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# Engaging Jungian function-orientations in a hermeneutical community: Exploring John 11: 1–17

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Working within the sensing, intuition, feeling, thinking (SIFT) approach to biblical hermeneutics, the present study invited a hermeneutical community of 23 type-aware participants to explore the account of the Death of Lazarus as reported in John 11: 1–17 within type-alike groups differentiated according to the participants' dominant function-orientation. Five groups were constituted differentiating: introverted sensing, introverted intuition, extraverted intuition, introverted and extraverted feeling and introverted and extraverted thinking. These five groups generated distinctive readings of the narrative that were characteristic of the individual type preference.

**Contribution:** The SIFT method, situated within the reader perspective approach to biblical hermeneutics, is concerned with attending to the influence exerted by the psychological type profile of the reader on interpreting the text. The present study goes beyond previous work by comparing the responses of five hermeneutical communities (each distinguished by a different dominant function-orientation) to the same passage of scripture.

**Keywords:** reader perspective; psychological type; SIFT method; psychology and Bible; function-orientations.

## Introduction

The sensing, intuition, feeling, thinking (SIFT) approach to biblical hermeneutics, as crystallised by Francis and Village (2008), has its roots in psychological type theory as originally proposed by Jung (1971) and in the reader perspective approach as shaped by Segovia and Tolbert (eds. 1995a, 1995b). Jungian psychological type theory, as made accessible by and popularised by a series of psychometric instruments, including the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates 1978), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley 1985) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis 2005; Francis, Laycock & Brewster 2017), is portrayed as distinguishing among the four psychological functions, styled as sensing, intuition, feeling and thinking. The SIFT approach is built on these four functions. A more sophisticated reading of psychological type theory recognises that Jung differentiated between the introverted and extraverted expression of each of the four functions, leading to an eight function-orientation model. The SIFT approach has more recently tested the eight function-orientation model.

## The four-function model

Sensing (S) and intuition (I) are the two functions expressing the perceiving process. They are concerned with ways of gathering information. Sensing types prefer to begin with the data and with the facts and progress to the bigger picture. Intuitive types prefer to begin with the bigger picture and with the wider theories and progress slowly to examining the details and the evidence. Feeling (F) and thinking (T) are the two functions expressing the judging process. They are concerned with ways of evaluating information. Feeling types prefer to begin by considering the personal and interpersonal values at stake in making judgements and progress to analysing the systems involved. Thinking types prefer to begin by considering the objective and logical issues at stake in making judgements and progress slowly to valuing the personal and interpersonal values involved.

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Psychological type theory suggests that people develop a preference for one of the perceiving functions (sensing or intuition), a preference for one of the judging functions (feeling or thinking) and a preference between these two preferred functions. The strongest preference is styled the dominant function, and the second strongest preference (from the other process) is styled the auxiliary function. The SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics suggests that each of these four functions has a part to play in reading and interpreting biblical text and that people with different dominant type preferences will develop distinctive modes of interpretation reflecting these type preferences. Many studies have now tested this theory against a wide range of biblical texts, including recent examples exploring the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24: 13–35 (Francis & Smith 2017), the call of the first disciples in Luke 5: 1–17 (Francis & ap Siôn 2017), the missionary journey of the disciples in Mark 6: 6b–17 (Francis, Smith & Francis-Dehqani 2017), the pericopes on Pilate and Judas in Matthew 27: 3–10, 19–25 (Francis & Ross 2018), the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1: 4–9 (Francis, Jones & Martinson 2019a), the search for the lost sheep in Matthew 18: 10–14 (Jones & Francis 2019a), Jesus' dialogue with Pilate in John 18: 33–37 (Francis, Smith & Evans 2021a) and Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 9: 26–40 (Francis & Jones 2022).

### The eight function-orientation model

This more complex and more developed approach to psychological type theory generated eight function-orientations: extraverted sensing, introverted sensing, extraverted intuition, introverted intuition, extraverted feeling, introverted feeling, extraverted thinking and introverted thinking. The description and development of the eight function-orientations have been discussed by Beebe (1992, 2017), Thompson (1996), Berens (1999), Haas, McAlpine and Hartzler (2001), Hartzler and Hartzler (2004, 2005), Berens and Nardi (2004), Hartzler, McAlpine and Haas (2005), Haas and Hunziker (2006) and Ross and Francis (2020).

A new strand of research developing and extending the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics adopting the eight function-orientation model was initiated by Francis, Strathie and Ross (2019b) who focused attention on the two lenses of dominant introverted sensing and dominant introverted intuition, exploring ways of reading the Beatitudes from Matthew 5: 1–10. A second study reported by Francis, Stevenson and Ross (2021b) also focused attention on the two lenses of dominant introverted sensing and dominant introverted intuition, this time exploring ways of reading the Wedding at Cana in Galilee from John 2: 1–11. A third study reported by Francis and Ross (2022) focused attention on the two lenses of dominant introverted intuition and dominant extraverted intuition, this time exploring ways of reading the Good Samaritan from Luke 10: 25–37. These three studies confirmed the added richness brought to the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics by taking the orientations as well as the functions into account.

### Research question

Against this background, the present study aimed to broaden the scope of the function-orientation approach to biblical hermeneutics by examining the voices of more than two function-orientations to the same passage of scripture. Opportunity to explore this broader canvas was provided by the annual seminar arranged by the Network for Psychological Type and Christian Faith in 2020. The constraints of COVID-19 meant that this seminar took place online. From this Network, 23 individuals who were well versed in psychological type theory signed up to work as a hermeneutical community and gave permission for their participation to be recorded and analysed for research purposes. The passage of scripture selected for this activity was the account of the Death of Lazarus narrated in John 11: 1–17. It was hypothesised that this passage was rich in material engaging both the perceiving process and the judging process.

## Method

### Procedure

The hermeneutical community was formed online within the context of the annual seminar convened in 2020 by the Network for Psychological Type and Christian Faith. Before the seminar, participants were emailed The Death of Lazarus from John 11: 1–17 in the translation proposed by the New Revised Standard Version. Participants were also advised that within the hermeneutical community, they would be invited to address the following issue: 'Bring your preferred function-orientation out to play: What do you notice in this passage of scripture?'

An analysis of the psychological type preferences of the 23 participants indicated that it would be possible to constitute five hermeneutical communities: introverted intuition (three INFJs and one INTJ), extraverted intuition (five ENFPs), introverted sensing (two ISFJs, one INTJ and one ESTJ drawing on the auxiliary preference), introverted and extraverted feeling combined (four INFPs and one ENFJ) and introverted and extraverted thinking combined (three INTPs and two ENTJs). There were insufficient dominant feeling types and dominant thinking types to run separate groups for introverted and extraverted orientations. No one present displayed dominant extraverted sensing, a very rare type within Christian communities (Ross & Francis 2020).

### Participants

The 23 participants comprised 11 females and 12 males. The 11 females comprised two INFJs, three ENFPs, two ISFJs, two INFPs, one INTP and one ENTJ. The 12 males comprised one INFJ, one INTJ, two ENFPs, one ISTJ, one ESTJ, two INFPs, one ENFJ, two INTPs and one ENTJ.

### Analysis

The five groups were recorded within the online meeting platform and two members of the authorial team analysed

each of these video recordings. The narrative was then checked by the other two members of the authorial team.

## Ethical considerations

This study received approval from the School of Humanities Research Ethics Committee, York St John University – HRP-RS-AV-12-20-01.

## Results

### Dominant introverted sensing

*Introverted sensing* is rooted in the detailed recall of previous experience, both the concrete realities and the affective responses. Present reality is routinely and carefully checked for familiarity against the internal data bank of images. Present sense impressions may trigger vivid recollections, including those that were emotionally charged. Indeed, the more emotion attached to the original experience, the more vivid the recall. Introverted sensing automatically connects what is in the immediate environment and past experience in ways that may neglect the novelty and potential of present experiences.

The group of three dominant introverted sensing types comprised two ISFJs (both female) and one ISTJ (male) and was complemented by one ESTJ (male) who was deploying his auxiliary function. There was an apprehension and reticence as the group of introverted sensing types tried to work out how to approach such a complex passage so characteristic of John's style.

Noel (ESTJ) who was leading the group tried to get the ball rolling by stressing the nature of the task: so as we bring our introverted sensing out to play, what do we notice? After a considerable pause, Tony (ISTJ) explained how he had prepared for the session by identifying the verses that he had found helpful and distinguishing them from the verses that puzzled him: what are these verses about, he asked himself. Noel suggested that a helpful way to begin is to reflect on how John's Gospel operates on two levels of meaning: what is happening on the surface and what is happening underneath.

After another pause, Helen (ISFJ) said that what she noticed was influenced by her auxiliary extraverted feeling. She noticed how Jesus was willing to let his friends suffer, seeing their brother Lazarus die. For her, this feels horrifying, even though Jesus explained that there is a reason behind it. Reflecting on this, Noel noted that Jesus' reason for delaying was good enough for him: so that you may see God's glory. For Noel, this was enough of a logical explanation for why this needed to be the way that it was.

After another pause, Susan (ISFJ) said that she noticed Jesus talking about the light. Her introverted sensing drew on her familiarity with other references to light in John's Gospel. She recalled that Jesus said that he was the light of the world, and that we are called to be the light of the world.

Coming in after another pause, Tony said that he noticed how Thomas made his decision to go with Jesus to Judea. Thomas was happy that the decision has been made even if he realised the significance could be quite dark. Drawing on her introverted sensing, Susan found that Tony's reference to Thomas resonated with her memory of her husband reading that passage in a way that drew out the ominous foreboding: Let us also go that we may die with him. For Noel, the mention of Thomas connected with his memories of reading and hearing other narratives about Thomas in the Gospels, particularly the resurrection narrative. Tony, too, then affirmed his recollection of how Thomas physically touched Jesus.

After another pause, Noel said that he noticed Jesus' use of the metaphor of sleep. This puzzled him. Why, he asked, did Jesus not speak plainly and clearly to the disciples and offer them details that were helpful, rather than something that could be misconstrued and that was misconstrued. This did not seem to Noel to have been a helpful image. In the end, Jesus had to speak out clearly anyway and say it as it was: Lazarus is dead.

Susan was keen to find a practical reason for Jesus behaving in such an obscure way. Perhaps the disciples might have stopped Jesus from going if they knew Lazarus was dead. What would be the point of going then?

Helen tried to figure out another plausible reason. Perhaps Jesus was trying to teach his rather literal disciples to understand that almost everything he says has a deeper meaning? For Noel, however, this multi-layered referencing in John's Gospel was part of the problem. Noel wondered if John's Gospel is a Gospel for sensing types or not? Tony was clear that John's Gospel was not the one to which he naturally turned. His deep experience through life had convinced him of that. This key observation led into a discussion on how sensing types may access their inferior function (intuition) in prayer and spirituality.

Feeling the need to refocus the group on the task in hand, Noel observed that they had tended to concentrate on the second half of the Gospel passage under discussion. Having heard that Lazarus was ill, Tony had noticed that Jesus had stayed 2 days longer before setting out. Tony wanted to know why Jesus had done that if his relationship with Lazarus had really been so strong. Susan wanted to know how they had spent those 2 days.

Trying to figure out a good reason for Jesus' action, Helen noted that the message sent to Jesus did not explicitly ask him to drop everything and come to Bethany. Working on that issue, Noel noted that Jesus did not send any kind of message back or rather John did not report any such message. Returning to this issue later, Noel wanted to interrogate the message further and fill in the gaps. The message is so short, like it could have been tied to the leg of a messenger pigeon. If somebody brought this message, why did they not quiz this person to find out more? If Lazarus was ill, what kind of illness was it? Had he broken a leg or had he got a temperature?



Helen had noticed how specific the passage had been in clarifying which Mary was involved (of the several Marys mentioned in the Gospel). This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with perfume and who had wiped his feet with her hair. So it was this Mary's brother Lazarus who was ill. Nobody could be confused about who it was whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Noel had noticed in the first half of the passage how often love is mentioned as the driving force behind the story. The message sent to Jesus said that he whom you love is ill. Then it is said that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Helen had also noted in the first half of the passage that the reference to 2 days is quite 'a concrete kind of thing'. Noel underlined the practical implications of the delay. Jesus knew that Lazarus was already dead and by delaying 2 days he knew that he would miss the funeral. He must have known that, if they were going to wait, they would have to wait until Lazarus was really dead and buried. There was no point in turning up in the middle of it all.

Susan had noted that when Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days. Noel wondered how these 4 days related to the 2 days that Jesus had waited. Could this mean that Jesus actually arrived at the tomb on the sixth day? Now this detail prompted Noel to recollect the complex way of counting days at the beginning of John's Gospel. If Jesus arrived at the tomb on the sixth day, on the seventh day something spectacular might happen.

At this point, however, time was running out. Noel refocused the group on organising its reflection for the plenary session. Two initial reflections on the process noted the number of silences during the conversation and the absence of intuitive types from the group. The silences were important for the process to work for these introverted sensing types as they explored their deep reservoirs of memories and associations. The absence of intuitive types was important to protect these periods of silence. As Tony observed, he found it difficult to stay focused in discussions with a lot of intuitive types: they 'seem to be leaking off all over the place'. For a group of introverted sensing types, this had been a somewhat unsatisfactory passage to study. The whole time they had been wanting more information to fill in the background to the narrative and John's Gospel simply failed to provide that level of necessary detail.

## Dominant introverted intuition

*Introverted intuition* is rooted in searching for the deeper meaning in things. It reads between the lines and concentrates more on symbolic significance and connecting signs than on concrete information and data. Introverted intuition is attracted to abstract and complex ideas and explanations and may find the intricacies and richness of the inner world difficult (or impossible) to encapsulate in precise language. Introverted intuition strives for perfection and is eager to

challenge and change things. It is excited by the unknown and generates unexpected flashes of insight.

The group of four introverted intuitive types comprised three INFJs (two females and one male) and one INTJ (male). It occurred to no one in this group that reading the instructions might have been helpful before beginning the task. Rather than reading the instructions, Jeff (INTJ) gave his impression of what he thought the workshop was all about: we are supposed to let slip the dogs of introverted intuition, he said, and paused for someone to respond. Jeff was already relishing the challenge.

George (INFJ) took up the invitation and began an important personal narrative that articulated the passage's symbolic significance. George explained that he was in the process of moving from one job to another and had spent most of the last 4 months in limbo. There was a necessary period of limbo between applying for the post and being shortlisted. There was a 7-week period of limbo between being shortlisted and the interview. There was a brief period of limbo between the interview and being notified of the outcome. Then there was a 6-week period of limbo between knowing that he got the job and being able to announce it. For him, living with such periods of uncertainty was incredibly frustrating. This personal narrative was the first connection being made with the passage when he heard how Jesus had delayed starting his journey for 2 days, rather than rushing to sort Lazarus out. That unnecessary delay must have been unbearable for the two sisters who must have been wondering whether Jesus had got their message and whether he was ever going to come. George really found himself making connections with the experience of those two sisters.

Once some connections had been established, Tracy (INFJ) was prompted to offer her response to the passage. She connected the passage with the issue of priorities. For Tracy, some odd priorities seemed to be happening in this passage. The first issue concerning priorities was about the delay. Why did Jesus delay? Did he have something better to do? The second issue concerning priorities was about Jesus' intention to go to Judea. Why on earth did he want to go there when people were intent on stoning him?

Jeff then offered his response to the passage. The thing that struck him was just how out of character it was for Jesus to be so hard-hearted. Jesus must have known that Mary and Martha would be devastated that he had refused to drop everything to come to their aid. But on this occasion, the priorities of the Kingdom were such that he needed to hold back. Jesus explained later that he was glad that he was not there, so they could believe. Reflecting more broadly, Jeff acknowledged John's purpose in writing, referencing the penultimate chapter of the Gospel, but said that the problem he had with this passage is a problem he has more generally with John's Gospel. John imputes to Jesus an overall knowledge of who he is, how he works and what he has to do. This is John's intention, but it did not ring

true for Jeff. Jesus may have had flashes of such insight, but the human brain would explode if that were the case all the time.

Valerie (INFJ) now joined the conversation, saying how liberating she experienced being among fellow introverted intuitive types. This allowed her to overcome her inclination to trust authority and not to question what she had been taught about this passage in the past. This passage intrigued Valerie. The idea that Jesus was acting out of character suggested that something exciting would happen.

Meanwhile, Jeff had been re-reading the passage and another connection sparked in his mind. Jesus said that those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of the world. Elsewhere Jesus said that he is the light of the world. Jesus the rabbi is always in teaching mode.

George, too, had been re-reading the passages, and this time what had struck him was the number of clues that John had put in the passage. John emphasises that Jesus had stayed 2 days longer even though he loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus. So, the delay is deliberate and somehow reflects the fact that Jesus loved this family.

Meanwhile, Tracy had been reading ahead to the next part of chapter 11. Here she noted that both Martha and Mary individually challenged Jesus with the same claim: Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Then Jesus wept. For Tracy, this showed how the suffering of others moved Jesus. This showed how God is moved by human suffering and that the prayers of people crying out in suffering can move God. Things are not set in stone; they can be changed through prayer.

George returned to verse 4. This illness did not lead to death, rather it was for God's glory. This promise should have forewarned us that finding Lazarus sealed in the tomb for 4 days would not be the end of the story. Jeff reflected on George's argument with the succinct aphorism: It will be all right in the end. If it is not all right, it is not the end.

Valerie was still trying to accept the idea that Jesus acted out of character. For her, it was a big concept that Jesus may not have been as nice as we thought he was. For introverted intuitive types, 'big picture people', having this wide view of the passage encouraged belief that Jesus must have had a good reason because Jesus would not do something nasty.

As the group further explored the issue of Jesus' delay, they struggled to grasp the detail of the timings and the geography, puzzling together as they tried to make sense of it. Assumptions were made without reference to the text about where Jesus was located when news arrived.

George linked the passage to his 25 years of pastoral experience when he has drawn on the Lazarus narrative for

funerals. Jesus' affirmation that he is the Resurrection and the Life brings hope. Jesus weeping with Mary brings consolation and comfort. To make these points George had needed to read well beyond the passage that he had been invited to study. At this point in the discussion, George who had been appointed to lead the group, asked if anyone had been keeping an eye on the time and how he was going to report back. No one seemed to have noticed the time and Valerie jumped in saying that she was looking forward to hearing what conclusions had come from their group. This had been a great discussion for her and she did not want to formulate conclusions. But this prompted Valerie to go back to read the instructions: What did you notice in this passage of scripture? Realising now for the first time what the group had been asked to apply focused attention.

For Jeff, the group had concluded that the purpose of the story was for God's glory. Jesus delayed until he was absolutely certain Lazarus was dead. Then Jesus demonstrated that: I am the light of the world and I have God's power in me to overturn the laws of physics. For Valerie, the group had concluded that Jesus was being very deliberate and acting out of character in order to fulfil a bigger picture. For George, the group had concluded that they could not limit the discussion to the passage set. They needed to draw in the bigger picture of the rest of chapter 11 and indeed of the whole of John's Gospel. Here were individuals searching to forge their own individual sense of meaning, not a group of people intent on coming to a common view or consensus.

## Dominant extraverted intuition

*Extraverted intuition* is rooted in awareness of future possibilities and future potential. It looks at how things are and quickly progresses to considering how things could be. Extraverted intuition generates multiple possibilities for the future. It is rarely satisfied with offering just one possibility when many contrasting possibilities come to mind. Brainstorming multiple options is fun. Extraverted intuition spots patterns and sees connections. Extraverted intuition wants to seek out new perspectives on things, find new ways of doing things and challenge established routines.

The group of five extraverted intuitive types were all ENFPs (three females and two males). There was an energy and a buzz about the group from the very beginning, as individuals moved quickly from one idea to the next. As ideas came into their head, each individual wanted to share that idea with others.

June opened the conversations by pointing to something in the text that she had not seen before: Jesus said that those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them. This text caught June's attention first and foremost because it did not seem to fit into the wider narrative. Trevor picked up on the incongruity of this verse. June tried to link it with the context of the Jews trying to stone Jesus, but that did not really work.

David interrupted June's unsuccessful flow of thought by pointing to what stood out for him in the passage. For him, the passage opened with a battery of powerful images: a certain man, an illness, a village. All these images were highly visual and sparked the imagination. But then these images were followed by the powerful idea that this illness did not lead to death but rather was for God's glory. Here we were dealing with real theology. From this observation, David concluded that, as always, in John's Gospel, Jesus seems to be in one place, and we seem to be in another place. The whole time we are challenged to make links.

June stepped in again quickly and linked the strong images in this passage from John's Gospel with the major themes introduced in the Johannine Prologue: with darkness, with light, with glory and with themes that touch on life and death. In June's mind, the Johannine connections had been made.

Sally stepped in to push these connections onto an even wider canvas. What she liked about John's Gospel was that there are always many levels of meaning. She went back to the reference to stumbling to illustrate her point. At one level, the passage referred to practical stumbling in the dark. At another level, the passage referred to stumbling spiritually. It was evident that this was a group ready to make large leaps in order to discover thematic coherence.

For David, a major attraction of John's Gospel was provided by the words of Jesus. These words were often enigmatic and crying out for interpretation. What Jesus spoke was different from the very practical statements that caught attention at the beginning of the passage: a certain man, an illness, a village.

June picked up David's train of thought. The sayings that did not really fit together fascinated her. She was fascinated by Thomas saying, 'Let us also go that we may die with him'. David noted that this saying had come from the blue. Then David switched the focus again to the hard practicalities with which the passage concluded: 'When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days.'

June's ears immediately picked up the notion of 4 days. Again, this is something that she had not noticed in the story before. She was puzzled by the reference to 4 days, one more than the 3 days she had expected.

Leaving the problem of the number of days unresolved, Trevor jumped in with a new idea. What fascinated him was how Lazarus had been described as the one whom Jesus loved. Hearing that phrase, Trevor began to speculate that Jesus had many close relationships beyond the 12 disciples. Jesus clearly loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Then Trevor wondered just how strong Jesus and the disciples were as a unit. He wondered just what Jesus' relationship with Lazarus was all about.

Linda at last entered the conversation by offering a completely fresh starting point. She was struck by Jesus saying that Lazarus had fallen asleep and that he would awaken him. While a sensing type may have heard that literally, for her those words encapsulated the heart of Jesus' work. For Linda, Jesus is saying that we go to sleep and that he wakes us up. Here is resurrection to the new life. When pressed to elucidate what she meant by resurrection, Linda noted that she could hold literal and symbolic interpretations in tension.

Linda had started a new train of thought about the resurrection. Trevor interjected the image of Lazarus walking out of the tomb wrapped in the grave clothes. Linda insisted that there are multiple ways through which to understand that image, and that therein is the mystery of God. David suddenly skipped across to the synoptic account of Jairus' daughter. There Jesus said that she was *not* dead but sleeping; but here Jesus was emphatic that Lazarus *is* dead. For David that emphasis makes this a very strong passage. Lazarus *is* dead. This point was important to Sally as well. She spoke strongly against spiritualising the death of Lazarus. She wanted there to be a real body that had really died after 4 days and that had then come back to life.

June interrupted that flow of thought with another idea. For her, Jesus delaying his journey to Bethany sounded like a put-up job, something that he had agreed with Lazarus that he was going to do to make a point. Otherwise, the delay would sound so callous.

This train of thought sparked a different idea in David's mind. He referred to Frances Young's book, *Arthur's Call: A Journey of Faith in the Face of Severe Learning Disability*, concerning her care for her disabled son. In that book, she made the point that Lazarus may have been handicapped in some way, being dependent on living with his two sisters. Perhaps Lazarus was not only handicapped but had a poor life expectancy, mused David.

June speculated further about the relational dynamics involving Mary, Martha, Lazarus and Jesus. She noted that Bethany was described as the village of Mary and Martha (giving priority to Mary) but that Jesus loved Martha and Mary (giving priority to Martha). Linda noted that it was Mary who sat at Jesus' feet. Jane noted that it was Martha who confessed that Jesus was the Messiah. Indeed, there was a lot about which to wonder concerning the dynamics of these relationships.

Meanwhile, Trevor's mind had continued to reflect on the image of Lazarus stomping out of the tomb. He said that what his intuition wanted to picture this story in multiple ways – one way this week and a different way next week. He could imagine this as a comedy, a sketch by the youth group, a story rooted in the mummer's tradition, like Jonah. June immediately picked up on these images – the image of Jonah breaking out of the great fish, the image of Lazarus breaking out of the tomb, being liberated into something new.

At this point, however, time had run out. In reflecting on how to share their experience in the plenary session, this group of five extravert intuitive types recognised that they had reached no consensus. They had experienced five individual voices. They had skipped around, making jumps from one thing to another, interacting with their own thought processes rather than listening carefully to each other. They were not a group of people seeking a strong logical progression, but one that understood that they had been given several 'pictures' of the resurrection. Nevertheless, they had felt that they had been in dialogue with each other, had been enriched by each other and had been able to see things that they would not have seen working alone in isolation. Like Jonah leaping from the great fish, and like Lazarus leaping from the tomb, they had been liberated to wonder about the passage and to share their wondering with confidence among like-minded people.

### **Dominant feeling (introverted and extraverted)**

*Extraverted feeling* is rooted in maintaining positive, caring, harmonised relationships with others. It is motivated to build relationships on the basis of acceptance and trust and may shy away from sharing difference in opinion or perspective. Extraverted feeling cares for others' feelings and may seek to defend or protect others. Extraverted feeling takes a deep interest in other people and connects easily with others who hold the same fundamental values. They are seen as warm, outgoing and understanding individuals.

*Introverted feeling* is rooted in awareness of inner values, standards and beliefs, and grounded in the individual's internal values system. It recognises our non-negotiable beliefs. Introverted feeling thrives on internal harmony. The outside world is assessed and measured against these deeply held internal values. For introverted feeling decisions in the external world are based on this internal system of values. Introverted feeling recognises when others are suffering from internal disharmony and tries to offer support. When its own values are challenged, introverted feeling does not compromise. It is the most intensely subjective of all the functions.

The group of five feeling types comprised four introverted feeling types (all INFPs, two females and two males) and one extraverted feeling type (ENFJ, male). There was a pervading sense of disquiet and unease as the complexity of the passage began to weigh heavily on the group.

In response to the question, 'What do you notice in this passage of scripture?', Hilary opened the discussion by suggesting that relationships are central all the way through. The passage is about Jesus' relationships with, and friendships with, Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Mark affirmed this view. For Mark, the passage gave interesting insight into a little, very close community, which the readers look at from the outside.

Delving more deeply into this narrative about relationships, Judith spotted that the word 'love' was used twice in the first

paragraph. There is a very strong sense of relationship captured in that word. Hilary wanted to probe that word 'love' more deeply and asked if anyone knew which word for love was used. Robin (ENFJ) responded by looking for the Greek New Testament from his study shelves.

While Robin was looking for that elusive book, Harry drew attention to how he had noticed the language Jesus was using, and how Jesus was speaking in metaphors and riddles. Mark had noticed this too and placed it within a relational context. He noted how Jesus and the disciples were talking at cross purposes. Mark felt sorry for the disciples who were put at a disadvantage, always just one step behind the beat.

The conversation between Harry and Mark then began to unravel their sense of discomfort with Jesus' use of language. Harry pointed to Jesus' enigmatic reference that Lazarus' illness is for God's glory and pondered why Jesus uses deliberately obscure language. Mark voiced his feeling that Jesus was not being fair here in the sense that he seemed to be deliberately using Lazarus' death as a platform for teaching. He questioned the kindness of that and the pain, anxiety and confusion caused by it. For Mark, this was a remarkable way of making a point. He suggested that, if Jesus were a parish priest behaving like that, he would be accused of being a brutal manipulator.

In turn, this criticism of Jesus made Hilary uncomfortable. She wanted to legitimate Jesus' approach. After all, Jesus had spent 3 years teaching his disciples through their experience. Jesus' treatment of the death of Lazarus was just part of the same process. Jesus was simply saying that this is what is happening, and this is what we are going to learn from it.

Mark is not so easily convinced. According to the narrative, Jesus deliberately tarried, so that instead of healing Lazarus, he could raise him from the dead. Building on this observation, Robin tried to get inside Jesus' psychology and suggested that he was keeping an emotional distance from the events. Judith corrected this view by observing that later in the passage Jesus was emotionally connected and really suffered along with the other mourners. Mark tried to tie these strands together. He argued that, at a distance, some days away, Jesus could do all this didactical and theological stuff, but when he actually stood in front of the tomb, he wept.

Judith tried to reconcile the tension in another way. For her, two narratives were running along in parallel, on two different levels. One narrative was the account of the human story in which Jesus does something absolutely amazing. The other narrative was provided by the writer of John's Gospel who is pursuing the various interests of his Gospel. Judith loved the dialogues in the Gospel of John but also recognised that the dialogue was unlike real dialogue. All this made her wonder what really happened.

Judith's reflections helped Harry to revoice his own unease with the passage. Harry sensed the figure of Jesus described



by John as being a mysterious, mystical figure who was almost in a different world. This left Harry with a strange, disconcerting feeling that collided with powerful specific details, like the sense of Jesus' deep and close relationships with the family.

In an attempt to dissipate the growing sense of unease, Mark turned attention back to Hilary's unanswered question about the Greek word behind the translation 'love'. Robin noted that the word used consistently in the passage and later in the chapter was the word *philos*, brotherly love. Mark was quick to emphasise that brotherly love was a weak translation. *Philos* indicated a powerful non-erotic connection with someone.

Drawing on his own pastoral experience, Robin had earlier attempted to understand and commend Jesus' capacity to exercise emotional distance from the immediate situation. Robin was conscious of how often in his own ministry he felt obliged to act very quickly and how easy it was to let ministry be dominated by emotional responses rather than by stepping back and taking a longer look at things. On this occasion, Jesus stepped back and did not immediately say, 'Gosh I must go there at once'.

Once again Mark pointed to the disconnect between how John portrayed Jesus as in control the whole time, and mystically all knowledgeable, and how Jesus was deeply involved with these people. Jesus wept and loved deeply. Perhaps Jesus was not the character that John wanted to make him out to be.

Looking back to the text of John's Gospel, Mark noted that they had not yet reflected on Thomas' strange response, 'Let us also go that we may die with him'. Hilary offered her interpretation of this text as indicating deep loyalty to Jesus. The disciples thought that returning to Judea was a bad idea because they were out to kill him. It was madness to go, but if Jesus was intent on going, they would go with him and would be prepared to die with him. Now there was real loyalty.

As time was running out, and the group of feeling types prepared their feedback for the plenary session, discomfort with the passage was still evident. Mark summed this up by saying that what Jesus was doing here was really quite shocking. Still defending Jesus, Hilary observed that Jesus may have been following instructions from God the Father. Mark was not so easily assuaged; in that case, God the Father was doing something quite shocking. Hilary retorted: No, God knows what he is doing for the good. Another voiced his concern:

'I just try to put myself in the shoes of the people who are there – and this is really shocking. Jesus could have saved him before he died. Yet Jesus allowed Lazarus to go through all that. Mary and Martha see their brother die. Why not just heal him before he dies. It's OK if you know the end of the story, but if you don't know how it is going to work out, it is brutally hard on you. And Martha felt that when she said "If you had been here he wouldn't have died."' (Mark)

The group agreed that this was not the kindest passage of scripture for their preferred psychological function. It raised too many uncomfortable questions, giving rise to disquiet and unease.

### Dominant thinking (introverted and extraverted)

*Extraverted thinking* is rooted in objective analysis that is aware of external circumstances. Extraverted thinking operates in the outside world by imposing boundaries on the problems being solved to ensure that they are manageable. It strives to find the best decisions within the time available, rather than the best possible of all decisions. Here is a logically analysed pragmatism. Extraverted thinking tends to operate within the framework of established rules, policies and regulations and to apply this framework logically and rigorously. The foundations for the decided outcomes need to be clearly established and stated.

*Introverted thinking* is rooted in an inner framework of precise categories. These internal categories are unique to the individual and much thought has gone into creating and testing them. Introverted thinking enjoys focusing on the parameters and processes used to formulate logical decisions. Introverted thinking wants to understand how everything really does fit together. It sorts out the most salient distinctions and criteria for a particular situation, evaluating the positive and negative implications. Introverted thinking discerns the deeper structure, aware that there is more to any problem than immediately meets the eye.

The group of five thinking types comprised three introverted thinking types (INTPs, one female and two males) and two extraverted feeling types (ENTJs, one female and one male). There was a sense of organisation and sharp analysis from the very outset, when Mandy (ENTJ) organised the discussion by reminding participants that their task was to focus on seeing the passage through their thinking function. She then asked who would like to kick off.

Mandy's fellow ENTJ, Robert was the first to respond. Robert began by establishing the grounds on which he planned to engage with the text of John's Gospel. He had learned about form criticism as a teenager and so routinely approaches the Gospels by trying to identify the dynamics at work in the early Christian communities in shaping the text before it was written down in its present form. What he spotted at work in the community that shaped John's Gospel was an overriding theological agenda. It was this dynamic that had to be taken seriously before dealing with specific text. In this text, the theological agenda seemed to be a play on death and sleep. Mandy responded to Robert's analysis by stating that she had a totally different take on this passage, which animated her rather than troubled her. But first she wanted to hear what others had to say.

Simon (INTP) wanted to begin by establishing a hypothesis about the text. He recalled having heard many things about this passage in sermons, many things that were based on

assumptions that he would like to interrogate. Simon's starting point in addressing John's Gospel was to recall that the writer of John was supposed to be the disciple whom Jesus loved. Now in this passage, Lazarus was identified as the one whom Jesus loved. Thus, Simon wanted to propose the hypothesis that Lazarus was the author of the Gospel, and that this event led Lazarus to write a Gospel with the clear message showing that Jesus was the Messiah.

Joan (INTP) offered a different route for analysis. She took for her starting point the way in which Jesus had focused on God's glory, the way in which Jesus had prophetic insight into what God was going to do, and the way in which Jesus delayed his departure for 2 days to make the outcome even more amazing.

Following this line of argument, Robert underlined the distinctive voice of John's Gospel as speaking of Jesus deliberately delaying his journey to support Mary and Martha. Luke, he argued, would never have documented a point like that. That would have been far too unkind. Now Simon picked up on Robert's comparison between John and Luke. Simon found it puzzling that a massive event like the death and raising of Lazarus never found its way into any of the synoptic Gospels. Robert argued that the absence of this narrative from the synoptic Gospels was further evidence that the account in John's Gospel had been theologically driven by the concerns and needs of the early Christian community that had formed the Johannine text. Robert was demonstrating the consistent power of his attraction to the form-critical approach to Gospel studies.

By now Mandy had felt that the time had come to give her distinctive perspective. She had tried to read the passage as someone with a clear thinking preference who did not know the distinctive background to John's Gospel. Her preference for extraverted thinking found that a lot was illogical in the passage, and she did not like things to be illogical. She then proceeded to analyse the passage and to point out the many features that did not fit. The passage said that Mary was the one who anointed Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, but Mandy thought it was Mary Magdalene who did that. The passage said that when Jesus received the news that Lazarus was ill, he said this illness does not lead to death, but it does not say to whom he was speaking, and no one responded to him. The passage said that Jesus stayed where he was for a further 2 days, but that makes no sense if someone he loved was seriously ill and he may have been able to heal him. The passage said that Jesus invited his disciples to go with him to Judea, but the response about the Jews trying to stone Jesus was a *non sequitur*. Jesus' further response regarding 12 hours of daylight was another *non sequitur*. Then there was a play on words and a misinterpretation of what falling asleep means. What Mandy found irritating was people who did not say what they mean and generate confusion. The passage said that when Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days, but that sounded as if he were dead even before Jesus received the message that Lazarus was ill. Close analysis of the passage raised so many

problems and contradictions. From this perspective, it was an awful passage.

Drawing on his introverted thinking, Simon agreed with Mandy but then proceeded to draw the conclusion that this analysis supported the view that the narrative was not relating an actual event but was written with another purpose in mind. For Robert, Mandy's analysis provided further evidence to support his theory rooted in the form-critical approach. The narrative as it stood was an amalgam of many forces in the early Church, drawn together by a theological agenda.

Having once again established the hypothesis that John's Gospel was driven by a theological agenda, this group of thinking types struggled to define how the death and raising of Lazarus contributed to the progression of a Gospel that reached its climax in the resurrection of Jesus. Robert argued that the raising of Lazarus eclipsed the theological significance of Jesus' resurrection. On the other hand, Joan argued that the raising of Lazarus prepared people for Jesus' resurrection. Simon argued that the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus were quite different categories and that Jesus' resurrection did not imply a physical body in the same way as the raising of Lazarus. Robert added the point that the difference was underscored by the timing, Lazarus after 4 days, Jesus on the third day. At this point, Jonathan (INTP) made his only contribution to the debate by insisting that Jesus' resurrection was a physical resurrection. Mandy noted that this was the only occasion when Jesus was recorded healing someone special to him. However, while others endorsed this view, there were insufficient clues in the text as to how this thought might be developed.

At this point, however, time had run out. In reflecting on how to share their experience in the plenary, two key observations were made. Firstly, the group had been conscious of operating in the NT mode, and it was observed that John's Gospel can be construed as a Gospel for NTs. The experience may have been different had there been a balance of ST as well as NT within the group. The group had been comfortable with speculation and with scepticism, in a way that may have been unsettling, especially for STJ participants. Secondly, the group had been conscious of embracing the two perspectives of extraverted thinking (rooting in objective analysis that is aware of external circumstances) and introverted thinking (rooted in a cool inner analysis grasping for the ways in which everything really does fit together). Such alliance between the dominant function-orientation and the dominant shadow function-orientation speaks of some maturity within the group.

## Conclusion

Working within the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics the present study was designed to build on and to extend the insights afforded by the three initial studies reported by Francis et al. (2019b), Francis et al. (2021b) and Francis and

Ross (2022) that had tested the additional nuance brought to biblical hermeneutics by differentiating between the introverted and extraverted expressions of the Jungian functions. Those three initial studies had profiled and contrasted the distinctive perceiving voices of introverted sensing and introverted intuition in respect of reading the Matthean Beatitudes (Mt5: 1–10) and the Johannine Wedding at Cana in Galilee (Jn 2: 1–11) and the distinctive perceiving voices of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition in respect of reading the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25–37). The present study has profiled the three perceiving voices of introverted sensing, introverted intuition and extraverted intuition in respect of reading the Johannine account of the death of Lazarus (Jn11: 1–17). Together these four studies have demonstrated the added variety and richness brought to biblical hermeneutics with the differentiation between the introverted and extraverted expressions of the Jungian perceiving functions. Additionally, the present study has set alongside these three perceiving voices, the two judging voices of feeling and thinking, although there were insufficient participants within the group to permit clear differentiation between the introverted and extraverted expression of the judging functions.

Further research working within the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics should be encouraged to undertake additional studies that differentiate between the introverted and extraverted expressions of the Jungian functions but not at the expense of neglecting additional studies rooted in the original tradition of focusing on the four functions. Research focusing on the eight function-orientations is most apposite when working with hermeneutical communities comprising type literate participants who have developed awareness of the eight function-orientation model. There are also added challenges in identifying a sufficiently large group of participants within the churchgoing community to compose communities able to exemplify all eight function-orientations. Not only does the formation of eight groups require a larger pool of participants, but some of the function-orientations are scarce within the churchgoing community and particularly so in the case of extraverted sensing (Ross & Francis 2020).

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## Data availability

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