



GAINESVILLE FIRST
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

The Enneagram: How It Changed Our Church

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[The Enneagram](#) is a personality type structure made up of nine different personality types. The Enneagram differs from other personality indicators because it captures the complexity of human health in a simple way. This system identifies basic desires, basic fears, basic characteristics and some of the more complex details of how a personality looks under stress, normal situations, and in growth.

Brianna Huff was our local expert and teacher of the Enneagram. From the beginning, our intention for the class was to offer a way for people to learn about themselves and how they can connect with others. At [GFCN](#), we do not believe anyone should be alone, and we are passionate about helping people connect to God and their neighbors.

Here's four ways our enneagram personality class has changed our church:

1. Increased Empathy.

I cannot say that we always act in solidarity with outsiders or the hurting. But, I can say I have seen an increase in empathy while going through our Enneagram class.

When it comes to acknowledging another's situation, hostility and apathy seems like the current national norm. We are either condescending or we do not care. Church people can be some of the worst at this.

Like any community of people, we have our issues. But, going through this Enneagram class has given us some groundwork for taking an empathetic stance. In the class, we took the time to go through each of the personality types and discussed the drives and fears of each. We took the time to think through what other people might be feeling and how they might need someone to be present with them in those stressful times. Outside of the class, I would catch people talking about their personalities or people sharing stories about their lives. I would hear things like, “Well, it makes sense that you responded that way since one of your basic desires is to make a difference. Tell me more about how you responded.”

We aren't the most empathetic people. We may not always acknowledge people's situation or even choose to be present with them. But, this class on the Enneagram is changing us to ask ourselves, “What does their situation look like from their perspective?” And, “What would it look like for me to see the world from their shoes?”

2. Greater Self-Awareness.

Each of the Enneagram personality types describe the fundamental drives of a personality. A three may find themselves competing with others in sports, work, or life, because a three has a fundamental fear of failure (speaking as a three). Every personality has basic desires and fears and characteristics to match.

Going through the Enneagram as a church group let us be honest about ourselves in a way that often is not found in a church setting. We were able to say to ourselves, “Oh, that's why I act that way.” Or, for myself, “Oh, that's why I make lists and am obsessive about checking off those goals.”

We learned about ourselves. What we look like when we are stressed. How we act when we are growing in our health. And, we learned some steps we can take to move towards growth.

The Enneagram showed us that we are not perfect. But it also showed us that we have unique strengths of which we can be proud. And, that increasing

self-awareness has been a tool for us to connect God and connect to our neighbors.

3. Better Communication.

My favorite part of the class was watching family members learn about each other's personality type and then watching those family members start to communicate to each other differently. My own family benefitted from this class as my wife and I learned new communication tools for when we are in stress and out of stress.

But it's not just families that learned new ways to communicate. Our own faith community has started communicating differently. Navigating through the Enneagram types, we have learned a little bit about managing our own conflicts, or showing someone kindness, or meeting the basic emotional needs of our friends.

Some of us have even started to take those communication tools into our work environments, like our church staff has done. We genuinely want to help people connect, to give people the tools and direction to move from loneliness to connection. This Enneagram class is changing us to do that through better communication.

4. Being vulnerable.

It's hard being vulnerable. Vulnerability has been the most difficult part of our group Enneagram experience (maybe just me, a three).

I have worked in several churches, and I would say all of them struggle with being vulnerable. Being vulnerable takes the risk that we might not be accepted. Vulnerability is a risk that we might not be understood.

Thankfully, the Enneagram has required us to take some risk. We have started to open up about deep emotional concerns like fear and shame and anger, and (generally) we have found that our peers have been able to acknowledge and accept us.

It's hard being vulnerable, but it has been so rewarding. Vulnerability, for us, has been a foundation for deep, meaningful connection. Since we started the class, I have seen people discussing their emotions with each other in a way that I had not seen before. I have stumbled upon one on one vulnerable conversations around the Enneagram. I have been in a circle of folks of all ages having an open and authentic conversations using the Enneagram as a model for understanding.

We wanted to see people connect, and we were unsure how that would look using the Enneagram. But, the conversations and topics from our Enneagram class has changed us to be more vulnerable, to communicate better, to be more self-aware, and to be more empathetic. I am praying that we continue to deepen in those skills and make meaningful connections.

If you would like more information about the Enneagram click [here](#). We're here to help you connect, to be and become authentic disciples of Christ. For more tips on connecting to God and neighbor subscribe to our communication platforms.

www.gainesvillenaz.com

