

Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram

Available August 15, 2017
\$16, 192 pages, paperback
978-0-8308-4632-0

“Both Eye Opening and Healing”

In her new book, Mirror for the Soul, spiritual director and Enneagram expert Alice Fryling takes readers on a journey of spiritual growth through the ancient tool of the Enneagram. Showing how the Enneagram is like a mirror, Fryling describes how the Enneagram reflects dimensions of ourselves that are sometimes hard to see. More than just helping us discern our number, this book relates the Enneagram to our spiritual journey as a way to identify our gifts as well as our blind spots.

“The Enneagram is an amazing and insightful paradigm, helping us identify our giftedness and how over-playing our gifts influences our personality style and the way we live out our lives,” Fryling says. “My particular interest is in seeing beyond a first look at the Enneagram to discover how it can help us on our spiritual journey.”

“This will be a most helpful resource for all who are seeking deeper levels of transformation through the narrow gate of self-knowledge and self-examination. Having worked with the Enneagram as a tool for transformation for many years, I love everything about this book – the concise descriptions of the history and theory of the Enneagram, the penetrating commentary on the spaces themselves, and the wise and gentle encouragement for how you can move from the bondage of the false self to the freedom of living as your true self in Christ. The personal meditations, discussion questions, and guidance for utilizing the Enneagram in spiritual direction make this enormously beneficial for personal and ministry use.”

– **Ruth Haley Barton**, founder, Transforming Center, author of *Sacred Rhythms*

“For many years, Alice has been a trustworthy guide for those who seek to love God and neighbor. Mirror for the Soul offers practical ways to engage with the Spirit for transformation through the tool of the Enneagram. We can’t change what we aren’t aware of. Mirror for the Soul can be both eye opening and healing. If you are hungry to grow in loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, I commend this book to you. Its wisdom can reveal your default settings, hidden agendas, and besetting temptations, as well as the shimmering beauty of your soul. Breathe deep, lean hard; God’s love holds.”

– **Adele Calhoun**, copastor of spiritual formation, Highrock Church, and author of *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

“I’ve been waiting for this book! When I began studying the Enneagram ten years ago, Alice Fryling’s insights set some key themes of my understanding of this enormously helpful tool in moving toward transformation to Christlikeness. Thank you!”

– **Jan Johnson**, author of *Meeting God in Scripture* and *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice*

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Alice Fryling is a spiritual director and the author of nine books, including *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction*. She has been giving Enneagram workshops for fifteen years, teaching participants how to use the Enneagram to know God and themselves more deeply. She and her husband have two married daughters and four grandchildren.

“This is the Enneagram book I’ve been looking for. It’s written from a depth of experience, a depth in Scripture, and with an eye for the formational possibilities of this ancient wisdom. Fryling serves as a seasoned spiritual director, guiding the reader into the rich growth in spiritual formation that the Enneagram offers.”

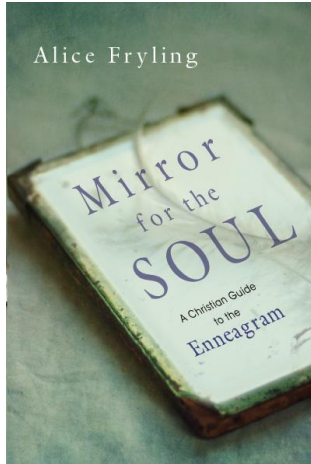
— Alan Fadling, president and founder, Unhurried Living, author of *An Unhurried Leader*

“The Enneagram points out where we are in need of grace; Christianity and Scripture point us in the direction where grace can be found. Alice Fryling’s book is at the crossroads where the Enneagram and Christianity meet. Fryling brings understanding and transformation together in a very readable and practical way.”

— Jerome Wagner, author of *Enneagram Spectrum of Personality Styles* and *Nine Lenses on the World*

“For many years, the Enneagram has helped many to understand their tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses. Now Alice Fryling has provided a very helpful guide for its use. I especially like the way she begins with an understandable explanation of the Enneagram and also matches personality types with Scripture meditations. I commend *Mirror for the Soul* to individuals seeking to understand how God has shaped them and to spiritual guides for their ministry with others.”

— Leighton Ford, president, Leighton Ford Ministries, Charlotte, North Carolina



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The False Self, Self-Awareness, and First Impressions

My friend Sheila is retired from a lifetime in Christian ministry, but she continues to use her gifts of hospitality for the benefit of friends and family. When she invited me to lunch along with several others, I was eager to accept the invitation – with one slight caveat: could I bring along a few questions about the Enneagram? My friends know that when I am deeply involved in a writing project, I am prone to talk about it all the time. So with Sheila’s permission I arrived armed with questions I wanted to ask about the true self and the false self, a concept I will explore in this chapter. I did wait until we had lunch on our plates, but then I jumped in. I described a bit about what I meant by the terms *false self* and *true self*, and then I asked, “How do you experience the true self and the false self in ordinary life?”

Sheila spoke up right away, telling us about her frustrations with herself and the meal in front of us. First of all, she said, she was embarrassed about the holes in the wall where a curtain rod had been replaced. (I hadn’t noticed.) The dishes on the table were not her favorite because in a moment of generosity, she had given away the other ones. (The ones on the table were beautiful.) The fruit salad didn’t have the right dressing. (It was delicious.) The only thing my friend felt good about was the quiche. (Someone else had made it.)

Sheila struggled with this not because she is depressed or self-deprecating. She struggled because she is very honest and very self-aware. She knew that as she prepared for us to come to lunch, she was facing her false self head-on. For her, the false self takes on the persona of an inner critic, reminding her that nothing she does meets her own standards of perfection. Her inner critic has been part of her life for a long, long time. She recognized the characteristics of the false self from her years in ministry as well as from her experiences in marriage and parenting. Now, she discovered, her false self had retired with her.

Sheila’s false self wants to be perfect. This reflects Sheila’s space on the Enneagram, but the false self crosses over all the Enneagram spaces. The false self wants to impress people. The false self has expectations that can never be met. The false self drains us of joy. Sheila said that what she really wanted was that we feel loved as we shared the meal together, but her false self challenged every attempt she made to express love.

What Sheila didn’t know was that I experienced love from the moment I walked in her front door. I immediately saw the pots of flowers on her deck and smelled the wonderful aroma of lunch. Then I noticed the dining room table – more flowers, beautiful place settings, and yummy food. I could tell she had put time, thought, and love into preparing for our arrival. I felt loved.

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The love I received from Sheila was the love of God. We know from the Bible that God is love (1 John 4:16). Created in the image of God, we are, in our essence, love. But the standards and lies of the false self had robbed Sheila of the pleasure of knowing that her love had embraced us all in spite of the things she thought were not perfect. Different people experience the false self in slightly different ways. Someone else might have invited us to lunch (or planned a business meeting) by thinking compulsively about how she could control the conversation. Another person might have struggled with wanting everything to be peaceful, worrying about how to make sure there was no conflict. Or still another person may have spent more time thinking about the topics she would bring up for discussion and how she could look wise and knowledgeable in the conversation. The Enneagram helps us give names to the ways the false self tempts us.

The false self is the person we think we should be but are not. It is the person we want others to think we are. The false self perpetuates the illusion that we are able to love perfectly, to be wise and all-knowing, and to be in control of life. The false self thrives on success and achievement. The problem is not that the false self is a bad person. The problem is that the false self is a façade. It is an imitation of God that we “use” to impress others. The false self languishes in pretense and in grasping for abilities and gifts that are not ours to have. The true self, on the other hand, truly expresses the gifts God has given us to love well.

— Taken from chapter two, “The True Self and the False Self”