

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Pursue freedom and joy with God and others through the practice of confession.

THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION

If we take the time to look, all of us see the need for personal growth. The question is how that growth takes place. God calls us to trust that His word is good and to walk in obedience in relationship with Him. But at different times and in different ways, we all fail. Further, we find that we are deeply broken and incapable of fixing ourselves. We need divine rescue. The good news of the Gospel is that God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ, who bore the penalty for our sin and has conquered sin and death so that we might experience true life. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have accomplished our deliverance. But how does this get worked out in our lives?



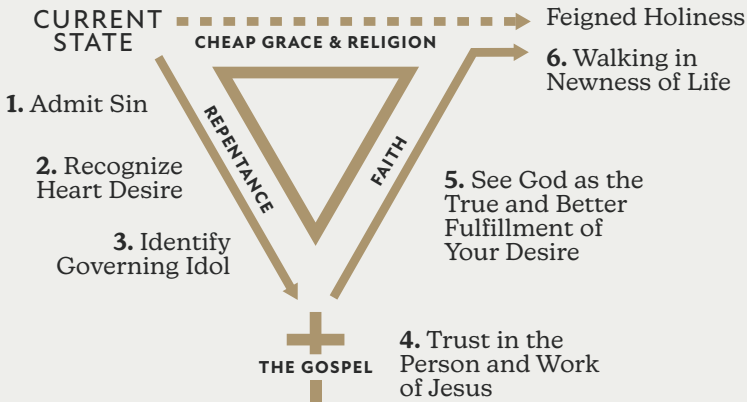
The purpose of this guide is to walk through one approach to understanding that process.

Personal transformation through the Gospel is real and it is possible. Sin is fundamentally more about misaligned desires than breaking rules. The heart is the home of our desires. We must address what resides in our heart in order to see genuine change.

Use this card with others as a way to pursue holiness together. When we see sin in our lives, we often try to rearrange our behaviors and words so that we meet the right standard. While this may work to fool others for a while (and ourselves) this type of “holiness” is not real and is not sustainable. We need an approach that goes to the center and source of our lives—our hearts.

IDENTIFY & CONFESS YOUR SIN TO GOD:

TRANSFORMATION CHART



Each step is further explained in the numbered list below.

All sin is first and foremost sin against God. When we hide, minimize, or cover up our sin, we hinder the fellowship with God that we were made to enjoy. In God's continual pursuit of our healing and freedom, He has given us the Holy Spirit to convict us of the ways that we have turned from Him in order that we might turn back to Him for forgiveness and healing. Ask God's Spirit to search your heart and reveal to you any ways that you have turned away from Him.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
(Psalm 139:23-24)

1. Be humble and honest. Admit that you have sinned and name what that sin is. (Psalm 51)
2. As you consider the nature of your sin, ask: "What did I really want in that situation?" (James 4:1-2)
3. Recognizing the motivations of your heart, place those desires into a category of idolatry:
 - Control:** I wanted things to go or be a certain way.
 - Glory:** I wanted others to respect me or be impressed by me.
 - Comfort:** I wanted an absence of interruptions, demands, or annoyances.
 - Approval:** I wanted others to validate what I did or who I am.

4. Having identified the governing idol of your heart in that situation, consider Jesus, who bore your sin on the cross and was raised to new life. Trust in Him for forgiveness. (Romans 8:1-4)
5. After embracing the forgiveness and grace found in Jesus, think about how God fulfills the desire you had, but in a much better way than how you were otherwise trying to fulfill it. (2 Peter 1:4-5)
Control: He is the sovereign One—You do not need to be in control because God, the one who is perfectly wise, is already in control.
Glorify: He is the glorious One—You do not need to be impressive because God, the one who is eternally glorious, is already impressive.
Comfort: He is the satisfying One—You do not need to find ultimate comfort in created things because God, the one who is uncreated, satisfies entirely.
Approval: He is the gracious One—You do not need to find approval from those around you because God has already approved of you in Jesus Christ.
6. Looking to God as the true and better fulfillment of your desire, walk in faithful obedience with God. (Romans 8:5-11)

CONFESS YOUR SIN TO OTHERS:

We cannot fight sin and pursue rightly ordered joy on our own. God has designed humans to be in relationship with others. As the people of God, we are meant to care for one another, listen to one another, bear one another's burdens, and ask hard questions of one another. Therefore, we need to be interacting with each other in a consistent and intentional way such that we know others and are known by others. This is where the true work of transformation takes place. Here's a way to get started:

1. Identify someone that you trust.
2. Ask them if they'd be willing to let you practice confession with them.
3. Connect somewhere where you feel safe being honest.
4. Name the reality of your sin.

Note: *If you have committed sin that harms that person, acknowledge the harm, apologize, ask for forgiveness, and seek to make amends wherever possible. Don't rush this, but approach this prayerfully and in the humility of one who is saved by grace alone.*

RECEIVE THE CONFESSION OF ANOTHER:

When someone entrusts you with the opportunity to hear their confession, you have been given a sacred responsibility! Receiving and responding to the confession of a brother or sister in Christ is an opportunity to lean on the Holy Spirit. Pray for the grace to represent the merciful heart of God the Father as you remind the person confessing of the good news of Jesus' power to forgive, cleanse, and transform all who would turn to Him in faith.

Note: *If you are personally hurt by the sin of the person confessing, you may need to give yourself space to process that and pursue Jesus for the heart to forgive them when you are ready.*

1. As they share, practice active listening and reflect the warmth of God's grace that runs toward His repentant children (Luke 15:11-32).
2. Thank them for sharing. It takes a lot of courage and trust to be vulnerable with others.
3. Show grace, reminding them of God's grace in Jesus that brings forgiveness and cleansing.

■ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **(1 John 1:9 ESV)**

4. Ask permission to ask clarifying questions:
 - Encourage specificity in their confession to help them toward more light and healing.
 - Ask about any heart-level motives and beliefs that might lie under their sinful behaviors or attitudes (for help, see the questions at the end of this guide).
5. Help them clarify what repentance would look like for them:
 - What do you need to turn from? What might this look like?
 - What do you need to turn to? What might this look like?
6. Learn how you could continue to support them moving forward: What kind of follow up would be helpful?
7. Pray with them that they would experience God's forgiveness, love, and healing grace.

QUESTIONS TO GET TO THE HEART:

In order to experience meaningful healing and transformation in Jesus, we need to help each other uncover the deeper heart-level desires, fears, and beliefs that motivate and influence our attitudes and behaviors. To do this well, we can ask three different types of questions of one another. This allows us to be “drawn out,” seeing more clearly our situations and our lives for what they are.

The first level of questions is designed to expose what actually took place in a particular situation. The second level questions help us articulate the heart’s desires underneath the sinful behaviors or attitudes. Lastly, the third level of questions categorizes those desires into idolatries that often functionally command our lives. Not all of these questions are directly applicable every time; simply use the questions as a guide in your conversations:

LEVEL ONE: WHAT HAPPENED?

1. What was the situation? (If there is more than one, go one at a time)
2. What did you do/say?
3. What did others do/say?
4. Who else was involved in the situation?
5. Where have you experienced tension in your relationships recently?
6. Where else have you seen ungodly thoughts, words, or behaviors in your life?

LEVEL TWO: WHAT DID YOU REALLY WANT?

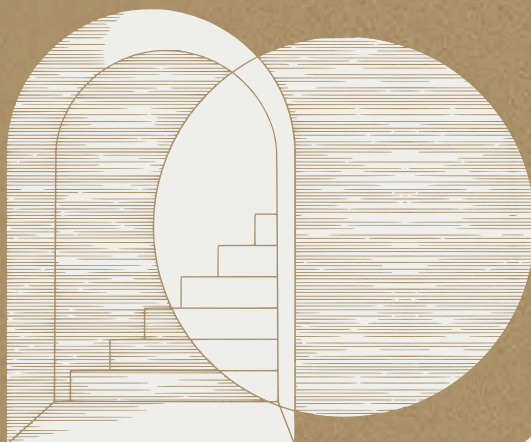
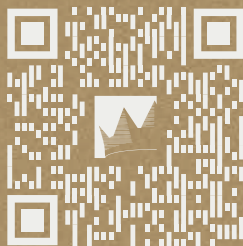
1. What were you really wanting right then that you were not receiving?
2. Why do you think you were angry, annoyed, hurt, or frustrated in this situation?
3. How did you want the situation to go instead of how it did go?
4. What were you trying to get by responding the way that you did?

LEVEL THREE: WHAT DID YOU THINK WOULD SATISFY YOU?

1. Would you have felt satisfied if you had been able to make things go your way? (**Control**)
2. Would you have felt satisfied if you had received respect or recognition from others? (**Glory**)
3. Would you have felt satisfied if you had no external demands or frustrations? (**Comfort**)
4. Would you have felt satisfied if you had received validation from others? (**Approval**)

MORE RESOURCES

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