

L D – Discovering Leadership Gifting – Background Survey

Family Atmosphere Survey

Circle "Yes" or "No" in answer to the following questions as they relate to your family of origin (this is for your own evaluation).

We all have "background noise and experiences" that affect how we experience life. We are all different with both wonderful and difficult experiences. As you answer these questions, for the "Child" column recollect your life as a pre-teen at about 12 years of age. How would you have responded based upon that time frame to each question. For the "Now" column consider how you would respond to these questions in the present tense in your family situation. Be as honest as possible.

Child Now

- 1) Y/N Y/N Did you often feel high amounts of tension & stress dealing with family members?
- 2) Y/N Y/N Did you feel you had to be extremely careful in how you responded to family members to avoid confrontation or physical/emotional outbursts?
- 3) Y/N Y/N Did some family members behave as if they were driven by inner tensions, urges, or desires?
- 4) Y/N Y/N Did people in your family act the way they did because they felt they had to maintain an image (not because they felt free to be themselves)?
- 5) Y/N Y/N Were any family members constantly critical of other family members?
- 6) Y/N Y/N Did you feel more accepted by family members when you were doing well than when you were not?
- 7) Y/N Y/N Did family members verbally attack each other when there was a conflict?
- 8) Y/N Y/N Was it sometimes hard to know what a family member was thinking or feeling by what he or she said?
- 9) Y/N Y/N Was there a dominant person in your family that others worked around?
- 10) Y/N Y/N Did you feel the need to go along with certain family members to keep the peace?
- 11) Y/N Y/N Did you feel uncomfortable to be yourself with your family members?
- 12) Y/N Y/N Did you feel uncomfortable to say what you felt or thought around family members?
- 13) Y/N Y/N Was your home a place you would not have chosen to go when you wanted to relax or have fun?
- 14) Y/N Y/N Did you sometimes get tense with the prospect of family gatherings at holidays or events?
- 15) Y/N Y/N Do you consider the atmosphere in the family you were brought up in to be either abnormal or less than normal?

_____ _____ **Totals**

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Now that you have completed the questionnaire, please count the number of questions to which you answered "Yes" in each column.

0-5 yes responses = Group 1 "Consistent Family" background – this group had love and discipline demonstrated and modeled fairly consistently and in a balance with discipline where the personal identity development is secure and love well modeled. People in this group will find it relatively easy to be open, trusting, and vulnerable with others, and consequently they'll tend to find it easier to trust others and extend love.

6-10 yes responses = Group 2 "Inconsistent Family" background – this group had love and discipline displayed in an inconsistent and unbalanced manner where personal identity developed amid an inconsistent standard. People in this group will find it more awkward to be open, trusting, and vulnerable with others, and consequently they will find it more difficult to trust and extend love.

11-15 yes responses = Group 3 "Confused Family" background – this group had love and discipline so inconsistently modeled that they developed a more confused identity in terms of love and vulnerability. People in this group will have greater difficulty being open, trusting, and vulnerable as their expectations of reciprocal responses are more confused.

What does this mean?

1. Depending on your family background you will have different expectations and emotional responses in your daily situations. You will have an idea of what you believe is "normal" or what "feels right" based upon your background. Many of us have woundings resultant from our past experiences, that distort our perceptions of ourselves and the world we live in. Consequently, those you interact with and desire greatest intimacy with such as your spouse, children and friends will often be affected by how you respond in areas where intimacy and trust are expected. Another consequence is that you will likely impose those expectations upon how you see God responding to you.
2. Depending on more recent events, you may have experienced changes that may have separated or even alienated you from your family. This may be a conscious or even an unconscious choice to remove the presence of obnoxious or even toxic personalities from your life. We often wonder if we're the problem when we're challenged as to why we don't participate more in our family situations. This may well be a defense mechanism that seeks to protect us from those we believe may hurt or wound us.

What can I do?

Understand that God has invited you into a new reality... it is His desire to transform you into a new way of relating, and you have been given a new identity in Christ. This means you don't have to remain a victim to your old identity. God has invited you into the love affair that exists among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Your new spiritual family is a Perfect Family, with a loving and caring, easy-going God who thinks you are wonderful. He sent His Son to die for you, and gave you the Holy Spirit as a down payment for the eternal life you can expect to enjoy with Him.

The value of this questionnaire is that you have more substance to help you understand and evaluate your life responses. You also have a choice as to whether you will continue where you are or reach for something better. Troubled pasts may prevent you from seeing God as He is, and especially from believing how God see you.

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In some cases there may be some toxic situations or people that you should probably distance yourself from. We are not intended to endure pain or abuse from those who should love and protect us, and seeking professional help is a wise approach toward healing.

Most churches have in house resources or referral services for helping people deal with their family backgrounds. Talk with your pastor if you desire help in moving closer to God who desires you to enjoy intimacy and acceptance. Many churches have coaches or counselors who may aid you in moving beyond the human woundedness we experience in our life.

Here are two resources you can pursue to move toward an integrated life of Spiritual and emotional health:

1. Becoming What God Intended - <http://whatgodintended.org/>
2. THEODYSSEY – Spiritual Formation Ministry - <http://theodyssey.org/>

These are two holistic processes toward personal health and Spiritual intimacy that I have personally benefitted from. They are designed to help people understand themselves and the effects of our life experiences, and then purposefully move toward wholeness in Christ. Each of us has a choice... do I remain conflicted struggling with self-doubts and condemnation? Or do I move toward the abundant life Jesus said He came to provide?

We pray God's blessing upon you as you move courageously toward healing and wholeness.