



Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 142: The Enneagram – My Honest Opinion

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Brian Miller: This is Brian Miller, Executive Director of Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short. I'm joined here today by the President of Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Chad Hall. How you doing today, Chad?

Chad Hall: Brian, I'm having a good day so far.

Brian Miller: Chad, we've got an assessment's class coming up. I think it's in April. I should have looked this up before we started recording. Say a little bit about that assessment class that's coming up.

Chad Hall: Yeah. Well, it's a class and it's on assessments. It starts April 15th.

Brian Miller: The dissection. Oh, people are in for a treat today. The dissection of truth by you is exceptional. Exceptional today, my friend.

Chad Hall: I tried out for the part of Captain Obvious, but it was just too obvious. It's a fun class. I think I said that about every class but that's because, well, they all are fun.

Brian Miller: They are.

Chad Hall: What's especially fun about this one is it's a class that talks about how to use assessments in your coaching, but it also is very much an opportunity for the coaches to take some of the assessments and create some self-awareness.

Chad Hall: Self-awareness is maybe the best kind of awareness. We talk about all kinds of assessments.

Brian Miller: [phone ringing] Somebody's calling in right now to sign up for the class. That's just amazing to me how quickly that came about. The class is April 15th, 2019, just in case anybody's listing. It's going to be at 2:00 PM eastern time. It's an

online class, it'll go over eight weeks. People are certainly welcome to sign up for that class if they want to. We'd love for that.

Brian Miller: Today, we were wanting to talk about assessments, Chad. I was bringing this up, and you said, how about my honest opinion about the Enneagram? I was like, whoa, I would listen to that podcast.

Chad Hall: And now we have to actually have it.

Brian Miller: Well, the Enneagram's hot, man.

Chad Hall: It's hot.

Brian Miller: I've been on calls. I bet you have, too, where people say, well, I'm a two. I'm like, okay. Honestly, I don't know. I finally broke down and took the Enneagram so that I'd at least know what I was and what these things were. Honestly, I haven't dug into it tremendously. I took an assessment.

Brian Miller: What's your history with the Enneagram?

Chad Hall: Yeah, I was first introduced to it through a coaching client. Gosh, I mean, maybe 10 or 15 years ago. It was one of those where we were having our intake session and I tend to end that intake session with a question along the lines of, what else do I need to know about you to be a good coach to you? This gentleman said, well, I'm an Enneagram type three. Are you familiar with the Enneagram? I said, I'm only vaguely, as in, I heard the word for the first time 20 seconds ago.

Chad Hall: I quickly researched it following that call so that I could be a more effective coach to this particular client. That got me interested in it a bit. It just through the years, I've taken it probably five or six times, various manifestations of it, because there are different tools out there to assess of the Enneagram.

Chad Hall: It's part of the class. It's a part of the assessments class. We talk about it because it's a popular assessment, especially in church circles, it's popular. I've gone to school on it. I'm not certified in it. I haven't taken a workshop in order to become an Enneagram Guru, but I have probably invested 40 hours learning about it in some way.

Brian Miller: Goodness. Okay. Well, I respect your opinion and I think a lot of people do. There's a few that don't.

Chad Hall: Well, we've got their names.

Brian Miller: Well, what happens is you take the Enneagram and you'll get a type description. It's interesting cause they'll say you're one of nine personalities, although they'll say you have all these personalities at some level in you, so maybe you're looking for the highest rated one, or the dominant one.

- Chad Hall: This is beginning to get into a level of discomfort with it. A lot of the answers to any question about the Enneagram is going to start with, "It depends." There's just a lot of fluidity. It depends on which Enneagram assessment you take.
- Chad Hall: Some of them are going to give you one number, you're a nine or you're a seven, or whatever. Others are going to maybe give you an order of, you're more of a seven, but you also rated high for a five, and a three, and a two. Okay. Then others are going to go into wings and they're going to go into all these other things.
- Chad Hall: It really just depends on which one you take. Some of the people I know who administered the Enneagram ... Administer is probably too strong of a word. They will have you just read a paragraph description of each of the nine types and say which one's most like you. That's the assessment. What feedback do you get there? Not too much, so it really does depend. I mean, it's nine, they score a nine, connected personality types is kind of the basis of it.
- Brian Miller: The nine, I'll try to do this really fast because people may not even know what we're talking about. They may not know. They may know less about the Enneagram than you did at that 20-second mark.
- Brian Miller: Type one's the reformer, perfectionist, responsible, fixated on improvement. Number two's the helpers who need to be needed. That sounds like, gosh, don't be that. The achiever: focused on the presentation of success to attain validation. Four, the individualist identity seekers who feel unique and different. Number five, the investigator: thinkers who tend to withdraw and observe. Type six, the loyalists conflicted between trust and distrust. The enthusiast, seven, pleasure seekers and planners in search of distraction. The challenge you're taking charge because they don't want to be controlled. Number nine, the peacemaker, keeping peace and harmony.
- Brian Miller: Just reading the titles and the little subtitle, I am either a three, four, five or six.
- Chad Hall: Oh, we've narrowed it down for you, Brian.
- Brian Miller: I've narrowed it down by half.
- Chad Hall: Yeah, that's good that you can now have the pentagram, I guess, would be the ...
- Brian Miller: Oh, instead of the nonagram that'd be nine, right? The penta... I got it down to a four or five here. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Brian Miller: Where do we go from here and thinking about how do we ... What's a good way to think about this? I think it's a good process to think how to think here because you can just take it face value, but how do you approach this?

- Chad Hall: Yeah. The name of this podcast is *My Honest Opinion*. This is not a podcast that explores everything anyone would want to know about the Enneagram. This is a podcast that I get to share my opinion and maybe that's helpful to people.
- Chad Hall: Maybe just the headline of my opinion would be mixed. I find some things about the Enneagram really helpful and very positive. And, I find some things about it troubling, confusing, maybe not so helpful.
- Chad Hall: Anybody who's out there who's in love with the Enneagram, don't write me letters. I have heard you. I do have positive thoughts and feelings about the Enneagram. Anybody out there who hates it, don't write me letters. I hear your concerns. I share many of them.
- Chad Hall: What I've found through the years, Brian, teaching in the assessments class, people often have very strong reactions toward the Enneagram, both positive and negative.
- Brian Miller: Mine were kind of mediocre because it just felt more like a splat. I'm like, oh yeah, though I can see myself in four of these at least.
- Chad Hall: Which would be a little bit more the confusing kind of like, well, I don't know, maybe. The strong responses that I'd see sometimes in the class will be, the negative version is very negative. I've heard people say it's of the occult. It's borderline witchcraft. I mean, by the way, I do not share those concerns.
- Brian Miller: Me neither.
- Chad Hall: I have had people I know and respect say things like that. On the other hand, I've had people who say nothing revealed the depth of who I am as clearly as the Enneagram.
- Brian Miller: Wow.
- Chad Hall: I remember in one particular class I was teaching in Sacramento years ago, I had a guy who, it was a two-day class, Friday, Saturday, and Saturday morning we started talking about the Enneagram and he said, "I'm glad you didn't cover this yesterday. I wouldn't have come back today. We shouldn't be talking about this."
- Chad Hall: In the same class, there was a guy who said "nothing's contributed to my spiritual growth more than when I took the Enneagram and [inaudible 00:10:33] few years earlier."
- Chad Hall: I think as coaches, just know that this is one that can elicit very strong responses from people.

Brian Miller: What I took from that, you said the assessment that has caused the most self-awareness of, oh, you described who I am at the core of who I am is, is the Myers-Briggs. I don't love the Myers Briggs. I don't nerd out on that. I've looked at it, I've tried, it's too complicated in some ways, but when someone told me I was an INTJ and it took a little time to get there, it took a little conversation, the assessment said I was something else. I was like, "oh wow. No, that's, that's exactly right."

Chad Hall: Yeah. Just took a while to get to that.

Brian Miller: It did.

Chad Hall: That's true of a lot of assessments that are going to describe anything that's of any depth. Anything that says in 10 minutes we're going to describe you at the true essence of who you are. Well, it might describe one aspect of you, but it's probably not going to describe at that depth.

Chad Hall: That's one of my concerns with the Enneagram, just to be honest. It seems like you have to really go so deep in it for it to maybe begin to reveal things of value. Not for everybody. I know some people who take it once, they're like, oh no, I'm that person. I'm a seven, or two or whatever. It's immediately helpful to them.

Chad Hall: Most of the time, you hear people say, you may need to live with this for awhile, may take a year or more before you really understand your number. Again, that gives me a bit of pause to say, that seems like a long time.

Brian Miller: What do you like about it?

Chad Hall: What I like about it is I think overall it has a very accurate description of human nature, and that is that we're driven by some positives and we're driven by some negatives. This is one of the very few personality assessments that makes room for the negative and says when you're in a time of stress or you've got these sort of coping mechanisms that are not healthy, they're not good for you, sometimes they even call them vices. Sometimes they even connect the seven deadly sins plus two with one vice, one deadly sin for each of the nine types. I think that's helpful that, that we kind of have this go to unhealthy vice, sin in our life that is basically a way of coping with stress and challenge.

Chad Hall: Then that we also are driven by some motivations that are good and are positive. I think scripturally that's an accurate description of human nature, that we are a mixed bag of saint and sinner.

Brian Miller: Yeah. I'm looking at the subtitles and it stood out to me on the helper for some reason, but now I'm looking at it, fixated, who need to be needed, to attain validation, who feel unique and different to withdrawal and observe. Trust. Conflict. Search of distraction, who don't want to be controlled. I mean there's ... Right?

- Chad Hall: Yeah. A lot of other assessments tend to focus only on sort of positive traits or just very neutral, even. Like Myers-Briggs, Myers-Briggs doesn't really emphasize negative aspects of your personality. It's pretty neutral. The Enneagram makes room for some strong, positive, strong negative. I think that's true about people and the more we're ... That's a good self-awareness, if we're aware of where we kind of go to in unhealthy ways.
- Brian Miller: Yeah. That even helps me out to think between these three or four I was looking at, to think about what the negative is that drives, me actually helps me to identify a little quicker there. Yeah.
- Brian Miller: Then, like you said, anything that brings self-awareness to think, what's driving me? What's the negative of it? How can I even use the negative to drive me forward? Most high achievers are driven by something a little negative.
- Chad Hall: Well, and that's the thing, especially when you look at some of these personality types in terms of what's the negative, it becomes this unhealthy thing that maybe helps them get where they're going in life, but ultimately is unhealthy.
- Chad Hall: That's one of the other things I like about the Enneagram. It kind of gives a bit of a spiritual, almost moral spin to the human condition. Again, I think that's true. I think that's something that we need to investigate and embrace.
- Chad Hall: For instance, number nine, the peacemaker tends to be that their vice is slothfulness and so they'll just sort of back away. There'll be hands off, there'll be kind of apathetic, keep the peace or kind of retreating almost. For somebody who really resonates with that personality type, to begin to notice those patterns of slothfulness in their lives, it's really helpful to call it a sin. I mean, that goes a lot farther than saying, oh, well, sometimes when you're not at your best, this happens. Well, the Bible calls that a sin.
- Brian Miller: I see. Yeah. I can think of a nine. I mean, as soon as you said that, I know a nine.
- Chad Hall: You know some people like that. Yeah.
- Brian Miller: Yeah. He's great to have around on a team just because it's easy and peaceful, but he doesn't rise to a challenge.
- Chad Hall: Yeah. Well, and some of the more elaborate Enneagram assessments will talk about different levels of health. A really healthy nine isn't going to display that slothfulness, they're not going to be apathetic, they're not going to be sitting on the sidelines. They're going to be engaged, but they're a healthy, well-adjusted and mature version of a nine, versus a nine who's not so healthy, well adjusted, mature, it's going to show more of those negative, vice-like traits. Again, I think those are good lenses to look at ourselves through.

Chad Hall: Now, my pause with the Enneagram is I'm not sure that it's accurate. Overall, it's accurate that humans are both saint and sinner, but in the specifics, I don't know that it's that accurate.

Brian Miller: You don't know that these are the nine, is that what you're saying?

Chad Hall: Yeah. So like why nine? I think that's a good question. Why nine? The other thing that makes me concerned with its accuracy is, again, I've taken it several times. I have never come out the same number. The first time I was a three, later I was a seven. I've come at an eight, a nine, and the most recent time it was a five. Pretty soon I'm going to hit all the bases and be home. There are certain ones I look at and I say, that's not me, and then there are others that are, gosh, it could be ... Again, I've looked at it a lot, so it's not an hour with a book. I can't figure out which one I am. I've looked at it a lot and the deeper I go into it, the less clear it becomes. So that's an area of concern.

Brian Miller: Is there something there that, and this is thinking of it in a positive way, that you and I are good partners because I lean five and lower, and you lean five and over? We both bring something.

Chad Hall: The numbers don't matter.

Brian Miller: Yeah. They don't matter. Yeah. That's what's confusing to me. I look at each one of these and go that's a good ... If I was writing a novel and wanted to pick some characters, I could pick three of these characters out and they're really well described and they have conflict in them. I know people like that, they engage quickly. As an overall thing, that's a concern you have, too, is ... And when they talk about wings, which I don't fully understand, but you probably got ... I'm a five and my wings either a four, it's up or down. And I go, ah, that doesn't ... No, hmmm, losing me.

Chad Hall: Yeah. Well, you can begin to have all these characteristics of pretty much any of the personalities, and that's where it loses me, if it doesn't feel very tight. I'll contrast it. This will really tick off the people who love Enneagram, but I'll contrast it with Myers-Briggs, which I'm in like with, I'm not in love with Myers-Briggs. I'm just in like. Okay? Get that disclaimer out of the way.

Chad Hall: Myers-Briggs doesn't pretend to describe everything about a person's personality. It says there are these four dichotomies that are important for understanding human personality. By the way, when you put four dichotomies together, you get 16 times. So why are there 16 types? It's not saying they're only 16 types of people. It's saying on these four descriptions of human personality, the way you combine them, it ends up at 16.

Chad Hall: Depending on how strong or moderated your preferences are on those dichotomies, you have this vast range of personality types. That makes sense to me. I can kind of imagine that as these ... Think of like the RGB spectrum and the

different combinations create a color. There are lots of different color. Just mathematically, logically that makes sense to me.

Chad Hall: Even though [crosstalk 00:21:05]. What's that?

Brian Miller: Those four make sense on their own, introvert, extrovert.

Chad Hall: Yeah.

Brian Miller: That's a measurable thing. I go, that's been scientifically checked out. Then there's thinker versus feeler. That makes sense to me. It's probably brain science, too, some of it is where you lean in your brain. I know some people argue against that as well.

Brian Miller: But anyway, it does make sense to me and I can at least track some things down and make some inferences about how I am on all four of those spectrums. It's a gradient for sure. You're a little bit of this and I could see the gradient better, and there's 16.

Chad Hall: Yeah. In some ways I find it more helpful because it's a bit more confined. It's not trying to describe everything about a person. It's describing the combination of these four traits. Okay. I get that.

Chad Hall: The Enneagram on the other hand, there's no logic behind how you got to nine. It's just kind of this through observing, somehow, they're just nine. They're nine. Then when you said, well where did the nine come from? Is there some system for understanding that difference between them? No, they're just nine. I'm like, well, maybe. I just don't see any kind of validity behind that, and that's where they really start to lose me.

Chad Hall: Now, again, people who use it and find awareness and find it helpful, I'm all for that. I wouldn't be concerned if someone wanted to use Enneagram in their coaching. That's no big deal. I just don't find it that reliable.

Brian Miller: Yeah. Especially if you came out four or five different ways, it could create more muddiness. It depends, right?

Brian Miller: The individual listing, those make some sense and we understand it's got sinner versus saint, we appreciate that. The overall, how these things come together doesn't make sense. It's not clear how these nine came up with, which leads to a final point, Chad. Who invented the Enneagram?

Chad Hall: Who knows? It makes the X-Men's origin stories seem pretty clear and dry. It kind of became a little more popular in the, I think it was the '50s and '60s with a particular guy, out of Chile, but it supposedly dates back to at least the Middle Ages. It's very mysterious, is the only really answer I have.

- Chad Hall: Now, there are books that talk about the origins of it, but nobody invented it. Nobody came up with it. Nobody said, here's how it works and here's what it is. Which is one of the reasons it's so popular is that nobody owns it.
- Chad Hall: That also means that you've got about 72 varieties of it floating around out there where again, if you look at something like Myers-Briggs, Strengthsfinder, even the big five personality factors, those are tight, organized, they're curated ways of understanding personality. Somebody somewhere owns these, you can't just make it whatever you want it to be.
- Chad Hall: With the Enneagram, there's a lot of fluidity and flexibility, and so you see a bunch of people ... You'll even see different names for the different nine. Sometimes the descriptions of the different types really seem different. So a five on one person's Enneagram assessment sounds not that similar to somebody else's. The fact that there's no single source for it, a single origin story for it, you can't trace it back to what was the original intent with it, makes it really kind of loosey goosey.
- Brian Miller: Yeah. Somebody's got to create an assessment, and to create assessment, it needs repeatability. I think that's the right word. There's maybe a different term for that, but you've got to be able to take it and become a five every time you take it.
- Chad Hall: The two things you look for in any assessment, in terms of the reliability are a repeat score, reliability, and ... By the way, not if I take it today and I'll take it six years from now, but if I take it today or next week, I should get the same result.
- Brian Miller: Right.
- Chad Hall: Over time, I should generally get the same result unless the assessment is assessing something that it admits changes over time. So repeat score reliability.
- Chad Hall: The other is sort of this subjective resonance. If I tell you you're a nine, and you read it and say nothing about that sounds like me, well that's not very reliable. This reliability, does it actually reflect what it is saying it indicates? That's where I find the Enneagram tends to really come up short.
- Chad Hall: For many people, there are a percentage who when they take it, it immediately resonates. They say, "yes, that's me. It reflects who I know myself to be. It's articulating it in ways that really resonate." But there are many of us who read our results and say, kind of, and then we could read another type and say kind of, and there's where the reliability starts to waver.
- Brian Miller: Well you said, I'm 'in like' with the MBTI, the Myers-Briggs, and you don't hate the Enneagram nor love the Enneagram. Is there one you absolutely love? I'm thinking along the lines of I'm probably 'in like' with all assessments because they can create awareness.

- Chad Hall: Yeah. I'm an acquaintance with the Enneagram. How's that for nuanced response?
- Brian Miller: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. You don't like, like him, the Enneagram. You don't even like the Enneagram, but you don't dislike the Enneagram.
- Chad Hall: We're just friends, kind of, when convenient. There are things I really like about the Enneagram, but overall-
- Brian Miller: No, but is there one that you just think, that's it, or is it the fact that that what a good assessment does is create awareness and conversation and that's the good stuff.
- Chad Hall: Yeah. That, I think that is the good stuff. It's the conversation with the coach, with family members, that kind of thing I think is really valuable.
- Chad Hall: There are two questions built into what you asked. One is what personality framework, and then the other would be what personality assessment? The framework is the Big Five. Research shows there are five factors that really significantly contributed to personality. However, the assessments that assess the big five are not that compelling. They don't generate a lot of discussion and conversation and those sorts of things. I would say there's no assessment that I'm just head-over-heels in love with.
- Brian Miller: I think that's a good place to be, to be honest.
- Chad Hall: Maybe. The one I'm most rely on would be Myers-Briggs. The one that creates the most conversations, probably the Enneagram. The one that I trust the most in terms of reflecting reality would be the Big Five.
- Brian Miller: Yeah. Yeah. The one that creates the best conversation for me tends to be DISC.
- Chad Hall: Yeah. People like DISC. That's another podcast.
- Brian Miller: Yup. Yup. Hey Chad, thanks for your time and your honest opinion. Okay, that's it. How do you respond to that?
- Chad Hall: That's right. You're welcome.
- Brian Miller: You're welcome. Hey, thanks everybody for listening to this week's podcast. Coach Approach Ministries is a nonprofit coach training school with over 15 years of experience training more than 2000 coaches.
- Brian Miller: Let us know how we can help you start or further your coaching career by visiting us at coachapproachministries.org or email me at bmiller@ca-ministries.com.

Brian Miller: If you want to take that assessments class, it starts April 15th. We'd like to get you signed up by April 8th. You have a month to do so, if you're listening to this right away. We hope you will.

Brian Miller: We will see you next week.