

The Dangers of Enneagram

by

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Introduction

Enneagram, or The Enneagram, is a method of spiritual enlightenment that has been transformed into a form of personality test that has become very popular in the past decade within progressive Christian circles. It is described as “one of the most powerful and insightful tools for understanding ourselves and others” and as an “invaluable assistance on our path to self-knowledge.”¹ Enneagram is not the only personality test on the market, but it does seem to be the only one that includes some form of spirituality. On the surface, Enneagram appears to be just another personality test, and it is attracting many people within church leadership around the nation. It has become common practice for church leaders to utilize different forms of personality tests to help others find their potential strengths, and subsequently utilize those strengths for the good of the organization. Meyers-Briggs has been one of the more popular styles of tests and some charismatic Christian denominations have also used similar questionnaires to help believers determine the spiritual gifts given to them by God. Generally speaking, these types of tests can be valuable for Christian believers, as long as they are not incorporating practices or beliefs that are against Scripture. Descriptions of Enneagram include a lot of spiritual phraseology that can be very attractive to a spiritually minded person of any faith, but it also incorporates a form of spirituality that contradicts Scripture; this should raise several serious concerns for any follower of Jesus.

Dangers of Enneagram

The history of Enneagram dating back to the late 1960's and shows that the methodology, created by Oscar Ichazo, is based on a philosophy that “contains components from mystical

¹ “About the Enneagram.” Enneagram Institute, accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/about/>

Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, and ancient Greek philosophy.”² Some have proposed that the Enneagram dates much further back into history, but Claudio Naranjo, one of Ichazo’s students, admitted the origins were fabricated to give it greater legitimacy.³ There has been some debate as to who actually created the Enneagram which spawned a lawsuit in 1992 that ultimately decided Ichazo is the original founder.⁴ Though Naranjo has also authored multiple books on the topic and has merged Ichazo’s original work into his teachings on psychiatry.

The model developed in the 1960’s is the foundation for the Enneagram personality tests being used today. Both Naranjo and Ichazo claimed to have created the enneatypes used in this test. Naranjo states that he received the enneatypes through automatic writing, which is a new age methodology of receiving information from the spirit realm (i.e. demons).⁵ Ichazo claims he received them much earlier when a supposed angel, named Metatron (i.e. also a demon), provided him with more than 100 enneagram diagrams.⁶ The courts sided with Ichazo, but either way, both methodologies of receiving this information from demonic sources is a red flag for anyone following Jesus. The current version of Enneagram was developed as a form of “inner work” that blended teachings on psychology, cosmology, metaphysics, and spirituality with the

² “The Traditional Enneagram.” Enneagram Institute, accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/the-traditional-enneagram/>.

³ “The origin of the Enneagram – Claudio Naranjo speaks – June 2010.” Workshops at IDHBB, June 18, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wI03KJWnNd8> (see 1:30 and 3:20 on the video timeline).

⁴ “Arica Institute, Inc., Plaintiff-appellant, v. Helen Palmer and Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated, defendants-appellees, 970 F.2d 1067 (2d Cir. 1992)” Justia US Law, accessed Jan 9, 2023, <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/970/1067/269899/>

⁵ “The origin of the Enneagram” (see 3:35 on the video timeline).

⁶ Charles T. Tart, *Transpersonal Psychologies: Perspectives on the Mind from Seven Great Spiritual Traditions*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977), 341.

goal of transforming the human consciousness.⁷ This should be the first major concern for any follower of Jesus who is considering using the Enneagram as a form of personality test. Blending other religious practices into the teachings of Jesus is never a good idea. The Bible very bluntly commands us not to worship other Gods in Exodus 20:3. God is a jealous God, and incorporating a practice developed within other religions for any reason is essentially the same thing as worshipping another God because it puts that religions belief system in the place of God.

What should trouble us the most about the Enneagram methodology is that it has somehow seeped into Christian leadership circles. Books have been written that try to draw parallels between the Enneagram and Jesus, Christian magazines are touting it as a tool that can bring healing, and churches have adopted the Enneagram as a form of personality test for their leaders.⁸ All of this without realizing that this methodology was created, not only apart from Jesus, but in direct contrast to what He offers. Supernatural healing from any source other than Jesus is demonic. Applying principles from Eastern Mysticism and other ancient belief systems is contrary to what God requires from us. He does not accept the idea of any other religious systems being intermingled with his requirements (Ex. 34:14). We cannot allow our need for spiritual truth to be answered by a falsehood shrouded in truth.

One of the popular Enneagram books, written by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, tries to draw a connection between this so-called “ancient system” and Christian spirituality⁹. Their book briefly discusses some of the fabricated ancient history of the Enneagram, without

⁷ “The Traditional Enneagram.”

⁸ John Starke. “An Evangelical’s Guide to the Enneagram.” Christianity Today, October 21, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november/evangelicals-guide-to-enneagram.html>

⁹ Ian Morgan Cron & Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2016).

any accurate sourcing, and glosses over the more recent history of how Oscar Ichazo blended in elements from multiple religions, before bringing the Enneagram to America in the 1970's. They fail to disclose the true history of how Ichazo developed the Enneagram or the multiple religious ideologies he merged into it.¹⁰ Ichazo was a student of George Gurdjieff, a mystic spiritual teacher who taught others how to attain higher states of consciousness and had regular contact with his spirit guides.¹¹ It's never a good idea to follow the teachings of someone who has a demonic spirit guide giving them advice. Early on, Cron & Stabile quote Brother Dave, a Monk Cron reached out to for advice, who described the Enneagram as something "full of wisdom for people who want to get out of their own way and become who they were created to be."¹² In contrast, Proverbs 2:6 tells us that wisdom and understanding comes from the Lord. Cron also mentions that he didn't know who he was, which led Brother Dave to encourage him to pursue the Enneagram. Followers of Jesus have been given the Holy Spirit, and we should be seeking Him for the answer to who we were created to be. We don't need encounters with the ancient Enneagram, we need encounters with the Ancient of Days.

Russ Hudson, the President of the Enneagram Institute, when discussing the Enneagram types, is quoted as saying "type isn't a 'type' of person, but a path to God."¹³ This is directly contrary to the word of God. Jesus told us in John 14:6 that He is the only way to the Father. There is no other path to God. There is only one path to God, and that is through Jesus. Offering

¹⁰ Cron, & Stabile.

¹¹ Marcia Montenegro. "The Enneagram GPS: Gnostic path to self." Christian answers for the new age, March, 2011, http://www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles_Enneagram.html

¹² Cron, & Stabile.

¹³ Jonathan Merritt. "What is the 'Enneagram,' and why are Christians suddenly so enamored by it?" Religion News Service, September 5, 2017, <https://religionnews.com/2017/09/05/what-is-the-enneagram-and-why-are-christians-suddenly-so-enamored-by-it/>

multiple paths to God is a common teaching in Hinduism as well as other Middle Eastern religions, because it allows people to live a lifestyle of their choosing and then pick a god that matches their choices.¹⁴ Christians are called to a higher standard. We don't choose a God that fits our lifestyle. We change our lifestyle to match what our King requires of us.

Chris Heurtz, a Christian, and the author of *The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth*, affirms this notion of multiple paths to God and also teaches within his book that he considers the Enneagram to be sacred to the soul.¹⁵ Sacred is defined by Merriam Webster as “dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a deity.” Christians should not hold anything in direct contrast to God as sacred. We are called to be set apart as the temple of the Holy Spirit (9), not gravitate towards a mashup of teachings from other religious beliefs (2 Tim. 2:21, 1 Cor. 6:19). Another article in *Christianity Today*, written by Pastor John Starke, states that “the Enneagram can enhance, not replace, our participation in the normal means of Christian grace and growth.”¹⁶ He goes on to state in this same article that “The Enneagram helps us see how fear might be controlling us, how shame might be motivating us, how guilt might be crippling us.”¹⁷ Once again, this is allowing a methodology to take the place of God. One of the roles of Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth, and as believers, we need to go to him to determine if we have any fear, shame, or guilt (John 16:13). God is the one who searches our hearts, not a mystical tool (Ps. 139)

¹⁴ Sachi Edwards, *Critical Conversations about Religion: Promises and Pitfalls of a Social Justice Approach to Interfaith Dialogue* (Scottsdale: Information Age Publishing, 2016).

¹⁵ Merritt, “What is the ‘Enneagram.’”

¹⁶ John Starke. “An Evangelical’s Guide to the Enneagram.” *Christianity Today*, October 21, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november/evangelicals-guide-to-enneagram.html>

¹⁷ Starke, “An Evangelical’s Guide to the Enneagram.”

Forms of spiritual enlightenment, or spiritual self-discovery, have been around for thousands of years within Eastern religions, but those ideas rarely leave room for the God of the Bible. Those beliefs are focused on individual enlightenment, and pursuing higher states of consciousness, as a way of achieving the sought-after enlightenment. Followers of Jesus are also on a spiritual journey, but our pursuit is to be in perfect relationship with the God we serve as Jesus describes in John 15:1-8, and to allow Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. Anything, any concept, any teaching, or any perspective, that is created out of belief systems created in other religions or which are contrary to biblical teachings should never be used by followers of Jesus (2 Cor. 10:5). Allowing these perspectives a place of influence in our lives is an open invitation to deception. There is no middle ground here. Jesus taught us to be in the world but not of the world, and the same teaching is reinforced in James 4, where we are quite sternly told that being friends with the world makes us enemies of God (John 17:14-19, James 4:4).

The concept of the Enneagram methodology is certainly appealing. All of humanity needs a deeper understanding of who we are because self-awareness shows us how we can impact the world around us in an effective way. Supernatural ideas are also naturally attractive to all people because we were created by a supernatural God, and we were designed to have a supernatural relationship with him. Our spirit is a major component of this relationship. But our spirit was never designed to be in relationship with satan, demonic forces, or even angels; our spirit was designed to be in relationship with our creator. The Apostle Paul makes a compelling point in 1 Cor. 10:20 that idol worship is really the worship of demons. Adherents to religious beliefs that do not follow the God of the Bible, are following and being influenced by demonic forces. To that end, the follower of Jesus should never pursue ideas or supposed truths formed from the beliefs of other faiths. Our truth must always come from God. The Christian believer's

path to understanding their identity is attained through intimate relationship with God where he teaches us about who we are and what we are called to do in our lives; note that this is not self-awareness. Any method that contradicts biblical truths, especially those developed from other faiths, are incompatible with following Jesus.

In Old Testament times, the Israelites tended to follow after the false gods that were worshipped by the nations with whom that they intermingled. Anytime Israel turned back to God, he always required them to get rid of anything associated with those false gods, and to not follow the ways or rituals of those beliefs. Asherah poles and altars are mentioned a lot in those conversations; they were designed specifically for the worship of those false gods, and there was never a time where God allowed them to stay or allowed them to be implemented in worshipping him (Ex. 34:13-14, Deut. 12:3-4, and Judges 6:25). Some try to make the argument that Christians can take something that was used for evil and redeem it for a good purpose. But this is only true when the original purpose of a practice was one that is approved by God. Redeeming the Asherah pole for a righteous purpose was never an option because it was originally created for an evil purpose.

The Bible never mentions God allowing anything created for an evil purpose to be redeemed and used for a righteous purpose. We often see an imitation of the Gifts of the Spirit, listed in 1 Cor. 12:4-11, used for purposes not in line with the will of God in areas such as fortune telling, Reiki, or access bars, but that does not negate the use of spiritual gifts by a believer in relationship with Jesus. These spiritual gifts were created for a righteous purpose. That is the distinction here. We cannot, and should not, take practices formed in evil, and adopt them to our lives. Doing that is nothing more than attempting to mix the systems of the world with the kingdom of God. We are called to influence the world, not the other way around. We

can live a supernatural lifestyle, led by Holy Spirit, and discover all that he has for us without looking to methodologies formed in other religious belief systems.

It should also be noted, on the scientific and psychology front, that multiple studies have revealed there is no real science involved in the Enneagram process. Jeanne Godin showed there was no significant effect on psychological well-being¹⁸, research by David Daniels, et al. revealed no differences between experimental and control groups¹⁹, Penelope Thrasher noted participants did not act according to their Enneatype when placed under stress²⁰, and Sutton's partial comparison with The Big 5 personality test showed Enneagram greatly lacking in its ability to produce better results based on self-efficacy.²¹ Additionally, a poll a 2015 poll involving 150 doctoral mental health experts focused on rating the efficacy of psychological treatments rated Enneagram at 88 out of 89 available tests.²² So, even from a purely scientific perspective, the Enneagram is seen as a very poor tool.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that the Enneagram is not compatible with the teachings of Jesus. Adding in a bit of Christianese or removing a few terms that sound a little too much like New Age, does not suddenly make it a spiritually healthy practice. Followers of Jesus must be on

¹⁸ Jeanne Godin. *The effect of the Enneagram on psychological well-being and unconditional self-acceptance of young adults*. PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2010.

¹⁹ David Daniels, et al. *Advancing ego development in adulthood through study of the Enneagram system of personality*. Journal of adult development, 25(4), 2018, 229-241.

²⁰ Penelope Thrasher. *The enneagram: Movement between types, an inventory, and a criterion measure*. PhD diss., Loyola University, 1994.

²¹ Anna Sutton *But is it real? A review of research on enneagram*. Enneagram Journal, 5, 2015.

²² Reference forthcoming as soon as a consistently reliable link is found.

guard against anything that attempts to take the place of Jesus in our lives. Believers need to be on the lookout for this type of deception and look to God for revelation of the fullness of our identity in Christ. Putting anything else in the place of God is essentially a form of worship to someone other than God and is an open invitation for demonic influence. That is not a road a follower of Jesus should ever walk down.

This is not about legalism, forcing someone to adhere to the law, or violating the Christian principal of freedom. It's about living a life of holiness that Jesus purchased for us. Our lives need to reflect the sacrifice of Jesus, and we need to live in a way that honors our King. Our freedom was not designed for us to go back into bondage. The enemy's goal is to kill, steal, and destroy; enneagram, yoga, reiki, etc. do not bring life, they put people into bondage. If you have fallen into this trap, renounce it, ask Jesus for forgiveness, and ask him to reveal your true identity. He is the only source of our freedom and identity!

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