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## Should Christianity Be an Emotional Experience?

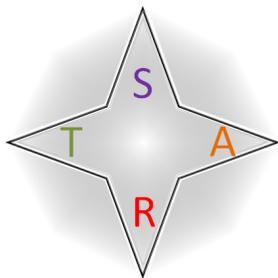
**Philippians 4:7:** (NASB) *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

There are many different approaches to Christian faith. Some of us find the basis of our faith in feeling Jesus present in our lives. Others of us find the basis of our faith in intellectual understanding and reasoning through the Scriptures. Still others of us thrive on the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ as the signature of our faith. Each would argue that their approach to faith is strong and sustaining. So, what does true Christianity really want from us? Are we supposed to always be excited, spiritually charged up and energized - or are we supposed to have a quiet and firm faith that might be characterized as strong and silent?

### What are the basic approaches to Christianity?

Back in 1998, Rick attended a communication and business development seminar taught by Jim Hoyt called "Release Your Brakes." His premise was that people are different and fall into four basic categories of approach to life, or combinations thereof. He used the acronym S.T.A.R. as a way to remember the personality types. This can help us uncover our strengths and weaknesses. Often we try to make Christianity fit into the mold of our lives, when in fact we ought to be making our lives fit into the mold of Christianity.

We will apply these to Christianity:



- *I read, study and absorb the message of the Gospel* **S = Stability**
- *I analyze, compare and contrast the hidden details of the Gospel* **T = Theory**
- *I observe, emulate and live the examples of the Gospel* **A = Action**
- *I follow Jesus and am energized by the love and inclusiveness of the Gospel!* **R = Relationship**

**Stability:** *A stability-oriented person must be dependable in our responsibilities and duties. We tend to see things in black and white, trust and value our roots and proven authority, and expect everyone to follow the guidelines, using the past as a guide into the future. Belonging is important to us and we enjoy organization, concrete facts, details and the proven reliability of a track record.*

**Theory:** *A theory-oriented person believes knowledge, learning and competence are of paramount importance. We tend to trust logic and reason above all, map out strategies for our growth and resolve conflicts logically and reasonably, avoiding emotionalism. We desire willpower and are precise in our speech and focus on long-term results. We love opportunities to learn, efficiency of communication and new insights to solve complex problems.*

**Action:** *Action-oriented people love beauty, variety and choices. We seek freedom to act, to make an impact, and to live with excitement and passion. We tend to recognize opportunity and sometimes in our optimism proceed on blind faith. We don't like to wait; we learn best through hands on experience, will try to find better ways to do things and will take risks to get things done. We like opportunities with concrete examples - not theories.*

**Relationship:** *Relationship-oriented people value harmony, morality and personal growth, are very potential oriented, willingly show appreciation and seek deeper meanings than material possessions can show. We need people's interaction, are on a quest for our own spirituality as well as that of others and are enthusiastic and intense. Developing people's potential, new ideas, involvement, cooperation, the meaning of life and ideals drive us.*

So which category or combination of categories are you? Let's give you a quick example. If four people are going to go on a hike, here is what might happen:

*Steve Stability will ask, "What time is it? How long until we get there? How long will the hike be? Do I have the right jacket and shoes?" He will make sure he has "all his ducks in a row."*

*Thelma Theory will think, "I wonder what kind of ferns will be alongside the pathway? What will I see during the walk that I can look at and appreciate?"*

*Action Arnie will be in the car but would have forgotten his jacket and will soon realize he didn't use the restroom before he left. But he is really excited to get up to the top.*

*Rhonda Relationship just wants to know who else is going!*



The Scriptures put this concept into perspective: [Mark 12:28-31](#): Look closely. This talks about loving the Lord four different ways: with your heart, with your soul, with your mind, and with your strength.

We are created in God's image, so which "STAR" is closest to the original?

 **What is the Born Again Experience? Valerie Tarico (psychologist)**

- *For many Christians, being born again is unlike anything they have ever known. A sense of personal conviction, yielding or release followed by indescribable peace and joy. This is the stuff of spiritual transformation. Once experienced, it is unforgettable, and many people can recall small details years later. Listen to these descriptions: I prayed harder and then I felt like everything I was saying was being sucked into a vacuum. When I stood up, I felt like I was in air. I had to brace myself. I felt this energy. It was a kind of ecstasy.*

So, is that how we get closer to God? [James 4:8](#) What are God's four attributes? God is: Justice, wisdom, power and love. Do they help us "see" God more easily?

- **STABILITY (JUSTICE)** *God is Just: Order, Rules, Strong Direction* [Psalms 89:13-14](#)
- **THEORY (WISDOM)** *God is Wise: Knowledge, Understanding, Prophetic* [1 Corinthians 1:19-21](#)
- **ACTION (POWER)** *God is Powerful: He knows and He does!* [Psalms 8:3](#)
- **RELATIONSHIP (LOVE)** *God is Loving: Relationship - Mercy, Compassion, Nurturing* [1 John 4:16](#)

So, that's what God is... now how do we "see" Him?

We are to love God four different ways. Could it have something to do with basic human personality traits? Remember, "to love" is not an adjective, it is a verb - it is something we do, not something we feel.

[Mark 12:30](#): (NASB) *and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*

- **STABILITY...all your soul** [Matthew 6:25](#)
- **THEORY...all your mind** [Mark 4:11-12](#)
- **ACTION...all your strength** [Matthew 6:33-34](#)
- **RELATIONSHIP...all your heart** [Matthew 5:8](#) [Matthew 6:21](#)

Is there a New Testament priority as to which "STAR" is most important?

 **Not only Christian, What is the Born Again Experience? Valerie Tarico (psychologist)**

- *This experience, more than any other, creates a sense of certainty about Christian belief and so makes belief impervious to rational argumentation. A believer knows what he or she has experienced. Evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Christianity that are gaining ground around the world particularly emphasize emotional peace, such as faith healing or speaking in tongues. Worshipers may get caught up in exuberant singing, shouting, dancing, and tears of joy. What most Christians don't know is that these experiences are not unique to Christianity.*

We need to overlay our experiences onto a scriptural basis.

[Romans 12:1-2](#): (KJV) <sup>1</sup>I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And be not conformed to this world: but *be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We have to continually feed upon the word of the Lord. So, the renewing process comes through our understanding - not purely our emotion - but the remaining items are needed as well! Our Christianity can start with what and who we are, but it should not end there.



We need to continue to mature and develop. This development may not come easily or naturally for many of us. Emotional Christianity is the beginning, not the end. We cannot stop at, "I'm saved;" there is more. Christianity asks, "What can you become?"

### Which "STAR" is the Gospel written for?

#### **What is the Born Again Experience? Valerie Tarico (psychologist)**

- *How can a Moonie, an encounter group participant and Christians sound so much the same? Because the "born again experience" doesn't require a specific set of beliefs - it requires a specific social-emotional process and the dogmas or explanations are secondary. Conversion is a process that begins with social influence. As sociologists like to say, our sense of reality is socially constructed.*

Even the Gospels were written to help us in the best way possible...

**STABILITY (Luke)** The most complete and linear history of Jesus' life. It has a very organized approach and records many parables not elsewhere recorded. Focuses on Jesus' prayer life more than the other gospels.

**THEORY (Matthew)** Written to give many Old Testament proofs of Jesus' Messiah-ship. Much of this book is chronological and focuses on Jesus as the King of the coming Kingdom.

**ACTION (Mark)** The shortest of the Gospel books. Focuses on Jesus' supernatural power as shown through his miracles. Mark records Jesus' actions more than his words, and this book contains graphic details and a rapid pace.

**RELATIONSHIP (John)** Written with a great deal of compassion so readers would believe that Jesus was the Son of God. John's focus was on the human touch.

So, the Gospel was written for ALL! What a surprise!

#### **Thought plus emotion is feeling, The Science of Miracles, Gregg Branden**

- *You know people who live strictly in their emotions and their lives can be a little chaotic. Emotions need to be focused, and this is where the power of thought or logic comes in. It is associated with the upper energy centers of the body. Thought is what gives focus or direction to the emotions. In other words, we have a thought about something, like a cloudy day outside. At the end of that thought, we pump, we fuel the power of the emotion - either our love of that rainy day or our fear of what that rainy day might bring to us. By doing so, when we marry the power of the emotion with the direction of the thought, by virtue of that, we create a feeling. So feeling by definition is the union of emotion and the thought.*

**Ephesians 4:14-15:** Being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine is symptomatic of "heart without head." We can feel okay but be way off because our thoughts are not truly anchored.

**Jesus' own example of grounded thinking:** **Matthew 4:1-11:** (KJV) <sup>1</sup>Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. <sup>2</sup>And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. <sup>3</sup>And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. <sup>4</sup>But he answered and said, **It is written (Theory),** Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Stability)** <sup>5</sup>Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said unto him, **It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Action)** <sup>8</sup>Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; <sup>9</sup>And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. <sup>10</sup>Then saith Jesus unto him, **Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Relationship)** <sup>11</sup>Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Satan was trying to hit him from all angles, thinking if Jesus were weak in one area...



**There are many Scriptures about protecting your heart - doesn't that mean it is the most important?**

Proverbs 4:23-27 Romans 1:21-25: God does not control what we think and feel; He allows us to have those things. But wait - we already established that the head is so critically important to build the heart upon. Why then all of the heart focus?

*Because it is weaker in its substance but more powerful in its influence!* That is why heart and head need to work together!

 **Saved, *What is the Born Again Experience?* Valerie Tarico (psychologist)**

- *Because of the positive energy created by the group, potential converts become unwitting participants in the influence process, actively seeking to make the group's ideas fit their own life history and knowledge. Factors that can strengthen the effect include sleep deprivation or isolation from a person's normal social environment. One example would be a late night campfire gathering with an inspirational storyteller and altar call at child evangelisms, Camp Good News. These powerful social experiences culminate in conversion, a peak experience in which new converts feel a flood of relief.*

If we just seek after the emotionalism, we are not seeking after Christianity but instead just a social/emotional experience. No emotion is greater than what Christ has to offer us. The heart can be rightly protected and exercised in several important ways: **To be forewarned is to be forearmed!** John 14:25-29 **Promise of spiritual care and protection:** 1 Corinthians 10:13 Philippians 4:7 **Prayer's power is verified through understanding:** Hebrews 4:14-16

**So, is there a secret to combining these approaches?**

 **The potential dark side, *What is the Born Again Experience?* Valerie Tarico (psychologist)**

- *Sensory deprivation, fasting, meditation, rhythmic drumming, or crowd dynamics have all been used systematically to elicit altered states in normal people. Since we humans are meaning makers to the core, such a powerful experience demands an explanation. But for most of human history, naturalistic explanations simply were unavailable. Down through the ages people have looked beyond this natural world to explain the inexplicable. These phenomena have been interpreted as gifts, revelations and personal communication from supernatural beings.*

We are not saying not to be involved in the emotional aspects of Christianity. We just need to make sure that it is properly balanced with the other half that is there to protect the emotional part. The higher and lower we go emotionally, the more likely we are to be destroyed by the Adversary.

The secret lies in the asking of several broad-based questions: **What is the quality of our words?** Psalms 52:4 **What is the deep emotional source of our words?** A "good" man is a balanced man: Luke 6:45 **What is the basis of our prayers?** Are they a balance of head and heart? Matthew 6:5-8: Reading and repeating, reading and repeating, reading and repeating ...symptomatic of head without heart. **Do we follow someone because of what they say or how they say it?** Colossians 2:1-4 **Do we adhere to a teaching because it is what we desire to hear or because it rings true regardless of how we "feel" about it?** 2 Timothy 2:14-16 **Try the spirits!** 1 John 4:1 **The God of Justice, Wisdom, Power and Love searches our hearts and tests our minds!** Jeremiah 17:9-10: If your heart and mind are not both engaged in your Christianity, you are not following through on what Christianity requires of you. Regardless of our personality, we should wrap our hearts around it and run with it with all of our energy.

***So should Christianity be an emotional experience...?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***