

Sermon preached September 18, 2011  
Rev. Kerry McIntyre  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Duncan

**"Not wrong – just different!"**

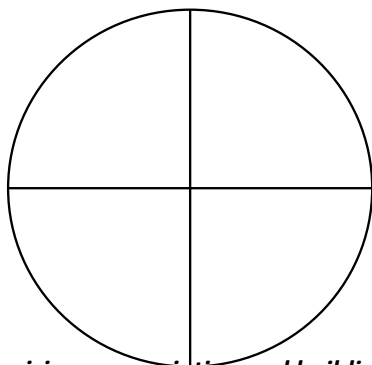
## I Corinthians 12: 12-27

St. Andrew's has, sadly, gone through a difficult season of disagreement and division within the fellowship, such that a number of folk have decided that they needed to withdraw from our church and go elsewhere. For many and especially those of us in leadership, this has been most difficult, hurtful and tragic – it certainly has been one of the hardest experiences I have ever gone through both professionally and personally.

This past weekend, the elders of our congregation together with the staff, shared together in a time of retreat – worshipping, praying, fellowshipping lamenting and struggling to understand the what and why of all that has happened within our fellowship. Praise God, the Lord was very present with us, and enabled us not only to console and encourage one another, but also to sense where God has been in all this and where the Lord may be leading in future days.

For part of the retreat, the Holy Spirit prompted me to do some teaching about spiritual types – how God has made us unique and different as human beings – we are fearfully and wonderfully made as the Psalmist puts it – and that includes our spirituality: how we understand God and work out our salvation and discipleship in life. The elders found this teaching helpful on several levels and encouraged me to share it in worship, so we're just going to leave Jonah in the belly of the big fish for the time being, and pick him up again next week!

Spiritual Types



***...recognizing, appreciating and building upon  
the uniqueness and variety of spiritual types  
God has formed in the Body***

The reason we need to talk about spiritual types is that we might recognize, appreciate and build upon the uniqueness and variety of spiritual types God has formed in the Body. It is the same as Paul's emphasis about the variety of gifts provided by the Spirit, all for the building up and strengthening of Christ's church. We are not all eyes, ears or big toes, either in spiritual gifts or in spiritual types.

But let me introduce this idea of spiritual types by talking first of all about personality types, something with which we are more likely to be familiar. We know that we are not all the same – human beings are remarkably different in personality. We know, for instance, that in terms of marriage, we often say that opposites

attract, and then drive each other crazy with their differences.

One of the most famous personality tests is the Myers-Briggs. Myers-Briggs use four different measures – think of a scale with opposites at either end and with every range of possibility in between. Sixteen different personality types are identified from these four measures.

The first scale looks at attitudes, and identifies the differences between the extrovert and the introvert. Extraverts, for instance, are *action* oriented, while introverts are *thought* oriented. Extraverts recharge and get their energy from spending time with *people*, while introverts recharge and get their energy from spending time *alone*. There are a number of differences, but this is key: one personality is not “right” while the opposite is “wrong.” They are simply different, unique, wonderfully and fearfully made.

The next two scales on the Myers-Briggs test are related to how we function in the world. The Sensing/Intuition or S/I scale looks at whether we operate primarily by what we can analyze using our physical senses – what I can see, hear, touch – or whether we are mostly intuitive and operate by “gut-feeling.” The T/F or Thinking/Feeling scale has to do with whether we make our decisions mostly from a cognitive or emotive basis.

The fourth scale is called the Lifestyle scale, and considers how we will have a preference for using either the *judging* function – the J element – (thinking or feeling) or our *perceiving* function – the P element – (sensing or intuition) when relating to the outside world. It’s been said you can always tell the “J’s” from the “P’s” by taking a group to a restaurant. The “J’s” are the folk who barely open the menu – they know before they sit down what they want to eat. The “P’s” are the folk who read the menu from front to back three times and still have to wait until everyone else has ordered before they can make up their mind. But again, let me stress, one personality style or type is not better than others; one is not right or wrong; we are just different.

Myers-Briggs is the most famous personality test and the one used largely in business and education. I prefer John Trent’s “Crittter” personality test in which he suggests there are four main types of personalities. There are, Trent proposes, the lions or natural born leaders; the otters for whom life is all fun; the golden retrievers who are compassion personified; and finally the beavers, who are the detail people. And of course, there are endless kinds of hybrids in between.

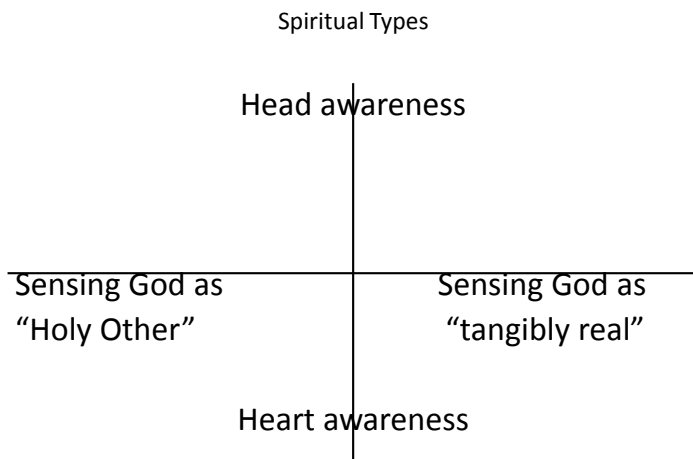
Or think about Gary Chapman’s helpful description of the five different ways in which we give and receive love. His book, *The Five Love Languages* is one of the most helpful resources, not only for couples, but parents and for anyone in a significant relationship, in terms of helping us discover how best to listen to one another, speak and interact with one another, and bless one another. Chapman’s five love languages, of course are: Touch, Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Gifts, and Deeds of Service. We all of us give and receive love in different ways, different languages. None is wrong – just different.

## Personality Types

***Opposites attract...  
then  
drive each other crazy***

We can talk about our different spirituality types in the same sense of different personality types or differing love languages. God is endlessly creative in how he makes us.

The classical identification of spiritual types begins with identifying two different scales or axis. The first, the vertical axis, has to do with how we apprehend or sense God. Some of us comprehend or encounter God primarily from an intellectual position. We are head



people. We sense the world and we sense the Lord mostly with a head awareness; we think about God or apprehend God with our mind. At the other end of the spectrum are the heart people, who sense God intuitively. We primarily "feel" the presence of the Lord, and are, for instance, less likely to encounter God in scripture, and more likely to be sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and experience.

The horizontal axis has to do with how we "picture" and thus respond to God. The one end of the scale would be those of us who sense God as tangibly real and present. The Lord is in this place. We tend to use quite concrete, human images and language to describe the presence of God. Those of us at the other end of the scale tend to emphasize God as the "Holy Other" and would focus on the vastness of God. There is an unknowable-ness about the Almighty; while God may reveal himself to us, we can never fully know or grasp his majesty. Think of the comment that trying to get God into my little brain would be like trying to get the Pacific Ocean into a teacup. God is too big, too much of a mystery.

Let me put the two axes together and go over the four ends once again, then add in some scripture references to more fully identify the differences. The one end of the vertical scale, about how we apprehend or sense God, is the intellectual, the head awareness. Those of us who are more at this end of the scale will resonate with scriptures like David's words to his son in I Chronicles 28:9: *and you, my son, Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with whole hearted devotion and with a willing mind*. Or we would grasp onto Paul's admonition to Timothy about the importance of coming to a knowledge of the truth. Or think of the familiar encouragement from Proverbs 3 that *blessed is he who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding* (vs 13).

At the other end of the scale, we are more "heart-aware" than "head-aware" people. So for us, we would intuitively understand the words of Ezekiel about God giving us a new heart and new spirit. Or we would understand what Paul was declaring to the Corinthians when he said it wasn't his wisdom and words that led to their conversion, rather the demonstration of the Spirit's power. Heart people find joy in the promise of the Holy Spirit in Joel and the story of that fulfillment in Acts, or when we sing the old hymn, "He lives!" we really mean it from "down here" in our soul when we say, "you ask me how I know he lives?"

He lives within my heart.”

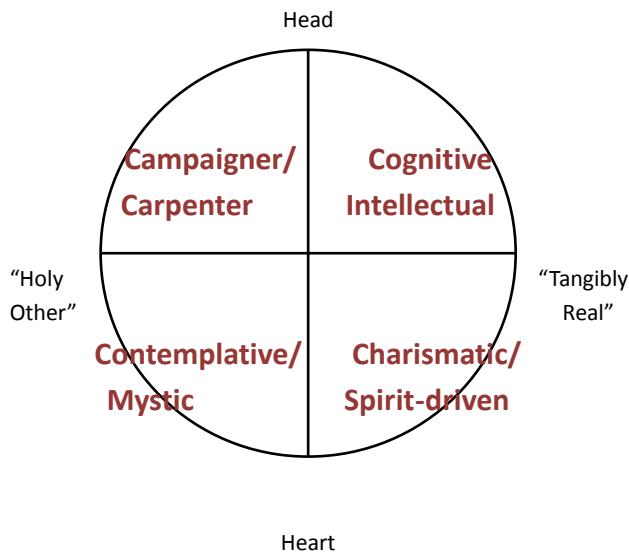
Again, look at the horizontal axis, how we “picture” or image and comprehend God. At the one end are those who sense God as the “Holy Other.” God is undefinable mystery who can’t be reduced to simple description. So those of us at this end of the scale can echo the words of awe from the Psalmist about this God whose glory is declared by the heavens while the earth proclaims his handiwork (Psalm 19:1) or who wraps himself in light as a garment (Psalm 104:2). The story of God revealing himself to Isaiah in the temple (chapter 6), or of God confronting Job in chapter 38 of that book, or the pictures of heaven in Revelation 5 all evidence the indescribable wonder and other-ness of God.

At the tangibly real end of the scale, however, we tend to use very concrete, human terms to describe our sense of God; not in any way as if to reduce God, but rather to describe the nearness of God and point to the comfort, hope and strength that is ours because of the presence of the Lord with us. God is not distant, but is “with us.” Psalm 18 therefore speaks of the Lord with those wonderful metaphors of rock, refuge, fortress, strength, shield, deliverer, salvation. That is why Psalm 23 is so beloved as we think of how

the Lord is indeed our shepherd, who cares for us, and showed himself, in Jesus, to be indeed our good shepherd.

So, two different scales: head and heart, tangibly real and holy other, and they form as it were, four distinct quadrants in which we may find ourselves.

The upper right quadrant is what I call the Cognitive or Intellectual quadrant; the lower right is the Charismatic; the lower left is the Contemplative or Mystic quadrant and the upper left I’ve called the Campaigner or Carpenter quadrant.



So four different ways we apprehend and live out primary response to God. Let me describe these a bit more fully, and maybe you can begin to sense which quadrant feels like home, feels like you.

If I was to suggest a theme verse for the Cognitive or intellectual quadrant, it would be Romans 12:2 – *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.* We who are primarily in this quadrant people focus above all on the Word, on scripture and we are drawn to theology. We’re the folk who will always be in Bible studies and find ourselves nourished and filled by the preaching of the Word – that is meat and potatoes for us. Psalm 1:2 names it well that *our delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law we meditate day and night.* Sometimes it can be said of us that we tend to worship God from the neck up, but we especially want to fulfill the command to love God with all our mind.

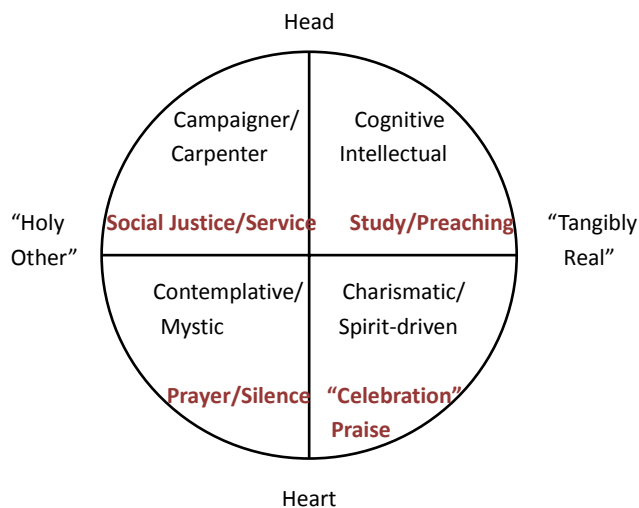
The lower right quadrant is what I call the Charismatic or Spirit-driven soul. Our theme

verse would be Ephesians 5:18 in which Paul urges his readers to be filled with the Spirit, and the term he uses really translates *be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit*. Because it is more our heart or our spirit with which we respond to God – we are the folk who aren't so much interested in learning more information about God, we are desperate for an encounter with God. We're the folk who can say with the psalmist that *as the deer pants for streams of water, our soul pants for God. Our souls thirst for God, the living God. O where can we go and meet with God?* (42:1-2) We're the people who crave for the Spirit of God to touch and move in power over us. It's not that we just want a religious experience – we want God. It is what Paul meant when he said to the Philippians that he wanted to *know Christ and to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings* (4:10). So those of us in this quadrant will be moved less by preaching and more by praising God; we'll be moved to tears as we worship and sing of God's majesty. We're the ones who will worship with not just voice but our whole body; we want to dance with David before the glory of the Lord, and we want to fulfill the command to love God with all our heart.

The lower right quadrant represents those of us who are more in the contemplative or mystic tradition. The theme verse of this quadrant could be either Psalm 46:10 – *be still and know that I am God* – or else Psalm 62:1 – *my soul finds rest in God alone*. We are the folk over here who are drawn especially to prayer, to silence, to waiting and meditating before the Lord with anticipation and longing. Most of the great intercessors and prayer warriors are over in this quadrant; it represents all those folk who can spend hours in quiet prayer and come away absolutely refreshed and energized. Like those in the Charismatic quadrant, we long for an ever deeper intimacy with God, but rather than sensing the power of the Spirit of God over us, we yearn for the presence of the Spirit of God deep in us – it is sometimes called longing for union with God – think of Paul telling the Corinthians in his second letter (12:4) about being caught up to the third heaven where he heard inexpressible things. Contemplatives are those who want to fulfill the command to love God with all their soul.

James 2:18 represents well the upper left quadrant which I call the Campaigner/Carpenter. That verse is James' famous dictum: *show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead*. Those

of us in this quadrant work out and express our faith with gumboots and soup ladles and protest letters and in whatever practical way God puts to our hand. I especially want to emphasize how valid and holy and good this quadrant is as a spiritual type, because often in the church we've tended to praise the Marys and disrespect the Marthas. Jesus never did. Never forget that Jesus was a carpenter. Think of how many of his parables featured ordinary folk



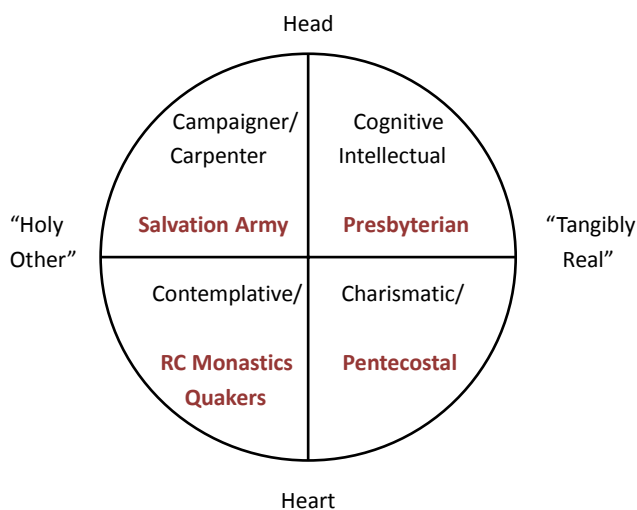
and the stuff of daily, practical living: shepherds and farmers, stewards and tax collectors, housewives and servants.

No, this quadrant of folk who care about serving others and doing social justice is every bit as significant a means of spiritual response to God as the other three. We're not the folk you will find in the Bible study or on the praise team or in the prayer meeting. We're the folk in the kitchen and Sunday School classroom, down helping at the Basket Society or conducting a letter writing campaign against the ills of poverty and homelessness. We're the folk who come out to every work bee, who quietly clean the parking lot of garbage every week, who take broken chairs home and weld them up again, who not only have a heart for the folk around them who are struggling in difficult times but also make sure that there is money in the Good Samaritan fund.

We're the ones who never think much about Jesus' words of commendation in Matthew 25 for those who ensured the hungry were fed and the thirsty given drink, the stranger was welcomed and the naked were clothed, the sick were cared for and the prisoner

visited, because we're too busy doing those things as the natural expression of our desire to fulfill the command to love God with all our strength.

Let me draw us to the spiritual types matrix one more time. You may well have already guessed, but to a certain extent, you can see some denominational emphases in this as well. These are broad generalizations, because of course, all denominations will include elements of all four quadrants, but tend to predominate in one.



Presbyterians are – could you guess it?? – people who tend to be especially strong up in the Cognitive Intellectual quadrant. In ecumenical circles, we are well known for being people of the book, people who know their scriptures and know their theology. We're head people.

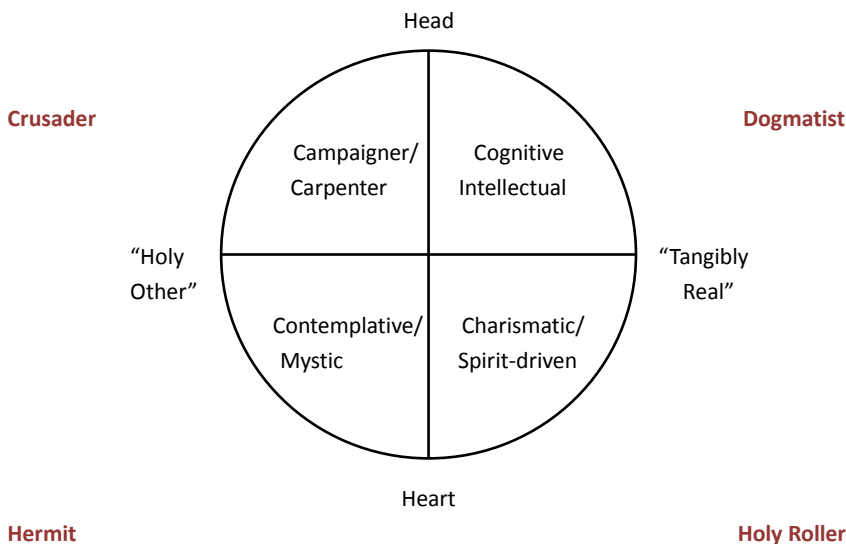
Pentecostals are, naturally, especially representative of the Charismatic quadrant. They are the heart people. The monastic tradition in Roman Catholicism but also the Quaker and English Puritan tradition are very much rooted in Contemplative tradition, while the Campaigner/Carpenter or service and social justice tradition has been profoundly fulfilled by the Salvation Army.

Here I need to say it again – not wrong, just different. Praise be to God for the diversity in the Body of Christ. Praise be to God for the richness of ways in which we sense and respond to who the Lord is. I've often said that St. Andrew's is sort of a Presby-Baptist church. That is, there are many of the elements from all of these quadrants that shape who this people of God is.

Folks, is this making sense to you? Can you begin to identify your spiritual type from these descriptions, or more likely see how in fact there is a little bit of all these types in you.

Some of us may be heavily oriented towards the Cognitive, others to the Contemplative, or Charismatic, or Campaigner/Carpenter. Again, let me emphasize – one type or mix is not wrong compared to others. We are fearfully and wonderfully made and each of us is called to work out our salvation and our discipleship in fear and trembling, and in the unique giftedness God has provided.

Now, here is where I do need to suggest where problems can occur, and they are related to what I call issues of spiritual imbalance and disrespect. Again, look at our basic diagram of spiritual types. Most of us, as I said, will likely be predominate in one quadrant



but still with significant aspects from the others. But sometimes, we get so far out on the extremes of the quadrants that we risk becoming spiritual out of balance where we can no longer recognize, affirm and respect others who are different from us. We become so convinced of the rightness or superiority or value of our position and posture that we, ignorantly and arrogantly, despise and degrade sisters and brothers who are

positioned differently before the Lord.

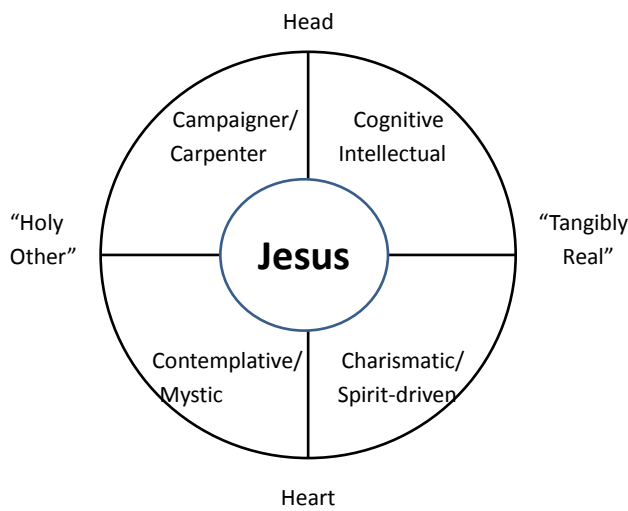
The danger for us in the Cognitive quadrant is that we can become dogmatic – so convinced at the necessity of everyone sharing our precise doctrinal views that we do not or will not recognize the heart of love for Jesus in anyone else. In a sense, doctrine, or at least the doctrines for which absolute adherence is demanded, has become an idol. Sadly, it is some of that dynamic which has happened this year here in St. Andrew’s.

In contrast, the danger for those of us in the Charismatic quadrant is that we become the proverbial “Holy Rollers” who as one poet suggests, crave the sensation but not the source. Some of the extremes of the Toronto Blessing Church, for instance, could be an example. It could be manifest in the attitude that if you don’t speak in tongues or raise your hands in worship you aren’t a real Christian.

The imbalance for the Contemplative is that we lose touch with others. We become the hermit, so immersed in our solitude with God that we pridefully isolate ourselves from the world to which God calls us to serve in love. And the hazard for the Campaigners/Carpenters is that we become the impatient “take-no-prisoners” crusaders for our holy cause of the day or else become the self-pitying martyr who laments that nobody else cares and shares in the work to be done.

Any of the extremes loses sight of the wholeness and balance that I believe is represented above all by Jesus who alone, we might say, was the perfect spiritual type. It is

Jesus for whom the Word was food and drink, who perfectly knew and obeyed God's command. It is Jesus who was filled with the Spirit from his baptism through all his ministry and who gifts us with himself through the Spirit. It is Jesus who spent hours and days in quiet, solitary communion with the Father that he might be perfectly refreshed and equipped to serve as messiah. And it is Jesus who above all went about teaching and proclaiming good news, doing good works in healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and strength to crippled, making clean the lepers and setting free those oppressed by demons, raising the dead and at last giving himself wholly unto death that you and I might be forgiven, redeemed and



given the hope of everlasting life. It is Jesus in whom we see the perfect balance of loving God with all his mind, all his heart, all his soul and all his strength.

Friends, this has been a long teaching time, but in a sense, I needed to give the whole picture for it to make sense. I hope it has been helpful.

But here is the final picture, and it is the invitation to each of us to be always growing in the fullness of our understanding of God and in our response to God. May the Lord ever stretch us, challenge us and grow us, even to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen.

