

# Weaknesses of Temperaments

## The Sanguine

When studied carefully, the boundless activity of the Sanguine temperament proves to be little more than restless movement. He is often impractical and disorganized. His emotional nature can get him instantly excited and, before really analyzing the entire picture, will have him running off "half-cocked" in the wrong direction. He does not often make a good student because of this spirit of restlessness. This carries over into his spiritual life, where he finds it difficult to concentrate on reading the Word of God. His lifelong pattern of restless activity in the long run usually proves unproductive. The Sanguine person seldom lives up to his potential. Frequently his life is spent running from one tangent to another, and unless disciplined, is not lastingly productive.



RESTLESS



WEAK-WILLED

Mr. Sanguine usually gets by on the power of his dynamic personality. But that dynamic personality is often a facade that covers a weak character. His greatest basic problem is that he is weak-willed and undisciplined. If Mr. Sanguine would discipline himself, there would be no limit to his potential in life.

He is a great one to start things and never finish them. If approached to take

a Sunday School class or position in the church, his instant response is "yes." Thinking the matter through in the light of his time, abilities, and other responsibilities is not a part of his make-up. He loves to please. He does not know his limitations, and although he functions well as a "front man" for a group, without the stimulus of the group he finds it very difficult to methodically do the necessary preparatory work.

Without meaning to do so, he easily forgets his resolutions, appointments, and obligations. He cannot be depended upon to keep a time schedule or meet deadlines.

Perhaps the most dangerous result of his weak will is seen in the fact that he is prone to modify his moral principles to his surroundings and contemporaries. He is not a man of resolution or loyalty.



EGOTISTICAL

Mr. Sanguine's pleasing personality, which often makes him appear more mature in his youth than his contemporaries, gives him a prominent position early in life that can magnify his natural egotism. He can go overboard and become obnoxious by dominating, not just the major part of the conversation, but all of it. He also, through the years, has a tendency to talk more and more about himself and be occupied with things of interest to himself and think others are equally interested in them.



EMOTIONALLY UNSTABLE

The emotional instability of Mr. Sanguine can be seen in Dr. Hallesby's statement, "He is never far from tears." This is true, in spite of the fact that he is the "enjoying temperament." He discourages easily and can drift into a pattern of excusing his weaknesses or feeling sorry for himself.

His warm nature can produce spontaneous anger, and in a sudden outburst he can "fly off the handle." However, after he has exploded he will forget all about it. He is the type of person that fits the cliché often heard, "He never gets ulcers, he just gives them to everyone else." This emotional instability makes him feel

genuinely sorry for his explosive outburst, and he will readily apologize. In the spiritual realm Mr. Sanguine is often found repenting for the same thing over and over again.

No one type of temperament has a greater problem with lust than does that of Mr. Sanguine. Since he is emotionally receptive, he can be tempted more easily than other types, but he is also equipped with a weak will that finds him frequently giving in to this temptation. His ability to live in the present is a danger in this regard, since he has a tendency to think more of the immediate temptation than of the wife and children at home. One of the things he should seek by the Spirit's guidance is the gift of "temperance" or "self-control." He should obey the Scriptural injunction to "flee youthful lust" and "make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof." Like the other three temperaments, Mr. Sanguine's greatest need is the filling of the Holy Spirit. The basic spiritual needs of the Sanguine temperament are "temperance or self-control, long-suffering, faith, peace and goodness."

## The Choleric

The admirable characteristics of Mr. Choleric carry with them some serious weaknesses. The most prominent are his hard, angry, impetuous, self-sufficient traits.

Mr. Choleric has a serious emotional deficiency. Christian compassion is foreign to his nature, and he tends to be thick-skinned and unsympathetic toward other people, their dreams, accomplishments, and needs. He has a tendency to look on the sympathetic response of the Sanguine as "sentimental drive!"



Much of the energy that propels the

Choleric toward the attainment of his goal is generated from his hot-tempered disposition. He can become violently angry, and even after exploding his wrath upon those objects of his displeasure will continue carrying a grudge. He has been known to be very revengeful, going to almost any lengths to repay someone for an injustice done him. This angry disposition causes him much discomfort in life and can make him an undesirable person to be around. Physically he is prone to

## HOT-TEMPERED

nurse an ulcer before he is forty years of age, and spiritually he grieves the Holy Spirit through bitterness, wrath and anger.

## CRUEL



There is a strange streak of sheer cruelty in Mr. Choleric that causes him to run roughshod over the feelings and rights of others in his effort to achieve his purpose. Unless he is given a strong moral standard, he will not hesitate to break the law or resort to any crafty means necessary to succeed. Many of the world's most depraved criminals and dictators have been Cholerics.

Mr. Choleric's ability to be decisive also produces an impetuous tendency that causes him to get into trouble and launch programs that he is later sorry for. However, because he is so proud, he stubbornly and tenaciously sees them through. It is very difficult for him to apologize, and many times he will blurt out cruel, blunt, and sarcastic statements that are very cutting. It is difficult for him to show approval, and in marriage this is often one of the causes of heartache on the part of his companion. He may have so much self-control that even in his hottest fits of anger he will not strike his wife but instead use the more devastating club of disapproval. There is nothing more devastating to a person's self-respect than being disapproved of by the person he loves most.



## IMPETUOUS

Mr. Choleric's strong tendency toward independence and self-confidence makes him a very self-sufficient individual. A few stages of success can make him very proud, haughty, and domineering to the point where he becomes obnoxious. In spite of his capabilities, these tendencies become boring to other people and, by contrast, gives them the frustrating feeling



## SELF-SUFFICIENT

that they can never please him.

Unless he surrenders his life to Christ while a child, it is probably more difficult to reach a Choleric person spiritually than any other in adulthood. His spirit of self-sufficiency carries over into the spiritual realm, and he does not feel that he needs man nor God. He has a tendency to look at his accomplishments as good deeds that will more than outweigh his bad deeds performed on the way to accomplishing his goals. Even after conversion to Christ, he has a difficult time realizing that he must depend upon the Lord. When he tries to read the Bible and pray, his active mind easily leaps to planning his day's activity, and somehow, unless he is deeply impressed by the Spirit of God and sees the power of the supernatural, he looks on a regular devotional life as being somewhat impractical and a waste of his time. Of all the temperaments, he probably has the greatest number of spiritual needs, which are love, peace, gentleness, long suffering, meekness and goodness.

## The Melancholy

The self-centered traits of the Melancholy temperament are superbly described by Dr. Halesby, and for that reason I quote his entire description. "He is surely more self-centered than any of the other temperaments. He is inclined to that kind of self-examination, that kind of self-contemplation which paralyzes his will and energy. He is always dissecting himself and his own mental conditions, taking off layer after layer as an onion is peeled, until there is nothing direct and artless left in his life; there is only his everlasting self-examination. This self-examination is not only unfortunate, it is harmful. Melancholies usually drift into morbid mental conditions. They are concerned not only about their spiritual state; they are also unduly concerned about their physical condition. Everything that touches a melancholic is of prime importance to him, hence no other type can so easily become a hypochondriac."\*



This self-centered trait in the Melancholy, if not corrected, can actually ruin his entire life. Combined with his sensitive nature, his self-centeredness makes it very easy for him to be offended or insulted. He literally "carries his feelings on his sleeve." He is prone to be suspicious, given over to "evil surmises." If two people are talking in hushed tones, he is almost certain to jump to the conclusion that they are talking about him. This type of thinking can lead, in severe cases, to a persecution complex.



## PESSIMISTIC

Because of his perfectionist and analytical traits, Mr. Melancholy is prone to be pessimistic. He not only can see the ultimate end of a project, but what is more real to him, all of the problems that will be encountered. Many times these problems, in his mind, far outweigh the good accomplished in the whole endeavor. Not only that, he is sure that the end result will not be nearly as good as promised, and since he has been disappointed in the past, he is sure to be disappointed again.

This pessimistic outlook makes him indecisive and fearful of making decisions because he doesn't want to be wrong and fall short of his own perfectionist standards.

No one can be more critical than the Melancholy. He has the tendency to be unyielding in his expectations of other human beings and cannot happily take less than their very best. Many a perfectionist has ruined a normally good marriage because his partner measured up to only 90 percent of what was expected of her. The small part of error is looked at through his magnifying glass of perfectionism, and instead of seeing all the good, he sees an amplification of the bad. This criticism, if not spoken, is often conveyed through a proud, haughty, sometimes arrogant attitude because he looks upon people who do not share his perfectionist standards as being inferior. It should be borne in mind that he is just as critical of himself as he is of other people.

When it comes to marriage, the Melancholy often has a most difficult time making the decision to take the "fatal plunge." He is prone to "idealize" a woman from a distance,

and then when he gets to know her, as lovely as she may be, he finds that she is only a human being and has her weaknesses. Many times a Melancholy will actually love the woman in spite of her weaknesses but hesitate to marry her because of them. Dr. Hallesby states, "A great many men are unmarried simply because they are Melancholic. They themselves may think that they are Melancholy because they are bachelors." The truth of the matter is they are probably bachelors because they are Melancholy.

No one manifests a greater mood change than does the Melancholy. On occasions he will be found at high emotional peaks of exuberance, but these are usually the exception and not the rule.

More frequently, Mr. Melancholy will be found (when not energized by the Holy Spirit) to be very gloomy, depressed or going through a period of great despair. It is this common tendency that caused Hippocrates to think of him as the "black" fluid type.



MOODY

This moodiness causes a vicious circle. Even those who like him when he is "acting like himself" will become annoyed or

disgusted with him when, for seemingly no reason, he is going through a gloomy period. They will consequently avoid him, and his sensitive nature will immediately pick this up and plunge him into greater depths of gloom. This one trait alone can wreck the entire life of a Melancholy person unless he turns to Jesus Christ for the joy and peace that He alone can give. This moodiness is often the result of his self-centered thinking pattern, which must be changed to produce a healthy mind and make it possible for his rich and capable nature to produce its maximum potential. The gloomy moods of Mr. Melancholy often lead him into a habit of escaping present reality through the practice of day-dreaming. Because he is so dissatisfied with the imperfect present, he has a tendency to look back on the past, which becomes more pleasant the farther it gets from him. When he tires of thinking of the past, he dreams of the wonderful future. This type of thinking that lets him escape from reality is most dangerous indeed! It not

only paralyzes his will and energy, but can lead to schizophrenia.

A Melancholy person should earnestly seek the Holy Spirit's help in getting his eyes up off himself and onto the "whitened harvest field" of needy people around him. One of the most dynamic illustrations of the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is to see a gloomy, moody, Melancholy person transformed by God's grace and armed with the Great Commission so that he has a lofty purpose for living that directs his conscious thinking toward others rather than himself.

Another characteristic of the Melancholy temperament is that he is prone to be revengeful. In himself he finds it very difficult to forgive an affront or an insult.



REVENGEFUL

Although he appears on the surface to be calm or quiet, many times there is turbulent hatred and animosity burning within. He may never put it into action, as would a Choleric, but he may harbor this animosity and desire for revenge for many years.

This unforgiving spirit and seeking for revenge sometimes outweighs his brilliant deductive ability and causes him to make decisions on the basis of prejudice. He may seek to destroy a very worthwhile project with which he is basically in agreement, merely because the person leading the project has at some time in the past offended him. Although he does not generally erupt into violent anger, if animosity is harbored long enough, it may cause him to lose complete control of himself in a fit of rage.

Now that we have seen both the strengths and weaknesses of the Melancholy temperament, our attention is drawn to an interesting fact. The temperament with the greatest strengths and potential is also accompanied by what seems to be the largest of potential weaknesses. This may account for a personal observation that there are very few "average" Melancholies. That is, a Melancholy person will utilize his strengths to the point that he stands above his fellows or he will be dominated by his weaknesses and sink beneath the level of his fellows, giving himself over to becoming a neurotic, disconso-

late, or hypochondriac-type individual that neither enjoys himself nor is enjoyed by others.

Melancholy people should take great consolation in the fact that many of the most outstanding men in the Bible were predominantly Melancholy. The success, however, of all these men was that they "believed God." Faith in Christ lifts a person beyond his own temperament to the point that he lives the "new life in Christ Jesus." The primary needs of the Melancholy are love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, and self-control.

## The Phlegmatic

The outstanding weakness of Mr. Phlegmatic is that he is prone to be slow and lazy. He often appears to be "dragging his feet," because he resents having been stimulated to action against his will, so he goes along just as slowly as he can.



SLOW & LAZY

and the activity of the Choleric often annoy him because he is afraid they may motivate him to work.

Because of his keen sense of humor and his ability to be a detached observer, he finds it easy to use his witty ability to tease others that annoy him or threaten to motivate him.



TEASE

the world, the Phlegmatic becomes more optimistic than ever and teases him beyond endurance. If a Choleric enters, brimful of his plans and projects, it is an exquisite pleasure for the Phlegmatic to throw cold water on his enthusiasm and with his

level-headedness and keen understanding it is an easy matter for him to point out the weaknesses of the Choleric's proposition."

If he chooses he can even use his humor and wit as a decisive tool to get others all stirred up and angry while he himself never loses his composure or becomes excited.



STUBBORN

Mr. Phlegmatic often exhibits the weakness of selfishness. This trait often becomes more apparent through the years, for he learns to protect himself.

He frequently finds himself in stubborn opposition to change of any kind. His reason is that it will get him too involved. He wants to be conservative, particularly in conserving of his own energies.

As he matures, he can often learn to disguise his stubbornness through his easy-going good humor, while becoming even more stubborn. Each time he is forced by the activity of others into projects and activities that turn out poorly, he becomes even more resistive to future suggestions. This stubbornness has a tendency also to make him stingy and selfish, for his first thought usually is, "What is this going to cost me?" or "What will this take out of me?" Although selfishness is a basic weakness of all four temperaments, Mr. Phlegmatic is probably cursed with the heaviest dose.



INDECISIVE

Mr. Phlegmatic often becomes more indecisive through the years, caused basically by his reticence to become "involved." His practical insight and calm, analytical ability can usually find a better method for doing something, but by the time he comes up with it, one of the activists already has the group moving on their program. Therefore, he only half-heartedly enters in, in proportion to what he feels is required of him, because down in his heart he feels his plan is better.

Another thing that makes him indecisive is that even though he can analyze a situation and come to a practical method for achieving it, he will often weigh the method against whether

or not he wants to get that "involved." Thus he is prone to vacillate between wanting to do something and not wanting to pay the price. This indecisive practice can soon become a deep-rooted habit that outweighs his naturally practical turn of mind.

The primary needs of the Phlegmatic are love, goodness, meekness, temperance and faith.