

The Enneagram and Discernment: A Unique Approach to Making Wise Decisions

Advent Lutheran Church

Morgan Hill, CA

Mondays and Thursdays via Zoom: Time TBA

“Discernment is the capacity to distinguish the difference in attitude in myself, and to make choices based on the deeper desires that emerge as i begin to notice what is actually going on.” Margaret Blackie

Instructor: Vicar Brandon Peck

(408) 389-8940

vicar@advent-lutheran.org

Course Overview

This course is designed for those who are both familiar with the Enneagram and those who are new to this tool for spiritual growth. Many personality typing systems highlight our strengths, which has value. However, true spirituality leads to growth and development. The Enneagram is a dynamic system that is based on self discovery and points us to both our gifts and our growing edges. It is designed to gives us access to great self awareness and to become more holistically integrated beings. This course will use the Enneagram as a tool for discernment and decision making. Particular attention will be given to the Ignatian tradition and discerning the will of God, and making decisions that are based on grace and love. Participants in this course will have the opportunity to discover their Enneagram type and to dive deeply into the rich waters of this spiritual lens. Those skills will then be applied to our everyday lives through practices that pay attention to the movement of the Spirit and decisions that move us in the direction of integration.

Course Objectives

At the ends of this course, participants should be able to:

1. Have an understanding of the Enneagram as a dynamic spiritual tool
2. Identify and understand their Enneagram number and how it manifests in their life
3. Know and understand several discernment practices
4. Use their Enneagram understanding to discern the movement of the Spirit in their life, as well as to make decisions that contribute to spiritual growth

Suggested Reading

Enneagram resources:

Cron, Ian Morgan and Stabile, Suzanne. *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016.

This book gives a relatively accessible introduction to the Enneagram and its role in self awareness. It dedicates a chapter to each type exploring each number in relationships and professional environments. It also includes statements from people in each time that speak to what it's like to view the world with a particular lens, as well as invitations for reflection and growth. The authors present a good narrative introduction to the dynamic elements of this spiritual tool.

Cron, Ian Morgan and Stabile, Suzanne. *The Road Back to You: Study Guide: Five Sessions for Individuals or Groups*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016.

The study guide is a companion piece to the book. It divides the nine numbers into their triads, the gut types, the heart types, and the head types. For each triad, it recommends the accompanying chapters in the book, and includes brief surveys of the types with questions to help the reader discern where they might fall on the Enneagram. This is a good resource for those who would like some prompted reflections whether they know their type or would like to think more about how it manifests in their life.

McCord, Beth. Book series entitled *The Enneagram Collection*. Nashville: HarperCollins, 2019.

This book series has nine separate books, one for each type. In addition to an introduction to the specific number, chapters include topics such as core motivations, fears, desires, longings, and various levels of integration. Each chapter is short and contains several reflection questions. The book is presented in a journal format, so the reader can fill it out a day at a time. The author explains the Enneagram through a religious lens, and leans more toward an evangelical theology. If this is not the reader's theological tradition, it still very well may be a helpful resource.

Riso, Don Richard and Hudson, Russ. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types*. New York: Bantam Books, 1999.

This is the largest authority on the Enneagram in North America and is considered to be the primary resource for a full understanding of this spiritual tool. An indispensable resource, Riso and Hudson explore the history of the Enneagram, its function, and extremely detailed explanations of each personality type. This text explores the various levels of integration of the nine types, and is a reliable reference for those seeking to use the Enneagram to further their personal and spiritual growth.

Rohr, Richard and Ebert, Andreas. *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2016.

A prominent theologian, Rohr brings together the Enneagram and the Christian spiritual tradition. He dives more deeply into psychological matters related to the Enneagram. If the reader is familiar with the Enneagram and has already done some work with their type, this resource can help move to a greater understanding of the vices or sins of each of the types. Rohr does not shy away from the dark side of each of the nine types, but does so in a way that encourages humanity to grow and become more fully integrated beings.

The Enneagram Institute. Accessed 4 June 2020. <https://www enneagraminstitute.com/>.

The Enneagram Institute relies heavily on the Riso/Hudson teachings and approach. It is an online resource that includes a plethora of information, most of which is free to access. The website includes profiles for each type which are paired down versions from *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* book. Another useful resource includes type misidentifications, which allows the reader to compare two types to help determine

the more subtle differences. There is also a feature that gives a brief introduction to two types in relationship with each other. The institute has a daily email feature that sends words of wisdom for each type, and provides information about various lectures and classes around the world. Please note that the Enneagram Institute does offer a couple of tests. While they can certainly point one in a particular direction, the instructor of this course encourages the participants to not rely on testing to determine their type. The course will approach the Enneagram in a narrative fashion, and will seek to move to type identification through the sharing of stories and experiences, and self discovery.

The Road Back to You. "The Road Back to You Podcast." Accessed 4 June 2020.
<https://www.theroadbacktoyou.com/podcast>.

The authors of the book *The Road Back to You* offer a podcast series where people of all types are interviewed. If the class participant is familiar with their type, the podcasts are a useful way to hear from those who may share their experiences. For those who are new and still discerning their type, the sharing of stories and experiences can be the most enlightening way to move toward self discovery.

Discernment Resources:

Blackie, Margaret. *Rooted in Love: Integrating Ignatian Spirituality into Daily Life*. South Africa: New Voices Publishing, 2013.

Blackie is a science professor and a spiritual director steeped in the Ignatian tradition. Her book examines the various aspects of the spiritual tradition such as finding God in all things, grace, desire, discernment, indifference, etc., and does so in a way that is accessible to those who are less familiar or new comers to the Ignatian tradition. The book is written with the intention of integrating spiritual practices into daily life and includes many reflection and journal questions.

Gallagher, Timothy M., OMV. *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2005.

Gallagher introduces the topic of discernment of spirits and draws from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. The discernment of spirits is a spiritual tool that seeks to discern the will of God, and make sense of our emotional reactions with the intention of making faithful decisions that strive for peace and justice. Gallagher includes a detailed discussion of the discernment of spirits alongside real life cases with people who apply the tools to their daily lives. This book is a good introduction for newcomers and good review for those experienced in discernment.

Gallagher, Timothy M., OMV. *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2006.

The Examen is a prayer that is the most accessible way to integrate discernment into daily life. It is a prayer that focuses on gratitude and reviewing the events of the day, paying particular attention to one's emotional responses. It also incorporates forgiveness and making plans for right action in the future. Gallagher presents the

Examen in a way that is easy to grasp for those who are new to the practice, but is also fruitful for those who have an established practice of praying the Examen. Similarly to his book on discernment of spirits, he presents the material in conjunction with the experiences of people in their daily lives. The Examen will be the foundational practice for this course.

Loyola, St. Ignatius. "Making and Election §169-188" *The Spiritual Exercises*.

In the middle of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, he provides methods for making life decisions, which he called an election. The cited sections here present the various circumstances under which an election may be made, a note about indifference, a two methods. The participants should note that this material is normally given as verbal instructions for one who is on a spiritual retreat, and usually not given as mere reading material. The language is steeped in the context of 16th century theology. Nonetheless, the election is a vital resource for making larger decisions in life and will be one of the focal points of the course.

Ignatian Spirituality. Accessed 4 June 2020. <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/>.

An online resource from Loyola Press, Ignatian Spirituality is a large collection of resources related to the Examen prayer, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, making decisions, etc. Participants will benefit greatly from any of the materials on this website. Most notable are the blogs and resources on making decisions and the Examen.

Course Structure:

This course is divided into nine weeks, beginning on 29 June. Each week two sessions are offered. Monday is a large group session where all participants will meet via Zoom. The topics for these weeks can be found in the course outline below. Much of our attention during these sessions will be directed toward discernment, that is making decisions and paying attention to our emotions and reactions. A second session will be provided weekly on Thursdays. These are small groups, and offer an opportunity to dive into the Enneagram. Each number will be given its own week. All participants are encouraged to make use of the suggested reading lists above, particularly the Enneagram resources. In order to provide a safe space for all participants, the Thursday sessions will be limited to those who identify with the particular number, and those who are discerning their number. Participants who are interested in learning about other numbers are encouraged to do their own exploration. The last two weeks of the course emphasize a full integration of these two spiritual tools.

Course Outline:

Week One

Introduction to Enneagram and Examen prayer

Enneagram Eight

Week Two

Consolations
Enneagram Nine

Week Three
Desolations
Enneagram One

Week Four
Election-Making Decisions Part 1
Enneagram Two

Week Five
Election-Making Decisions Part 2
Enneagram Three

Week Six
Reviewing the Day
Enneagram Four

Week Seven
Renewal
Enneagram Five

Week Eight
Using the Enneagram as a tool for discernment
Enneagram Six

Week Nine
Integration
Enneagram Seven