

## Welcome

My wife Amanda is a Nine. Not long after we were married, we were going to sleep. We were still getting used to each others' sleeping habits, and mine involves turning a lot. I went to roll and she was pressed up against me (which is adorable, isn't it? Objectively yes.) I was in the process of falling asleep, so I said - much more curtly than I should have, "Could you give me some space?"

She rolled over and I passed out.

A couple of days later, as we were falling asleep, I noticed she was waaaaaay over on the other side of our king-sized bed. I thought back and realized she'd been sleeping like that for the last couple of nights.

I said, "Are you sleeping on the edge of your side?"

She replied, "Yes."

I smiled despite myself and said, "Are you sleeping on the edge of your side because I asked you to scoot over a couple of nights ago?"

She said, "You could have been a lot nicer about it."

I apologized, and we met in the middle - literally. And we laugh about that story now, but her actions there were classic Nine.

Do you know someone who absolutely *hates* conflict? Someone who would rather gnaw their own arm off than speak up for themselves? I bet that person is also a really great friend - they really care about other people in their lives too.

But Nines - it's not good for you to ignore your own needs for the sake of everyone else. I know that's really hard for you to hear, so today we're going to ask: What is your path to spiritual wholeness? And how can the rest of us help you love yourself as well as you love us?

## 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 began with Abuela, the Protector/Challenger. Today, we’re going to shift our focus to the main character of Encanto, Mirabel. She’s the baby of her immediate family and only one cousin - Antonio - is younger than she is. She’s the one who introduces us to the magical La Familia Madrigal, and by the end of her song, we learn that she’s the only member of the family who hasn’t received a magical gift. That’s right - Mirabel isn’t special.

That right there tells you almost everything you need to know about the Enneagram type Mirabel represents - number 9, the Peacemaker.

Average 9s come off as sweet and easygoing (and they don’t realize it but they’re really stubborn and have a deep well of anger they’re ignoring). They are quick to speak up for those around them, but they’ll nearly never advocate for themselves.

Unhealthy 9s struggle to make even small decisions. In many cases, they can engage in numbing behavior rather than face the demands of their world. In general, 9s would rather gnaw their own arms off than engage in conflict. They’ll destroy themselves to keep everyone around them happy - or at least content.

Take Mirabel - she worked so hard to keep everyone else in her family happy that she couldn’t face her own feeling of exclusion. They literally *leave her out of the family picture* and she doesn’t speak up.

If you resonate with Mirabel - if you’re a peacemaker at all costs who isn’t sure how to feel your own feelings, then I have some good news for you:

When you’re healthy, you’re an incredible mediator. You have the ability to make people feel validated and known - all without sacrificing your own values and identity. You’re generous, adaptable and welcoming. You make people feel safe.

So what is a Nine? A Nine is a person who feels overlooked and ignored - like Mirabel, they feel like everyone else is more important, more special, than they are. As kids, Nines learned the message, “Your wants, opinions and presence don’t matter much.”

Because they learn they're invisible, Nines start acting invisible from an early age. They merge their behaviors and desires with other people. Never ask a Nine where we should go to eat. Asking them to make a decision for other people is like dropping them in the middle of the third act of a horror movie.

Nines can also have a hard time prioritizing - tied to that inability to make a decision. How can they do something without knowing exactly what will make everyone else happy?

Of course the reality is that all those desires and behaviors Nines ignore and suppress don't go away - they get shoved way down. So Nines can be stubborn and really passive aggressive. If you do something to make a Nine mad, you may not find out about it for several days.

Remember how Eights were angry? Well Nines are angry too - they just *avoid*. Eights direct their anger at the world. Ones (who we'll meet next week) direct their anger within. But Nines avoid, avoid, avoid. That's why they'll do anything to avoid a conflict.

That's deeply unhealthy, and if Nines want to heal, if they want to flourish the way they need to learn to get in touch with their anger and express it in healthy ways.

So Nines, take a deep breath: your path to union with God is through getting back in touch with yourself. Remember where Jesus said, "Love your neighbor like yourself"? Well, we've gotta work on that "loving yourself" bit.

The bad news is that the road to harmony is littered with discord and conflict - all those things you hate.

The *good* news is that you're uniquely primed for oneness with God - after all, unity is your superpower!

Turn with us to [John 17](#).

This passage is a prayer Jesus offers during his last night with his disciples - the night before he's crucified. My favorite thing about this prayer is that Jesus is praying it over his disciples - and watch for the end because Jesus extends his prayer from them to us too!

Since we're talking about Nines today, I want you to pay special attention to the goal of faith for Jesus. It has to do with unity:

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. -- John 17:15–23 (NLT)

Jesus asks the Father to make us holy - more on that in a minute. Then he goes on to pray that the Father will make us all one the same way Jesus and the Father are one.

The unity Jesus desires for us is the same unity the Holy Trinity shares. Jesus invites us into the life of the Trinity.

How cool is that?

## Song

Nines invite us into the Unity of God. Here’s the catch: what we call Unity is often just superficial calm, or enforced uniformity. Think about la Familia Madrigal - no one was really happy because everyone was just going along because Abuela said so. It was actually Mirabel’s confrontation with Abuela that brought all that conflict to the surface.

On the other side of the conflict, la Familia Madrigal had a much deeper and truer sense of unity. They were one not because everyone was pretending to be something they weren’t, but because they’d all learned to love each other for who they were - flaws, quirks, differences and all.

*That’s* the sort of unity God created us for.

*That’s* the kind of unity we see among the Persons of the Trinity.

*That’s* the kind of unity we see in the healthiest churches.

*That’s* the sort of unity Nines can help us achieve. But not as long as you’re merging and suppressing and avoiding.

So Nines, how do we *do* that? How do you make sure you’re pursuing that deep, authentic unity and not the superficial calm you’ve taught yourself to settle for?

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

This is a letter to a church that has experienced a lot of division - especially along ethnic lines. The whole letter has been a call for the real, authentic sort of unity that we find in the Trinity.

In this bit here, the author is calling the Church to a holy life - the holy life Jesus prayed God would give us. And here, we have a very good piece of practical advice for Nines:

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. -- Ephesians 4:21–27 (NLT)

Don’t let the sun go down on your anger. One of the best pieces of wisdom my Nine spouse ever received was to engage conflict quickly. I’m a verbal processor, so when I have a problem, I want to talk it out immediately. Of course for a Nine, that’s a nightmare - literally, she has nightmares about us fighting!

So she would wait days or sometimes even weeks to bring up an issue - by which point it felt sort of silly or irrelevant. A trusted advisor warned her that no one needs *that* much time to process. Taking more than a few hours to engage an issue is avoidance, not processing.

This is what Ephesians tells us too - don’t let the sun go down on your anger. Don’t stuff it down deep. That actually gives evil a chance to poison our spirits.

It’s scary. It’s hard. But you matter. Your desires and perspective and presence matter.

And we need you. You’re a picture of God’s love and hospitality we desperately need to see right now.

We want to be one. And you can help us be one, the way Jesus and the Father are one!

## Communion + Examen

The oneness of the table!

What’s made me angry in the last week?

How did I engage that conflict? Was it holy or hurtful?

Where might I be in conflict this week?

How is God inviting me to engage others this week?

## Assignment + Blessing

Practice expressing your opinions this week. Start with something small and work your way up.

For those of us who love Nines, a great way to love them well is to give them choices. It affirms for them that we love them and that they matter to us.

