

We all love the same God, so why don't we get along? And what can we do about it?
by Nancy Moran

That is the question I had and started exploring answers three years ago. We all have good intentions --- we really want to love our neighbor, and well, we do. But loving them and really understanding them are two different things. Plus, we are supposed to be setting an example for our young people. We are the leaders they look up to. So, what can we do to improve our understanding of ourselves and others – and more easily love one another?

One way I learned is by identifying behavioral styles. The model that is very effective is the Biblical Personal Profile System. By selecting a few word choices, we can learn what our preferred style is and ultimately learn why we act (and react) the way we do, the behavioral strengths we have and how to capitalize on them, how we communicate with others, how we make decisions, how others perceive us, and how to more easily get along with people who are different than us.

The four styles are:

D = Dominance; i = Influence; S = Steadfast; and C = Conscientious

Once we identify our style, we can explore additional information. For example, a “D” person is focused on results, accepts challenges, makes quick decisions, may question the status quo, takes authority easily, and likes to solve problems. A role model from the Bible might be Paul, who was direct, pioneering and analytical. He desired unique accomplishments and control of self-selected projects. God provided him direct instructions and opportunity to be a church pioneer.

An “i” person likes being with people, usually makes a favorable impression, creates a motivational environment, generates enthusiasm, and views people and situations optimistically. A role model for this style might be Peter, who was enthusiastic, social and dynamic. He wanted recognition and a variety of status symbols. God publicly rewarded him and allowed flexibility in how he did things.

An “S” person likes consistency, is patient, likes to develop specialized skills, desires to help others, shows loyalty, and is a good listener. Abraham might be an appropriate role model for this style. He was patient, stable and concerned for others. God allowed him to work at his own speed and was supportive to Sarah.

The “C” person shows attention to high standards and concentrating on details, thinks analytically, is diplomatic with people, uses subtle or indirect approaches to conflict, and checks for accuracy. A deliberate, precise, diplomatic Biblical role model might be Moses. His goal was predictable accomplishments. God gave Moses clear explanations and answered all his questions.

Do you recognize yourself – or someone you know? So with such differences and varied preferences, how are we to follow Jesus' words in I Corinthians 13:4-8, the “love” chapter? It isn't easy for everyone to be patient, kind, not rude or proud, not easily angered; to always protect, trust, hope, and persevere. Don't we sometimes feel like love does fail, even with our good intentions?

Some helpful hints may be to consider the following:

In dealing with a “D” person, don't take what they say personally, respond to their questions, and know they have a desire to lead and win.

With an “i” person, talk with them about their feelings, publicly acknowledge their contributions, and provide an opportunity for their enthusiasm and motivational spirit to shine.

With a person who demonstrates “S” behavior, understand they want a well thought-out plan and any change to be introduced slowly. They may comply just to prevent a conflict; and share with them in an understanding way.

A “C” person is the one who will generally enjoy working with numbers, analyzing situations, and is a good diplomat. Acknowledge the care they take in their work and projects.

Sometimes we have to “stretch” our natural behavior. But in doing so, we are perceived as easy to get along with, a good communicator, and a person who is truly capable of accepting people as they are. This will ultimately lead to setting a better example for other adults, for young people, and for the world we are trying to reach for Christ.

Of course, the best example of this is Jesus. He talked with everyone in terms they understood, for example the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, the leper and the blind man. He understood how to communicate with them with the ultimate goal of sharing God’s love for them.

So when He told us to love one another, He knew there would be people who come into our lives with whom we don’t see eye to eye. But He also gave us knowledge and the ability to understand. And the more we understand about ourselves and others, the better we can get along with others, and ultimately be more like Him.

Next time you find yourself in a situation where you and another person don’t seem to be “clicking”, stop and think, “They are different from me; if I try to understand them better, I can adapt my style to accommodate theirs – and really love them, like God commanded.”

Nancy Moran & Associates is a full-service training company, specializing in human behavior. Nancy’s experience has proven beneficial in training teens and pre-teens, parents of teens, and youth leaders, as well as educators. She worked with Strategic Focus Cities/Celebrate Jesus 2000 and is actively involved in the Character Counts! program in her community. She can be reached at 630/372-8984 or toll-free at 866/372-8984.