

“Definitely NOT Quiet in the Land” // Enneagram Type 8
Stained Glass: Nine Windows of Divine Light
Joe Heikman // Wildwood Mennonite Church // July 15, 2018

Type EIGHT: The Challenger / The Protector:
...confident...action-oriented...powerful...decisive...assertive...

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

Gut-Centered

Basic Desire: To be strong, self-reliant, and engaged in the world.

The Project: I maintain love and connection by standing up for myself and others.

Gifts of the Eight: determination, pragmatism, grit, independence, truth-telling, daring...

Last month, when we were talking about the Type Two personality, the Helper or Giver type, I talked about one of the metaphors the Hebrew Bible uses to talk about God. *El Shaddai*, the many-breasted God, who nourishes and sustains and gives life from herself.

Another metaphor from the animal kingdom that the Bible uses to describe God is the protective mother: the mother eagle who hovers over her young (Deuteronomy 32:11-12), the mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wings (Matthew 23:37), and the mother bear who rages against those who would separate her from her cubs (Hosea 13:8).

These are very Eight-like images of God. The guardian, the protector, the one who won't just stand idly by while her children are abused, who responds with righteous anger and fierce determination, who will not rest until her children are safe and sound.

Of course the guardian and protector is not an exclusively feminine role, and there's nothing inherently feminine about the Eight personality type in the Enneagram. There is something significant about the anger of a mother, though, even if it's just in our poetic imagination. Don't mess with mama!



That's one of the images of God that the ancient writers wanted to convey, the fierceness of God's Love.

The love of God is not passive. It is not okay with abuse. It takes action against bullying. It stands up for itself and especially for others. It vibrates with the passion of God's speech to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3): *"I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cry at the hands of their slave drivers. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to rescue them!"*

That is who God is. Seeing, hearing, knowing, and *acting!* Setting people free.

Now, that usually doesn't mean what we think it means. We look around and there's plenty of hurting people in our world, our families, our hearts. We want God to take action, to fix it, to stand up for *us* and make everything better. Apparently that's not what God's Love does. And that's really painful and many of us rightfully ask God *why* or *why not*. And to question God's Love, or God's very existence.

That's fair. Sometimes God does not act, or at least that's how it seems from where we're standing. If that makes you angry, that's fair. And it's also another sermon for another time.

Today, what I can tell you is that just because God doesn't seem to act in every circumstance, doesn't mean that God is not active. The witness of biblical history, and of the church today and throughout history, is that God does hear our cries. And often, when God comes near, it is with the question that we just sang, "whom shall I send?"

And the Eights in the room are the first to say, "Here I am, send me."

That story of Moses and the Exodus began with a very 8-like act of courage. Two of the great heroes of the Hebrew Bible are Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives. These were the midwives that the Egyptian Pharaoh commanded to kill all the Hebrew baby boys as they were being born. Pharaoh was threatened by the population growth of the Hebrew slaves, so he ordered Shiphrah and Puah to subtly increase the infant mortality rate among the Hebrews.

But in spite of his order, Shiphrah and Puah persisted, continuing to help with the Hebrew births and refusing to kill any babies. And when Pharaoh questioned them, they pushed back with the greatest weapon at their disposal, male ignorance. They told him that the Hebrew women weren't like the Egyptian women, that they gave birth so quickly and with such strength that the midwives didn't have time to get there before the babies were born. Two slave women taking on the king-god of the Egyptian empire, lying to his face to protect innocent children.

Eventually Pharaoh grew frustrated with this system that wasn't working, and switched to the less subtle genocide approach, having soldiers throw baby boys directly into the river. But again, the women stood against him. When Moses was born, his mother, Jochebed, hid him from the Egyptians for three months. When he grew too big to be hidden, she put him in a basket and sealed it up and set it in the river. Moses' older sister Miryam stood watch. Until the daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe in the river and found the basket with the baby floating among the reeds.

The Egyptian princess realized that this baby must be one of the Hebrew slaves, and decided not to kill him. And Miryam ran out of hiding and offered to go find a Hebrew woman to nurse this Hebrew baby for the princess. And so she went and got Jochebed, and the Princess paid Moses' mother to nurse him and to raise him.

Every step of that story was an act of rebellion against Pharaoh. There was no guarantee for any of them, even Pharaoh's daughter. Yet at each step, these women did what they could do, did what needed to be done to stand up for the weak against the strong.

So by the time that Moses arrives at the burning bush and God says that God has heard the Hebrews' cries and was sending Moses to set them free, the plan was already in motion, with the Eights leading the way.

When you look for it, the stories of Eights are all over the place in the Bible. Partly because Eights often do stuff just crazy enough to make for good stories. And mostly because that's the whole story of who God is, in the Bible, taking action to make things right.

Another Eight in the Bible is Deborah, the prophetess of Judges chapters 4 and 5. Deborah was the wise judge of the tribes of Israel, so when they were threatened by the overwhelming force of the Canaanite army led by a man named Sisera, they turned to Deborah.

So Deborah called for Barak (no, not that one) the leader of the Israelite militia. She told him when and where Sisera's army was going, and challenged him to go take on Sisera. And as big bad army generals do, Barak said, I'm not going unless you come with us. So Deborah rolled her eyes at the big bad army general, and said, come on princess, let's go win this thing. (I might be making up the eye roll and the princess bit.)

So while Barak led the army, Deborah told Barak when and how to attack. And the Israelite army confused and panicked the Canaanite army, and Sisera ran away from the fight and was killed by another Israelite woman when he tried to hide in her tent. So the decisive action in the story was taken by two women, and it's the names of Deborah and Yael that got the glory.

Another Eight story is the story of Naomi and Ruth. Naomi was a widow with no living sons, alone in a foreign land. In that culture, she was as vulnerable as possible; she was supposed to live as a dependent, to just fade away. Instead, she took control of her destiny, moving back home, empowering her daughter-in-law, scheming the marriage system to get the best possible match for Ruth. She was tough, she had grit, she made the best of a difficult situation.

One more Eight is Vashti, Queen of Babylon. Remember this one? Vashti was the Queen to King Ahasuerus, ruler of the Babylonian Empire. He was kind of a big deal. And he threw himself a big-deal kind of party, 180 days of festivities for his nobles and governors. And after the 180 days, King Ahasuerus decided to celebrate the end of the party with another party, a grand banquet that lasted seven days.

By the seventh day, the Bible says, King Ahasuerus was drunk. Really drunk. And he decided to show off the only thing he had not yet shown off, his queen. He sent his eunuchs to *"bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing the royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the officials her beauty; for she was fair to behold."*

Now that was *not* an order you could refuse. No matter how drunk the King was, when the king called, you came, and you wore whatever he wanted you to wear.

But not Queen Vashti. She simply refused to come at the King's command. No way, I'm not going.

King Ahasuerus was stunned. His counsellors were stunned. These men were so threatened by this, they worried that if word got out, if their wives found out that Queen Vashti had refused the king, their wives would also "look on their husbands with contempt" and "there will be no end of contempt and wrath!" (Turns out that male fragility is not a new phenomenon!)

So they kicked Vashti off of her throne and set out on the first nation-wide talent search for a new Queen. Who turned out to not be a pushover, either. But if it's okay with you, I'll save the story of Esther for the Type Sixes next week.

There are lots more examples of Eight-type action in the Bible. And it's not just from women, though I chose to highlight women's stories because there's something special about Eights who operate from a position of vulnerability rather than fighting power and violence with more power and violence.

So what do we do with these stories? As we have with all the personality types in this series, I think we start by taking seriously the idea that the Eight type shows us something about who God is. 2 Timothy 1:7 -



That's the healthy Eight, not acting out of insecurity or ego or a desire to control, not lashing out in anger, but grounded, poised, with awareness and grace. The Spirit of God is Fierce.

And we are called to join in with the action of the Spirit. All of us, not just the Eights for whom it comes naturally.

From Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

You are the light of the world. You don't build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you? You don't light a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you? No, you set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before others so that they may see your good acts and give praise to your Abba God in heaven."
~ Matthew 5

We Mennonites have an awfully complicated relationship with this scripture. The first generation of our Anabaptist ancestors took this as a call to action, to live out their convictions with total commitment. They died to bring light to the world.

For later generations, this text became a call to purity, to separation away from the corrupting influence of the world, letting our light shine but from a distance so that we could shine purely. In theory, anyway.

Many of our ancestors of faith embraced the identity of "the quiet in the land." We've kept to ourselves, practicing our religion faithfully, perhaps, but also often disengaged from the people and cultures around us.

And in the past century, many Anabaptists have re-engaged the world around us. For a variety of reasons, but for most of us at least part of it is a renewed sense that we are not called to be passive and removed, but bold and engaged in peaceable ways. We may be quiet, but God's Spirit is decidedly NOT quiet, and we have a calling to amplify this voice.

I see a lot of Eights leading the way, but the call is for all of us.

And we're not always going to get it right. It's risky to engage. We might show ourselves to be hypocrites, we might cause harm where we intend to bring peace. It's a complicated world out there, and we carry with us both darkness and light. But I don't think the complications diminish the call to action.

One example of this playing out right now is my friend, Steve Heinrichs, the Director of Indigenous/Settler Relations with Mennonite Church Canada. This April, Steve intentionally got himself arrested in protest of the planned expansion of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline system in BC. You may have seen this story reported in recent editions of the *Canadian Mennonite*.



As part of ongoing protests at the BC end of the pipeline, representatives from Tsleil-Waututh First Nation had invited religious leaders to join them in opposing the project. Steve is originally from Burnaby, so he has a personal investment in this area. And he has great concern about the impacts of climate change on the globe, particularly for how its effects are impacting disadvantaged Indigenous communities.

And Steve works with and is incredibly invested in relationships with Indigenous people and communities. He sees the call for reconciliation as inextricably linked to the call for justice in resisting climate change and fossil fuel and resource extraction. So when his Indigenous partners asked him to join them, he could not refuse.

So he's taking action. On April 20, a group of protesters defied a court order by blocking access to the Westridge Marine Terminal in Burnaby, where the pipeline ends and the oil is moved to tankers for shipment. Steve joined them, along with Johann Funk of Christian Peacemaker Teams and Henry Krause, former pastor of Langley Mennonite Fellowship in BC and former moderator of Mennonite Church Canada. When the police came to enforce the order, Steve was among those who remained in the way, allowing himself to be arrested for criminal and civil contempt of the court order.

Steve was processed and released, and will be put on trial in BC around August 7-10. Steve plans on pleading not guilty, I believe on the grounds that the court order he was violating was itself a violation of international law... He's fully expecting to be found guilty and faces the likelihood of 7 days in jail.

How do you feel about that? I imagine there are some very different reactions in the room, as there have been across Mennonite Church Canada. Some of us would see the issues in much the same way as Steve does and would applaud his stance. Some of us are at the other end of the political and ideological perspective and would have a very strong reaction against his actions. Some of us earn our living in the oil, gas, and energy industries, so we have very significant personal stakes in these things. All of us depend on the energy from oil and gas, and we all depend on clean air and water and reliable food sources. So we're invested in different ways, no matter what we think.

These are complicated issues, with vital real life outcomes at stake. I'm not pretending that I have the answers or that I can convince us all to see things the same way. I don't think Steve would claim any of that, either. He knows this is stirring the pot, and that there aren't simple ways forward that will work out just peachy for everyone involved.

Steve wrote a [Frequently-Asked-Questions](#) resource explaining his motives and hopes for his action. Or you can follow [Steve on Facebook](#) for some really interesting content on just how complicated these things are, especially in the Indigenous communities that are often the first to experience the real life impacts of these decisions. There are many differences of opinion and different perspectives within the First Nations communities as well, and Steve acknowledges that.

What I admire about Steve's action is that he's not letting the complexity of the situation keep him from engaging it. A lot of us tend to sit back in these things until they directly affect us. We don't get involved because we don't have answers and there's a lot to lose by asserting ourselves. We would face pushback, from multiple directions. We would be called out as hypocrites, which we are. We might make things worse even as we're trying to be helpful. At least, those are my fears, plus the tremendous personal costs of taking action when there are so many powerful people and institutions involved.

And yet, "we are the light of the world." We have something to offer, even if it's our imperfect attention and hypocrisy. Not that God is with us exclusively or that we're bringing light that is pure. But we do pay attention to the light, as people of faith. We have a different perspective, of conviction, of trust, of instincts for justice and compassion. We have a calling not to look out only for our own interests, but for the interests of others. We have a commitment to the common good, and to look to the interests of those without power.

Those values matter. Our faith perspective needs to be part of the public conversation. There is more to the world than power and politics, money and progress. We may not have the answers, but can we lift up an alternative set of values and hopes and creative solutions.

So no matter what you think of his political position on this, I invite you to pray for Steve and the others who are facing charges in this action. Listen to them, ask questions, bring your experiences and wisdom and, yes, challenges if you have them. Listen as you pray, to see what actions you might be called to and what conversations you may be called to join. You have the Spirit of God in you, of power and love and self-discipline, and that Spirit speaks and calls us to move.