



Each person is unique, but throughout history, humanity has observed certain personality patterns that help us better understand ourselves and others. One of the oldest and most profound systems is that of the **four temperaments**, which has its roots in classical philosophy and has been adopted and enriched by the Christian tradition.

Far from being just a psychological theory, the study of temperaments can help us grow in virtue, strengthen our relationships, and, most importantly, advance on the path to holiness. As the Book of Proverbs says:

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

Knowing our temperament is part of the self-knowledge necessary to allow ourselves to be shaped by God.

What Are the Four Temperaments?

The concept of the four temperaments comes from Ancient Greece and was developed by Hippocrates and later by Galen. According to this theory, there are four basic personality types, determined by the predominance of certain bodily fluids. Although modern science no longer supports this physiological basis, the classification remains useful for understanding human character.

The four temperaments are:

1. **Choleric:** Energetic, determined, and dominant.
2. **Sanguine:** Cheerful, sociable, and enthusiastic.
3. **Melancholic:** Reflective, deep, and sensitive.
4. **Phlegmatic:** Serene, patient, and stable.

From a Christian perspective, these temperaments do not determine our morality, but they do influence our tendencies and the way we face spiritual life. Understanding them helps us strengthen our virtues and work on our weaknesses.

The Four Temperaments and Spiritual Life

Each temperament has specific gifts, but also weaknesses that need to be corrected with God's grace. Let's see how each can grow in the spiritual life.



1. The Choleric: Strength of Will

The choleric is a born leader. They are passionate, determined, and pursue their goals with tenacity. In Church history, many choleric saints have been great reformers and defenders of the faith, such as St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa of Ávila.

Virtues to cultivate: Fortitude and determination can be great allies in evangelization and growth in holiness.

Weaknesses to correct: The choleric can be impatient, authoritarian, and prone to anger. St. Francis de Sales, who had a choleric temperament, worked his entire life to cultivate meekness and humility.

Spiritual advice: Cultivate patience and humility through prayer and mortification. Jesus' words **"Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matthew 11:29)** should be a motto for the choleric.

2. The Sanguine: The Joy of the Gospel

The sanguine is extroverted, optimistic, and charismatic. Their enthusiasm is contagious, making them excellent communicators of the Christian message. Saints like St. Philip Neri and St. Francis of Assisi had a sanguine temperament, and their joy attracted many souls to Christ.

Virtues to cultivate: Their ability to socialize and spread joy is a precious gift for evangelization.

Weaknesses to correct: They can be superficial, inconsistent, and prone to distraction. Spiritual life requires depth and discipline, something the sanguine must work on.

Spiritual advice: Develop perseverance in prayer and self-discipline. A key passage for the sanguine is:

"Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2).



3. The Melancholic: The Depth of the Soul

The melancholic is reflective, sensitive, and perfectionist. Their natural inclination toward introspection makes them prone to a deep spiritual life. Many great theologians and mystics were melancholic, such as St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Virtues to cultivate: Their love for truth and beauty allows them to attain a deep prayer life.

Weaknesses to correct: They can be pessimistic, withdrawn, and struggle with scruples. They tend to focus on their faults and feel unworthy of God's love.

Spiritual advice: Learn to trust in God's mercy and avoid paralyzing perfectionism. St. Paul reminds us:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

4. The Phlegmatic: Peace Amid the Storm

The phlegmatic is calm, patient, and balanced. Their emotional stability is a valuable gift in community and family life. Many phlegmatic saints have been great pastors and spiritual directors, such as St. John XXIII.

Virtues to cultivate: Their serenity and prudence are essential for the Christian life.

Weaknesses to correct: They can be passive, lazy, and afraid of sacrifice. Complacency is a spiritual danger for them.

Spiritual advice: Cultivate apostolic zeal and generosity. A key passage for the phlegmatic is:

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).



Practical Applications in Christian Life

Knowing our temperament and that of others helps us improve our relationships and advance in the spiritual life. Some practical applications include:

- **In family life:** Understanding the temperament of each member helps us be more patient and educate with wisdom.
- **In prayer life:** We can adapt our spirituality according to our temperament, choosing devotions and practices that help us grow.
- **In evangelization:** Knowing how we communicate best helps us be more effective witnesses of the Gospel.

Conclusion

God has given each of us a unique temperament, but we are not called to remain in our weaknesses—we are called to be transformed by His grace. Holiness is not exclusive to one personality type; we are all called to conform ourselves to Christ.

Each of us has a particular path, but by knowing ourselves better and trusting in God, we can advance in virtue and draw ever closer to holiness.

May the Lord grant us the grace to know, accept, and transform ourselves according to His will. **Saints according to our temperament, but saints above all!**