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FORTY DAYS ON
BEING A NINE



ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS



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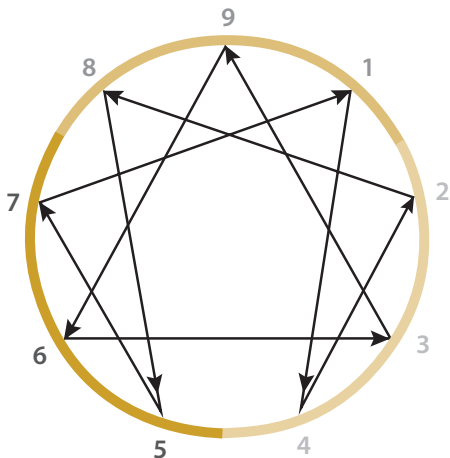


WELCOME TO ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS

Suzanne Stabile



The Enneagram is about nine ways of seeing. The reflections in this series are written from each of those nine ways of seeing. You have a rare opportunity, while reading and thinking about the experiences shared by each author, to expand your understanding of how they see themselves and how they experience others.



I've committed to teaching the Enneagram, in part, because I believe every person wants at least these two things: to belong, and to live a life that has meaning. And I'm sure that learning and working with the Enneagram has the potential to help all of us with both.

Belonging is complicated. We all want it, but few of us really understand it. The Enneagram identifies—with more accuracy than any other wisdom tool I know—why we can achieve belonging more easily with some people than with others. And it teaches us to find our place in situations and groups without having to displace someone else. (I'm actually convinced that it's the answer to world peace, but some have suggested that I could be exaggerating just a bit.)

If our lives are to have meaning beyond ourselves, we will have to develop the capacity to understand, value, and respect people who see the world differently than we do. We will have to learn to name our own gifts and identify our weaknesses, and the Enneagram reveals both at the same time.

The idea that we are all pretty much alike is shattered by the end of an introductory Enneagram workshop or after reading the last page of a good primer. But for those who are teachable and open to receiving Enneagram wisdom about each of the nine personality types, the shock is accompanied by a beautiful and unexpected gift: they find that they have more compassion for themselves and more grace for others and it's a guarantee.

The authors in this series, representing the nine Enneagram types, have used that compassion to move toward a greater understanding of themselves and others whose lives intersect with theirs in big and small ways. They write from experiences that reflect racial and cultural differences, and they have been influenced by different faith beliefs. In working with spiritual directors, therapists, and pastors they identified many of their own habits and fears, behaviors and motivations, gifts and challenges. And they courageously talked with those who are close to them about how they are seen and experienced in relationship.

As you begin reading, I think it will be helpful for you to be generous with yourself. Reflect on your own life—where you’ve been and where you’re going. And I hope you will consider the difference between change and transformation. *Change* is when we take on something new. *Transformation* occurs when something old falls away, usually beyond our control. When we see a movie, read a book, or perhaps hear a sermon that we believe “changed our lives,” it will seldom, if ever, become transformative. It’s a good thing and we may have learned a valuable life lesson, but that’s not transformation. Transformation occurs when you have an experience that changes the way you understand life and its mysteries.

When my dad died, I immediately looked for the leather journal I had given to him years before with the request that he fill it with stories and things he wanted me to know. He had only written on one page:

Anything I have achieved or accomplished in my life is because of the gift of your mother as my wife. You should get to know her.

I thought I knew her, but I followed his advice, and it was one of the most transformative experiences of my life.

From a place of vulnerability and generosity, each author in this series invites us to walk with them for forty days on their journeys toward transformation. I hope you will not limit your reading to only your number. Read about your spouse or a friend. Consider reading about the type you suspect represents your parents or your siblings. You might even want to read about someone you have little affection for but are willing to try to understand.

You can never change *how* you see, but you can change what you *do* with how you see.

ON BEING A NINE



Are you an Enneagram Nine or do you know one? I trust this book will be useful in helping you to better understand us. For you see, it's written by an Enneagram Nine. Me!

This book enflashes a Nine's tendencies and dispositions. You will likely read along and find yourself saying, "Aha! Me too," and, "No wonder I do that!" It may very well lead you to bury your head in your hands and lament because you see in yourself that which you don't want to see—that which you wish for all the world did not exist within you as a Nine. It is true that learning about your Enneagram number will do that to you.

And yet, you will also be pleasantly surprised by joy, for you will see the loveliness others see, characteristics and gifts you always hoped were true of you. You'll see that others see this beauty, giftedness, grace, and power when they encounter you. You'll also look into eyes of delight and see yourself reflected back. And it is wonderful to be a Nine. We are indeed unique gifts to the world (as is each person reflected

by each number). But Nines in particular need to know that, because in our unhealthy states we discount ourselves.

I first learned about the Enneagram in 2010 from my fellow contributors at *Christianity Today's* Her.meneutics blog (content now available at christianitytoday.com/women). They talked about it in our private Facebook group, asking what our “numbers” were, and then went back and forth about it. I had no idea what they were talking about, so I did some initial research. (Indeed, I continue to research and learn much about the Enneagram and myself to this day.)

The Enneagram reminds me that weakness and sin lie within, yes, but there is also so much good in us—because we are made in the image of God. Not one of us are alike even though we may share in being an Enneagram Nine. Our personalities, experiences, physical makeups, histories, environments, ages, ethnicities, religious contexts, and many more factors make us unique human beings and unique Nines. What I'm getting at in these daily reflections is how my “Nineness” manifests itself. Hopefully, you will see more and more of how your Nineness manifests itself in your life, or the life of one you know. At the end of each reflection you will find a prayer, a reflection question or two, space to journal, or a spiritual practice to try out.

In this book, I am as honest as I can appropriately be about who I am. This is so because I truly believe that the truth sets us free from what shackles us to destruction, to

that which is death-dealing. The truth sets us free to move forward in our life in Christ—to love God and our neighbors well. What I want you to know is that if you seek to move toward wholeness, holiness—toward life; that is, union with God—then you have to start by accepting the truth about who you are and then by telling the truth, especially as an Enneagram Nine. It can be good or not-so-good truth. But whatever it is, commit to doing it! I so strongly believe in the need for truth that I start out with it on day one. Fear not.

I am so glad you are coming along for this Nine ride. Certainly, if you find it helpful, tell others about it. And, one last thing: I would love to hear about your Nine adventures, either as a Nine or as someone in relationship to a Nine. May you flourish!

COMING TO TERMS WITH WHAT AFFECTS US



ONCE, TWO WOMEN IN my Christian workplace bullied me and continually sabotaged me. At first, I doubted it could be happening. I questioned my intuition and especially the evidence before my eyes because I couldn't figure out why they were attacking me.

When I started at the venue, they liked me. In fact, I was downright giddy because I thought I found two good friends after having moved to a new town. But, it was not to be. Soon enough, they started ignoring me. They blatantly refused to help me when I asked for help, even though they helped others and we were all supposed to help out each other. They put me down, made fun of me. They verbally and demonstrably communicated that they did not want to sit by me at meetings and at retreats. They rejected me and uninvited me.

I was told it was due to jealousy and envy over how my superiors treated me. They didn't like when my superiors praised me and gave me opportunities to use my God-given

gifts. It didn't matter that I honestly praised them up and down and rejoiced in what they did well. It soon became a hostile work environment. I was harassed. The abuse factored into my leaving the position for something else.

The whole time, I tried to grin and bear it—to love my enemies: those who were slandering me, talking behind my back, and actively sabotaging my work. I didn't treat them like they treated me. It's what Jesus would do.

And truth be told, it was also a way of avoiding conflict. I was so upset by what they were doing to me I was scared I'd explode on them if allowed to let my pain and hurt leak out. I didn't say anything at first because I wasn't sure I could control my anger once I unleashed it. I sought to reconcile with the main aggressor to no avail. Finally, when I was pushed to the max, I told my superiors about the hostile work environment. It was extremely uncomfortable to be at odds with my Christian coworkers!

This kind of situation put my weakness, which is sloth—the vice of the Nine—on full display. Slothfulness could be actual physical laziness. And for some, it probably is. But one way we can think of it is that it's a failure to show up to life. One way we give into slothfulness is by avoiding disappointment and that which limits us. It is pretending to be unaffected, or wanting to be unaffected, or willing ourselves to be unaffected by not acknowledging the negative effects on us. Indeed, we might not even be aware of what it is we are feeling or are affected by. It is a self-forgetfulness of the

unholy kind: avoiding ourselves. It is stubbornly refusing to come to terms with how we are being affected and limited. It's a penchant for avoiding conflict or hard things.

It's a proclivity to be asleep at the wheel of life instead of being awake. It is the proclivity to live halfheartedly, to give halfhearted attention to what is going on in us. Dealing with the messiness, the hard, and the sad takes too much energy. It is our unhealthy coping mechanism. As a result, we can have a hard time figuring out what we feel!

In that situation, I was trying to put on a brave face, to follow Jesus by loving my enemies but without admitting to myself, them, or others the profound harm they were doing to me because I was trying to keep peace in the workplace and in my soul.

And that's the thing about us Enneagram Nines. We have beautiful contributions to make to the world and we bring great value. But we will be healthier when we face ourselves and figure out, maybe with the help of trusted others, what we have been avoiding, escaping, and trying to be unaffected by. It's the path forward for us in Jesus' name.

We will not grow healthy and whole until we are willing to face ourselves. We face ourselves by acknowledging the truth and engaging life instead of avoiding it or white-knuckling life so as to be unaffected and keep the peace. Truth-telling and facing ourselves are the first steps toward wholeness and holiness.

Are you willing to face yourself and move forward in grace? What are you avoiding or suppressing so as to be unaffected? Maybe today you will take a step to acknowledge it. Confide in someone you find wise and trustworthy and who loves you.

THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF ALL THINGS



ONE OF THE HIGHLY PRONOUNCED qualities in our lives is the profound knowledge—indeed, the lived conviction—that all things are interconnected. This is a truly beautiful feature of Nines and one of the many gifts we bring to the world. Who you and I are, how we live, our thoughts, our words, and our actions have lasting effects on everything and everyone around us. This is true whether we or anyone else are aware of it. God knows. And others who know us *are* aware of this facet of us. We have a way of weaving seemingly disparate fabrics together into a beautiful tapestry so that others might glimpse the reality of the big picture while also noticing the fine details. We are seers. Observers.

It is why when I am in my kitchen and would rather forego the slight inconvenience of cutting up the plastic-type netting that holds soft drinks together that I wonder to myself, *What if this doesn't get recycled, and fish or other marine life get trapped inside it?* So, I take the thirty seconds

to snip, snip, snip the rings with a pair of scissors. I toss it into the recycling bin, hoping it will indeed be recycled and not wind up on a barge sailing from continent to continent and turned away from disposal. The same with clothes. I wonder, *Do I really need a pair of shoes or another outfit?* And if I do, I think, *Why not buy secondhand so my clothes don't end up in landfills?* Our action or inaction affects all living things. Our environment. People.

We could talk about our words. We damage our loved ones *and* those we hold in contempt. We are responsible for our words. Even if they remain unspoken in our hearts, they affect our posture toward others and ourselves.

But the littlest good in us affects all things in some mysterious way too. Doing our part to recycle and care for the environment and the animals is effectual, even if minutely so. Taking evil thoughts and slanderous words captive before they reach our mouths and are spewed into the atmosphere is effectual. Speaking life-giving words every chance we get to those with whom we interact makes all the difference in the world. Seemingly inane and little actions are the means of overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21). How you and I take care of our bodies will not only affect us but also those around us because our bodies affect our emotions and spiritual perceptions and vice versa. Do you see how it's all related?

What we do or don't do, what we say or don't say forms our postures. We need the grace of God's Spirit and healthy,

trustworthy community to overcome evil with good. Remembering that all things are connected will motivate us to live whole and holy lives with the help of God and the beloved community.

As we live “whole,” our lives will affect generations to come. Threads of beauty and goodness can be traced to how we lived and loved—and whether future generations can trace it to us particularly or not, it is true.

God has made your life one of the icons of the goodness and interrelatedness of all things. This is true for every person, but Nines symbolize it in a particular way. Our ways of living draw seemingly disparate strands of life together and weave them into a beautiful tapestry. Our lives are windows toward heaven, scenic views where much can be seen. Yes, we certainly have our weaknesses—details that need to be worked out in God’s way, in God’s time, with our cooperation. But showing others how all things are related is something to celebrate and for which to give thanks.

Do you see the interrelatedness and connectedness of all things? In what ways might you offer that as a gift to others?

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