

Back when I was a kid, one of my favourite TV shows was a low budget Canadian show called The Littlest Hobo. This half hour show was about a stray German Shepherd, Hobo, who wanders from town to town, helping people in need. Sometimes Hobo would befriend a senior citizen, or maybe a paraplegic child, or maybe a forest ranger, but in each case, the dog sensed some underlying problem that always came to a head and was resolved in a half hour. Hobo always won the hearts of the people he helped, but despite the attempts of the many people whom he helped to adopt him, Hobo preferred to be on his own, and would head off by himself at the end of each episode.

The series lasted for six seasons and went off the air in 1985, the year I graduated, yet to this day, it remains fresh in my mind because of all the characters I have seen in all movies and shows, and of all the characters I wish I could emulate, I identify most with this helpful, stray dog. And to this day, when I head off on an adventure, the theme song to The Littlest Hobo remains my theme song.

There's a voice that keeps on calling me  
Down the road is where I'll always be  
Every stop I make, I'll make a new friend  
Can't stay for long, just turn around and I'm gone again.  
Down this road, that never seems to end,  
Where new adventure, lies just around the bend.  
So if you want to join me for a while  
Just grab your hat, come travel light – that's hobo style.  
Maybe tomorrow, I'll want to settle down,  
Until tomorrow, I'll just keep moving on.

I have always scored very high as a Type 7 in the Enneagram test, and when I re-took the test a couple weeks ago, that hasn't changed. Type 7 is six points ahead of my second dominant trait, which is Type 5, and that, in turn, is four points ahead of the next category. At the other end of the spectrum, the traits that rank at the bottom of my list have very low scores.

So who am I? Really? Simply going by the titles of my top and bottom categories gives you a good indication of what I am. My top three, from highest to lowest, I am, to the extreme,

an Enthusiast, an Investigator and a Challenger. And my bottom three, from lowest to highest, I am definitely not a Loyalist, a Helper or a Peacemaker.

My top two categories are Head categories. I live my life in my head, and my head is constantly bursting with ideas, most of which I never act on. Then, if I need more, I trust my gut; my intuition. My heart rarely enters the equation, except to befuddle me when things start to go really badly.

Ideas are good or bad, or right or wrong. So since I am not tempered by my feelings, I am an all or nothing type of person. Hot and cold. On and off. If I believe in something or someone or some idea, regardless of how crazy it sounds to others, I will throw all my energy into pursuing that thing, to the detriment of my health, reputation, employment, and sometimes personal relationships. And if I don't believe in something, or someone has hurt me, I have no problem completely cutting myself off from whatever that thing is.

I am intensely self-reliant, I make decisions based on ideas, and my end is to act on whatever I decide. I have a hard time with compromise, and the worst thing you can say to me is that something is "good enough". Not surprisingly, my biggest struggle has been with how to work with others. I know how to be social, and I have one or two close friends; Angela being one of them, but I am an intense introvert and get strength in my time alone.

Despite all this time thinking, I really have no idea who I am. In my mind, I can be anything. In my life, I have done many things from farming, to pastoring, to IT, to running a hostel in East Jerusalem, to sailing through a hurricane on my return trip from Antarctica. In a perfect world I wish I could be some sort of pacifistic version of Ethan Hawke or James Bond. But instead I satisfy myself with experiencing the types of things I might do as that person; such as sky diving or scuba diving. But to this day, the only time I really know who I am is when I am playing some other character in a play; simply because their lives are strictly defined.

So in the context of church, how can this kind of a personality possible have any merit?

The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the early church. In this story, Paul plays the central role in strongly encouraging the disciples to open their movement up to the Gentiles. But Paul begins the story as Saul, a devout Jew who is persecuting the early Christians. Saul has his

Damascus road conversion experience, renames himself Paul, and tries to join the disciples. But the disciples don't initially trust Paul. In Acts 9: 26-28 we read:

26 When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

The disciples don't trust Paul because they can't believe that he really changed. They don't allow for the possibility that a person can truly and completely change, so they think that Paul is trying to fool them. But Barnabas is open to the possibility that a person can change. Barnabas is our exemplary Type 7 who is future-oriented, and not crippled by the past. So Barnabas is able to see Paul for who he is at that moment, not who he was. Barnabas sees Paul as a changed man and becomes Paul's advocate.

This alone is not enough, but again, as Type 7, Barnabas has another natural talent. Barnabas has the gift of getting others excited about something. Barnabas is an enthusiastic advocate of Paul and is therefore able to change the minds of the disciples. Without a Barnabas, Paul may or may not have gained the trust of the disciples, and the church may or may not have succeeded as it did.

But the influence of Barnabas was not done. Once Paul joined the disciples, they faced the task of spreading the good news to those who had never heard it. The early Christians were still being persecuted, so it was dangerous times to be travelling to other places. Which is why the early church is fortunate to have had a Type 7 in their fold. In Acts 11: 19-26 we read:

19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. 20 But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. 21 The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and

when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

The first Christians were the people from Antioch, and this church only started because Barnabas was able to travel there and build on the enthusiasm that he found. Was it just a coincidence that it was Barnabas and not Peter, or Paul? Probably not. Type 7s work well in chaotic conditions. It’s not that we are brave, it’s just that we thrive in chaos. We think on our feet and love to create something out of nothing. So Barnabas went to Antioch, brought a large number of people to the Lord, and then eventually went to bring Paul to Antioch to join him. And thus began the first Christian church.

But all is not rosy for the Type 7s. The charisma and enthusiasm of Barnabas is later offset by another one of our traits; our unwillingness to bow to authority. In Acts 15: 36-39 we read:

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” 37 Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. 39 The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

After such a great introduction to Barnabas, his story ends soon after with this brief reference to a falling out between Barnabas and Paul. Paul invites Barnabas to join him to revisit believers in every city, but when Barnabas wants to bring John called Mark, who scholars believe was Barnabas’ relative, Paul refuses. Barnabas does not back down, and so Paul and Barnabas part company.

Though the particulars of this disagreement are not spelled out, if Barnabas is like me, I know that if Barnabas had faith in John called Mark, just as Barnabas had faith in Paul earlier, Barnabas would not have bowed to pressure from Paul. Type 7s are intensely loyal to our ideas, and we do not compromise to please others. And so the same enthusiasm that brought Paul into the fold eventually causes Barnabas to fall from favour. Just as the same enthusiasm that has helped me do great things, has, more often than not, shot me in the foot.

So what role did the Type 7 play in the early church? And what role can a Type 7 play today? Types 7 work best when times call for creative solutions and charisma. Barnabas was able to recommend Paul to the disciples and convince them that Paul was a changed man. And the charisma of Barnabas enabled him to spread the good news in hostile conditions. But as the early church began to take shape, Barnabas' charisma eventually took him away from the group.

Likewise, the strength of Type 7s today are in helping the church find creative solutions and helping create excitement for change. But as Type 7s are not the greatest team players and dislike structures, it should not be surprising that in the absence of need, Type 7s often just keep moving on.