

## Welcome

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.

Today, we're focusing on Mirabel's older sister, Isabela. Mirabel calls her and her other sister, Luisa, the 'beauty and the brawn'. Isabela is the beauty. She's tall, slender and her power is creating beautiful flowers. She embodies what a perfect daughter should be, and to top it all off, she's engaged to a handsome man from the village.

She's got it all, she can do it all and she never, never does anything wrong. No wonder Mirabel loves her and is more than a little envious of her.

Do you know that person? The straight-A student or the star employee? They are the model student, child, employee, whatever and they never settle for less than absolute perfection. And, look, you wouldn't say this out loud - certainly not where *they* would hear it - but they can be really judgy.

Friends, you may just know an Enneagram One.

And if you're thinking, "I don't know anyone like that. But I sure do know a bunch of slackers and rule-breakers. Don't they know that in order to succeed, we have to be perfect?!"

Then you might be a One!

Ones are amazing - their drive for excellence is unparalleled, and if you want something to just knock your socks off, you should involve a One.

But we'll see today what 1s already know - they have an overbearing inner critic who keeps them from being able to enjoy the life they've worked so hard to build.

So Ones, how can you find freedom to enjoy the life God has given you? And how can the rest of us love the Ones in our lives well?

## 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.

[Slide: **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.

[Slide: **Triads**] 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’ve explored the first two in the anger triad. We began with Abuela, the Protector/Challenger. Then we met the Peacemaker, Mirabel. Where Abuela directs her anger at the world, and Mirabel avoids her anger, the Madrigal we’re meeting today internalizes her anger.

[Slide: **Isabela**] Let’s spend some time with Isabela, the perfect one. Isabela is the good child. Her power creates flowers and making la casita beautiful. She seems to be the perfect, happy sister. It’s not until Mirabel upsets her engagement to a man in town her cousin Dolores loves that Isabela shows her real self. She explodes at Mirabel:

“I’ve been stuck being perfect my whole entire life. I never wanted to marry him. I was doing it for the *family!*” [Slide: **Quote 1**]

Isabela reveals a deep core of anger - she’s the one who’s always followed the rules, and it really gets her when someone like Mirabel doesn’t.

That’s a classic Enneagram One. Ones are textbook rule-followers. They see the world as a place full of dos and don’ts, as a place that rewards good behavior and punishes those who color outside the lines.

The word that rules a One’s life is *should*.

[Average, Unhealthy, Healthy Slides] Ones live in a world rife with imperfections. Intellectually, they know perfection is a pipe dream, but they can’t escape that voice in their heads demanding perfection at all costs. Particularly unhealthy Ones are relentless micromanagers, who assert control so they can quiet that inner critic.

If you, like Isabela, are cringing right now, take a deep breath.

It’s not all bad. In fact, we need you. When you’re healthy, you are the drive to make the world a better place (particularly because you recognize it doesn’t happen all at once).

So here’s the deal, Ones: if you want to be healthy, you have to recognize that perfect is a process, not a state. It’s a place we’re heading, a person we’re becoming.

Turn with us to [Hebrews 5](#).

Hebrews is a sermon written in the first 30 or so years of Christianity - so think first generation after Jesus' resurrection. This passage is in the middle of a long proof the preacher is making that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to God's people.

Now, one of the things we say about Jesus is that he is perfect. By that, we mean that he never sinned while he lived on Earth. Ones, you're both impressed and shamed right now. He sounds like your kind of guy, but you also know you could never live up to that example.

Ones, would it surprise you to know that the Bible says that Jesus *became* perfect? That's right - we're about to read it. And I want you to let it complicate your understanding of what being perfect means. Usually, we use the NLT here, but the NRSV actually preserves the sense of the original Greek better so I'm going to read from it here:

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him... -- Hebrews 5:8–9 (NRSV)

Did you catch that? Jesus learned obedience and that *made him perfect*.

That language doesn't make sense to our modern ears, does it? We think of perfection as a state - you're either flawless or you're tainted. Like water, either pure or polluted.

But in the ancient world, perfection was a state you attained. The word can also be translated 'completed' or 'finished'.

This is Jesus: the suffering he endured made him the one who could rescue us. His suffering completed his journey to being God's chosen one.

As kids, Ones missed that memo. The lie they learned was that they have to be good to be loved. They have to behave. They *should* be perfect.

But perfection isn't something you either are or aren't. It's a process. It's something we become. You're on a path, and you have to let go of all those 'shoulds' so you can get back in touch with that inner kid who needs to hear that there's nothing you *should* be to be loved. You're worthy of love just as you are.

If Ones can hear that... well, things get really good.

Once she lets her anger out, Isabela produces a cactus. She launches into "What Else Could I Do?", the One's anthem.

During the song, she laments, "I'm so sick of pretty; I just want something true."

Ones, you spend so much time *should*-ing that you get lost in creating a perfect world. But perfect is an illusion, a mirage. You spend so much time chasing perfection you miss the truth and beauty that's right in front of you.

## BREAK

Striving for perfection, ironically, destroys the work of perfection God is doing in you. Paul says it this way to the church in Philippi:

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. -- Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

God is the one who is perfecting you - finishing you (in Greek, it's the same word!). Do you hear that, Ones? You're not responsible for being perfect! God is the one who started that good work in you when God created you.

You're *already* a good work. Not because of what *you* have done. But because of what God has done in you.

And God takes full responsibility for perfecting you. God owns that project.

And that's good news because if you can relax your death-grip on perfection, you'll actually discover an untameable beauty you can't anticipate.

In a burst of anger - possibly the first time we see the real Isabela, she creates not a beautiful flower but that prickly cactus - lopsided and captivating in its imperfection. Isabela wonders, "What could I do if it didn't need to be perfect, it just needed to be?" [Slide: Quote 2]

Indeed, Ones. What could you do if you didn't need to be perfect? What could you do if you could just... do... you?

Turn with us to [John 3](#).

Here Jesus is in the middle of a meeting with a religious leader named Nicodemus. Jesus has just made a big splash in Jerusalem by cleansing the Temple, and Nicodemus has questions. Jesus' words do way more to confuse Nicodemus than help him.

And look: I have no idea if Nicodemus was a One or not - we don't get to spend enough time with him. But In Jesus' response to the man, we get an invitation I think Ones will find both intimidating and enticing.

So I want to read this with you, and pay attention to how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit:

Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." -- John 3:5-8 (NLT)

The wind (which, by the way, in Greek, is the same word for Spirit), does whatever it wants. It doesn't ask your permission, or mine.

This drives a One crazy: the reality that you are *not* in control. You can work as hard as you want, be as perfect as possible and the world will still not follow whatever rules you've decided matter.

It's enough to make you want to pull your hair out.

But Jesus goes on to say, "That's actually the Spirit at work."

Ones: it's easy for you to reduce religion to a moral code, a list of rules. But Jesus warns us here that faith in him isn't like that. He's the kind of God who's going to do whatever he wants, without asking our permission.

And if we're going to follow him, if we're going to be filled by that same Spirit that raised him from the dead?

Guess what... we're going to have to get used to coloring outside the lines.

The Church was never meant to be a place where we're all the same.

And Ones, just like Isabela, if you can relax your grip on perfection a little, you might find the Spirit is at work in surprising and beautiful new ways you never could have imagined.

Ones, you have to learn how to listen to the Holy Spirit, not to your inner critic.

I know... that sounds impossible. But here's a weird trick: give your inner critic a silly name. Grumps McGrumperson. Debbie Downer. Then, when that inner critic starts up, you say to them (which is to yourself, of course), "Thanks Grumps. I appreciate your insight, but I'm not a kid anymore and I don't need your help."

Laughter takes the sting out of criticism. If you can learn to laugh at your inner critic, it'll open you up to look at the world with different eyes. (And hey, if you need help coming up with a terrible name, obviously I'm great at it.)

What could you do if you didn't have to be perfect? What could you do if you could just be... you?

Can you imagine letting go of your need to be perfect and trust that God is inviting you into God's plan for perfecting the world? What might God want to do in your life, and through you in the world?

## Communion + Examen

You don't earn a spot here. This is a table that welcomes imperfections.

When in the last week have I criticized myself, even silently?

When in the last week have I criticized others, even silently?

When in the upcoming week might I be tempted to be critical?

How can I let go of my inner critic and listen to the Holy Spirit this week?

## Assignment + Blessing

Ones: this week, bite your tongue every time you want to correct someone. Instead, pay attention to what they're doing well and praise them for that.

For those of us who love Ones, being on the receiving end of their criticism can be painful. I've found it helpful to remember that Ones reserve their harshest criticism for themselves.

Ones also like to be appreciated for their hard work, so if you know someone you think might be a One, take some time to send them a note or small gift this week. Be explicit about your praise.