

How God Can Use the Enneagram With the Gospel to Transform Your Marriage

Perhaps you've been hearing all the buzz about the Enneagram, but you've assumed it's just another personality test. While those tests can be useful in pinpointing our particular preferences and tendencies, they don't get to the root of the motivations behind our behaviors, and they don't often lead to spiritual and relational growth.

The Enneagram works differently. It reveals not only what we do, but why we do it. From the Greek words for nine (*ennea*) and gram (*diagram*), the Enneagram is a nine-pointed symbol. Each point represents a basic personality type and a specific pattern of thinking. We study the Enneagram to learn why each type thinks, feels and acts in specific ways, and what that looks like when they're in a healthy mental state or if they're struggling.

The nine Enneagram personality types are all experiencing the same world, but with different colored lenses, or perspectives. There are different core motivations driving each type's behavior. The Enneagram names and addresses the core dynamics of our hearts. It invites us on a path of discovering and growing. By learning about the nine different colored lenses, we can grow in compassion in our marriages and all our relationships.

If you're ready to discover your type, I invite you to go take my free assessment.

A Christ-Centered Approach

Identifying our type is the first step to uncovering the power of the Enneagram as a tool for lasting transformation. But in

order to experience real freedom, we must look at the world through the lens of the gospel. The Enneagram illuminates our heart's intent, but the gospel itself is the transformation. This tool can show us what's wrong, but only Christ can fix it.

The gospel says we're free in Christ, forgiven and received as righteous, adopted and loved, and filled by His Spirit with the power to become like Christ. When we focus on obeying externally, we fall short every time. But if we allow ourselves to rest in the finished work Christ accomplished on our behalf, then we can look at our inner world without shame, condemnation or fear. That's when real transformation happens.

Fighting Well

No matter your personality type, God hardwired you for relationships. You were made to want and need community with others, and like it or not, you can't lead a truly fulfilling life on your own. Marriage is an especially beautiful gift that provides us an earthly representation of Christ's love for His church.

But just as it is with every good thing this side of heaven, sin can make its way into our marriages, stealing our joy, intimacy and satisfaction and replacing it with resentment, misunderstanding, hurtful words and wounding arguments. The covenant relationship God created for our enjoyment can quickly become riddled with and all too often ended by conflict.

So how do we resolve conflicts with our partners in a constructive way? The gospel-centered Enneagram provides us with some extremely helpful insights. It shows us how our personality's unhealthy perceptions can negatively impact our behaviors.

This powerful tool empowered my husband, Jeff, and me to reject the lies of our internal wiring that don't match up

with what the Lord says of us. We learned to harness our different perspectives for good. Helping our spouse to become their best self isn't about us changing them into who we think they should be; it's about coming alongside of them and loving them as they are becoming who God wants them to be.

Changing Our Dance

During the first few years of our marriage, we felt like we were trying to climb Mount Everest with no equipment. Despite our best intentions to have a thriving partnership, we kept hitting the same walls over and over again. We simply didn't understand ourselves, one another and the fullness we already had in Christ.

We discovered that much of the time, the root of marriage conflict stems from not truly understanding the hearts of our spouses, and insisting that our point of view be seen as right. God created us uniquely different so we can come together and bring Him glory, honor and praise.

The belief that "we are right, and they are wrong" keeps us in unhealthy relational patterns. It's like an old dance where we fall into the practiced steps of false thinking, resentment and condemnation. Our thoughts, feelings, assumptions and reactions seem stuck, and we don't see another way. But when we shift our focus from being right to being restored, we can finally change our old dance steps.

Imagine how your relationship would change if you really trusted the amazing news of the gospel, believing that Christ is restoring you and your partner. God has an amazing plan and specific purpose for your relationship! Though conflicts are inevitable, it's so encouraging to know that they give us the opportunity to experience transformational grace and abundant life. {eoa}

Beth McCord *is the founder of Your Enneagram Coach, a community designed to be a safe place for individuals to*

explore a Christ-centered Enneagram. In her new book, Becoming Us, Beth and her husband, Pastor Jeff McCord, provide a roadmap for couples to break free from unhealthy patterns, align their marriage with the gospel, and grow into the couple God designed them to be. Learn more at .