

“The Perfect Sermon” // Enneagram Type One  
 Stained Glass: Nine Windows of Divine Light // God is Good (Enough)  
 Wildwood Mennonite Church // 2018-07-08 // Joe Heikman

Remember that moment in middle school, when the teacher handed back your tests, and everybody compared marks? I got an 89, what did you get for #19, that was the hardest one, oh man, I messed that one up, too...etc.

I hated those moments. Because everybody always wanted to know what I got, but when I told them, they always got mad at me. Especially in grade 7 and 8 math class. Every time, they'd ask how I did, and I'd tell them I did pretty good, and they'd ask what specific grade I got, and I'd say 98. And they'd roll their eyes, that's not pretty good, that's really good, ugh, you're so smart, I hate you.

It's true, I did really good at 7th and 8th grade math, and I really did get 98% most of the time. That was my average at the end of the year both years, actually. I remember that number exactly, because that was kind of my thing. I got a 98% so often it was uncanny.

And here's the thing, my friends would always go through that routine, another 98, ugh, you're so smart, I hate you. And I'd be sitting there thinking, another 98, what the heck, I should have gotten a 100. And then I'd obsess over the simple mistake that I made for the next week. But I couldn't talk about that with anyone, because nobody has any sympathy for the guy who complains about the one question he got wrong on a test.

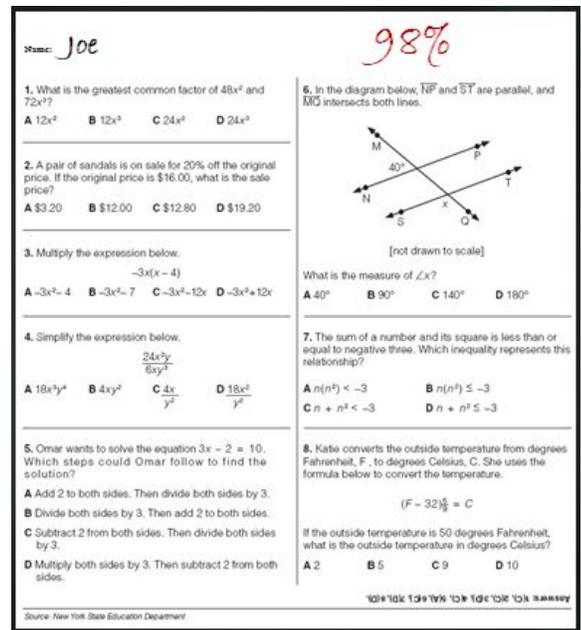
But I was. Not because it mattered to anyone else; everyone knew that I was one of the smart kids in our class, including me. And my parents and teachers were perfectly happy with my grades, I mean, a 98 average gets plenty of praise. But still, I was unhappy with that mark, because I knew I could do better.

That's the thing about seventh grade math: there's always a perfect conclusion to every problem. And the path is clear, where to start, what steps to follow, and, voila, one single, correct, verifiable answer. And you're even required to show your work, to put each step down on paper. So there was no excuse for me to get a 98 on a test. I knew how to do the work, I knew the steps, I just made one simple mistake on each test.

I knew that I was capable of 100%, but I always fell just short. No matter how hard I tried. And so what should have been, that's great, you're doing really well, became a “not quite good enough” every week, burned into my brain.

That's the world of an Enneagram Type One, right there. Never enough. It doesn't matter what everyone else thinks, how many things they accomplish, how many awards they win or how close they get to the top, Ones always know that they could be doing better.

I had a lot of One-ish tendencies when I was a teenager. I never knew what to do with compliments--if someone was impressed with my 98 on a math test, I just had to point out how silly of a mistake I had made.



Or I remember talking to other people's parents after a high school choir performance, when they would say "that was beautiful" and I'd correct their compliment. I'd give them a breakdown of where we did better in practice, which songs the tenors didn't get quite right.

Or I remember vividly, like I was there, the mechanics of taking a 3-point shot in my grade 12 basketball championship game. I remember exactly what that shot felt like, seeing the pass coming, catch, shoot, release, and realizing that it was going to miss short. I remember next to nothing about the exact same shot that I had made literally 30 seconds before, the one that had tied the game. I don't remember the success, only the failure.

The One type is not my primary number these days, but I still have a lot of One in me.

***Type ONE: The Reformer / The Idealist:***  
*...good...disciplined...visionary...ethical...decisive...right...*

*Instinct-Centered*

*Basic Desire:* To be good and to do better..

*The Project:* I maintain love and connection by bringing myself and my world into alignment with my high internal standards.

*Gifts of the One:* integrity, drive, clear judgment, critical thinking, precision, self-control...

Stained Glass - Nine Windows of Divine Light  
*We learn to know God more fully  
by learning to know ourselves  
and each other more fully*



The composite image at the bottom of the slide consists of three distinct parts. On the left is a cartoon illustration of a woman in a business suit and glasses, holding a briefcase labeled 'SHOULD'. In the center is a speech bubble from a woman with short dark hair, listing 'I'm the PERFECT wife, I'm the PERFECT employee, I'm the PERFECT daughter, I'm the PERFECT mother...' followed by '(and I'm PERFECTLY STRESSED!)'. On the right is a diagram of the Enneagram One, a circle with numbers 1 through 9 around its perimeter. Two arrows originate from the number 1: one points to the number 7, labeled 'Growth', and the other points to the number 4, labeled 'Stress'.

I think the biggest distinctive of the One type is that their primary drive comes from within. Ones have an inner sense of morality and justice, they just know how things are meant to be. Ones, along with Eights and Nines, are "Gut" types or "Body" types--they have strong instincts that drive them.

Enneagram teachers [Ian Cron](#) and [Suzanne Stabile](#) say that the best way to find out if someone is a One is to ask them, "do you hear the voices?" Most Ones have voices in their heads, not in a mental disorder kind of way, but the voices of conscience and intuition, and constant, constant criticism. For a lot of people, the inner voice sounds like their mother or father, or maybe an old instructor or coach.

Many ones go home from work or school with a list of all the things they failed to accomplish that day, and they go to bed with a list of all the things they could have done better, and they wake up with resolve to take on that whole list of failures from yesterday and add it to the list of things they've already scheduled in for today. Ones love to make lists of things they need to do, and do better, next time.

Not good enough. Those themes of shame that we talked about in the spring, those are really powerful for a One. Do it all and never let them see you sweat, as Brene Brown, said, that's all you have to do to be worthy.



All of the problems in the world, the Ones bear the weight of all of those because they see what is possible and they *just know* how to fix them. And because they know, they should. That inner sense of Justice is an obligation to themselves and the entire world.

And all their personal flaws, as well. That's the project for the Ones: by completing the work of self-improvement, then they'll be worthy of love. By working hard enough, by being perfect enough, they'll be able to fix all of those broken relationships.

That's a huge weight to carry, and a huge load of shame when Ones fail to live up to what they see as perfectly reasonable, achievable expectations.

The other primary emotion for the Ones, again in common with the Eights and Nines as we'll talk about in coming weeks, a primary emotion for the One is Anger.

Anger at the world for being broken, anger at others for not doing their part to fix it, resentment that it always seems to come down to them to solve the world's problems. "If you want something done right, you have to \_\_\_\_ (do it yourself.)" A wonderfully One-type sentiment. And then anger internalized, because, no matter how hard they try, Ones fall short of their own standards.



My favourite line from the "One" song from [Sleeping at Last](#):

*no, i'm not saying perfect exists in this life,  
but we'll only know for certain if we try.*

I hope that you can see the beauty in that statement, the courage and strength and clarity to take on that challenge of the world as it should be, even while knowing the odds against perfection.

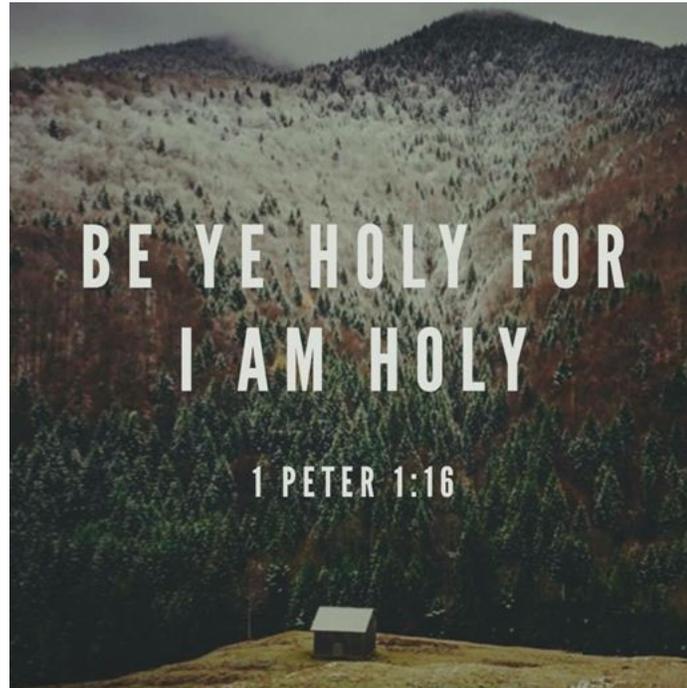
For Ones, I imagine that might feel like an exhausting burden, a chain of compulsion.

But don't miss the goodness and hope that others experience in that drive for justice and truth. You look at the world and not only see how things might be better, you also generally have a plan for how to get us there, or at least where to start.

We need that vision of a better world, and Ones bring that vision to us and invite us to join you in the struggle of making it real.

Does any of this sound familiar? A personality looking at the reality in front of them and making plans to fix it up and make it better, to save us, heal us, redeem us, sanctify us, make us holy and whole?

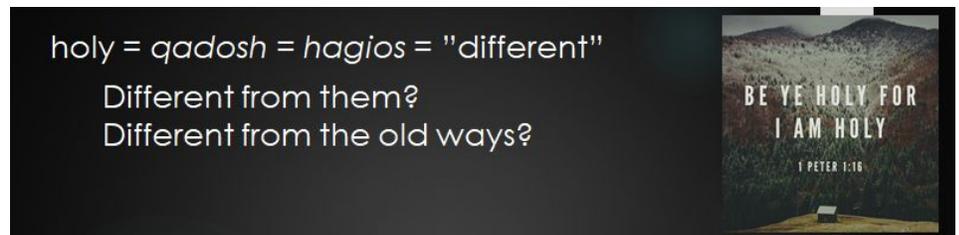
Are you familiar with any deities that share that longing for the world to be a better place? Ah, yes, the ancient *YHWH*, god of the Hebrew tribes:



(Lev 11:44 and 20:26, & 1 Peter 1:15-17)

“For I am the Creator God, who has called you out and set you apart, calling you to be sacred, to be different.” That’s what *holy*, means, *qadosh* in Hebrew, *hagios* in Greek--”Different.” “Set apart.”

Different from what? Well, the direct answer is “different from everyone else,” or if you like, “different from those pagans over there.” And the Judeo-Christian religion has invested a ton of time and energy in difference for the sake of distinction: we are not like them.



But there’s a different story we could choose there, not different for the sake of distinction, but different for the sake of choosing a better way.

That’s the deeper link in the Hebrew’s story, that God called them out of slavery in Egypt and set up a different kind of society: not because God doesn’t like Egyptians, but because a society built on slavery was destructive for *everyone* and the way of *Torah* and *Shalom* that God offered to the Hebrews was a better way to live.

And the food laws and purity rituals weren’t purely symbolic, there were practical health issues for individuals and the society at stake. Eating food from animals that are raised, selected, and slaughtered with care is simply *better than* eating creepy crawlies and pigs that wallow in their own filth. Sorry, pig enthusiasts, I know

that is a myth; pigs are actually very clean animals. The science back then was primitive. But the intent was not only for ritual purity, but for pragmatically healthier individuals and a *better* society.

distinction in service of transformation  
NOT  
transformation in service of distinction

In other words, the religious distinctions of the ancient Hebrew purity laws were intended to serve the project of *holiness*, not the other way around.

And this continues with Jesus and the Christian New Testament writers. We see Jesus making this move repeatedly in the Sermon on the Mount. You have heard it said...but I say to you... As far as the Law served to promote love and justice and health, Jesus kept the Law and cheerfully doubled down on it. But when the Law made life harder but not better, he was just as free to walk away from the Law, in search of a *better* way.

The Apostle Paul did the same; systematically breaking down the old way and calling for a higher way, a new community, a *holiness* that was fuller and deeper and richer and more complete. (If Ones have a patron saint, it's definitely the Apostle Paul, he of the endless self-improvement project, lists upon lists of things to do and not to do, and arriving at the end and still declaring himself the chief of all sinners.)

So, Ones in the room, get ready to hear your favourite words the whole wide world: "You're right." You're right. You really are, the world can be a better place, and we all have work to do. This is *not* the perfect sermon. I'll try again next week. I really can do better, we all can, and the pursuit of what is better is a sacred, godly pursuit.

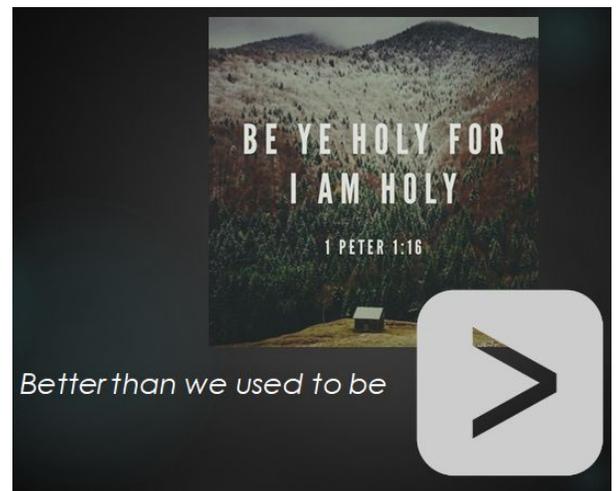
The One project is God's Project. As a pastor, I'd say that your instinct for justice, that feeling of just knowing what is right and true and just, that's a connection to the Divine Truth of the universe, the Spirit of God in you.

And so I want to celebrate that voice in your head, because to the point that it calls you and the rest of us to a higher and better way, that is the Voice of God.

So that's the good news. And, in keeping with the One style, I also have *better* news. How God goes about the project of holiness is a *better* way.

For most Ones, the struggle to be better is a cycle of critique and effort. Notice the failures and problems, try hard to fix them, critique the results to find what's still wrong, try to fix that, critique the fixes, and so on. If we work hard enough, we'll eventually get to the end of the project and everything will be perfect and we'll finally be pleased with ourselves. But--*good enough* remains elusive and the project never ends.

In the biblical story, God certainly offers plenty of critique, or at least that's how it's presented. God's prophets speak out about injustice at great length, and call people to account for their actions, large and small. Criticism is a useful tool in God's Restoration project.

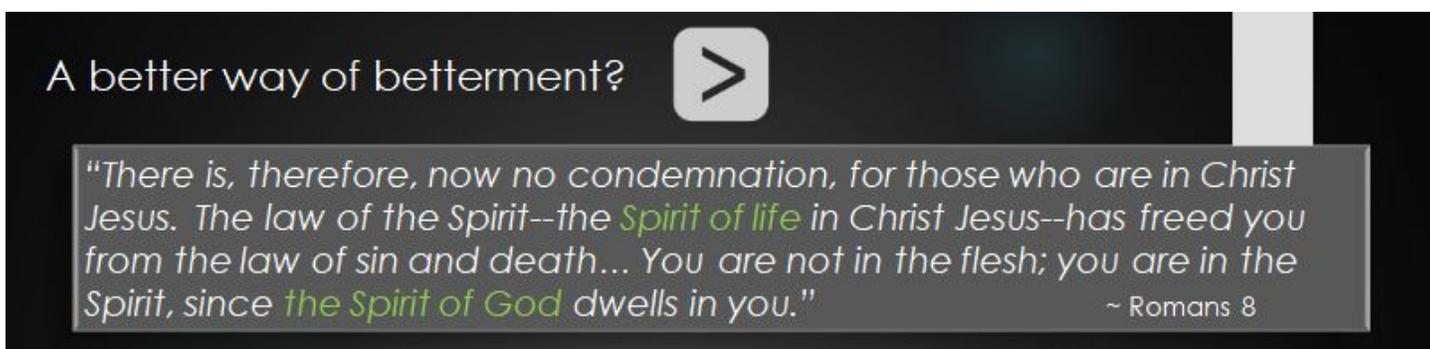


Take Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. He didn't shy away from the truth about her life, and he didn't hesitate to critique her theology. But he also didn't reject her or tell her to come back when she had it all together. The critique was accompanied by acceptance, so that, instead of judgment, Jesus offered an invitation: all who are thirsty, come and drink, come and find rest. So that the invitation to a better way was not obligation but mercy and freedom.

Likewise, the woman caught in adultery. Jesus did not condemn her as the keepers of the Law did, instead he offered mercy and the invitation to begin again: "go and sin no more." Not by sheer effort, not in the same way as before, but free and grounded in the grace that she had been given.

That was always the Spirit of the Law, even in the Hebrew Bible, to offer freedom and mercy, along with the invitation to live into a better way, a more full way of relating to God and all of Creation.

And the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Way of Jesus, that was confirmation of the depth of God's mercy and grace:



No condemnation. The project of the Ones always ends in frustration, because it's impossible. Instead, the invitation of Jesus is to begin with mercy and grace, and to let those beginnings guide us more than our intended destination.

When I was beginning my career as a pastor at the age of 19, I took a week-long course on youth ministry at AMBS, the Mennonite seminary in Indiana. There were about a dozen of us in the course, a lot of really good people, many of whom already had years of experience as youth pastors. So these were people that I looked up to and was really enjoying building new friendships.

One evening at the end of the week, we took a trip to the beach of Lake Michigan, just for fun. And at some point we started building the world's largest sandcastle. At least, that was how we described the project at the beginning. But after about 45 minutes of digging and carrying sand, what we had was more like a large off-centered pyramid, really more of a pile than a castle. And people started to lose interest and move on to other things.

Except me. I was still there, adding more sand, trying to get the sides to be square...come on guys, we said we would build this amazing castle so let's finish it! But they just laughed and called it a "Postmodern sand castle." And they walked away.

We'd been talking about Postmodernity in our youth ministry class, the idea that there are multiple stories and multiple perspectives available, so things weren't as straightforward as the idealism and progress of the modern world would have us believe.

So a Postmodern Sand Castle could have sagging corners and no true center, because the point was never about building the perfect sandcastle, but about having fun on the beach.

It took me about 15 minutes of working away in the hot sun, by myself, making very little progress on the perfect sand castle, before I realized that they were right. The quality of the sand castle was not the best story that day--the group of friends having fun together, that was the story worth pursuing. While the goal of the perfect sandcastle had been helpful to get us started, at the point that pursuit got in the way of the fun and friendship, they walked away. So I joined them, and left a bit of my One identity on the beach that day.

That's the way of Jesus, I think, to shift our focus from the pursuit of perfection to participation in the better story of relationship.

The Way of Jesus invites us "beyond justice, to mercy." Mercy towards others, and mercy towards ourselves.

The Way of Jesus seeks not *purity* but *righteousness*--being in right relationship with each other and our world.

The Way of Jesus seeks not *perfection* but *integrity*. Integrity meaning that which is necessary, that which brings *wholeness*.

We don't have to ignore or shut up the voices in our heads. As if we could. Instead of shutting them up, we can embrace them for the ways that they keep us oriented towards what is good, and holy, and whole. And we can reorient them around the project of wholeness and integrity, reminding them of the legitimacy of the journey.

A better way of betterment? >

The Way of Jesus: beyond justice to mercy...  
beyond purity to right-relations...  
beyond perfection to integrity...

critique (with acceptance)  
+  
mercy/grace  
+  
effort (aka Spirit)  
=  
invitation (aka freedom) to growth

That's simple math. Take it from me, Mr. 98%! I even showed my work... :)

Type Ones, the rest of us will try to recognize how difficult that might be for you. While the rest of us can walk away from an imperfect sandcastle, that's just a lot harder for you, especially when it's something you really care about. That's okay, we'll try to give you space and grace. We need your drive for integrity; we all benefit from you being who you are.

And in return we ask that you trust us, trust that we also carry the Spirit of God in our imperfect ways of being and loving and knowing. There is truth and goodness in the whole circle, not only in the Ones. It's not the vision of perfection that you might have imagined, but it is a "[Magnificent Thing](#)" indeed.

For our prayer ritual today, I'm going to invite us to participate in the prayer of communion. I know, I'm not doing it right, I did not observe the protocol of warning you two weeks in advance so that you can "examine your hearts" and make all of your relationships right before you come to the table. That was the Apostle Paul's [warning to the church in Corinth](#), that they not "eat and drink in an unworthy manner." Like I said, Paul was definitely a One.

As though it would ever be possible to make ourselves worthy. You're going to have to come as you are. And yet, the Table still stands, open and waiting.

The bread represents the body of Christ, blessed and broken, offered freely to give you sustenance and strength. The juice represents the blood of Christ, poured out for you, because your sins are forgiven and your weaknesses embraced by the Breath of God.

All who wish are invited to come. Take a piece of bread and dip into into the juice before you eat. Or if that's not your style, you can eat the bread and drink a cup of juice separately.

*(Paraphrased from [1 Corinthians 13](#))*

*God's love is patient with you. God's love is kind to you. God's love is not suspicious, or self-righteous, or smug, or abusive. God's love does not insist on its own way. God's love does not cut you down. God's love is not sharp or easily offended. God does not keep track of your failures.*

*God does not take pleasure in your facade; God rejoices in your true self! God's love carries you, trusts in you, hopes for you, endures with you. Always.*

*God's love never fails.*

Come and See.



A perfectly inspiring [original song for the Ones](#), from *Sleeping At Last*:

# ONE

*Sleeping At Last*



*hold on for a minute,  
'cause i believe that we can fix this over time,  
that every imperfection is a lie, or at least an interruption...*

*now hold on, let me finish.  
no, i'm not saying perfect exists in this life,  
but we'll only know for certain if we try.*

***i want to sing a song worth singing,  
i'll write an anthem worth repeating.  
i want to feel the transformation,  
the melody of reformation.***

*but the list goes on forever,  
of all the ways i could be better, in my mind.  
as if i could earn God's favor given time,  
or at least "congratulations"...  
now, i have learned my lesson;  
the price of this so-called perfection is everything.  
i've spent my whole life searching desperately  
to find out that grace requires nothing of me.*

*i'll hold it all more loosely,  
and yet somehow much more dearly,  
'cause i've spent my whole life searching desperately  
to find out that grace requires nothing of me.*