

“Inside Out: Knowing Ourselves -Type 3”
1 Samuel 11:1-11

Today we get to Type 3 on the Enneagram. As I have shared before, the Enneagram is a spiritual tool that could help us understand ourselves and uncover some of the ways we have adapted to life which get in the way of our living fully and out of our true essence. The Enneagram is a way to hold up a mirror for us so that we may see the distortions of who we think we are. Our personalities are our ways of coping with the world’s challenges and yet we become so identified with them that it is hard for us to access our souls. The work of the Enneagram is to step out of the cycle of our personalities: our likes and dislikes, our expectations, our reactions, and our automatic behaviors. When we become conscious of our personalities, they become less powerful and our souls begin to emerge. When we bring our personalities before God with all their potential and limitations, God brings us healing and new freedoms to be in the world.

Today we focus on personality type 3 on the Enneagram. This is also known as the Achiever or the Performer. Even though many of you are not this type, you can relate to it because it is the personality type that represents our American culture so well. The ideals of success, hard work, efficiency, goal-setting, glamour, optimism, and achievement are at the heart of the American dream and are what makes our country unique in the world. I have heard one pastor describe our country this way, “America: Home of the brave and the land of the Threes.” In talking to a successful psychiatrist, I asked him why he drove a fancy car, his response was very interesting. He said that “if I drive a nice car, people look at me as a good doctor because the car is a symbol of my success.” Threes thrive in our country. Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile write (screen), “Being a Three and living in America is like being an alcoholic living in a saloon.”

Enneagram Type 3	
AT THEIR BEST	AT THEIR WORST
Optimistic	Deceptive
Self-Affirming	Self-Promoting
Industrious	Pretentious
Efficient	Vain
Self-Propelled	Superficial
Energetic	Exploitative
Goal-Orienting	Overly Competitive
Team Builder	Workaholic
Motivator	Attention Getting

Enneagram Type 3

We use our personality to protect ourselves from our Core Fear and to also obtain our Core Desire.

⊗ Core Fear:

Being worthless, a failure, incapable, unimpressive, unsuccessful, and inefficient.

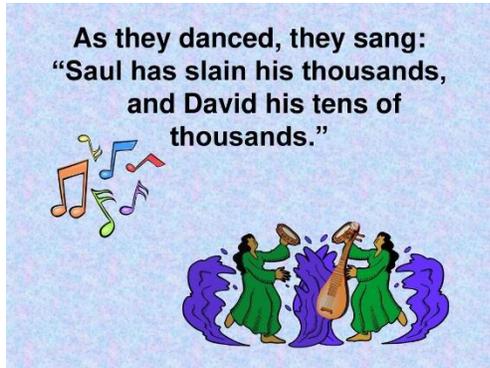
⊕ Core Desire:

To feel valuable and worthwhile by just being themselves without having to preform.

In their book *The Road Back to You*, Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile use the example of the famous tennis player Andre Agassi as a Three. He was the image of success in the 1990s and early 2000s. Here is an ad from 1991 where the main message was “Image is everything.” <https://youtu.be/E78OnfyQiWo>

Yet, the truth behind this image of success and glamour was very different. “In his memoir, *Open*, Agassi describes growing up with a father whose love for him was tied to his performance on the court. Agassi shocked the world when in his book he publicly confessed for the first time that he had hated playing tennis from the time he first picked up a racket to the day he retired. What drove him to become a champion wasn’t passion for the game but his desire to win the heart of a father whom he describes as unable to ‘tell the difference between loving me and loving tennis.’” (Cron and Stabile page 138) Because threes are so focused on accomplishments and success, they have a hard time accessing their feelings and the feelings of others. They see feelings as distractions from the work to be done. King Saul suffered so much because of his inability to deal with his feelings of failure. As a Three, King Saul seemed to have it all. He was the first king of ancient Israel. He was chosen by God. (Read 1 Samuel 10:1) He united the 12 tribes and established a unified central government. This was not done before him. As a Three, Saul was a visionary and was able to rally others around him. He was a great warrior and thus became victorious in battle. Saul defeated many of the enemies of his country, including the Ammonites, Philistines, Moabites, and Amalekites. He united the scattered tribes, giving them greater strength. He reigned for 42 years. He was also interested in public image and public relations so when he won in battle, he did not go after the ones who doubted him. Instead he sought to win them over. His need to be liked made him forgive easily. (Read 1 Samuel 11:1-11). But as a Three, Saul’s success became the source of his downfall. He could not face any of his mistakes. He fell into depression when he lost

in battle. He struggled with jealousy and feelings of competition when a young man by the name of David started to rise to power. He went as far as trying to kill him because he lost his trust in God and became consumed by his fears of failure. (Read 1 Samuel 18:8-9)



Saul became a tragic character because of his inability to let go of his drive for success and to trust that he was loved by God not for his accomplishments but for who he truly was. He ended up seeking help from a medium. He disguised himself to visit the woman of Endor (Read 1 Samuel 28:8) even though earlier in his rule, he had outlawed all mediums and wizards from the land.

Today we are invited to look at the example of Saul and learn some lessons about success and the need for transformation for Threes and for all of us who look for success as a way to happiness. While success is not a bad thing in and of itself, it is a challenge for us because it often engages our vanity and sense of worth. We end up equating success with being of value. Our humanity then hinges on our ability to perform and produce and not on our inner quality of life. There are two helps for us when success becomes the driver in our lives (headings on the screen):

1. A Focus on the Cross: The cross of Jesus was a symbol of shame and failure in his time. It was the capital punishment of the Roman Empire for any who seemed to threaten their rule. Most people at the time saw the cross as a failure for the mission of Jesus. In fact, the Gospels spend a lot of time trying to help us understand the cross and how God works through what the world considers to be weak. As the Apostle Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 1:18 (screen) "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." For Threes accepting the power of God in what the world considers to be weakness is the challenge of faith and of subverting our whole value system. The cross could redefine our views on success and help us see that humility is the path to true joy in life.
2. An Active Contemplative Life: Part of the transformation path for those with a drive for success is to find a different source for energy by getting in touch with their inner lives. It is important for Threes to take time away from the crowds and from

projects and tasks to be in silence and in stillness where the drive to produce is set aside.

Consider the challenges for these lessons in your own life and in the world around you and pray for how God might be calling you to grow in these areas especially if you are a Three. We will close with the practice of breath prayer. (The following prayer exercise is taken from gravitycenter.com) Breath prayer is an ancient Christian prayer practice dating back to at least the sixth century. Breath prayer is usually said silently with one part being said on the inhale and the second part on the exhale. But some people sing it; others chant it. It's your prayer; use it your way. You may also use the breath prayer for a focused time during a daily spiritual practice. Simply repeat the prayer over and over keeping your attention on the prayer. If your attention wanders, gently return to the prayer. You may begin with 5 minutes and gradually increase the time to 15 or 20 minutes. Today we will go with a few moments.

1. Close your eyes and recall the line "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Be still, calm, peaceful, open to the presence of God.
2. With your eyes closed, imagine that God is calling you by name. Imagine that God is actually asking, "(Your name) what do you want?"
3. Give God a simple and direct answer that comes honestly from your heart. Write down the answer. If you have more than one answer, write them down. Your answer may be one word such as peace or love or help. It may be several words or a phrase such as "feel your presence" or "lead me into life." Whatever your answers, they are the foundation of your breath prayer.
4. Select the name that you are most comfortable using to speak with God. Combine it with your written answer to the question God asked you. This is your prayer.
5. Breathe in the first phrase/word (generally your invocation of God's name) and breathe out the second phrase/word (request or need). Amen.