

Voices: The problem with personality assessments

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In college, I took a spiritual gifts test before going on a mission trip. When I received my results, I flipped out. My spiritual gift was *knowledge*.

Questions rattled through my mind about whether I had any real skills which could impact people rather than the ability to tell random Bible facts no one cared about.

I went through a season where I really wrestled with this. I asked friends if they thought this was true. I brought it up at church and asked my spiritual mentors about it.

I had an identity crisis. Is this really who I am? Is this the only thing God has made me to be? Why can't I have a gift like empathy that could impact more lives?

Not just a number

This past fall, I started attending classes at Truett Seminary. Like a massive tornado that hit our campus, everyone was talking about the Enneagram. People at church and school were discussing their numbers with each other. It seemed like everyone was asking me, "What's your number?"

For those who don't know, the Enneagram is a personality assessment that ascribes a number on a scale of one to nine to individuals based on how they act in certain situations. It isn't unlike the Myers-Briggs 16-type personality test I took in college.

Today, the Enneagram is blowing up. There are Enneagram classes and

seminars people can attend. If you search online, multiple websites pop up with online surveys so you can know your type.

Honestly, I don't get it.

A few years ago, I ate tests like that up. It's easy to wrap your identity into one category. But, where I am now, I believe that personality assessments do nothing more than compartmentalize people into nice and neat categories that fail to show the bigger picture of who each individual is as made in the image of God.

For instance, when I was really into Myers-Briggs, I thought I probably wouldn't get along with certain people because my type clashes with theirs.

Is that truly seeing others as being made in God's image?

Who are you, really?

I realized that I don't need assessments because I already know who I am in Christ. When I took the spiritual gifts exam, I failed to acknowledge that reality. All I became at that moment was what I'm good at and what I'm not so good at.

Why wrap identity in an assessment rather than realities found in Scripture?

We should be looking to the Bible to point to the realities of who we are rather than assessments, which give too narrow of a view of each individual.

I've heard people argue the necessity of assessments like the Enneagram, saying that they are meant to show your flaws so you can work on them. I understand this sentiment, but the only real way to see your flaws is to be formed in the way of Christ, to know Christ intimately and to seek to know

Christ more in a community of believers, which reveals the flaws each and every one has. It is only in that community where our flaws can be rooted out to shape us more into Christ.

My wife recently read a Facebook post by a friend who said she was struggling to discover her Enneagram number. What I'd like to say to anyone in that position is that it really doesn't matter.

Take hold of Scripture. That is who you are.

You are a child of God, more than a conqueror, made in God's image and likeness, redeemed by the atoning work of Christ on the cross—and on and on it goes.

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