

EXPLORING *The Enneagram*

INTRO

The Enneagram is a personality typing tool used in business, ministry, counseling, and spiritual formation. While the system is thousands of years old, the last century has seen its wisdom integrated with modern psychological terminology.

The Enneagram's name comes from the Greek ennea, meaning "nine" and gramma meaning "written." This makes sense when you look at the actual Enneagram: it's a diagram made up of nine points, with each point representing a different type of personality.

As we continue to explore the Enneagram over the next two weeks, I'll provide resources for those who want to know more and dig deeper. **Those will include:**

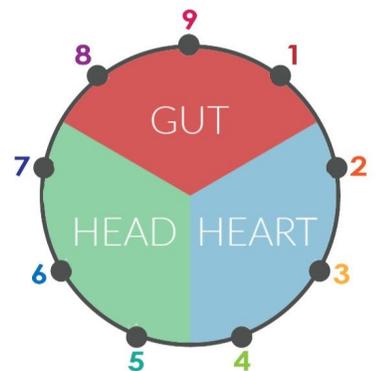
- A daily video that covers the basics of each type
- A detailed PDF in each Spiritual Adventures newsletter
- A page on the St. Thomas website where all videos, PDFs, and links to external resources will live

As we learn more about the Enneagram, you'll notice that some types have behaviors that are similar to each other. Don't let that confuse you! Enneagram types are less about what you do and more about WHY you do it. **Your Enneagram type describes what motivates you, not necessarily what you do.**

THE NINE TYPES

Your Enneagram Type is your core personality. Your type does not change, but the way you express it does based on maturity, stress, and some other factors we'll cover below.

The first thing to determine when discerning how the Enneagram best describes you is finding your Primary Type. This is one of the nine numbers you see at first glance. You can do this by reading through the types to see which one most resonates with you. You can also take an online assessment -- this isn't fool-proof but can be a good shortcut for determining your type.



Intelligence Centers: Gut vs. Heart. vs. Head

When learning about the nine types, it's helpful to know that they're divided into three categories, or "intelligence centers." We are all dominant in one of these areas, but this does not mean we do not use the other two at all. We all use our gut, heart, and head in different ways and at different times but we definitely default to a favorite.

Gut

Types Eight, Nine, and One all take in life through their instincts (with their gut) and generally respond based on what their instinct is telling them to do.

Concerned with: Justice

Seeking: Autonomy

Core Experience: Anger

Each of these enneagram types all deal with anger as their gut center issue. However, each type deals with the anger very differently.

Heart

Types Two, Three, and Four all take in life through their feelings (with their heart) and generally respond based on what their feelings are telling them to do.

Concerned with: Image

Seeking: Attention

Core Experience: Shame

Each of these enneagram types all deal with shame as their heart center issue. However, each type deals with the shame very differently.

Head

Types Five, Six, and Seven all take in life through their thinking (with their head) and generally respond based on what their minds are telling them to do.

Concerned with: Strategies

Seeking: Security

Core Experience: Fear

Each of these enneagram types all deal with anxiety or fear as their head center issue. However, each type deals with their anxiety very differently.

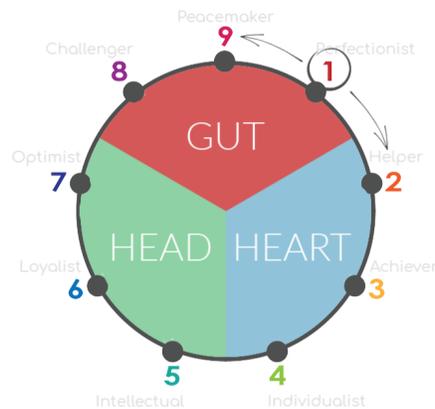
OKAY, I KNOW MY TYPE. NOW WHAT?

Obviously, there are more than nine types of people in the world! Each type has a number of variations. We'll cover two of them here. Once you discover your type, you can then determine your...

Wing

This is one of the two numbers flanking your primary type. So if your primary type is 1, then your wings are 9 and 2.

Although you have access to characteristics of both wings, most people lean more strongly into one of them. Your dominant wing influences how your primary type is expressed.



For example, Ones with a Nine wing (1w9):

- The primary type is One, the Perfectionist
- The dominant wing is Nine, the Peacemaker
- Peacemakers seek harmony, so Ones with a Nine wing tend to be perfectionists about bringing “peace” to the world -- making it more balanced and just. These are the folks who start businesses or nonprofits with a vision to make the world a better place.

Compare this to Ones with a Two wing (1w2)

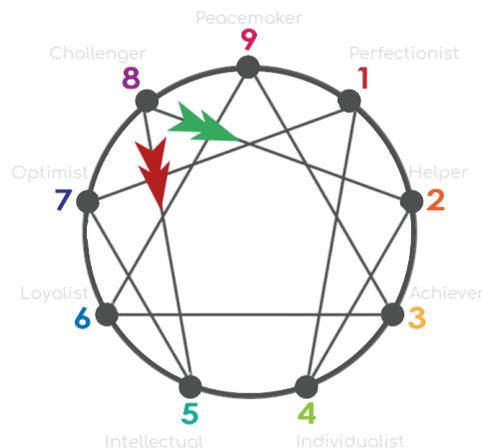
- The primary type is One, the Perfectionist
- The dominant wing is Two, the Helper
- Helpers seek connection, so Ones with a Two wing strive to perfectly meet the needs of others -- these are the perfect hosts and hostesses, nurses and doctors who provide meticulous care for their patients, or the relational, conscientious pastor.

Growth & Stress Points

When you look at some models of the Enneagram, you might notice that there are inner lines connecting different numbers to each other. These lines indicate each type's Growth and Stress points (these are sometimes called a type's directions of integration and disintegration).

Growth and Stress points show us how each type behaves under different conditions -- this is why it's helpful to remember that your Enneagram type describes your motivations, not your behavior.

For example, I (Holle) am a Type Eight (the Challenger). There are lines connecting my type to Two and Five. Two is my Growth Point -- when I'm healthy, growing, and thriving my Eight motivations (to influence and protect) are expressed in ways that can make me look like a healthy Two (the Helper): I'm relationally available to the people in my life, generous with my resources, and willing to connect and be vulnerable with others.



There is another line going from Eight to Five: this is my Stress Point. When I'm in crisis, under stress, or otherwise emotionally unwell, my Eight motivations (to influence and protect) are expressed in the behaviors of an unhealthy Five (the Intellectual) -- I turn inward and want to defend myself against the world, I detach from those around me and isolate, criticizing others as a way to keep them from getting close.

At no time in Growth or Stress am I changing my primary type, because my motivations remain the same. The lines connecting the types to each other help us see how interconnected all of us are, regardless of type, and can also help us understand how we impact each other.

That's A Lot to Process...

Don't worry, I know that the Enneagram can be overwhelming. It can take years to learn all of the ins and outs of this complex and fascinating system!

If you find yourself overwhelmed by the information, that's okay -- just focus on reading through the basics of each type and finding where you fit.

Come back tomorrow as we begin exploring the types! We're starting with Type One: The Perfectionist. In the meantime, you can take the online assessment by clicking the link provided in our Spiritual Adventures newsletter.

Happy learning!