

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT ELISABETH BENNETT AND ENNEAGRAM LIFE...

Elisabeth's teaching on the Enneagram is insightful and deep. Her focus never wavers from providing biblical insights to assist believers in personal, professional, and spiritual growth. This book gives readers the power to see their stage and season in ways they may have previously overlooked. Elisabeth invites us to look a little longer at the impact our personalities have on all aspects of life.

—Molly Wilcox
Blogger, author, and coach

To say that this book is comprehensive is an understatement. I am touched by the depth and breadth that Elisabeth has gone to not only make the Enneagram applicable to an individual's growth across all seasons of life, marriage, and parenting, but also to make each reader feel especially seen and loved.

—Christa Hardin, MA
Host, *Enneagram and Marriage*

Enneagram Life by Elisabeth Bennett is a book that all students and teachers of the Enneagram should have readily available. The lovely and effective metaphor of the seasons of life lends itself perfectly to gaining new insight into the Enneagram as a tool for growth and grace. Rather than stereotyping each Enneagram type and keeping things on the surface, Elisabeth takes a deeper dive into how our types form, respond, and can grow throughout the various stages of life. I found the spring (childhood) chapters particularly revealing and helpful in my own life and in my work as an Enneagram coach. The personal voice and shared experiences make this resource a quick and engaging read, but you had better have a highlighter in hand as you will want to go back again and again to the insights contained in this book.

—Stacy DeVries
Fresh Tracks Enneagram Coaching

When my husband Jeff and I first discovered the Enneagram, it wasn't easy finding books written from a Christian worldview. We understood how important gospel-centered Enneagram resources could be, and that inspired us to start our business, Your Enneagram Coach. Since then, we have had the honor and privilege of certifying thousands of Enneagram coaches in more than twenty-five countries. Jeff and I are thankful the Lord has provided more gospel-centered Enneagram coaches like Elisabeth Bennett. No matter what season of life you currently find yourself in, we know that you'll find lasting value in her book. We're praying that God will meet you on these pages, and you will recognize your inherent value as His beloved, uniquely created child.

—Beth McCord
YourEnneagramCoach.com
Author, *More Than Your Number*

Applicable to all relationships in each season of life, this comprehensive and practical Enneagram guide is one-of-a-kind and a resource you need! Elisabeth's Enneagram knowledge and ability to offer it to readers in relatable and understandable ways makes it a tool for transformation and a source of enrichment for relationships.

—Meredith W. Boggs
The Other Half Blog and Podcast

ENNEAGRAM *Life*

PERSONAL, RELATIONAL, AND
BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR ALL SEASONS



ELISABETH BENNETT

All Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, © 2016, 2001, 2000, 1995 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

Boldface type in the Scripture quotations indicates the author's emphasis.

Photo of Elisabeth Bennett by Jena Stagner of One Beautiful Life Photography.

ENNEAGRAM LIFE
Personal, Relational, and Biblical Insights for All Seasons

www.elisabethbennettenneagram.com
Instagram: @enneagram.life
Facebook.com/enneagramlife

ISBN: 978-1-64123-920-2
eBook ISBN: 978-1-64123-921-9
Printed in the United States of America
© 2022 by Elisabeth Bennett

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022944414

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher. Please direct your inquiries to permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com.

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	9
Acknowledgments	11
Introduction	13

SECTION ONE: CHILDHOOD (FORMATION/SPRING)

1. How Our Types Are Formed	20
2. Childhood Messages.....	24
3. Lost Childhood Messages	36
4. Birth Order	44
5. Parental Orientations	48
6. Our Parents' Enneagram Types	62

SECTION TWO: ADOLESCENCE (EXPLORING/SUMMER)

7. Seasons of Stress and Growth.....	78
8. Living in Excess of Your Personality.....	93
9. Introvert vs. Extrovert	102
10. Male vs. Female	108
11. Subtypes	117
12. Friendships.....	135

SECTION THREE: ADULTHOOD (HARVESTING/FALL)

13. Marriage	147
14. Parenting.....	174
15. Centers of Intelligence: Triads	187
16. Workplace Stances.....	197
17. Individual Enneagram Types at Work	205

SECTION FOUR: ADVANCED ADULTHOOD (RHYTHM/WINTER)

18. Security and Missing Piece Arrows.....	216
19. Wings.....	225
20. Grief.....	234
21. Death	240
Epilogue	250
About the Author.....	254
Book Recommendations.....	255



SECTION ONE:

CHILDHOOD (FORMATION/SPRING)

Childhood represents the spring of your lifetime. A season of much growth and celebrations, it sets the stage for a healthy summer and fall. There was an opportunity in your springtime for the soil of your heart to be prepared for planting in the summer (adolescence) in order to achieve a bountiful harvest in the fall (adulthood). Like pansies popping up amid the snow, some seeds sown by those who tenderly cared for you during your childhood may appear in this season, which is why the people in your life are so significant. The springtime growth is ultimately the responsibility of the gardeners tending to the life that is blooming. These gardeners are the adults who were charged with overseeing your mental, emotional, and physical growth.

Springtime is a time of innocence, rapid growth, and blooming, a time when we are fragile, observant, and in a constant state of discovery. Childhood is the second shortest period of life, but it also tends to provide us with the most vivid memories.

Thinking back to childhood can give us many hints about the person we became. Some may be clear as day, while others may be complicated. Whatever the case may be, there is so much rich information about childhood in the Enneagram. While different teachers may disagree about how personality is formed, we all agree that childhood is the cornerstone upon which all other seasons of our life are built.

1

HOW OUR TYPES ARE FORMED

One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is the gift of accepting that child's uniqueness.

—Fred Rogers

I was born in mid-June, the same day an earthquake shook Aigio, Greece, resulting in several deaths and significant damage to many buildings. It was the same year that O.J. Simpson's murder trial began. The number-one song in the US was "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman" by Bryan Adams. I was a second-born child and the firstborn daughter, almost named Rachel during the height of *Friends'* fame on TV.

The world was rotating the sun just like it is now, but everything looked a little different. There were no iPhones, no Instagram, and no Zoom calls. Things I use every day, things that help me earn a living, didn't even exist. It's odd to be so marked by a year I will never remember. I have no memories of 1995, my birth year, but it defines me.

Think of the day you were born. What month was it? Can you imagine what the weather might have been like? Who was waiting for your arrival? Can you imagine what they might have been feeling?

All of these things impact you and flavor your personality in ways that we may never be able to fully know. However, throughout my research of the Enneagram, I have come to believe that you were born your Enneagram type. Looking at personality from a biblical worldview, we see God giving

His people unique skills and gifts. Some of these are fruits of the Holy Spirit that are manifested after we are saved, but many are strengths that our personality possesses. When we are walking in Christlikeness, we can use these gifts for God's glory.

Proverbs 20:11 says, "*Even a child makes himself known by his acts.*" Children are not all the same, but are known by how their personality manifests even from a young age. As I have studied the Enneagram and the deep motivations of the soul, it has become impossible not to worship our souls' Creator. God created us, even down to the quirks of our personalities. He was not blind to every aspect of who you are when He created you in your mother's womb. Personality is not beyond His control and design.



**GOD KNEW EVERY ASPECT OF WHO YOU ARE WHEN HE
CREATED YOU IN YOUR MOTHER'S WOMB.
PERSONALITY IS NOT BEYOND HIS CONTROL AND DESIGN.**



Some may say that we are born a blank slate and receive our personality due to specific wounding messages in our childhood. But if that were true, wouldn't all siblings who received the same wounding messages have the same personality? Obviously, we all react to even the same wounds and trauma very differently, so personality must already be formed before these occur.

Our situations, traumas, and the nurturing we receive all impact us in different ways, but when it comes to your Enneagram type, it's more like shifting the hue of your base color. You may have been nurtured to become a little more of a deeper purple—say plum rather than lilac—but at the end of the day, you're still purple. This is kind of how Enneagram types work. You are born a specific core type but your circumstances will change how that looks to others.

Some well-known Enneagram teachers favor the soul child theory, which says that we are born our growth number and descend to our current Enneagram type as a way of coping with the world. But if this were true,

why would we see personality show up in children two or three years old and remain constant into adulthood? Would some of us descend into our current number, while others are born and remain their growth number? Other Enneagram teachers say the specific wound you receive will determine your chief motivation in life and hence your type. But if this were the case, wouldn't children who all went through the same traumatic event or received the same parenting be the same Enneagram type?

What I have seen in patterns during coaching sessions is that we are born with a leaning toward one Enneagram number. Often we can reflect on our lives and recall going to our core stress number at an early age or even drawing toward our growth number.

If we were born our Enneagram type, this would make a lot of sense. And since we are seeing the world through those specific Enneagram type's eyes, we are most sensitive to the messages that form that number's wounds. We perceive the world from that vantage point and only severe trauma can drastically change the personality that was set at birth.

A Three may react to a harsh dad by thinking, *I must change who I am to be liked. Maybe if I were successful, I would be worthy of love.* At the same time, their type One sibling thinks, *I must not be good enough to be loved. I must do everything perfectly and not make mistakes in order to receive affection and praise.* Meanwhile, the youngest child, a Four, is thinking, *There must be something wrong with me that I am not making Daddy happy. I'm just not lovable.*

All three children had the same dad with the same expectations, but reacted to his harshness in different ways. On the outside, it may have appeared that each one was thinking, *"I must change myself to please Dad."* However, their individual thought processes resulted in divergent long-term consequences. This suggests an inherent and very young formation of our base personality.

DO NOT TYPE CHILDREN

If you're a parent, you may wholeheartedly agree with children being born their Enneagram type as you watch your little daredevil who would try anything and your shy younger child who wants you to cut the tags off their clothes. You can see personality and differences clear as day even when they're

infants or toddlers. However, I am going to implore you not to hold too tightly to what you may perceive as your child's Enneagram type. Here's why:

CHILDREN CHANGE

I know this sounds like I'm contradicting my theory that we are born our type, but different Enneagram types can adapt to parents and environments in different ways during childhood. Their motivation may be the same as another child of their same Enneagram type, but their behaviors can be drastically different—and you should not presume to know your child's motivations before they can communicate them to you.

Behaviors may be a symptom of motivation, but any motivation can produce almost any behavior if the circumstances are right. Usually we see personality solidify between ages twelve and eighteen. At that point, the child may be ready to learn about the Enneagram. Keep in mind, however, that each child takes their own amount of time to become fully comfortable with their personality or tries to hide it.

TYPING CAN DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD

Hearing something like, "You're such an Eight!" while growing up can make a child either feel boxed in because of your perceptions about them, or cause them to form their reactions around your expectations. Either scenario can cause them to present as the wrong Enneagram type, or give them permission to act out in the more unhealthy characteristics of their personality. Meanwhile, you would wrongly assume that's just who they are.

IT ROBS THEM OF A JOURNEY TO SELF-AWARENESS

I know this point may sound a little silly, but there is so much gold in learning about yourself *by yourself* and not from other people. First, they could be wrong, and second, we tend to cling to the negatives we hear and not the positives.

God willing, you are going to have a long-term relationship with your children, and most of the time you spend together will occur when they themselves are adults. You'll be able to ask them how they see their personality and learn *about them from them* one day! How sweet will it be to let them discover their Enneagram type for themselves and then teach you what they've learned?