

“The Many-Breasted God” // Type Two: The Helper  
Stained Glass: Nine Windows of Divine Light // A worship series based on the Enneagram  
Joe Heikman // Wildwood Mennonite Church // 2018-06-17



What does this image bring to your mind? Lots of things, I'm sure... from oh, that's cute... to that's a little bit disgusting... and some of you have started thinking about lunch.

But how many of you look at that picture and see an image of God?

Well, perhaps you should. Some of you will have heard of the biblical name for God, *El Shaddai*. Literally, “The Many-Breasted God”

This is probably not exactly the image that the biblical writers had in mind when they referred to God as the Many-Breasted One. The ancient Hebrews weren't too fond of pigs. But I settled on this image because this pig pretty strongly illustrates the point...and there are some things you just don't want to type into a Google Image search when you're using a church computer.

El Shaddai, the Many-Breasted God. The God who provides and sustains, the Giver of Life, who draws us close and nourishes us with the gift of her own body. I've heard some of my female friends who have given birth talk about realizing their feminine superpower, literally keeping another human being alive for like a year and a half entirely with their bodies.

That's the strength of this image of God, *El Shaddai*.

Now you probably haven't seen the “The Many-Breasted God” written in most of your English translations. And that's fair. *El Shaddai* appears 48 times in the Hebrew Bible, and most English translations use the word “Almighty.” But I like this footnote from [The Inclusive Bible](#):

‡ The name El Shaddai is usually translated “the Almighty,” under the assumption that it derives either from the word *shadad*, which means “burly” or “powerful,” or from *shadah*, which means “mountain,” making the name mean “God of the mountains.” There is growing opinion, however, that Shaddai may derive from the word *shad* or “breast”—thus El Shaddai may be a feminine image of God meaning “the Breasted God.” Then again, since mountains are frequently shaped like breasts, these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

There's your lesson in Bible translation for the day, *El* meaning "God" and *Shaddai* being the plural of *Shad*, breast. I like what this says about the two interpretations not being mutually exclusive. While I wouldn't dare to refer to any woman as "burly," there's definitely power and strength in the feminine image of the breast-feeding God. "Almighty" does not have to mean violent; it can also mean life-giving and life-sustaining.

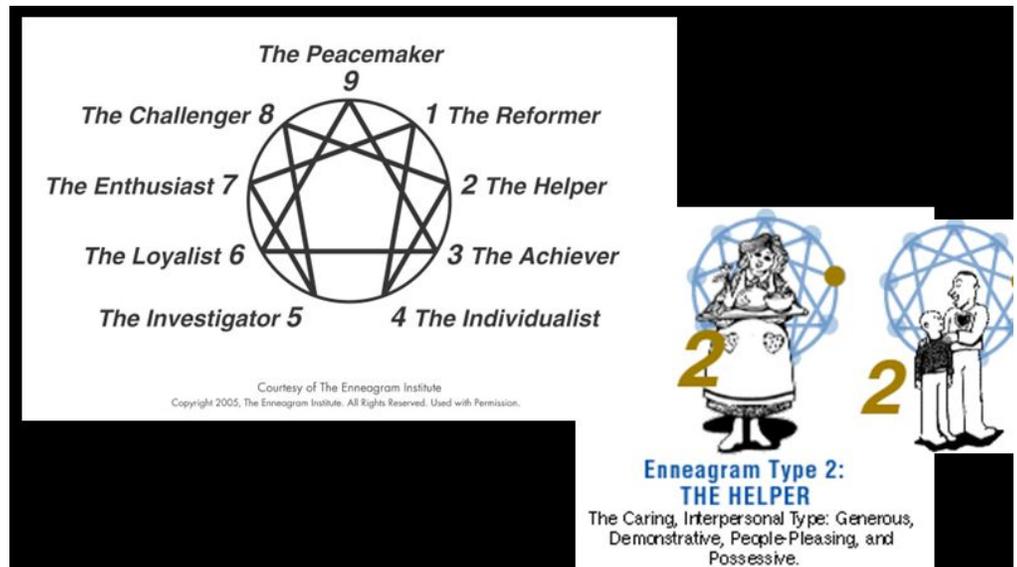
I think that's the idea that William Young, author of *The Shack*, has in mind when he depicts God as a matronly African-American woman; she has this very large, gracious, powerful presence. *El Shaddai*, source of life and sustenance, as the hymn puts it, we are "Children of the Heavenly Father," or in this case Mother, "[safely in \[her\] bosom gather.](#)"

That image of God fits very well with the Enneagram personality type we're talking about today. "Type Two, the Caring, Interpersonal Type: Generous, Demonstrative, People-Pleasing, and Possessive."

Two Sundays ago, Joel and Katie showed us something of the beauty and depth of God in their sharing about being Type Fours, and last week Ken and Tom reflected the Effectiveness of God in their sharing about getting things done as Type Threes.

And today, Type Two, the Helper or The Giver. Now I'm sorry to say that Type Two is not my primary type, and unfortunately no Type Twos offered to share from their personal experience. When I asked for volunteers to share, the Type Fours of course offered right away, because what a great chance for self-reflection and sharing their emotions. And the Type Threes said, "Oh, I can do that. That will prove my value to the community." But the Twos don't really like being in the spotlight, and besides they were all busy making the MCC sale run last weekend. Now if I wanted to, I could have gotten some of the Twos to share; if I'd said "(sigh), I really *need* someone to share," well then of course the answer would have been yes.

Those three words, "I need you" are huge motivators for the Twos. Like several of the other types, Twos are oriented towards relationship. Their world revolves around the people that they love. In the Bible story of Ruth, Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law when both of their husbands died. In that culture, there was nothing that connected them beyond the relationship of their husbands, and so Naomi urged Ruth to go take on another husband, that she was still young enough to make a new life for herself. She owed Naomi nothing.



But what did Ruth say? “Where you go, I will go, and your people will be my people and your God will be my God.” That definitely the mentality of a Two--choosing to give relationship the priority, even over personal identity. Where you go, I will go.



Twos are also great at identifying people’s needs. Hospitality is definitely a gift of most Twos. They’ll be the first to notice that your drink could use a top-up, and they wouldn’t dream of showing up empty-handed when you invite them over for dinner. If you’ve ever been so busy hosting a party or serving in the church kitchen that you’ve forgotten to eat yourself, you might be a Two.

Another classic Two story in the Bible is when Jesus went to the home of Mary and Martha. While



Martha is busy being the perfect hostess, Mary sits at Jesus’ feet and listens to his teaching. And after a while, Martha is so frustrated by Mary’s uselessness, that she goes to Jesus and says, *“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.”*

*“But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’”*

I know, some of you are really frustrated with this story, because, come on Jesus, if Martha doesn’t do it, who’s going to fetch the water, start the fire, and prepare the meal? Who’s going to take the coats and serve the drinks and set the table? What’s she supposed to do, invite a famous rabbi into her home and *not* make sure he and his entourage is taken care of? If you think Martha’s got a pretty fair point, you might be a Two.

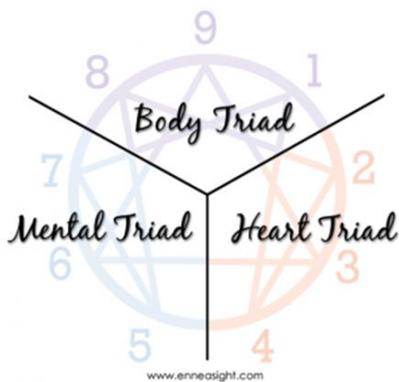
Incidentally, both women and men can be Type Twos. In our culture, most women are expected to act as Twos, to do the work of serving and listening and responding to the needs of others. No doubt many of you have been thinking of your mothers and grandmothers as I’ve talked about hospitality and nurturing. Most of the Mennonite women I’ve talked to score very highly in the Type Two area when they take an Enneagram test, even when that’s not the type that they identify with most strongly. As Tom mentioned last week, our personalities are shaped by a combination of inherent

dispositions, our family of origins, and the circumstances of our lives. There's a lot of cultural baggage around the Type Two role in particular, a lot of expectations for what our culture considers to be feminine.

But certainly not all women are oriented around relationships and meeting the needs of others, and it's not only women who find deep satisfaction in those things. From the biblical perspective, there are plenty of men who seem to be showing Type Two behaviours, Jonathan, the Apostle John, the Good Samaritan, even Jesus is described by some Enneagram teachers as a Type Two.

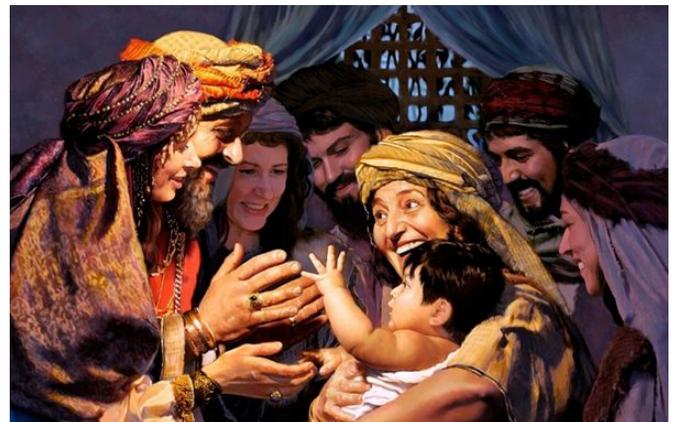
As with all of the Enneagram types, the Twos aren't the only ones to be hospitable and helpful; hopefully we all have more than a bit of that in us. To be oriented towards relationship and to put the needs of others ahead of our own is at the heart of discipleship. But for Twos, it just comes naturally, that's the fullest expression of themselves. That combination of emphasizing relationship and responding to people's needs, that's the core of who they are.

And as with all the Types, that core identity can be both a gift and a burden. For Twos, the trouble often comes in identifying so strongly with the needs of others that they lose track of their own identity, their own needs.



Twos are part of the Heart center in the Enneagram system, along with the Threes and Fours. They feel things quite deeply and are often capable of great compassion and empathy, and while that's a really good thing, Twos, Threes and Fours can all get stuck at that emotional level. The danger for Twos is that those emotions can be oriented towards others at the expense of their own. They care so deeply about how others are doing and feeling that they don't pay attention to how they're feeling; "well, it doesn't really matter how I feel as long everyone else is happy."

Have you ever noticed in the story of Ruth and Naomi that Ruth kind of fades away in the end? She has bound her life to Naomi's, and they go to live in Naomi's hometown and Naomi tells her where to work and how to behave, and eventually who to marry. And by all accounts, Ruth is more than happy to obey, and things turn out well for her as she marries Naomi's relative and they have a son. And in the biblical account, nobody says "Wow, congratulations to Ruth, your faithfulness has been rewarded!" No, the story ends *"Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi."*



But what happened to Ruth? She kind of faded away, and it became Naomi's story, not Ruth's story. On the one hand, that's the humility of the Two, they're not doing anything for the spotlight, and no doubt Ruth cared more about Naomi's happiness than her own.

On the other hand, is that really healthy? Or is disappearing into someone else's story a path towards dependence and resentment? Twos don't actually want to disappear, they long to be noticed and accepted and loved just like everyone else. Downplaying those desires doesn't make the desires go away.



## *Type Two: God is Nurturing*

- *Oriented towards relationship*
- *Identify others' needs*
- *Minimize their own needs and feelings*
- *Need to be needed*

The other dark side facing many Twos is that the desire to be helpful can become a compulsive *need to be needed*. At the heart of the Two identity is the belief that if they work hard enough to keep others happy, if they meet all the needs of all the people in their lives, they will be loved in return. What looks like sacrificial love often comes with strings attached.

And so Twos often struggle with shame, that feeling that they're not worthy of connection with these people that they care about so much, and so they work, work, work to earn the love that they crave.

And that works...until it doesn't. Caring for someone is no guarantee that they'll love you back. And nobody can meet all the needs of another person, much less all the people that they want to love. And Twos know that, they're aware that they will ultimately fail to be everything that their loved ones need them to be, and what then?



Will we still love them, will God still love them, when they fail us? And again, that's not just a Two thing, though many Twos tend to organize their lives around that impulse more than others.

Twos, like everyone else, desperately want to be loved, but they're often afraid to ask for the love that they need. I suspect that's what is really going on when Martha approaches Jesus--she's not really wanting him to tell Mary to help her, she's hinting that she wants Jesus to notice her efforts, to give



her some of the attention that he's been lavishing on her sister, who's just sitting there! She wants Jesus to love her, but how can she earn his love if he doesn't need what she has to offer?

Twos often struggle to relate to God, because what can you give to the God who has everything? God doesn't need our help, not really, and so where does that leave

someone whose identity is wrapped up in being helpful?

Twos often struggle with that spectrum of compulsion and dependence, and that can feel like manipulation to their loved ones. "No no, you really can't leave the table until you've had a third helping, what, you don't like my mashed potatoes?" Sorry, Grandma, I don't think it's really about the mashed potatoes, now, is it?

What happens when the kids grow up and don't need you anymore? Or when your girlfriend tells you to back off and give her some space? Or when the church has all the volunteers it could possibly use and there's nothing for you to do to serve? (Just kidding, that will never happen!)

That's the deep struggle of the Two--there are always limits to the love that can be earned. Love that can be earned can also be lost. I have to love you well enough that you'll love me back, without me asking for your love. That's a really heavy burden to carry around.

So, what do we do with this picture of the Type Two Personality?

For one, we practice gratitude. Twos do so much for us, they support us in so many practical and emotional and spiritual ways. Our families and workplaces and communities would fall apart without the care and attention that Twos give. Our church would not function without them.

And yet, Twos are often taken for granted. Partly because they avoid the spotlight, and wouldn't dream of begging for compliments. They definitely want us to notice them and appreciate what they're doing for us, but they'll never ask for that. But mostly, the rest of us are so busy lapping up what the Twos are offering to us that we miss them as people. We're all longing for love and connection in various ways, and the Twos are built to identify and attend to those needs. And since they don't ask for anything in return, it's easy to just turn on that tap of affection and milk it dry.

So to all the Twos in the room, Thank you. You give so much to us, you make our world a better place. You serve so well. And we see you. You are God-like in your capacity for care, sacrifice, and empathy. You are the very image of *El Shaddai*, the Many-Breasted God, Source of Life and Nourishment.

We see you, and we love you. We are thankful for all that you give to us, but more than that, we love you just because of who you are. You are worthy and lovable, and we won't abandon you if and when you let us down.

That's what the Twos in your life really want to hear, in some way or another. So don't make them work for it. Pay attention to them, and whenever you can, offer back to them the care and nourishment that they give to the rest of us.



**Type Two: God is Nurturing**

1. Gratitude – pay attention those who serve us
2. Rest – allow your feet to be washed first

And if this description of the Type Two is ringing true with your identity, the invitation to you is to learn to trust and to rest in God's love. El Shaddai, the Source of Life and Nourishment, that's not only the image of God *in* you, that's who God wants to be *for* you as well.

In our Scripture reading from the gospel of John 13:1-17, we read the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Now you Twos are likely to identify with Jesus, you instinctively reach for the basin and towel to wash someone else's feet. And that's great, you can definitely do that. But first, let Jesus wash your feet. Like the wisdom from the flight attendant, you have to put on your own mask first. Before you can serve, before you go around filling up the cups of others, you have to allow your own cup to be filled.

That's the only way to love without strings attached, to learn to rest in the love that you receive love, even as you give and love and nourish those around you.

So that's the Enneagram Type Two, the Image of El Shaddai, the Many-Breasted God.

As our prayer practice today, I'm going to invite the ushers to hand out "thank you" cards for you to fill out. I imagine that as I've been describing the gifts of the Twos, you've had at least one friend or family member come to mind, someone who gives a lot to you in one form or another, without asking anything in return.

As your prayer, I invite you to write a note of gratitude to them. Maybe they're a Type Two, and maybe not; either way, I'm sure they'd appreciate a note from you telling them what they mean to you. Even if you don't plan to give it to them, or if that's not possible because they're gone, you can write down your gratitude as a prayer to the God who made them.

A song of reflection on the Type Two perspective, from [\*Sleeping At Last\*](#):

TWO

*sweet heart, you look a little tired.  
when did you last eat?  
come in and make yourself right at home-  
stay as long as you need.  
tell me, is something wrong? if something's wrong  
you can count on me.  
you know i'll take my heart clean apart, if it helps yours beat.*

*it's okay if you can't find the words,  
let me take your coat  
and this weight off of your shoulders.*

*like a force to be reckoned with,  
a mighty ocean or a gentle kiss,  
i will love you with every single thing i have.  
like a tidal wave, i'll make a mess.  
or calm waters if that serves you best.  
i will love you without any strings attached.*

*it's okay if you can't catch your breath,  
you can take the oxygen straight out of my own chest.  
i know exactly how the rule goes:  
put my mask on first.  
no, i don't want to talk about myself-  
tell me where it hurts.  
i just want to build you up, build you up  
'til you're good as new*

*and maybe one day i will get around to fixing myself too.*

*i don't even know where to start,  
already tired of trying to recall when it all fell apart.  
and i just want to love you, to love you, to love you well.  
i just want to learn how, somehow, to be loved myself.*

*like a force to be reckoned with,  
a mighty ocean or a gentle kiss,  
i will love you without any strings attached.  
and what a privilege it is to love,  
a great honor to hold you up.*

*like a force to be reckoned with  
a mighty ocean or a gentle kiss,  
i will love you with every single thing i have  
like a tidal wave, i'll make a mess.  
or calm waters if that serves you best.  
i will love you without any strings attached,  
i will love you without a single string attached.*

