

Transformation Triad Reflection

We want to introduce the following Transformation Reflection guide as a new resource tool for you to use! The purpose of its design is for individuals to intentionally reflect and take inventory of their growth as a disciple of Jesus. This is a spiritual check-in, of sorts, that can be used regularly as an opportunity to reset and continue growing into fully devoted followers of Jesus.

This resource tool is meant to be utilized in groups, preferably in three. The intention within these groups is to create moments where each person shares about how they have grown with God and areas where they've grown stagnant - highlighting areas of discipleship needing focus to develop.

Key Characteristics of Transformation Triads:

- A structure of:
 1. Prayer
 2. Scripture
 3. A set of personal reflection questions
- Each person is to be received without judgement and feel safe to share where they are at in their discipleship journey.
- The set of questions act as a guide to stimulate reflection around traits of a disciple and personal evaluation of how they are doing in that area.
- Requires active listening and reflection on what was shared without giving suggestions or trying to solve each other's problems.
- Be open to God's presence and the Holy Spirit nudging your heart.
- Triad groups may choose to meet regularly, or Community Groups can choose to use this transformation reflection tool periodically as members grow together in discipleship.
- Transformation triads are not about accomplishment or competition, but are intended to bless and encourage one another that we are not in this discipleship journey alone.

Instructions if using in a Community Group:

- Before your group meets, everyone is encouraged to read through individually the "What is Growth?" and "Reflections on Your Own Growth" (pages 3-7).
- Open your time up with prayer, and then divide your group into groups of 3 (where possible) of the same gender (because of gender-related accountability questions).
- There is no leader in these groups. They are peer-based, and everyone participates.
- Take turns reading through each segment of the devotional reflection.
- Ask each other questions which stimulate conversations about character, lifestyle and confession of sin.
- This is meant to be an encouraging, safe environment that values honesty, vulnerability, confidentiality, and grace.
- Each Transformation Trio ends their time praying for one another.

Transformation Trio Reflection Questions

As you go through the list of accountability questions, taking turns evaluating yourself and answering them within your Transformation Trio, keep in mind these three areas:

1. How have you seen growth in your discipleship? Can you pinpoint what exactly led to that growth?
2. What areas have you grown stagnant in your growth as a disciple of Jesus? Why do you think that is?
3. What are some areas you sense God prompting you to focus on and develop growth in? What are some practical things you can do to set yourself up for success in this?

List of accountability questions to ask one another:

1. How have you sensed God's presence during this past week?
2. Have you taken enough time to be with God alone in prayer?
3. Have you received a specific answer to your prayers?
4. How did you do in your Bible reading this week?
5. What has God been speaking to you through his Word this week?
6. How can you respond to this?
7. Did you express a loving and forgiving attitude toward others?
8. Have you remained pure sexually?
9. Have you lacked integrity in your financial dealings or coveted something which does not belong to you?
10. Have you taken enough time to rest?
11. Do you need to confess any other sin?
12. Did you pray for your non-Christian friends?
13. Did you share Jesus with someone (in word or deed)?
14. What worries or other issues are you currently facing?
15. What would you like to pray about?

What is a Disciple?

In Christianity, a disciple is defined as a dedicated follower, a student, an apprentice of Jesus. A disciple disciplines themselves to truly listen, learn and obediently put into practice what they learn from Jesus' example.

Making disciples is what the Village mission is all about: to see people transformed into “*fully devoted followers of Jesus*.” This following is empowered through an intimate, instructive, imitative and loving relationship with Jesus Christ. A disciple knows and follows Christ to be like Christ because they belong to him. They are a disciple because of their relationship, communion with Christ - they know him, experience him and powerfully encounter Jesus on a personal, transformational level. A disciple is someone who has grown in their life.

What Does Growth Look Like?

1. GROWTH BEGINS WITH HEART TRANSFORMATION

OUR HEART

What does the Bible say about our hearts?

Our hearts can be troubled (John 14:27), broken (Psalm 34:18), and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Only God can help our hearts to trust (Proverbs 3:5), be guarded (Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:7), strengthened (Psalm 73:26), be examined (Psalm 26:2; Psalm 139:23-24), and be made pure (Matthew 5:8; Psalm 24:4; 51:10).

Truly knowing Jesus is a heart matter. We can't change ourselves. Only God can transform our hearts and lives. Before salvation, things that used to appeal to our sinful nature no longer served us. God continues to mold us and shape us into the image of Jesus and desires to transform our hearts.

GOD'S HEART

Evidence of a disciple's heart transformation is when we capture and reflect God's heart to the world around us. A heart transformed desires things that align with what pleases the Father. The heart is central to our core and is the part of us that distinguishes us as creatures made in God's image.

As his disciples, Jesus' great commandment to us instructs us to love God with our whole heart (Matthew 22:37-38; Deuteronomy 6:5). The gospel reveals the depth of our hearts. It is through the transformation of the heart that we can experience an intimate relationship with God.

Our human hearts seem so far from Jesus' heart. He is pure, peaceful, purposeful, pleasant and spiritual. We are sometimes greedy, hassled, distracted, cranky and earthbound. The distance between Jesus' heart and ours seems so immense. How can we ever hope to have a heart like Jesus'?

But there is good news! God's supreme promise to us is that whoever has given their life to Jesus, Jesus has given himself to them.

What does the Bible say about the transformed heart?

Psalm 9:1; 19:14 - It is only with our heart that we can genuinely praise and worship our Lord and Savior.

Romans 10:9-13 - With the heart, one believes in Jesus' finished work and is justified for salvation.

1 Corinthians 2:16 - Followers of Jesus have within them a portion of the very mind of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - In Christ, we are a new creation.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - The Spirit transforms us, growing us more into Christ's image.

Galatians 2:20 - It's no longer us who lives, but Christ who lives in us.

2. GROWTH IS INFLUENCED BY OUR THOUGHTS

If a disciple is transformed as they grow in being a student, an apprentice, a follower of Jesus - think for a moment of what it looks like to be a good student.

A good student has some key characteristics that we need to evaluate ourselves on:

1. A disciple is a learner with a growth mindset

If you are familiar with education, you would probably be well acquainted with the importance of students having a growth mindset. What is a growth mindset in terms of growth as a disciple of Jesus?

It is a way of thinking and approaching life knowing that growth is possible, not merely by human effort, but for the eternal purpose of the glory of God. Talent can be stewarded well and developed through prayerfully taking risks, hard words and ongoing coaching and feedback from others.

They eagerly pursue learning, persisting even when they encounter stumbling blocks because God has given them the capacity to constantly grow and change - getting better at what is important

Those with a growth mindset are curious, seek out new challenges and are inspired by the success of others.

They eagerly pursue learning, persisting even when they encounter stumbling blocks because God has given them the capacity to constantly grow and change - getting better at what is important to them. They invest the time and effort in pursuing a deeper relationship with Jesus, their Lord, Saviour and treasure. A disciple's growth mindset is anchored firmly in who they are in Christ and the love and grace he has for them.

2. A disciple thinks about what they are thinking about!

Read and reflect on these verses. What do they say about the importance of our thoughts?

2 Corinthians 10:5 - "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

Romans 12:2 - "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Philippians 4:8-9 - "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

3. GROWTH FOLLOWS AS WE LEAD LIVES HALLMARKED BY HUMILITY & GRATITUDE

A disciple, as Jesus' apprentice, leads a life hallmarked by humility and gratitude. Both these traits of any good student are necessary for being teachable and motivated. They humble themselves, knowing that they don't have all the answers to life's questions - and so they depend and look to Jesus in every area of their lives. Gratitude acknowledges the goodness of God in providing everything a disciple needs to grow. Thank God he is so faithfully invested in our growth!

Here are two questions that you can ask yourself and others daily and through every life experience:

1. What did I/you love?
2. What did I/you learn?

How do you think asking these questions helps you to grow in a godly growth mindset and in humility and gratitude?

Hinderances to Our Growth

1. GROWTH IS LIMITED BY A FIXED MINDSET

Opposite to the growth mindset is a fixed mindset, where one believes that their abilities and traits are fixed and finished - they cannot grow, develop or change. In a disciple's life, these areas become stagnant and resistant to growth. A fixed mindset fears failure and resists effort. They may be intimidated by others' success instead of letting it inspire them. When life's challenges come, they give up and stop being persistent. They have the mindset in particular areas of life that if they struggle, they might not even try. They may believe the lies about who they are, their ability and who God is. Fixed mindsets believe they are failing instead of learning - they lack grace for themselves and don't rely on God's provision of grace and strength.

What thoughts are causing you to have a fixed mindset that is currently negatively impacting your life?

Review these scriptures that give reference to the benefits of our growth. God takes our growth seriously, and he encourages us to persevere even though we struggle and find things hard. Which of these verses encourage you the most in your life currently and why?

2 Peter 3:18 - "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Philippians 4:13 - "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Philippians 3:13-14 - "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 2:10 - "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Colossians 1:10 - "So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Philippians 1:6 - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

John 15:5 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

2. GROWTH IS DISTRACTED BY WHAT IS ENTHRONED IN YOUR HEART

What has the most attention in your heart?

Picture the imagery of a king on his throne. Everything and everyone in the throne room is so intentionally positioned as to point towards the throne. Every bit of direction, influence, and authority in that place comes from the king on the throne. He has full attention.

Now, picture that king as King Jesus - and that throne room, as your heart. Jesus is the King of your heart! God has so designed us to function best when Jesus has the center stage of our hearts and lives. From Jesus' authority enthroned in your heart, every area of your life flows from that place. He has the ultimate authority and influence over how you think, talk and choose.

As a disciple surrenders to Jesus' Lordship, the attention and focus of their life shifts. It is when this attention gets distracted that our lives get derailed. Our hearts and minds get cluttered, and the focus of our priorities gets distorted. Whatever has your attention is the direction you will inevitably head to. If you have your heart set on something, it means you want it more than anything else. The heart of a true disciple is set on choosing to love and obey God.

Read and reflect on the following scripture passage:

Proverbs 4:20-23 - *"My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."*

The heart in Proverbs refers to the center of one's inner life. It is from this place that a person does all thinking (mind), feeling (emotion), and choosing (will). Taking words of wisdom into the heart is of greatest importance (they are life) because out of the heart flow all the thoughts, words, and choices of a person's life (from it flow the springs of life).

Our hearts were never designed to be followed, but to be led. Our hearts were never designed to be gods in whom we believe; they were designed to believe in God.

God doesn't tell us to follow our hearts - but to follow Jesus. Note that Jesus did not say to his disciples, *"Let not your hearts be troubled, just believe in your hearts."* He said, *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me"* (John 14:1).

Heart transformation happens when we capture and reflect God's heart. It's then that we pay attention to his wisdom and desire things that align with what pleases him.

HOW IS YOUR HEART?

When do you struggle to meditate on God's wisdom and seek his guidance?

3. GROWTH IS HINDERED WHEN YOU RESIST TRANSFORMATION

We may ask ourselves if I am a disciple of Jesus and the Bible says I have the mind of Jesus, why do I still think so much like me?

It's because although our souls are saved, our hearts are unchanged - we are connected but not altered. We've trusted Jesus Christ for salvation but have resisted transformation. We may occasionally let Jesus' light shine through our hearts, but a lot of the time, we settle for less.

God has ambitious plans for us. He offers us a complete heart transformation. God is willing to continually change us into the likeness of the Saviour.

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29)

"And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." (Colossians 3:10)

Reflection On Your Own Growth

Read the following exercise and picture yourself in the scenario:

What if, for one day, Jesus lived your life exactly as it is with the same people in it, the same house, the same job, the same pains, the same schedule, the same health, and the same circumstances? But only one thing changed.

What if, for one day, Jesus lives your life, but with His heart?

Your day starts off with being led by Jesus' heart. His priorities control your actions; his passions lead your choices; his love defines your behaviour.

Would the people in your life notice a change?

Would Jesus' heart alter how you feel, alter your stress level, your mood, your sleep, your perspective on everything? Would you still do what you planned to do that day? Would Jesus, taking over your heart, change anything about your appointments, obligations, and outings?

Growth in your discipleship is what God wants for you!

As you begin to think about this and have a clearer picture of Jesus' heart leading your life, you will see what God wants. He wants you to think and act like Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

God's plan for you is a new heart. He wants you to have a heart like Jesus (Ephesians 4:23-24).

The essence of God's heart for us is this: He loves us just the way we are, but he refuses to leave us that way - He wants us to be just like Jesus.

Nothing changes God's love for us. Our evil does not diminish it, just as our goodness does not increase it. Our faith cannot earn God's love, and our stupidity cannot jeopardize it. His love for us is not less if we fail or more if we succeed.

However, with all the assurance and confidence of God's unconditional love setting us up for success, it's His love that compels us toward change and growth.

We can get stuck when we get the idea that we can't change. Jesus can change our hearts to be like his. This is the best offer ever!