call the animals to LOVE THE CHURCH?:

- Well, both LIONS and BEAVERS are good with the strong side of love, organization, decision making. TRUTH
- But OTTERS and RETRIEVERS are good with the soft side of love, encouragement, affirmation, relationships. PEACE

So what happens in community together? After a little living with a LION or BEAVER who says things like, “everyone knows that... why can’t organize your... make a decision already!”

- the OTTER or RETRIEVER concludes, they are smart, I am dumb, they are strong I am weak, they are right I am wrong!

And on the other side, after hearing from OTTERS or RETRIEVERS, “why do you worry so much, stop being so bossy, or cheer up!”

- the LIONS and BEAVERS start thing “they are fun, I am boring, they are well liked, I’m hated, they are joyful I am angry.”

And pretty soon resentment builds, we start to stand in judgment on each other. Friends, just realizing that “God works DIFFERENTLY in each of us,” means those differences are not WRONG. Just different. And the truth is we need each other. So with those differences in mind, let’s reflect on Scripture:

Rom 12:3-5 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

I want to pull out a few things:

- “Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought.” God encourages us to be shrewdly self aware of our own limitations and bents. So as we consider our style, what is God saying to you? Apart from sin, your way is not superior. Your bend toward spontaneity, or planning, aggressiveness or passiveness, is not better than the next guy’s.
- “We don’t all have the same function.” So while we form one body, we NEED to be different. When was the last time you celebrated differences?
 - o Where would we be without LIONS? Leaderless.
 - o Where would we be without OTTERS? Joyless.
 - o Where would we be without RETRIEVERS? At war all the time.
 - o Where would we be without BEAVERS? Artless and Scattered.
- “We belong to each other.” Like your gifts are mine, my otterness is yours. You can lean on it and I’ll lean on your beaverness. And what this means friends, if we belong to each other is we protect our unity because I know you’re different and I extend grace to you because of that. I won’t allow someone else to call you a space cadet because I know God made you an otter and otters are dreamers. And I won’t let someone call you a control freak because I know God made you a LION and lions are goal driven.

You see friends? If we accept each other, the church becomes a hotbed of mutual respect and peace and unity. But it won’t happen if we bite and devour each other, calling into question those very differences God has given, and thinking of ourselves higher than we ought to.

Before I got married I figured I was good spousal material. I figured any woman who got me was pretty darn lucky. I had spent my life up to that point being perfect. I had a lot of friends, I was outgoing, tried my best to be charming and romantic. I thot:

Who wouldn't want a person like ME? Personable, warm, enthusiastic, optimistic, fun loving. Like I said perfect!

Well, while I was busy being perfect, about 2000 miles away a young woman in the State of Washington was also busy getting herself perfect. A straight A student, this woman was as diligent as a BEAVER. Johnna was seen by teachers as decisive and gifted, by peers as loyal, self sacrificing, a leader.

All Johnna's life she was told she was a star, graduated in the top fifth of her class, her grandparents worshiped the ground she walked on and if anyone disagreed, she was told they were the problem. Now, can you imagine marrying a woman like that?

We had trouble walking down the aisle, cause we kept tripping over our egos!

So I knew I was in for trouble early in our marriage we're driving by a store and it just hits me that I'd like to go in there. Why? Because it sounds like fun! Logical. The otters in the room as saying, "makes sense to me!" So I make some hint or suggestion and Johnna and says,

"that's not on our list. If you wanted to go there you should have said something this morning when I made out the list of what we were doing today."

I said, I didn't know at 7 am that I was going to want to go there! Who made the list, anyhow, we can't make a new list? Did **God** make the list?" And because my wife is also part lion who think they rule the universe she said,

"YES!"

Conflicts build because we don't have God's perspective on our differences and so we are left to assume that who we are is somehow flawed or the people in our lives are somehow flawed. Huge change happened when we started to understand that different isn't wrong. And the only way out of the rub created by differences, is self sacrificing love.

DARK SIDE

NOW learning about styles is not an excuse for bad behavior. Your hand out has a great write up about this for you to read later. It images someone learning this and saying:

Hey, you can't expect me to apologize for yelling at the cleaning crew! They made a mistake and they deserved it. And it's not my style to apologize.

Over our styles we have God's Word to inform us and guide us into the TRUTH which show us behaviors that are truly LOVING and those that are not. That's our absolute standard. And against that standard we are all offenders.

"ALL HAVE SINNED and fall short of God's glorious standard of perfection."

Sorry, Lions, you're not right all the time. And though each of our personality traits presents the world and our families and our careers and the church with a rich array of gifts and strengths, each of us is prone because of our wiring to specific areas of weakness.

- The LION can be insensitive,
- The OTTER can be undependable,
- The BEAVER can be negative
- The RETRIEVER can be unmotivated

But with Paul's instruction about thinking of ourselves with sober judgment, the Bible never gives us the permission to fixate on someone else. Instead the Bible says, you're concern in the change department is always and only, YOU .

- 1 Cor 11:28 A man ought to examine **himself** ...
- Ps 17:3 ...you probe **my** heart and examine **me** [o Lord]
- 2 Cor 13:5 Examine **yourselves** to see whether you are in the faith; test **yourselves**...
- Ps 26:2 Test **me**, O LORD, and try **me**, examine **my** heart and **my** mind;

Or... Ps 139:23-24 Search **me**, O God, and know **my** heart; test **me** and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in **my wife**, and lead **her** in the way everlasting.

That's the way we WANT it to read! Because it's easy to see people's different approach to life and the weakness of their approach and conclude, they are so wrong! But love demands that we do this the hard way.

There's a little Narcissus that feels that our way is the right way and different ways are dumb. And so if we try to LOVE THE CHURCH well with this attitude, we find no harmony in the family of God. To love the church well, we have to accept one another, be considerate of one another, forgive one another, bear with one another.