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FORTY DAYS ON  
BEING A THREE

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ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS

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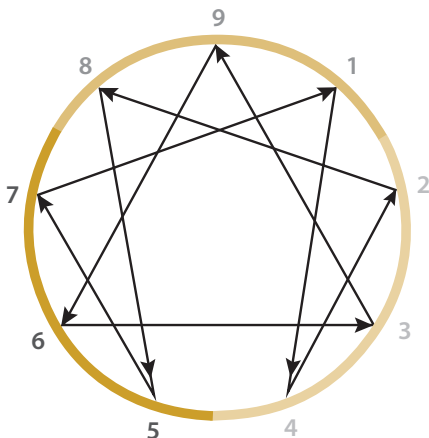


# WELCOME TO ENNEAGRAM DAILY REFLECTIONS

*Suzanne Stabile*



**T**he 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.

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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 difference, 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.

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## ON BEING A THREE



Everyone needs a spiritual director *and* a therapist,” says my friend Suzanne Stabile. So I spend Monday mornings with John.

John is my therapist, my “I don’t give a crap who you are” guy. As an Enneagram Three, I find it helpful to know John and people like him—people who couldn’t care less what I do, who I know, or what I’ve accomplished.

My first spiritual director was Don, who I met in seminary at Fuller Northern California. Don showed me what it looked like to be real, open, and honest. Before he knew me much at all, he shared with me his victories and defeats, as a son, husband, father, and businessman. He was open about the one thing I don’t want to share with anyone, even myself: failure.

As an Enneagram Three, my core sin is deceit. That doesn’t really mean what people often think it does. It doesn’t mean I lie, though, at times, I’m confident I do. Deceit means I live at the edge of duplicity. I don’t want to. I want to be esteemed. I want to be admired. I want to be

loved. I want to be in relationship with people. In fact, I want to be in relationship with people more than I want anything else. But somewhere along my path I got the misguided idea that being loved required being valuable, worthwhile, or at least *looking* valuable and worthwhile. And not just successful in some generic or universal sense, but successful in presenting a version of myself that the person or the room of people before me wanted to see.

There's just no way to be successful at looking successful to everyone without creatively shading the picture. That's deceit.

In one of my favorite movies, *A Few Good Men*, Demi Moore's Lt. Cdr. JoAnne Galloway and Tom Cruise's Lt. Daniel Kaffee go out for seafood. After Galloway gives Kaffee a rundown of her accomplishments, Kaffee asks, "Why are you always giving me your résumé?" JoAnne responds, "Because I want you to think that I'm a good lawyer." I don't know where JoAnn Galloway might type herself on the Enneagram (I never, ever, ever type other people), but Galloway's response was pure Enneagram Three.

And that's why I need John and Don.

They don't care about my résumé. Giving it to them would make me feel silly, stupid even.

My problem is I've spent a good bit of time and energy building that résumé. I've been in professional ministry for over twenty-three years, currently serving as teaching pastor for a large church in Houston, Texas. I'm also a writer, speaker, and coach for other speakers and preachers. At the



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same time, I enjoy the gifts of a wonderful wife, Rochelle, and two beautiful teenaged daughters, Malia and Katharine. I have both a home office and a home gym because my daily instinct is to *do* something.

When I signed the contract for my first book, *Unarmed Empire: In Search of Beloved Community*, I called Don. All my other friends received the news with excitement. Not Don. There were no “congratulations.” No “well done.” No “you’ve earned it.” Don said, “Wow! How do you think that will impact your relationships with Rochelle and your daughters?”

I felt deflated. Why? *Because I want you to think I’m a good . . . pastor.*

Like Don, John doesn’t care if I’m a good pastor. He’s more concerned if being a pastor is good for me. Every Enneagram Three needs both a John and a Don. We need people who don’t care about what we’ve accomplished or are trying to accomplish. We need someone who looks at our failures with grace and kindness, who knows those false steps are passing realities of life and not a reflection of our value.

You might not have found a John or a Don yet. Even if you haven’t discovered your “I don’t give a crap who you are” people, you don’t really need to in order to unearth the truth your heart needs most: you are loved.

Stop.

Dwell on that.

*You are loved.*

The best thing you can do right now is let your heart hunker down in the deep truth that you are loved and lovable. The late Catholic priest, writer, and theologian Henri Nouwen wrote,

The world tells you many lies about who you are, and you simply have to be realistic enough to remind yourself of this. Every time you feel hurt, offended, or rejected, you have to dare to say to yourself: These feelings, strong as they may be, are not telling me the truth about myself. The truth, even though I cannot feel it right now, is that I am the chosen child of God, precious in God's eyes, called the Beloved from all eternity, and held safe in an everlasting belief.

And isn't love what you most deeply crave?

The Enneagram came to me after a series of prolonged and public failures, the kind that left me crying in bed at night and crushingly disappointed with God and myself. And I'm glad that it did. Had the Enneagram arrived any sooner, my outsized ego and dreams of a flourishing future would have silenced its wisdom. The beauty of failure—at least the beauty around *my* failures—was that in the midst of it, God revealed to me who my friends were, who my friends weren't, and who loved me for me, rather than for what I did or how I performed. In a world consumed with fans and followers, nothing can replace the abiding love of the faithful people God surrounds you with.

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The beauty of the Enneagram is its dynamic nature. For starters, you are not your number. You are your true self, the beautiful, wonderfully made person you were created to be, your “essence,” in Enneagram language. Your Enneagram number is a strategy to find love and meaning; that number is an explanation, not a reason or excuse for stagnancy or complacency. The Enneagram works best as a tool for growth, not a mechanism for a system of stasis.

Besides your core number, there are three crucial aspects of the Enneagram you will need to be aware of—your behavioral changes in stress and security, your “wings,” and “subtypes.”

First, let’s consider the direction of the arrows, or what some Enneagram teachers call “integration/disintegration” or “stress/security.” Stress and security seem more evocative and truer to my personal experience, so, with apologies to and with an appreciation for various schools of thought and experiences, I will use “stress/security” for shorthand throughout. In stress and security, each Enneagram type takes on some of the positive or negative behaviors of other types. For example, Enneagram Threes in security and integration adopt the positive or negative behaviors of Enneagram Sixes; while in stress, Threes will take on the positive or negative behaviors of Enneagram Nines.

There are three key distinctions we need to be aware of concerning stress and security. For one, no one “moves” to another number. Your core personality persists. We merely take on the behaviors and not the motivations of another

number. Second, inside this dynamism you can adopt either (or both) the positive or negative behaviors of the other number. This is commonly called the “high” or “low” side of your stress and security numbers. Many Enneagram students misdiagnose their numbers because they examine their behaviors (not their motivations) only to find out, often much later, that they had actually been living in stress when they encountered the Enneagram and weren’t who they thought they were. Third, the behaviors we adopt in stress and security are necessary to survive. For instance, there was a time I was frustrated by a coworker who consistently shut down my ideas, even those our organizations spent thousands of dollars creating. After a time I checked out—disintegrated to the low side of Nine—because it was either that or allow my frustration to grow to the point of lashing out or leaving my job. I knew I’d eventually re-collect and re-center myself, but for about six months, that Nine space and energy saved me. So you can see that the most important numbers to know besides your core number are your numbers in stress and security.

Second, you need to pay close attention to the numbers on either side of your core number. These are your “wings.” Wings can be important or not, depending on your own spiritual journey and your location on that journey. It really is particular. Some of us, like me, have enormous wings, while others do not. The core of growth using the Enneagram will be found in knowing yourself within your number as deeply as you can.

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Third, inside each core number are what Enneagram teachers refer to as instinctual variants, or “subtypes.” The three subtypes are self-preserving, social, and sexual (also called one-to-one). Each person, in addition to having a core number, also lives from within their subtype. For instance, I am a self-preserving Enneagram Three while my friend Lisa is a social Enneagram Three. Her motivations come from her core number, but often people assume she’s a Two because her subtype motivates her to curate successful social interactions for her and her family.

There is a widespread belief that subtypes are concretized and immovable. That’s not true. Thinking about subtypes, I’m reminded of a house my family lived in near downtown Houston. It was three stories. The entire house was ours, but at different times or seasons we spent more or less time on some floors. On the bottom floor was a garage and a guest bedroom with attached bathroom that doubled as my home office. The second floor contained our living room, dining room, kitchen, and a half bath, with two large bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. The laundry was on the third floor. When I was working on writing projects, I spent a great deal of time on the bottom floor, but none when my wife’s second cousin moved in with us and we gave her that room. One summer when I could hardly sleep, I spent long hours in the living room on the couch. And when my wife or daughters had friends visit, I hid out in my bedroom. This is an apt metaphor for the same way an Enneagram

Three might be self-preserving at the height of her earning power and providing for a family, while a stay-at-home father or mother with young children might be social, only to have those subtypes change as life changes. Subtypes are not locked. Humans shift to these “floors” depending on what they need to do to survive.

However, stress and security, wings, and subtypes can be terribly fascinating but also incredibly distracting. Fascination is often a distraction from the hard work of transformation. The readings you are holding are aimed toward helping you find love and authenticity, not simply knowing more about the Enneagram. On one hand, finding love and authenticity means allowing God and the Scriptures to indict the deceit and vainglory that seeps inside and becomes a compulsive way of manipulating the world. On the other hand, these words attempt to harness the divine impulses inherent within Threes—our energy, focus, optimism, reflex for cheerleading, and so many other important virtues.

I suggest you read them slowly, reminding yourself that you, like everyone, are a mixed bag of virtues and vices. As a matter of fact, each of us can find ourselves in each of the numbers. Thus, this volume is not only for Threes. It’s for everyone. So whether you want to explore a Three wing or to grow in relationship to a Three, you are welcome on this journey.

Our fugitive impulses, though resident within, are not our real selves. Some days these readings will make you

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angry. Other days you will feel affirmed. Still, there will be more days, if you are a Three, that you will feel nothing. And that's what I hope to change.

Every number on the Enneagram interprets the world through one of three centers—thinking, feeling, or doing—but is also repressed in one of those centers. For our purposes, let me explain it this way: though we receive the world through the heart and feelings, Threes don't use feelings to move forward, make decisions, or respond to the world. Threes are “feeling repressed” in terms of Enneagram wisdom. We are quick to do and think but not feel. That being the case, these readings will not ask you to do something each day; the readings are not task centered. Rather they will more often ask you to sit and try to raise your feelings, to make them intelligible and helpful to you. The only way for these readings to be rewarding is to show up for forty days.

Do the hard work. Read. Ponder. *Feel*.

Stop.

Dwell.

You are loved.

## SHOWING OFF



**KIM KARDASHIAN WAS ROBBED** at gunpoint in a Paris hotel room in October 2016. The thieves strapped her to a bed, tied her arms and legs, and gagged her. When the men first burst into Kim’s room they asked her about a specific diamond ring. It was worth \$4 million.

A few days after the robbery, Kardashian said the robbers probably followed her entire Parisian trip. She posted her location and announced each party she was attending and what she was wearing on Instagram. She had even posted pictures of the ring they stole. Kardashian said they knew where she was and what she was doing because she was “showing off.”

I like to think of myself as a deep, thoughtful, spiritual man but the truth is, I’m much more like Kim Kardashian than I am Joseph Kiwánuka. As an Enneagram Three, the bear on my back every day is the temptation to be seen. To be heard. To be considered. To be worthwhile. I’m a showoff in a show-off culture who gets rewarded for showing off. And the reward for showing off is more opportunities to show off. We call this “success,” but as a friend of mine



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asked, “If a Three succeeds and no one is there to see it, did it really happen?”

And in my desire to show off, I disavow what the divine One says about me. When God promises me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, that God will bring God’s good work in me to completion, I reject it, vowing to wow the world on my own. In showing off, I disbelieve that I am seen, heard, considered, worthy, and more than that, *loved*.

Immersed and indoctrinated as we all are into a show-off culture but born with braggadocio, Threes too easily trade being admired for being adored by our Savior. I don’t like to admit it, but I make daily attempts to get the world to look at me—whether through successes, physical fitness, or being considered clever or funny or smart or sophisticated.

What might today look like, then, if I were to simply pray the ancient words of the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” Being healed means accepting the innate brokenness within us. Those broken places are the very things we are trying to hide by showing off.

**In which area of your life are you most tempted to show off today?**

**What would it mean to enter that space and simply be present in your brokenness rather than in bragging about your “success”?**

## I CAN RUN FASTER THAN YOU



**I'M A COMPETITOR.** It's encoded in the essential makeup of Threes. And anyone who has been around Threes knows it. I compete at everything, even when the person I'm competing with doesn't know (or care) that I'm competing with them.

In 2014 I lost one hundred pounds. That's when I discovered my love for running. The preceding year my doctor had told me that I was prediabetic with class 2 obesity. I didn't know there were classes to obesity, but I had reached the second one. I put my head down and got it done. First, I lost twenty pounds, then forty pounds, until I was down one hundred pounds in just over a year.

With my newfound love for running, I received my daughter's decision to also start running with great joy. Malia has never been particularly interested in sports, and we tried a few—softball, soccer, and finally, cross-country. When it comes to competition, she just doesn't thrive like I do. She just hops onto the field of play, content to win or lose.

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So, when my daughter ran, my instinct for competition went into hyperdrive whereas hers did not. She ran for school credit and the endorphin release, not to win. I wanted her to compete so I could prove to the other parents, the coaches, and myself that I am a winner. It was a struggle to stand and watch her bring up the rear of the pack and then the rear of the rear. I did what I knew to do: cheer and congratulate. But what I wanted to do was slink away. I imagined the other parents seeing me as a loser. Her running made *me* feel like a failure. It made her feel alive.

When she runs, Malia feels pain, yes—but also freedom and release from her own desires for control. I had missed that in my craving for excellence. She had a different idea of excellent. And I’m learning that hers is better. St. Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is man fully alive.” Running gave her life. Constant competition, even when I wasn’t competing, depleted me of mine. I learned from Malia that the gift of the run is in the running.

Where can you release power today by refusing to compete?

**How can you be vulnerable and open in this area?**

**Where can you allow the experience to be the gift to you rather than a pursuit to conquer?**

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