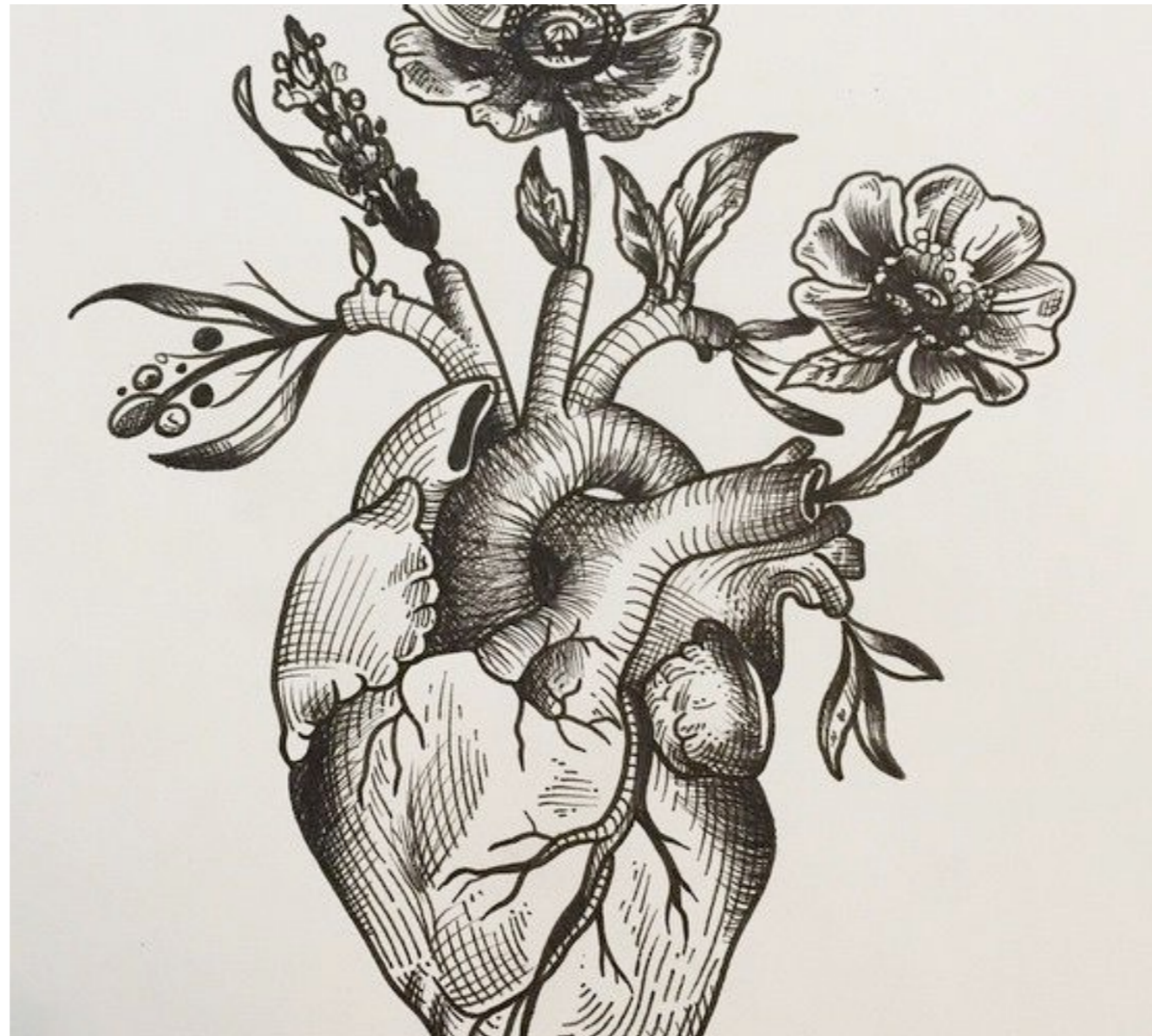


DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE



DISCIPLESHIP

RESOURCE

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A Heart Issue

We must start with this basic premise:

True and lasting change in our lives and our relationships always requires a change of heart.

Sin has corrupted every aspect of this world and our lives within it. The only solution that will help us face the difficult consequences of sin is for our hearts to be recreated by the power of God.

The good news of the gospel is that this is exactly what God wants to do in our hearts and lives. He has made a way, through His Son Jesus Christ and through His Spirit, to reconcile us to Himself and recreate us from the inside out. We are in constant need of the Spirit's help and, thankfully, that's exactly what God is offering to us.

We hope this resource is a small part of the larger work of gospel-transformation and sanctification that God continues to work in each of our lives and a helpful support to you as you invest in and care for others around you.



Here is a list of some helpful readings within the Scriptures as well as some other notable books to help you as you seek to better understand the essence of true heart change in regard to gospel transformation.

SCRIPTURE

<i>Psalm 27</i>	<i>Proverbs 4:23</i>	<i>2 Corinthians 5</i>
<i>Psalm 32</i>	<i>Proverbs 27:19</i>	<i>Galatians 5</i>
<i>Psalm 37</i>	<i>Matthew 5-7</i>	<i>Ephesians 2</i>
<i>Psalm 51</i>	<i>Matthew 22:34-37</i>	<i>Philippians 3-4</i>
<i>Jeremiah 17:9-10</i>	<i>John 3</i>	<i>1 Peter 1-2</i>
<i>Ezekiel 36</i>	<i>Romans 5-8</i>	<i>Colossians 3</i>

ADDITIONAL READING

Gospel Primer by Milton Vincent

Prodigal God by Timothy Keller

How People Change by Paul Tripp

You Can Change by Tim Chester

Women of the Word by Jen Wilkin

Imperfect Disciple by Jared C. Wilson

Gospel-Centered Life by Robert H. Thune

Knowledge of the Holy by A.W. Tozer

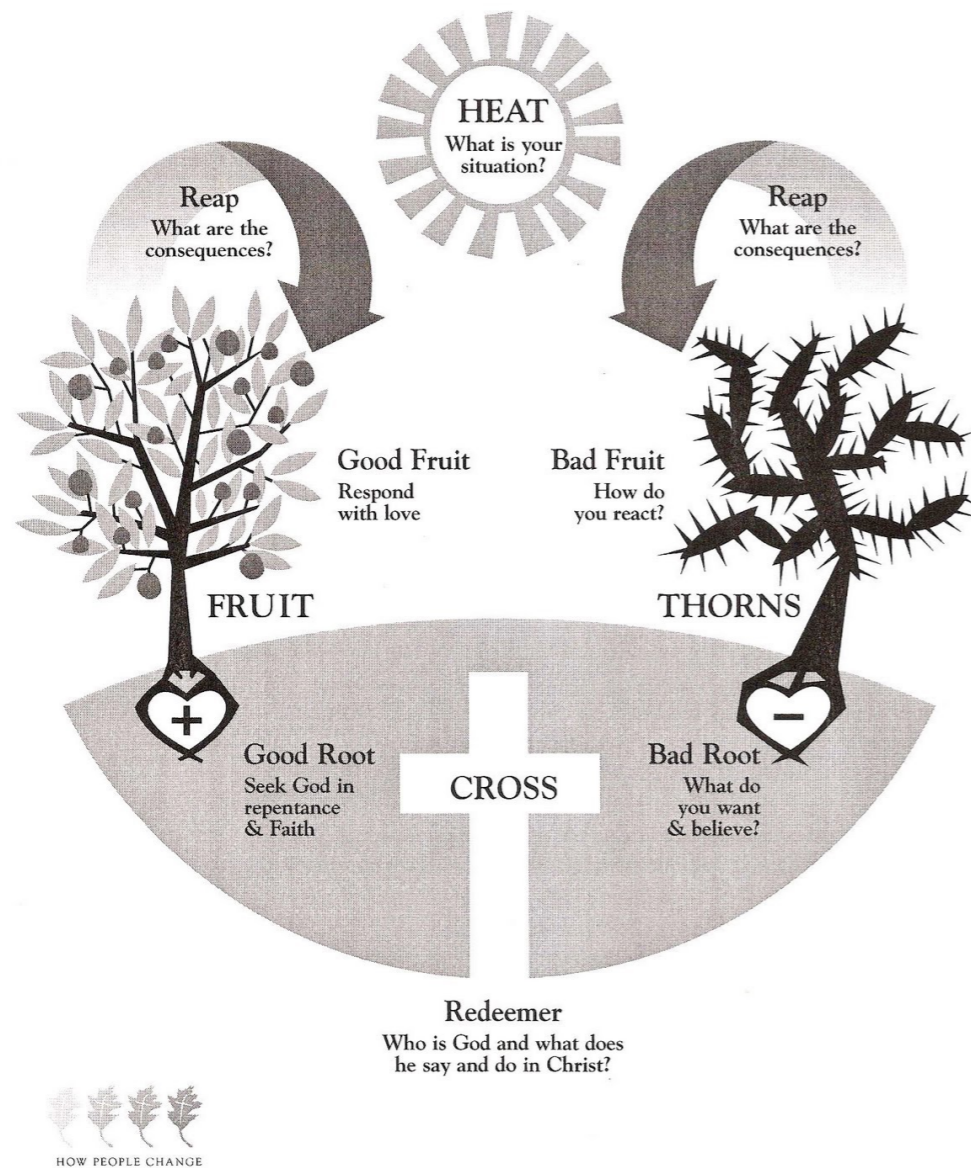
Even Better than Eden by Nancy Guthrie

QUESTIONS TO ASK OUR HEARTS

Here are a few questions to ask at the beginning of a time of counseling, discipleship, or personal growth that can help us discover the heart issues that are present behind the symptoms that are causing us to realize our need for help.

1. What were the symptoms of trouble or distress that led me to reach out for help in this moment?
2. How long have those symptoms been present?
3. Of those symptoms or evidences of distress in my heart, which are the ones that are most troublesome to me and why?
4. Do the things that are currently causing my heart trouble/distress reveal any specific lack of trust in the nature and character of God?
5. Are there any hidden areas of unconfessed sin in my heart that need to be brought into the light to find grace and healing?
6. In this moment of trouble or distress, what do my thoughts and actions reveal about what I think my heart needs the most?
7. Am I giving my heart access to the things God has provided to help me heal and grow in this moment?
8. If I were writing the script, what would I want the outcome of this moment of trouble or distress to be?
9. Have I considered whether or not my desired outcome is consistent with the things God says He wants for my life?
10. Do the habit and practices of my life reflect what I say my heart desires?
11. How does the good news of the gospel speak to my trouble or distress?

Figure 4-1. How Do People Change?



© PaulTrippMinistries

This chart is from *How People Change* by Paul Tripp and Timothy Lane

EXCERPT FROM *HOW PEOPLE CHANGE* ¹

"This picture represents how God changes us in the middle of the toughest challenges of life. We all have trials, pressures, temptation, and difficulty in our lives (**HEAT**). As sinners we all tend, in our hearts, to respond in a variety of sinful ways to what is going on in our lives (**THORNS**). God meets us in our sin and struggle with his heart-transforming grace (**CROSS**). Finally, as our hearts are transformed by that grace, we begin to respond to the same old difficulty in brand new ways (**FRUIT**)."

A Good Root (heart transformed by God and seeking Him in repentance and faith) is enabled by the Spirit to produce Good Fruit (respond to the various circumstances and challenges of life in obedience to God and for the good of others...fruit of the Spirit).

A Bad Root (proud, unrepentant heart pursuing selfish desires) will produce Bad Fruit (thorns of disobedience, pride, anger, selfishness, deceit, unforgiveness, and every conceivable sinful behavior).

The transforming nature of God's salvation in Jesus Christ and through His Spirit brings about the kind of lasting change our hearts so desperately need and long for. He changes us from the inside-out.

HEART CHANGE GOALS FROM THE AUTHORS (CPR)

CENTRAL POINT: Living with God's ultimate destination in view gives hope and perspective in our daily situations and relationships.

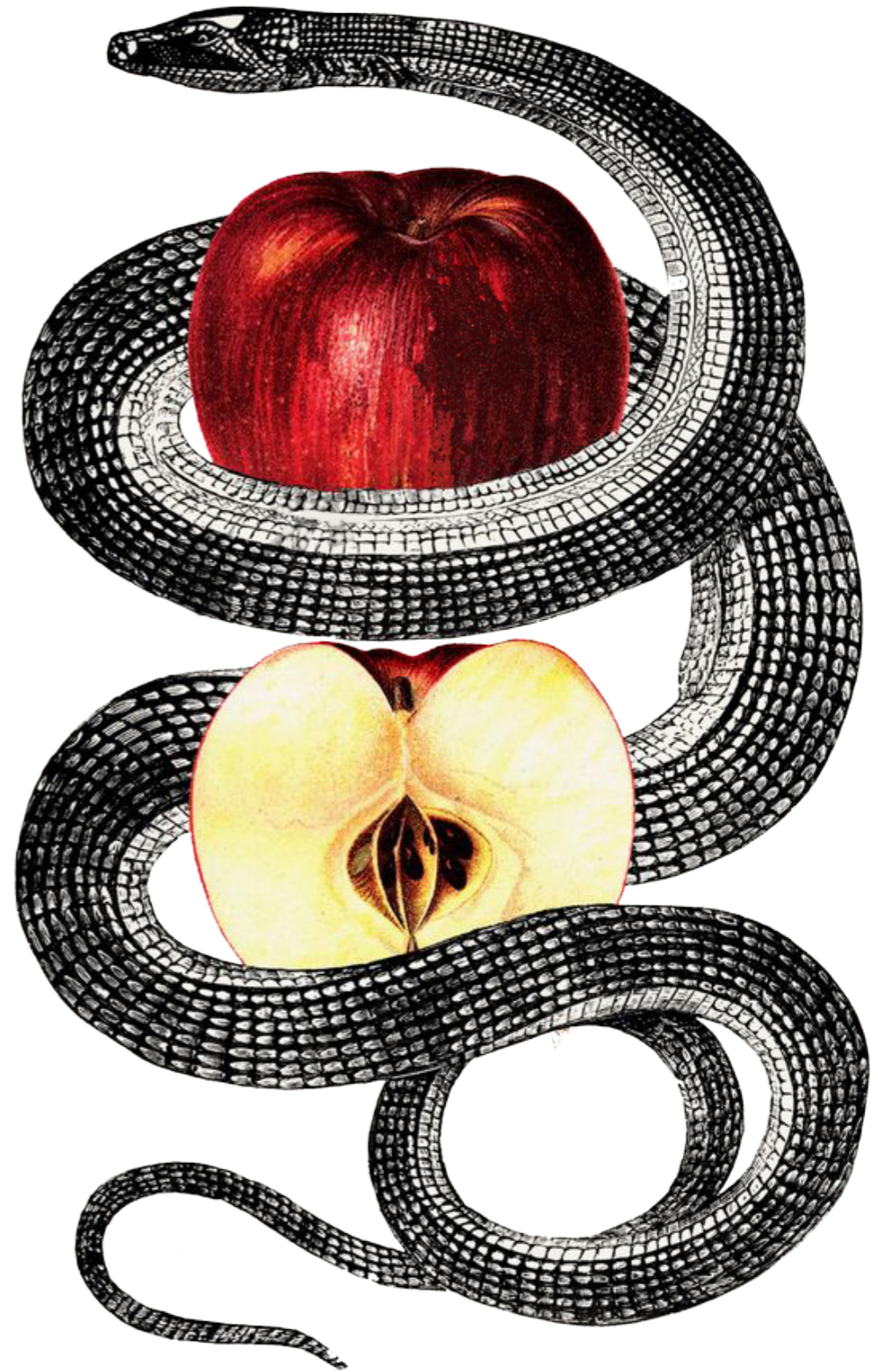
PERSONAL APPLICATION: I need to know what kind of hope directs my life. Functionally, what am I really living for?

RELATIONAL APPLICATION: I need to look for ways to help others live with the final destination in view.

The Root of Pride

“The Christians are right: it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

God created a world in perfection. The opening scenes of Scripture teach us that God, with great intentionality and intimacy, created all things and did so in the midst of His own perfection. But, shortly into the Biblical narrative we find that everything that God had made good has been corrupted and distorted by sin. At the foundation of our sinful desires is pride.



THE FRUITS OF PRIDE

Sin shows itself in numerous ways in our lives, but pride is perhaps one of the greatest ways that we reveal our brokenness. While we can demonstrate pride through countless forms, there are several common fruits of pride that we are able to identify here:

Fear of Man: the opinion of others outweighs God's view of you.

Anxiety/Worry: lack of trust that says, "I know better than God."

Self-Righteousness: false sense of moral superiority over others or false belief that one's works will merit righteousness from God.

Self-Centeredness: overly concerned or impressed with yourself.

Comparison: constant over-confidence or self-loathing by holding yourself up against the successes or failures of others.

Deceit: concealing or misrepresenting the truth; lying in order to maintain a false image of yourself that you want others to believe.

Overly Competitive/Ambitious: taking yourself too seriously; cannot laugh at one's own mistakes; cannot enjoy the victories of others.

Lack of Gratitude: feeling entitled to what you have been given; believing you deserve better; bothered by God's blessing of others.

Poor Listening Habits: forming responses while others are speaking, assuming the motives of others, interruptive, argumentative, divisive.

Unteachable: unable to be corrected, stubborn, arrogant.

Unaccountable: isolated, answer to no one, actions unchecked.

Defensive: anxious to challenge, avoid criticism, always assume a better explanation would help, everything is personal, easily hurt.

THE FRUITS OF HUMILITY

The gospel reminds us that God saw the worst of our pride and still moved toward us in unrelenting love and mercy. **The radical nature of God's love begins to destroy the posture and practice of pride. The good news, however, is that it doesn't simply destroy pride's foundation, but it also heals the heart where pride had established deep roots.** Unlike pride, the fruits of humility seek the good of others and do not seek recognition for the benefit they produce. Here are some of the fruits of a life of humility:

Fear of God: the approval of God outweighs the opinions of others.

Trust: firm belief that God is good, just, and faithful to His Word. Able to rest both physically & spiritually, quick to prayer, not easily shaken.

Self-Forgetful: thinking of yourself less often, compassionate, empathetic, pursue the needs of others, serve without expectation.

Honest: tells the truth, accepts the truth, admits flaws, no pretense.

Joyfully Celebrate Others: do not take yourself too seriously, able to laugh at mistakes/faults, enjoy the victories of others, encouraging.

Life of Gratitude: everything you have is a gift, good steward, truly content, generous with God and others, habit of thankfulness.

Good Listener: empathetic, compassionate, makes sure others are done talking and feel understood, stays focused on issue at hand.

Teachable: patient, non-argumentative, willing to change, able to receive criticism, seeks unity,

Accountable: transparent, vulnerable, pursues community, responsible for actions, seeks wisdom in Scripture and with others.

GRACE UPROOTS PRIDE

One of the most sobering summaries of pride is found in the book of Proverbs, “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 26:12). Here, the author reveals that the prideful person believes he/she is beyond the need of God’s help, His care, or His wisdom. The proud heart is resistant to any form of godly correction and quenches the Spirit’s appeals for their heart and mind. In that way, he/she is more hopeless than the fool. Therefore, the pressing question that arises is this:

How do we uproot the insidious influence and corruptive nature of pride within our hearts and minds?

One author responds this way, “There are many answers, but none more helpful than the principle we find in 1 Corinthians 4:7. Paul asks the arrogant Corinthians, ‘For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?’ It’s difficult for the person who understands the sovereignty of God’s grace to be prideful, unless he/she takes credit for understanding it. Pride is taking credit for what God has done. **To know that all we have is a gift, that all we experience and enjoy is an expression of God’s goodness and not ours, to know that everything in our possession—especially our salvation—comes from the hand of God is to take the first step in defeating and dethroning pride from our hearts.”** ²

At it’s root, pride is an act of cosmic treason. Apart from God’s grace, we would be destined for divine judgement and without hope for escape, but thanks be to God...He has made a way for us.

Jesus made a way for pride to be destroyed and displaced. He humbled Himself by becoming a man, by suffering the indignity of death, and by bearing the sin of humanity. The humble One substituted Himself for the proud, changing everything.

“The hope of proud humanity is humble faith in the humble Savior. We confess our pride, receive His forgiveness, and live for His glory.” ³

SCRIPTURE

A profitable habit and aid in destroying pride would be to read through the book of Proverbs annually, if not monthly. The residue of pride in one’s heart or mind would be routinely exposed to the wisdom of God, the love of God, and the folly and futility of clinging to our ego or perceived self-sufficiency.

ADDITIONAL READING

The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness by Timothy Keller

Humility by Andrew Murray

Gospel-Powered Humility by William Farley

The Blessing of Humility by Jerry Bridges



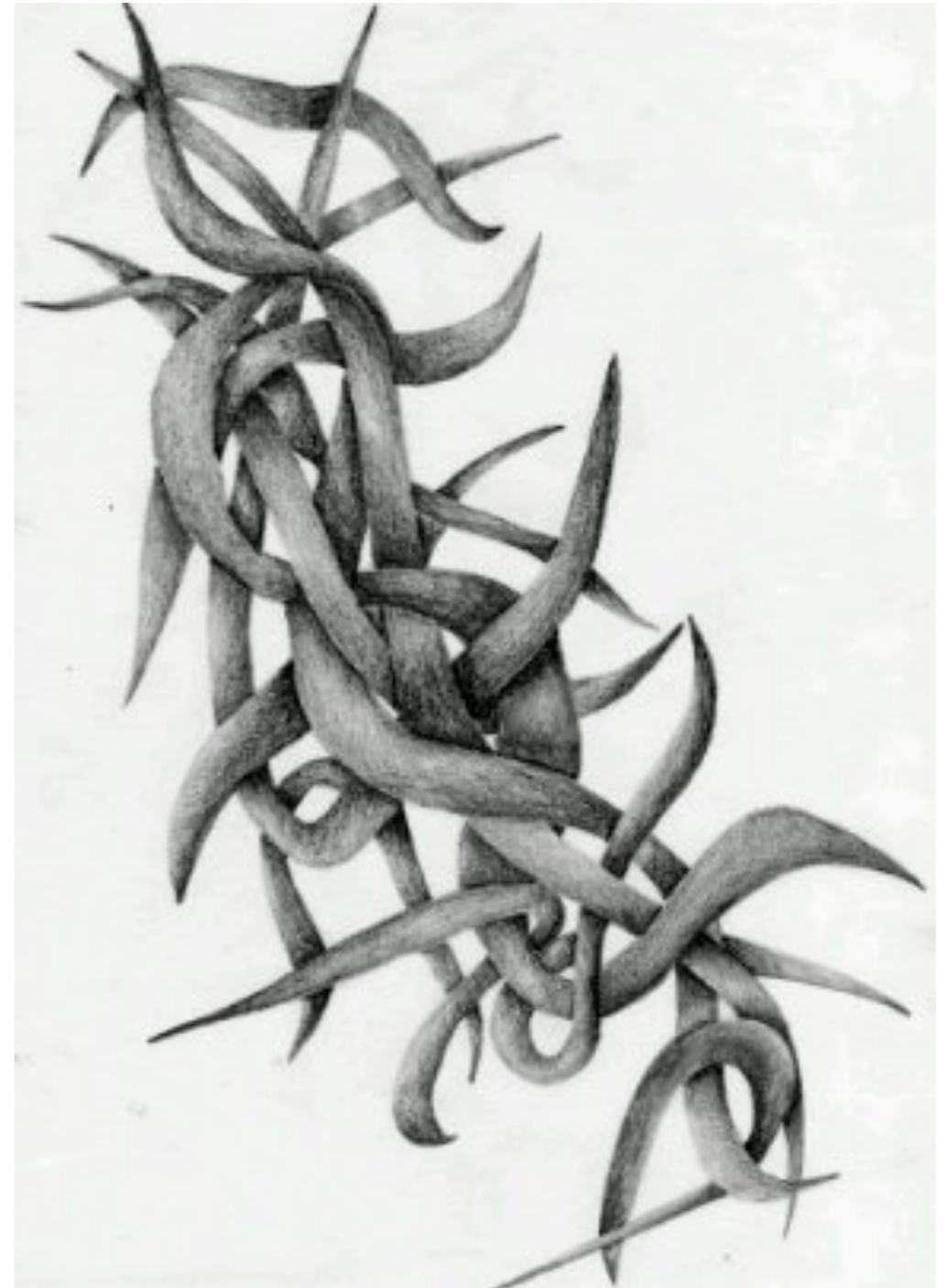
**“Humility is the displacement of self
by the enthronement of God.”**

Andrew Murray, *Humility*

Freedom From Idolatry

In salvation, the heart is set free from the chains of sin and death by faith. It is recreated so that it no longer has to remain, as John Calvin stated, "an idol factory."

And yet, in this life, the flesh still wages war against the new heart and seeks to rebuild appetites and desires for the old idols that once captivated us. The flesh still seeks to rule our lives while God has granted that this new heart, inhabited by His Spirit, can rule the flesh and bring it into submission to the will of God. The new heart has been made alive in Christ and will maintain the death sentence He has given to idols (both old and new).



OUR COMMON IDOLS

Though each person is uniquely made by God, there is a shared commonality to our sinfulness that is not unique. We all sin in similar fashion, at least at the root, even if our sins present their fruit in various forms. Idols are deceptive, because they are often very good things (given by God for our good) that become objects of our over-desire. Here are some common idols vying for our worship:

Approval of Others	Ministry Success
Money/Retirement Security	Good Works
Material Possessions	Marriage
Politics	Spouse
Power	Children
Job (Form or Title)	Safety
Sex	Love
Sexuality	Friendships
Comfort	Dreams/Ambitions
Freedom	Talents
Athletics	Social Status
Academics/Education	Work Ethic
Audience/Platform	Reputation

QUESTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING IDOLS

1. What do I tend to worry about most?
2. What, if I failed it or lost it, would cause me to feel despair?
3. What do I use to comfort myself when things go bad or get difficult and/or stressful?
4. What do I do to cope? What are my release valves when the pressures of life grow? What do I do to feel better?
5. What preoccupies me? What do I daydream about?
6. What makes me feel the most self-worth? Of what am I the proudest? For what do I want to be known?
7. Who is the hero of most of my stories?
8. Early on in meeting someone new, what do I want to make sure that other people know about me?
9. What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously question the goodness of God?
10. What prayer, answered, would make me love God more or believe He loves me more than He does now?
11. What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?
12. What is my hope for the future?
13. What do you write or post about the most on social networks?
14. What do you hope to experience before heaven?

APPLYING THE GOSPEL TO IDOLS

It has been said this way, “Underneath every sin is idolatry and underneath every idolatry is disbelief/distrust in the gospel.”⁴ One of the ways to apply the gospel to the idols of our hearts is to preach the gospel to our own hearts on a regular basis. The rehearsing of Biblical truths reinforces in us the foundational concepts of our identity in Christ and displaces the lies that assault us on a daily basis with promises that are rooted in the very nature and character of the God who has redeemed us.

When we are tempted to believe that we have earned the right to demand our desires over submitting them to the Lord, the gospel reminds us that our only hope is built on the costly grace of God extended to us through the death and resurrection of Christ. When we are tempted to look to stuff or others for ultimate affirmation in life, the gospel reminds us that in Christ we have received final affirmation from God who has declared us sons and daughters. When we are tempted to frame our identity around our achievements, the gospel reminds us that our accomplishments, divorced from who we are in Christ, are but wisps of smoke that are carried off by the winds of time. The gospel speaks to every corner of our hearts and every moment of our lives.

The work of killing the idols in our lives is the work of the Spirit of God, but it is a work that he invites us to participate in with him. We do so when we rehearse the gospel by committing the truths of God’s Word to our hearts and minds. We do so when we intentionally lift our hearts in worship to the God who has always been, and will ever be, faithful to us. We do so in community, as we confess our sins,

our hopes, and our doubts and by reciting biblical truths over one another. The application of the gospel to our idols is present in our quiet, prayerful conversations with the Lord and as we corporately walk through life tethered to the Body of Christ.

A CASE STUDY

The questions offered on the previous page can serve, in conjunction with the work of the Spirit, as a litmus test in determining what idols might sit on the throne of our heart. Take, for example, the first question on the page, “What do I tend to worry about most?” Perhaps the answer to that question is primarily the welfare, care, and approval of our family. That answer alone does not indicate that family is, in fact, an idol in our lives. After all, isn’t caring well for one’s family a virtue that Scripture extols as right and good (i.e. Ephesians 5:21-6:4)?

What if we, then, asked and answered question 12 honestly, “What is my hope for the future?” If our answer(s) to that question revolves around those we love, for example, answering that our hope is built on a desire to see our children live fruitful, successful lives or to be able to enter into the twilight years of life comfortably retiring with our spouse or family, that is further indication that family – an inherently good gift from God – may, in fact, have supplanted God on the throne of our lives. We can further extrapolate this by continuing to address these questions, because it is likely that, if our answers reflect those above, then we’ll see that in the preponderance of our social media posts, we’ll recognize that which preoccupies most of our thoughts, and we’ll realize that it is in our

family that we find our ultimate value and worth. Again, this is not a condemnation of family as bad. Rather, like all idols, family is a good thing that can become a controlling thing which leads us to replacing the Lord as operative in our lives.

It is vital that this rhythm of assessing the idols in our lives happen not simply within our own minds, but also in community. What might it look like for us to actively and intentionally engage one another in this way? Are we willing to push through the discomfort and vulnerability to find the fruitful joy of life together in Christ? We can, and we must.

ADDITIONAL READING

Counterfeit Gods by Timothy Keller

You Are What You Love by James K.A. Smith

“The gospel overcomes our idolatry.

The idol of money says to us, “If you don’t do enough to obtain me, I’ll make you miserable.”

The idol of family says, “If you lose me, life won’t be worth living.”

The idol of comfort says, again and again, “Sacrifice your honesty, your integrity, your closest relationships, for me.”

Idols are harsh taskmasters.

If you fail them, they make you pay.

But in the gospel Jesus says to us, “You did fail me. But instead of destroying you, I’ll let myself be destroyed for you. Instead of demanding a sacrifice, I will become a sacrifice for you.” In Jesus, unlike idols, we find the only God that—when we obtain him—will satisfy us, and—when we fail him—will forgive us.”

J.D. Greear ⁵

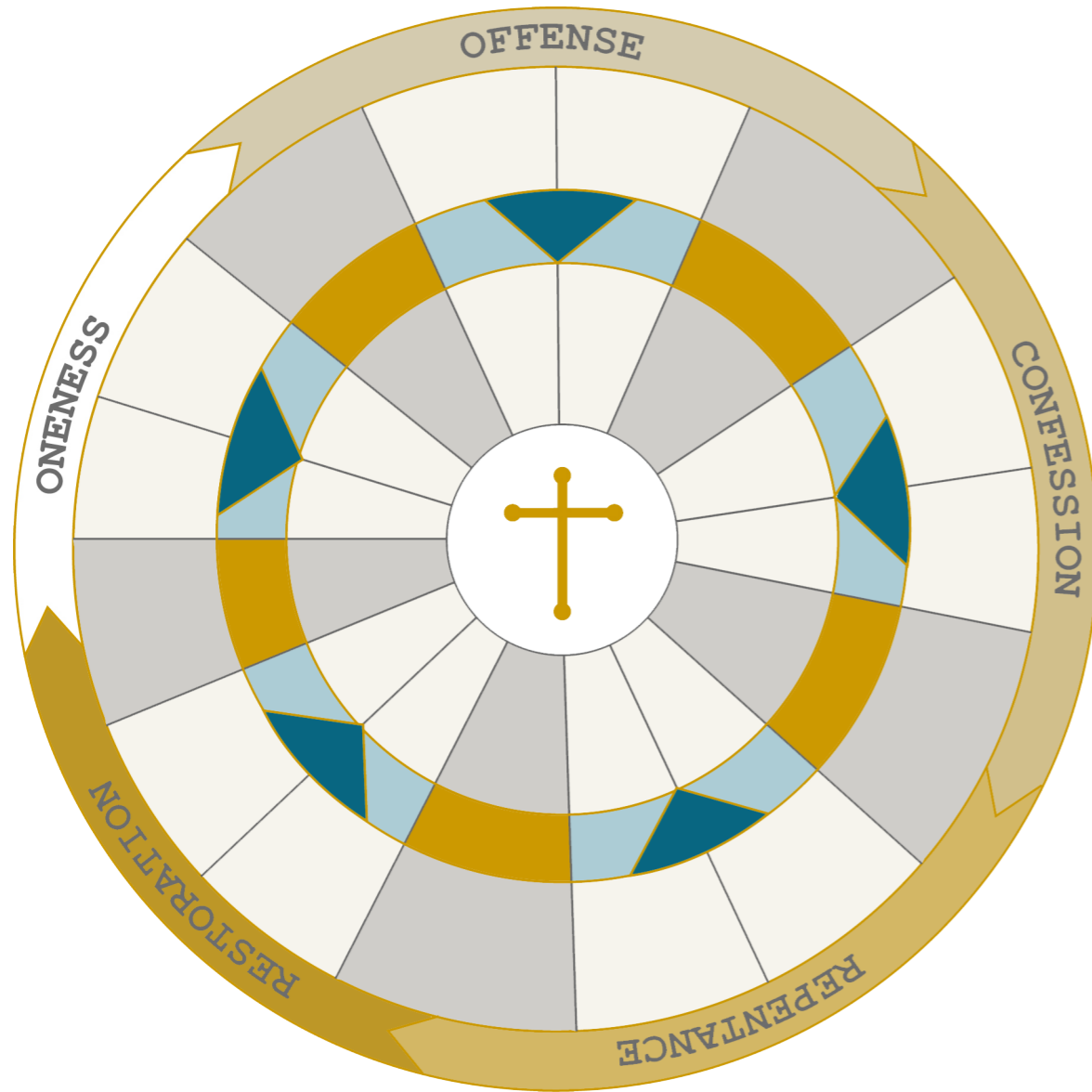
Conflict Resolution

Every human relationship (of any meaningful depth) this side of eternity will inevitably be forced to deal with conflict. It's important to remember that conflict is not always a terrible thing, as it can be a means of grace and often an opportunity for growth.

One of the most common barriers to healthy relational conflict resolution is our desire to "win the argument." By striving to "win" or to be "proven right" we actually forfeit what matters most – unity. Consequently, everyone loses.

The key to conflict resolution is not unlike the way God resolved His conflict with mankind. It is achieved through a high commitment to love, swimming often in the realities of grace, and moving unrelentingly toward those who hurt us with the offer (and hope) of reconciliation. Only the gospel offers us a sustainable motivation for fighting for oneness and unity rather than for a perceived and unrewarding "win."





RELATIONAL GOAL = ONENESS (UNITY)

In marriage relationships, the goal of conflict resolution is **oneness** (in friendships, families, relationships with others in the body of Christ, and other non-marital relationships, it might be more helpful to think of the goal of resolution in terms of **unity**).

Forgiveness is extended every time the offense is remembered.

PHASE ONE

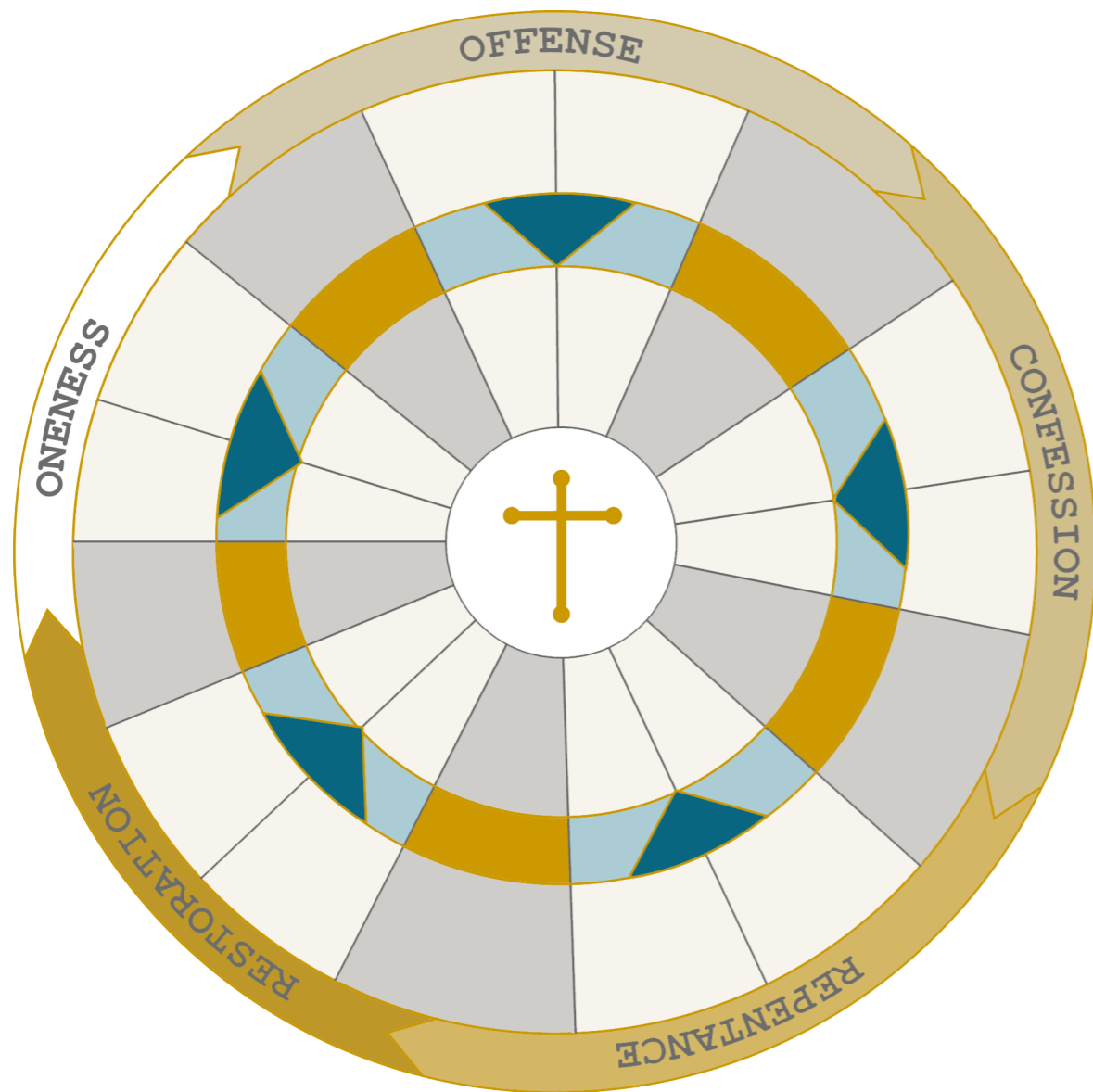
IDENTIFY THE OFFENSE Often, the conflict within our relationships arises from an act (or word) of offense. One of the vital first steps in conflict resolution is for the offense to be identified. It can be identified by either the one who was offended (letting the offender know about the hurt) or by the one who did the offending (seeing the signs of the brokenness in relational oneness/unity or prompted by the Spirit that they have sinned against the other person, they pursue forgiveness and reconciliation).

We are all empowered (whether offended or offender) to identify the offense-causing conflict in the relationship. Before doing so, we benefit greatly by taking our own heart back to the gospel in order that we might extend forgiveness on the basis that God in Christ has forgiven us. We then move toward the goal of reconciliation with the ability to extend the kind of grace we have been shown in Christ.

The gospel frees us from offering forgiveness solely on the basis of the response of the offender or offended individual when the offense is identified.

The gospel roots the foundation of forgiveness in the person and work of Christ. The love of Christ becomes the motive for moving forward through the process of conflict resolution and continuing to forgive the offense each time we think of it. The depth of love and security we receive in the gospel removes the need for revenge, binds the lies of fear, and holds high the hope of restoration.

Listen to the Lord and then listen to one another.



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PHASE TWO

CONFESSION This is an admission or acknowledgement of guilt, wrongdoing, or the hurt experienced by the offended party. This is the phase where ownership of the offense occurs. The one who has caused the offense takes ownership of his/her actions regardless of their intentions. **This validates the other person's experience whether it was the intended outcome or not.**

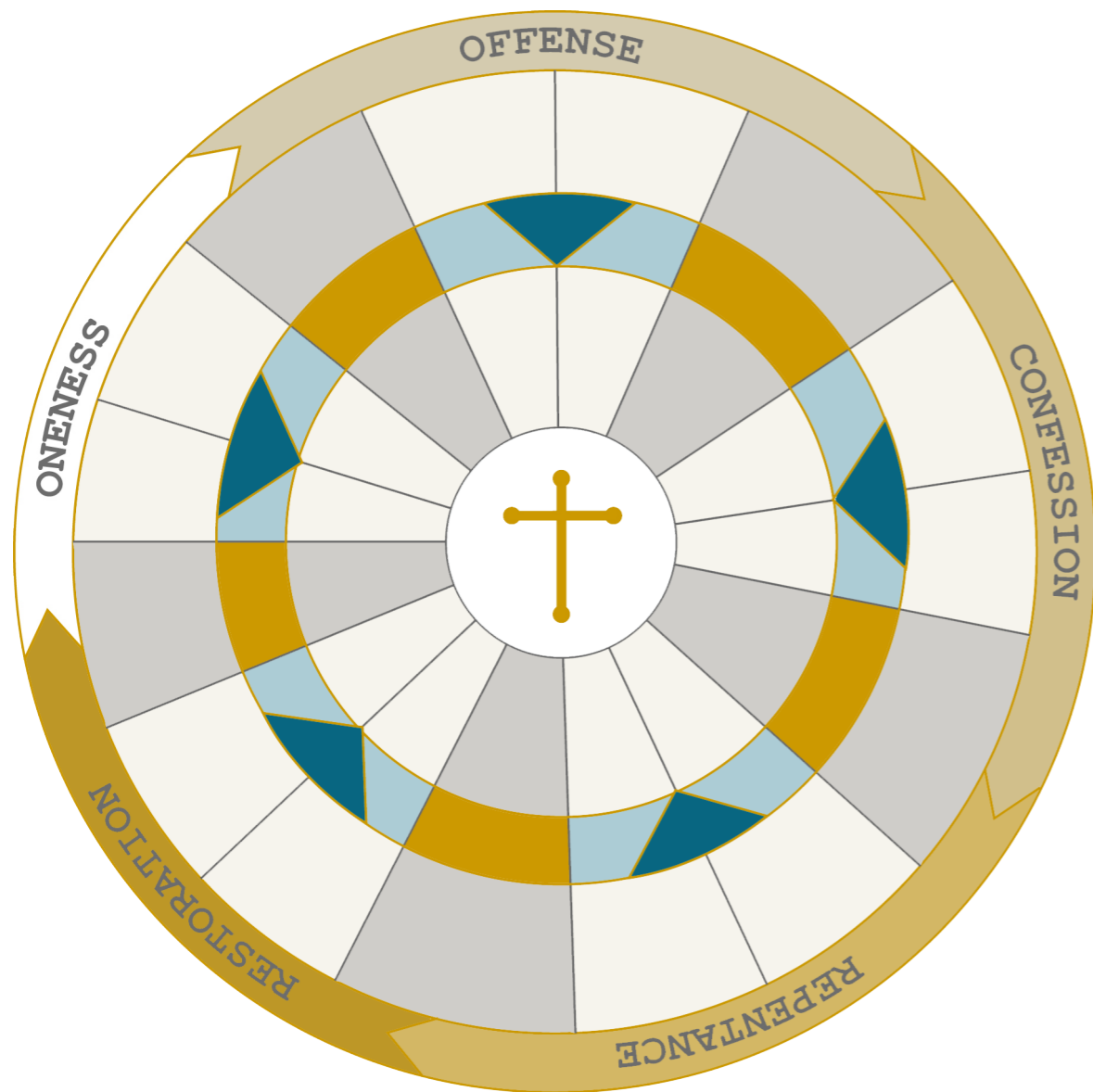
In this phase (like every other), it is imperative that both parties continue to actively take their own hearts to the gospel to be reminded of God's sufficient grace that enables us to freely confess/admit sin and also to extend forgiveness when sinned against.

It is important to note again, forgiveness from the offended party is not dependent upon the offender's confession, it is rooted in the reality that God, in Christ Jesus, has forgiven us.

Ephesians 4:25-32

In this phase, it is good for all identified offenses to be clearly acknowledged by the offender (whenever possible). This allows for clarity for both parties to understand exactly what area of conflict is moving toward reconciliation and restoration. This is not typically the place to seek to clarify motives or intentions, as this will often prove unhelpful and can cause further hurt or confusion.

Ultimately, this is a good moment for both parties to take an agreed upon amount of time to consider the offense before the Lord and ask the Spirit of God to reveal the roots of the sin/offense so that their heart is softened for confession, repentance, and restoration.



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PHASE THREE

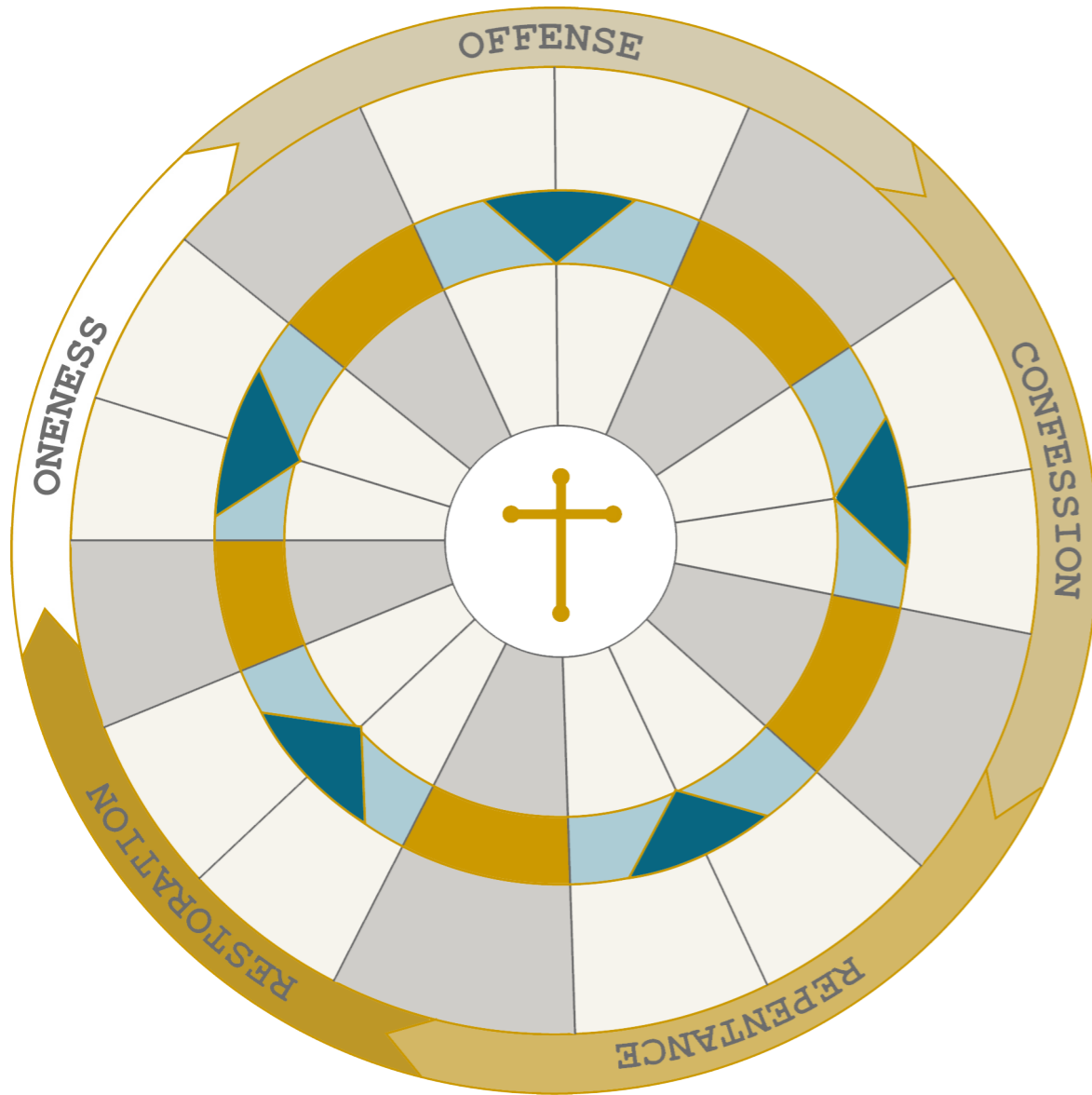
REPENTANCE Repentance is a gift of grace resulting from the kindness of God. A pastor once said it this way, "Repentance is not merely behavior reform. But because true repentance involves a change of heart and purpose, it inevitably results in a change of behavior." ⁶ Much more could be said here about the nature of repentance, but for sake of this resource, we want to think of it primarily in practical terms of relational conflict.

The offender is seeking to bear the fruit of repentance, but the offended is not passive or idle. They actively participate by continuing to extend forgiveness, examining their own heart for contribution to the conflict, and maintaining healthy expectations for what they hope to see from the offender.

HEART The offender searches the motives of their heart that may have led to the offense. The offended searches the condition of their heart that might have led them to be easily/unnecessarily offended. Here, both parties can, when ready, discuss the motives/intentions underneath the offense.

MIND Both parties begin discussing any of the patterns of thinking, not rooted in truth, that were exposed by the offense. The goal is to submit all unhealthy patterns to the Scriptures for the sake of renewing our minds and embracing a Biblical model of thinking.

BEHAVIORS/HABITS At this point we are dealing with the reality that part of bearing fruit in keeping with repentance does involve gospel-motivated, intentional changes in habits or behaviors.



RELATIONAL GOAL = ONENESS (UNITY)

In marriage relationships, the goal of conflict resolution is **oneness** (in friendships, families, relationships with others in the body of Christ, and other non-marital relationships, it might be more helpful to think of the goal of resolution in terms of **unity**).

Forgiveness is extended every time the offense is remembered.

PHASE FOUR

RESTORATION (RECONCILIATION) This last phase is an essential part of moving a relationship back to a place of genuine oneness or unity and may take some time. Reconciliation depends on the attitude of the offender, the depth of the betrayal, and the pattern of offense. As we move toward restoration and reconciliation, we continue to see genuine signs of repentance from the offender.

Six potential signs indicating the offender is genuinely repentant:

1. Accepts full responsibility for his or her actions, not defensive.
2. Welcomes accountability from others.
3. Does not continue in the hurtful behavior or it's associated actions.
4. Does not dismiss or downplay the hurtful behavior.
5. Does not resent doubts about their sincerity or the need to demonstrate sincerity—especially involving repeated offenses.
6. Makes restitution when available and as necessary.

Lack of reconciliation is merely a sign that the offender remains unwilling to repent and believe the gospel. Genuine repentance is always accompanied by the desire to make matters right. The truly repentant person does not demand restoration as this is not repentance; it is manipulation. The offended party, with the gospel in view, is setting the pace for true restoration. When this occurs, the forgiving victim rejoices that oneness and unity have been regained and seeks to embrace and enjoy the relationship again fully. And the offender, humbled and transformed by the love and grace received, also embraces and enjoys the relationship again fully. This whole process reflects the nature of God's reconciling work in the gospel.

The Path Forward

One of the most astonishing realities of God's love for His people is that He has made a way for us to grow and mature in Christ. He did not save us only to then leave us on our own to find our way home. The complete and all-satisfying work of God (never missing a single important detail in redemption) is grounds for great confidence that what He has begun within us, He will bring to completion.

"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."

Philippians 1:6

As J.I. Packer once said, "What matters supremely is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it – the fact that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind." ⁷



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

The gospel is the only sufficient and lasting motivation for a life of enjoying God, pleasing Him, and sharing Him with the world around us for their greater good. While the gospel is about the pinnacle moments of Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, it is also about the entire story of God's creative, redemptive, and restorative work throughout eternity. Therefore, in this sense, the whole Bible is telling the good news of the gospel and each unique section of the Bible is proclaiming pieces of its truth and beauty.

We do not obey God so that He will love us or in order to merit His redeeming grace, but rather we obey Him because He has already perfectly loved us and redeemed us in Christ. He rescued us while we were still sinners in rebellion to Him. Our maturity and obedience is born out of both His justifying and sanctifying work in our hearts to continue to make us into the likeness of His Son. His Spirit is actively working to mature this identity that we have been given in Christ into reality by shaping every aspect of our lives. His Word is authoritative and true, and every area of our heart, mind, and will is to be submitted to His rule and reign. It is a good thing to strive to please the Lord, but our obedience doesn't change His love for us. Rather, our obedience demonstrates that we actually understand and believe His love for us is utterly perfect and unchanging at all times. **Our obedience is pleasing to God, not because it makes us alive, but because it proves we have, in fact, been made alive in Christ.** There is far greater blessing in obedience than in disobedience. Our desire at Summit is to allow this good news to transform all of life.

VALUES OF A DISCIPLE

Eugene Peterson has described the journey of discipleship as a, **"long obedience in the same direction."**⁸ The path forward in discipleship is a continued maturity in Christ as we follow Him. These values are not an exhaustive list, but rather an attempt to give some definition to the characteristics that are evident in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipline and hard work are not opposed to God's great grace, but rather to any sense of meriting or earning that grace. **Putting forth gospel-motivated effort to grow and strive towards maturity in these areas is a way of agreeing with what the Holy Spirit already wants to bring to life within us.** They are characteristics rooted in the Scriptures and pleasing to the Lord. They help define who we already are in Christ (hidden in His righteousness) and, simultaneously, who we are becoming as we continue to mature in Christ (being sanctified into His likeness).



PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF GOD

Making intimacy with God our highest priority.



LIVING CONNECTED

Sharing life together for the sake of others.



ENGAGING OUR SPIRIT-GIFTEDNESS

Discovering and practicing our gifts for the good of the body.



STEWARDSHIP OF LIFE

Managing all of life in view of God's ownership and glory.



SHARING OUR GRACE STORIES

Proclaiming the gospel through God's grace in our lives.

DISCIPLINES (HABITS) OF GRACE

Open heart surgery is truly a modern day miracle. In our modern world we have the technology and understanding to open up a human body and do actual repair to a heart. Oftentimes, this surgery is made necessary due to decades of poor choices in eating habits and exercise. And every doctor and surgeon tell their patients the same thing – this moment has given you life, yet in order to continue to live and flourish, the patient must begin to make changes in the rhythms of their lives.

Life change is hard. But what we see over and over again in Scripture is that the people of God are given avenues of grace to empower and sustain this new life we have been called to. David Mathis writes, **“It is grace to be forgiven of sinful acts, and grace to be supplied the heart for righteous ones.”**⁹ God calls his people to immerse themselves in the Scriptures, in prayer, and in true Biblical community as these are consistently the avenues in which the Spirit works out life change.

What does this look like? As no one ‘just so happens’ to exercise, time in the Word of God, in meditation, prayer, and in meaningful relationships with the people of God will not occur without intentional, sacrificial change in the habits of life. And so with great joy and anticipation...set the alarm, acknowledge the excuses, invite others in, download the Bible app, grab a journal, lessen the grip on distracting devices, and in the freedom of His great love and at His invitation...these kinds of habits help us continue to enjoy and share in the life that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit share!

NECESSITY OF BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

At her best and at her worst, Jesus loves His Church, so much so that He laid down His life for her (John 10:11). He promises to never leave nor forsake her (Hebrews 13:5). He promises to complete the work He started in her (Philippians 1:6). In other words, the Scriptures know nothing of having more of God by having less of His Church. In fact, the Church is the chosen, beloved bride of Christ.

The wisdom of God declares that we need the Church. But what does that look like? Perhaps, we could say it this way, **The Church is a community made up of complicated, beloved by God, made alive in Christ, always in process, fearfully and wonderfully made, sometimes faltering and inefficient people that we are called to love and grow with as we represent Christ in the world.** We are God's chosen people who have received great mercy, grace, and love, and as God's chosen people we have been called to love one another like we have been loved...mutually pursuing and maturing in Christ!¹⁰

The love of God demonstrated through the family of God centered upon the Word of God will transform us. It will transform our lives, our community, and the people God has sovereignly placed around us. Whatever God has done to you and for you in Jesus Christ, He desires to do through you for others. By God's grace, we can discover that the Church needs us and we, too, need the Church.

Therefore, we can pray for, bless, and engage the local church, which will always be for our good and His glory.

APPENDIX

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- 5) **Page 11** – J.D. Greear, "5 Insights Into Idolatry",
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- 10) **Page 19** – Scott Sauls, "5 Reasons to Not Give Up on Church,"
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