

Welcome

Welcome to Summer at Catalyst! This summer, we're exploring the movie *Encanto*, meeting each member of La Familia Madrigal as a guide to spiritual transformation. We have to begin with the Matriarch - Abuela herself.

When we meet the family, we're told, "Let's be clear, Abuela runs the show. She led us here so many years ago." Abuela tells us that the family, "Swears to always help those around us" through the mystical force that gives each member of the family a special ability.

Later in the film, we learn that this force came to be through the sacrifice of Abuela's husband, who gave his life when the family was fleeing soldiers. These refugees found refuge because of Abuelo's sacrifice, and ever since then, Abuela has made it her sacred mission to protect la familia's magic and the community that has flourished because of their work.

But when the magic begins to fail, Abuela turns ugly. Her granddaughter Mirabelle's work to find the cause of the magic's failure disrupts many of the family's unspoken rules - like she keeps talking about Bruno! As the house begins to crumble around them, Abuela explodes at Mirabelle, blaming her for the failure of the magic and for hurting the family.

It's a brutal, ugly scene - in large part because we've seen that Mirabelle is right. Abuela's drive to preserve the magic and protect her family has become oppressive and abusive.

Do you know someone like that? Someone who deep down has a heart of gold but has a crusty, tough exterior? Someone who's abrasive and rough? Sure, they have their reasons, but that hardly matters when you're on the receiving end.

At their best, people like Abuela are a powerful force for justice. They stand up for the most vulnerable and speak truth to power. But they can also steamroll over people. It's hard to be on the other side of someone like Abuela.

If you're a challenger like Abuela is, what does it look like for you to be healthy and whole? How do you learn to wield your anger for good?

And what about the rest of us, those who live with challengers? How do we love them well? How do we help them flourish?

Let's begin today by celebrating how these folks bear God's image - they help us know the God who cares about justice, who defends the vulnerable!

Message

Welcome to Summer at Catalyst! This year, we're going on a quest for spiritual transformation. To help us get at that, we're spending our summer with La Familia Madrigal from *Encanto*. The nine magical Madrigals correlate with a tool utilized in Spiritual Direction called the Enneagram.

On its surface, the Enneagram looks like a personality profile - like Myers-Briggs or Strengthsfinder. In the Enneagram, you identify yourself as one of the numbers 1-9, which then goes on to describe how you interact with the world. Ian Cron, a Spiritual Director who has written about the Enneagram a lot, says it like this: "Personality tests tell you who you really are. The Enneagram tells you who you're really *not*."

In other words, what the Enneagram helps you identify in yourself is something theologians and mystics call our *shadow self*. Personas we all create to help us cope with the world.

Throughout this series, we're investigating the type embodied by each member of La Familia Madrigal, allowing them to illustrate for us the various personas. Then we'll dive into Scripture to see how these personas keep us from being fully who God created us to be.

The end goal is that we come to know our creator better by better knowing God's creation. By the end of the summer, I hope we come together as a spiritual family, closer than ever and a source of healing and hope for our community - just like La Familia Madrigal!

We're beginning today with Abuela, who embodies a type called the Challenger - the Enneagram Eight. You might know some Eights - average Eights are steamrollers in relationships. They're dualistic, so people are good or bad, right or wrong. They use aggression to protect themselves. Unhealthy Eights are suspicious, sure they'll be betrayed at every turn. They're vengeful and have little respect for rules.

Think about Abuela - it was her way or the highway. She was the boss, she made the rules, and when Mirabelle stepped outside Abeula's way, Abuela came down like a hammer.

We all know someone like this - that or you feel like there's a spotlight on you right now.

Take a breath. It's not all bad.

When Eights are spiritually healthy, they're amazing friends. They're terrific leaders. And they're champions of the most vulnerable. They're smart and they have the energy to stay in the fight long after everyone else has given up.

I love my friends who are Eights. They're incredible humans.

So what, exactly, is an Eight? An Eight persona develops in a person who has to grow up way too fast. Maybe they grew up in an unstable home, or were bullied at school until they learned there's no one they could depend on except for themselves. For Abuela, it was a life on the run, the life of a refugee.

As kids, Eights learned the message, “The world is a dangerous place. It’s survival of the fittest and vulnerability makes you a target.” To cope, Eights are *angry*. Their anger is directed out at a hostile world.

This anger is fuel for Eights. They have an almost bottomless well of energy, like a fire burning inside them. When Eights manage this well, it’s a source of warmth and comfort to those around them - just like the Casita in *Encanto*! If Eights aren’t careful to manage this energy well, the house can burn down.

Turn with us to [John 4](#).

There are quite a few Eights in the Bible, and I went back and forth on who we should sit with for this message. Ultimately, I wanted to spend some time with the unnamed Woman at the Well in John - even though I preach about her like twice a year at least already (what can I say? John is my favorite Gospel and this story is one of the reasons).

In this story, Jesus and his disciples are traveling through Samaria. He sends the disciples off to find food while he rests at the well outside of town. It’s here he encounters a woman coming to draw water. If you’re unfamiliar with the story, here’s what you need to know:

Jesus and this woman are opposites in about every way you can imagine. They’re ethnic enemies. They’re male and female in a patriarchal culture where a man even speaking to a woman in public was taboo. He’s a respected religious leader and she’s a woman who’s been used and abused her whole life. In fact, her presence alone at the well indicates she’s an outcast in her town.

All of that to say, she is a woman for whom the world has been a cruel, harsh place. No wonder she greets Jesus with skepticism. She sees in him one more man who wants to use, abuse and discard her. Let’s read their exchange, beginning in verse 4:

Jesus had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.” He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”

Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

“But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?”

Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

“Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.” -- John 4:4-15

We readers know Jesus’ offer is genuine and earnest. But of course the woman has no such knowledge. She puts up a front, meeting his words with a wall of sarcasm and bluster.

I love that Jesus’ response is kind. He doesn’t meet her bluster with defensiveness. He just keeps unspooling his offer until she finally bites. “Give me this water.” I read her still being sarcastic here - she still thinks Jesus is all talk, but she opens up just a crack. It’s enough for Jesus to find that tender, wounded person hiding behind the Eight’s bluster:

“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her.

“I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied.

Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband—for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!” -- John 4:16–18 (NLT)

He shows her that he knows her, truly knows her. And he responds not with the judgment, exploitation or condemnation she’s used to, but love and invitation.

Break

The woman accidentally shows a little vulnerability and Jesus sees who she really is. You’d think this would be enough to send her running for the hills. But look how the woman responds:

“Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”

Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus told her, “I Am the Messiah!” -- John 4:19–26 (NLT)

Rather than fleeing, she turns the conversation to deep truths. She's actually getting right to the heart of the ethnic divisions between them.

This is *classic* Eight behavior. Eights tend to be blunt, 'what you see is what you get' people. They often don't realize they come across as angry. They don't hide or dissemble. They put everything out on the table because that's how they can tell who is trustworthy and who isn't.

It's just like Abuela's confrontation with Mirabelle. Nothing gets through to Abuela until Mirabelle tells it how it is: "No matter how *any* of us tries... we all love this family. You're the one breaking our home. The miracle is dying because of you." It's not until Abuela hears the unvarnished truth that she can see what she's done, apologize and begin to heal - herself, her family and her community.

So too this Samaritan woman. She crafted a brusque, impenetrable exterior to protect her true self from a dangerous world. But when she opens herself up just the littlest bit to Jesus, he meets her with love and compassion. He proves to her that the world is not *all* out to get her. That there are trustworthy people.

This is what Eights need - to remember that hiding isn't actually courageous. What takes real courage is being vulnerable, knowing that when we choose to be vulnerable, we're going to be hurt. It's a guarantee. That hurt isn't the end of the world though.

Jesus calls us to have a childlike faith - and that's especially scary for Eights. But Jesus shows us the way. He went first, offering himself to a world that crucified him. He trusted that God would not allow that betrayal, that violence to be the end of the story. And we know it wasn't - God raised him from the dead, proving that this loving vulnerability is the way we heal the world.

Because it's not just the Abuelas of the world who need that vulnerability. We cannot heal until we open ourselves to that healing. And perhaps the Eights of the world can use that courage they've spent their lives cultivating to lead the way.

Communion + Examen

Jesus invites us to the Table - a vulnerable space!

What makes me angry?

How can I discern whether my anger is righteous or not?

Where do I avoid vulnerability?

With whom is God calling me to be vulnerable?

Assignment + Blessing

From Ian: “Broaden your definition of strength and courage to include vulnerability. Risk sharing your heart at deeper levels with someone in your life.”

From Suzanne: Be confident, strong and assertive with the Eights in your life. They respond well to intensity and plain-talk.