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FORTY DAYS ON
BEING A SIX



ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS

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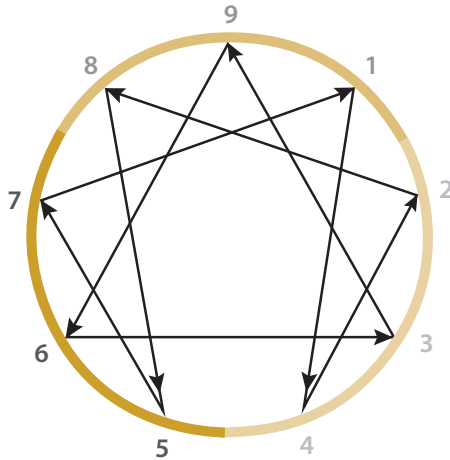


WELCOME TO ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS

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 their personal faith commitments. 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 SIX



When I began my journey with the Enneagram, I had no idea how transformative the work would be. Like many, I assumed the Enneagram was another personality test that we'd all use to label the front of our desks at work until the next behavioral fad rolled in. Others told me this was a different kind of journey, but I was skeptical.

Then my dear friends Ali and Joel Deckard shared passionately about how the Enneagram had been a formative tool in their faith development. My curiosity drove me to begin digging deep. When I discovered I was a Six, I didn't want to be one. I felt small. In a world that crowns courage, achievement, success, and winning, I hated that Sixes were motivated by something so negative.

I hated that I was marked by fear.

I am a pastor, and I know what the Bible says about fear. It says do not fear. Some point out that the command not to fear appears 365 times—one for every day of the year. If we believe this, then perhaps Sixes are the most

rebellious of all the Enneagram types. You might even say I'm a hypocrite, because I have preached countless sermons on fear. The truth is, as an Enneagram Six, I am no stranger to fear.

When I first began to read about this reality, it resonated with me deeply, but it also made me feel small and inferior. I felt so exposed. But the Enneagram journey doesn't have to end with discovering our type—especially not if we are Christ-followers. The Christian story is a rolling story of redemption, grace, love, transformation, and healing. The beauty is that God sees us as we are, loves us as we are, and invites us to deeper living in God's power. I have no idea where I would be without Jesus.

Whether by nature, nurture, or both, I was formed into an Enneagram Six. I was molded into my Sixness by the world around me, family trauma, heartache, and pain. I lived through abuse, abandonment, and loss. I believe that, had I not met Jesus, my life would be spiraling out of control as I reacted to my own fears through self-sabotage, addictions, projections, and reactions. But instead, I have met Jesus. And instead, through countless means of grace, I am being formed into the likeness of Jesus.

Yes, I am an Enneagram Six, but God is redeeming me. Although there are shadow sides, vices, and idols that Sixes get tangled up in, I also believe in grace, and I believe that redeemed Sixes have much to offer this world for the glory of God.

My invitation to you as a reader is to go deep during the next forty days, not just in your own heart and mind but in the power of Christ. As your defenses begin to come down and your heart softens and your mind opens, may the grace of God renew your vices and shadow sides so they become virtues and fruits. May you discover that redeemed loyalty can be a beautiful gift to friends, family, and God's people. May you discover the Spirit of the living God who redeems our fears and emboldens us to walk in God's power. May you discover the Spirit's power to renew our minds.

Perhaps you find yourself here as a curious learner of Sixes—you're married to a Six or you have a family member or friend who's a Six. May you read with an open heart and mind and with empathy. Perhaps you are a Seven or an Eight with a Six wing. May this forty-day journey take you into the depths of what it means to have a Six wing: the beauty, the fruits, and the vices therein.

A redeemed Six never stops being a Six. Our motivations and fears will always propel us forward through this life, but our hope is that we take this journey as redeemed children of God. I hope that you use this book as a tool, but may it be just one of many. Incorporate other practices into your life such as the prayer of examen, therapy, weekly worship in community, exercise, and meaningful friendship. Like the Enneagram, these things are means of grace—tools through which God can work for God's purposes.

God has a purpose for Sixes, and it is for God's good. God's purposes require our surrender, obedience, awareness, faithfulness, participation, and partnership. Transformation doesn't just happen; God asks for our response and for our work. May you be a Six who digs down and gets to work, and may this book bless you beyond measure.

I AM LOVED



AS I WRAPPED THE SWADDLING blanket around my firstborn, his face oscillated between rage, fear, confusion, and sadness. For nine months he had been snuggled tightly in the security and comfort of my womb. Now suddenly he was experiencing feelings he had never known: hunger pangs, cold air, hot air, untucked limbs, pain, disorientation. Gravity was new and unknown. All he wanted was safety and security, to be tucked into the warmth of something known, something protected, something that would center him.

As I tried to wrap him in the blanket, his arms and legs flailed wildly, and just as I would near completion of a tight swaddle, a limb would magically pop out. Finally, at last, I won the battle and had him secure in both the swaddling cloth and my arms. I held him tight, rocking him back and forth and gently patting his butt while whispering, “It’s going to be okay; mama is here; you are safe and you are secure.”

Slowly but surely his piercing scream turned into a whimper and then an occasional gulp of air. I watched as his eyes began to roll back and he fought what his body

needed most—sleep. He looked up at me, secure in his swaddling cloth, studying his mama’s face and listening to her familiar voice. He was safe, he was secure, he was known, and he knew it. At last he slept.

As I watched him sleep, something about his helplessness made secure awake a longing in my own soul. I too felt helpless. I too felt disoriented. I longed for (and still long for) nothing more than security, safety, and protection.

I suspect you know that familiar longing. *Oh, to be held. Oh, to be secure. Oh, to be centered.*

And you are.

Scripture gives us a vision of a nurturing, maternal, and loving God who offers security for the flailing, courage for the fearful, strength for the weak, and refuge for the unsheltered.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 17:8)

I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed. (Psalm 57:1)

He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge.
(Psalm 91:4)

The God of history—the living, ever-present, ever-loving, and maternal God—is a God who draws the flailing baby near and secures her into God’s warm embrace. Like an eagle who pulls its chick close in times of disaster or the

parent who comforts a terrified child in the middle of a storm, God offers refuge and strength for the fearful.

Life as a Six can feel disorienting. Sometimes we long for someone to tell us where we can find the nearest path of safety. The fear of picking the wrong path feels crippling, so we look for the wiser, confident, guiding voice.

The God of history does not veer away from your disorientation; rather, God moves nearer. You are not alone; you don't have to navigate this life lacking courage. Instead, God will embolden you to take the path—not because it's easy, but because God is Emmanuel. Take courage, dear Six. You are secure. You are not alone. God is your refuge.

Find a comfortable spot in your home. Perhaps it's a chair or nook or bed that brings you comfort and security. Find a blanket and wrap it snug around your shoulders and body. Slowly breathe in for fifteen seconds, and as you do, soak in the grace of God. Slowly exhale for fifteen seconds, releasing all of your anxieties and fears. Repeat this six times.

ELECTRIC JOY



WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS OLD, I walked into our one-bedroom apartment one day and saw my mom spinning and dancing with glee in front of the television. I stood there dazzled by her electric energy. She twirled with her hair carelessly falling across her face. She acted like something extraordinary had just happened and she was celebrating.

She turned to me, pulled me in, and spun me around with her. As a four-year-old, I was delighted. We were having a party in the middle of the day! Turns out nothing significant had happened; she was dancing *just because*. She was filled with electric joy, and I will never forget our midday party. It's one of my earliest happy memories.

As a Six, I often crave lighthearted fun just because. I love to laugh, and I seek friends who make me laugh. My husband and I have an extremely playful marriage, full of inside jokes and adventures. I love to tease my children, have dance parties in the middle of the living room, and celebrate just because. My mom exuded joy that day. Although I may never fully understand what caused it, I'm okay with it being *just because*.

Laughter and celebration drive my fears away, even if only momentarily. In his book *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*, Richard Rohr says, “When we laugh from the heart, fear can’t remain very long.” Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and while many Enneagram experts say overcoming fears with courage is the Six’s strength, I contend that joy is another. We know how to be joyful even in times of chaos. But the greatest joy is the kind that wells up from security in Christ.

I’ve always been captivated by the apostle Paul’s joy. He had no reason to be joyful when he penned the book of Philippians—he was detained and in chains. But his joy sprang from what God had done in Christ, and his loyalty to Christ was reason enough for him to rejoice. Gordon D. Fee talks about joy in his commentary on Philippians this way: “Joy, unmitigated, untrammelled joy, is—or at least should be—the distinctive mark of the believer in Christ Jesus.”

What if instead of rejoicing to ignore our fears, we rejoiced out of our security and loyalty to King Jesus? That’s the kind of joy I long to see well up in my own life.

God, what you have done in the faithfulness of King Jesus is truly awesome. I do rejoice! You have redeemed me, and I am also still being redeemed. All of my aches, longings, and brokenness find their answer in you, and I therefore rejoice. I pray that your joy would flow out of me not to just drown out my fears but because of my security in you. Amen.