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SPEAKING  
BY THE  
NUMBERS

*Enneagram Wisdom for Teachers,  
Pastors, and Communicators*



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## THE ENNEAGRAM KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED

*Once you get over yourself, you can get anywhere.*

UNKNOWN

“THAT’S THE MOST Enneagram Three sermon I’ve ever heard.”

Autumn gently confronted me after worship one Sunday morning with those words—“the most ‘Three’ sermon I’ve ever heard.” She knew what most of my friends know: I am a Three on the Enneagram, and there’s just no hiding that fact. Threes are called *The Achiever*, *The Performer*, or *The Motivator*. When we are in a healthy space we are energetic, charming, attractive (I like that one), ambitious, goal-oriented, and all sorts of other things that excite me.

Right now, for instance, it’s nearly midnight. The house is quiet—even though my wife, two daughters, and my wife’s cousin all live here—and I am in my happy place,

pecking away at my keyboard, working toward goals I set six months ago. In four hours, I will be here again. Today I set new goals for house renovations and physical fitness—I have two races coming up, chipped away at two work projects, and moved to a new level on my favorite video game. I love accomplishing things. They don't even have to be important things. I'm a Three on the Enneagram and accomplishing things is the fuel that ignites my inner engine. And that fact is not lost on anyone I've ever known, especially those who hear me preach.

Autumn was right. The introduction to my sermon that weekend was soaked through with Enneagram Three perspiration. Want to know what I said? This is how it began:

*I want to tell you three indisputable facts about your life. And guess what, there's nothing I'm going to tell you that you don't know already.*

*You're the expert. You know these already, but once you hear them out loud, it'll give you clarity.*

*The first indisputable fact about your life is this: You were consulted before you committed your biggest regrets. So was I.*

*I had a say in doing whatever I did, saying whatever I said, going wherever I went, when I did or said the thing I regret.*

*I wasn't just consulted. I was the brains behind the whole operation. I was the fool who proofed it.*

*And so were you.*

*Now there are certainly times when we are the victims, but those aren't regrets. Regret is upset over our own past actions.*

*And you know who cast the deciding vote in your biggest regrets? You did. I did in mine.*

*I chose to eat that. I decided not to work out.*

*I decided that zero percent APR for one year was a good idea.*

*I charged that to the card. I swiped left (or right. I'm really too old to know how that all works).*

*I was consulted on all my biggest regrets.*

*And the reason you need to know that is because I'm about to tell you the most provocative and controversial thing I've ever said.*

*Like you, I have views on politics and race and the Bible and everything else, but this is the one thing that I get the most pushback on even though it's an indisputable fact.*

*You know what it is? It's this: You have a choice.*

*You have a choice of where you live, who you work for, who you marry. You have a choice about how you respond when provoked.*

*You have a choice which college to go to. You have a choice. And you know what Americans hate more than almost anything? The fact that their lives, our lives, are largely—not totally, but largely—the result of our choices.*

*You may not like your choices. You may think you have bad choices, but you always have choices.*

That was my sermon introduction. Later on, I planned to talk about the choice we make to become and be people of love and that doing so involves the decision to love. Like most things I say, the sermon introduction made complete sense to me. It was clear, somewhat concise, and was the shortest point from the beginning of my message to the heart of my content—it made sense.

To me.

As a Three I intuitively believe certain things about the nature of my life and the world. I believe that my life matters. I can make a difference, an impact on the world. I'm an aggressive person, and I wake up every morning with an instinctual belief that what I do matters. It sounds weird to some folks, but I wake up with a list of accomplishments that need to be complete before sundown. Some people like to make lists. I don't make lists; I *am* a list. Working out, writing one thousand words per day, and structuring my world are as natural to me as breathing. When I think about life, I naturally connect life to deliberate choices.

Not everyone does.

What Autumn revealed to me is while I was speaking what I believed to be true, I was filtering that truth through my lens of a Three, the Achiever. The Threes in the room were sold; I suspect the Fours weren't. Activities like scheduling every hour of the upcoming week on Sunday night, doing the dishes, or accomplishing routine daily and common tasks have little-to-no appeal for them. It's all too

mundane, too simple. The Nines in the room were contemplating whether or not their decisions really could add up to consequential change and concluded they could not. The Fives were hoping that I'd back up my assertion with five or more peer-reviewed studies.

While I was thundering away at a reality that was as true to me as the fact that humans breath oxygen, I missed a significant number of people in the room. It can't all be helped; miscommunicating can never be completely avoided. When communicators speak, we are always people—we don't always quite "get" what other people "get"—we cannot possibly see the world in the same way all our hearers do. We misunderstand one another's experiences, we don't always know where other people are coming from, and that's okay. But we can reach more people in the room than only those who see from our point of view.

### **THE STANCES: FEELING, THINKING, AND DOING**

One of my favorite commercials claims to solve a problem that customers can't know they have: nose blindness. It's a series of commercials, each one promising to rid our homes of smells we either don't know or can't prove we have. Our homes have smells that are hidden to us. Certainly, we've all had that friend or family member whose house always has a particular smell. When I was a kid, it was the family across the street. I hated going into their house. I didn't like the way it smelled. But either my neighbors didn't know it

smelled or they didn't care. The science of nose blindness suggests that we spend so much time in one location that we quit smelling it. And so to solve the problem, use Febreze.

Like all commercials, the makers of Febreze want us to respond in three ways. First, they want us to *feel* anxious about the smells in our home. Second they want us to *think* that Febreze might solve this un-smelled problem and cure our anxiety. And third they want us to buy Febreze—they want us to *do* something.

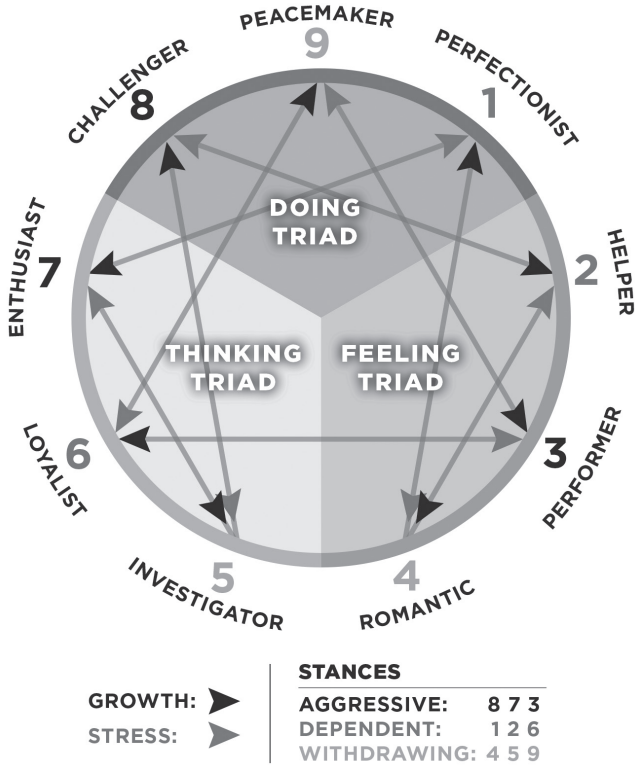
Feeling, thinking, and doing are the three primary ways human beings make sense of their world. Each of us is our own three-legged stool, using feeling, thinking, and doing to solve nose blindness and everything else. We are all born with this matrix of feeling, thinking, and doing—the Enneagram calls these the *Centers of Intelligence*, sometimes referred to as *Intelligence Centers* or simply *Centers*. All humans are born with all three Intelligence Centers intact. Typically, an early experience in life encourages one center to become dominant, another center to support the dominant center, and the remaining center to become repressed. This unbalances the stool, thus creating an unbalanced life.

These three centers inside the Enneagram are the Feeling Center, the Thinking Center, and the Doing Center. Since the Enneagram consists of nine numbers and only three Intelligence Centers, three Enneagram numbers are dominant in one center, supported in another center, and



# THE ENNEAGRAM

Implications of an Ancient Tool for Seeking Health and Wholeness



repressed in the remaining center, creating what we call triads and stances.

The Intelligence Center that is dominant in certain Enneagram numbers is called a *triad*. Twos, Threes, and Fours are the Feeling Triad (feeling); Fives, Sixes, and Sevens are the Fear Triad (thinking); Eights, Nines, and Ones make up the Anger Triad (doing). These ways of being become

the default setting of each triad, or what we reflexively do. This is the center that steps forward early in childhood, as we discussed, and becomes overused.

While the dominant center becomes overused, another center recedes and becomes underdeveloped. This is referred to as the *repressed center*, *Horneyian Group*, or *Enneagram stance*. For ease of language and brevity, I will use the language of “stance.”

Karen Horney (from whom *Horneyian Group* gets its name), a German psychoanalyst, posited that children exposed to an unsupportive or uncaring environment developed ways to cope and to gain the love and support they craved. These coping strategies reveal themselves in helplessness, hostility, or isolation. In short, we each develop a sense of when to *move toward others*, when to *move against others*, and when to *move away from others*. Though Horney was not a master of the Enneagram, her findings overlay well with the wisdom of the Enneagram and are now the widely held understanding of Enneagram stances (repressed centers). Humans move toward, against, or away from others in balanced and equal ways when we are healthy. However, life is neither balanced nor equal. In response to early trauma and in search of the love and support we crave, we pick one way of being, moving toward, against, or away from others in unbalanced and unequal ways. Which pathway we choose is our *Enneagram stance*.

Ones, Twos, and Sixes compose the Compliant/Dependent Stance and instinctively *move toward others*. Committed and hard-working, their reflex is to gain what they need from moving in the direction of others, befriending and serving others well. Threes, Sevens, and Eights are the Assertive/Aggressive Stance and *move against others* with their energy, direction, and aggression. Fours, Fives, and Nines are the Withdrawing/Detached Stance and *move away from others*, finding what they need in introspection and delivering it to others after they've had time to ruminate and reflect. The names of the stances are widely accepted, and I use the common, known names for each stance with the understanding that they can be off-putting to some readers.

Horney suggests that those who move toward others (compliant/dependent) are fulfilling their need for approval through another person or people; those who move against (assertive/aggressive) have a need for control, power, achievement, and adoration; and those who move away (withdrawing/detached) are fulfilling their need for independence and self-reliance. Enneagram masters Riso and Hudson observed that these Hornevia groups (or stances)—dependent, aggressive, withdrawing—gave richness and texture to the existing wisdom already available through identifying Intelligence Centers in triads.

## AS DEEP AS YOU WANT (OR NEED) TO GO

Now we can explore the concept that within each triad is also each stance. One member of each triad is also a member of each stance (or Hornevian group). Herein is the essential Enneagram recipe for how we all make our way through the world. The dominant center each one of us has—feeling, thinking, or doing—is known as our triad. The repressed or underdeveloped center each one of us has—feeling, thinking, or doing—is known as our stance. One center is dominant and one center is repressed, therefore leaving the third center to support our dominant center. Again, each of us uses all three Intelligence Centers but prefers one to the other two, leaving us essentially unbalanced.

### TRIADS AND STANCES

Typology	Triad (Dominant/Preferred Intelligence Center)	Stance (Repressed Intelligence Center)	Supporting Intelligence Center	Orientation to Time
<b>Enneagram 2</b>	Heart/Feeling	Dependent (Thinking)	Doing	Present
<b>Enneagram 3</b>	Heart/Feeling	Aggressive (Feeling)	Thinking or Doing	Future
<b>Enneagram 4</b>	Heart/Feeling	Withdrawing (Doing)	Thinking	Past
<b>Enneagram 5</b>	Head/Thinking	Withdrawing (Doing)	Feeling	Past
<b>Enneagram 6</b>	Head/Thinking	Dependent (Thinking)	Doing or Feeling	Present
<b>Enneagram 7</b>	Head/Thinking	Aggressive (Feeling)	Doing	Future
<b>Enneagram 8</b>	Gut/Body (Doing)	Aggressive (Feeling)	Thinking	Future
<b>Enneagram 9</b>	Gut/Body (Doing)	Withdrawing (Doing)	Thinking or Feeling	Past
<b>Enneagram 1</b>	Gut/Body (Doing)	Dependent (Thinking)	Feeling	Present

For example, let's look at the Feeling Triad (Twos, Threes, and Fours). When speaking to a gathering of Twos, Threes, and Fours, note that this triad will *take in and*

*receive* what is shared predominantly through their feelings. As their feelings progress, the numbers will then *respond* differently because they each are a different stance: Twos will move *toward* others or opportunities; Threes will move *against* others or opportunities; Fours will move *away from* others or opportunities. In each triad there is an Enneagram number from each stance represented.

Confused yet?

Maybe this will help.

Suppose you are speaking to a large group, meaning every Enneagram number is in attendance. For your hearer, their *triad* (feeling, thinking, or doing) reveals which Intelligence Center is dominant in their personality—how they *take in* information. A hearer's *stance* (dependent, aggressive, or withdrawing) determines which Intelligence Center is repressed in their personality—how they *respond to* information. The Aggressive Stance (Threes, Sevens, and Eights) is “feeling repressed,” with *feelings* defined as “acknowledging and appreciating their own feelings and the feelings of others.” The Compliant Stance (Ones, Twos, and Sixes) is “thinking repressed,” with *thinking* being defined by Suzanne Stabile as “gathering and sorting information and analysis and making plans.” The Withdrawing Stance (Fours, Fives, and Nines) is “doing repressed,” with *doing* defined as “both accomplishing and pleasure seeking.”

Let's make sure we are careful. Simply because an Intelligence Center is repressed does not mean feeling,

thinking, or doing is absent. We all feel, think, and do. It means, rather, a particular Intelligence Center is underdeveloped. Like an astronaut who has spent a year on a space station neglecting her exercises; when she returns to Earth she knows how to walk, but the muscle atrophy prevents her from doing it well. She must relearn techniques and rebuild the muscles that went so long without use.

Christopher L. Heuertz observes that this mixture of dominant, supportive, and repressed Intelligence Centers are crucial clues to our basic Enneagram type. He writes:

The stacked preference of the dominant Center, supported by one's secondary Center, provides our earliest clues to our Enneagram type's Basic Fear . . . and the Basic Fear that develops from this as a result, creates the life script that will shape so many of our experiences. The perceived reality, though generally far from the objective reality of our holding environment, gives shape to the story we begin telling ourselves about who we are, thus allowing the figurative soft cartilage of pre-type to calcify into the skeletal structure of personality.

### **SPEAKING TO PROMOTE FLOURISHING**

Here I'd like to offer a word about the connection and interchange surrounding triads and stances. The best understanding about dominant, secondary, and repressed

Intelligence Centers does not rest on looking only at behavior; simply to make it through the day each of us must feel, think, and do. Repression is not the same as absence. I understand the offense and anger we may feel when someone suggests that we are repressed in an Intelligence Center. It feels like we're being called deficient in a crucial arena of life.

Let's instead think of triads and stances in terms of energy; what gives us energy and what costs us energy. As a Three on the Enneagram, I am *feeling dominant* and *feeling repressed* (more on how that works later). I move through the world intuitively knowing and feeling what other people feel. This kind of intuition helps me be a better communicator—I can feel the room. At the same time, feeling *my own* feelings and expressing *my own* feelings is exhausting. Where some people find a “good cry” a good thing, if I have a good cry it's probably been years in the making and then I'm drained for the day. Even when writing, because writing is inherently emotional, I'm good for two-hour sessions and not much more. After preaching four worship gatherings per weekend at my local church, I'm good-for-nothing for the next twenty-four hours. I function this way

*Everything you say as a speaker is either leaning into your hearer's energy or costing them energy. If you fail to lean into their energy, you will lose them. If what you say costs them too much energy, you will lose them.*

not because I don't feel but because I do, and it costs me energy to feel. The same is true for you and your hearers.

Everything you say as a speaker is either leaning into your hearer's energy or costing them energy. If you fail to lean into their energy, you will lose them. If what you say costs them too much energy, you will lose them. The smart and gifted presenter will keep in view how her audience is receiving messages, whether they are feeling, thinking, or doing dominant. Some hearers will always want to think and think and think and are repressed in their doing. Others will be all too quick to do. They'll jump out of the plane and try to build a parachute on the way down. And still others have lost or given away their ability to feel.

At the same time, to transform and move hearers, speakers must also artfully expand what is repressed in the life of her hearers, whether they are feeling, thinking, or doing repressed. Speaking is a dance between what is intuitive for the hearer and what has been inhibited by the hearer. It doesn't take much to motivate hearers in the Intelligence Center where they are dominant. The work of speakers and teachers is shepherding healing and wholeness into the lives of hearers in the Intelligence Center where they are repressed. This is more than working on our weakness—this is bringing balance to the three-legged stool so that the stool will meet its purpose. This is the end game for every church, conference, business, and



government. A balanced people is a better people. Who wouldn't want that?

Our dominant and repressed Intelligence Centers identify the potential and places for growth for our hearers, both their glory and their shame. When we speak to those, we speak to everyone.

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