

Learning Community Eleven

Triads for Transformation

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Split everyone into groups of three and ask each triad to read through Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 together and to discuss the following questions. Encourage the groups to end the sharing time with personal prayer for one another.

Sharing Questions:

1. What are some of the main reasons that “two are better than one”?
2. Share about a time when you experienced the “two are better than one” dynamic in your own life.
3. Which one of these situations are you currently facing and how can others pray for you today:

“I have fallen down and need help up.”

“I’m cold and feel pretty alone.”

“I’m feeling a bit overpowered.”



15-30
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

1. Go on one extended prayerwalk per week that focuses on the needs of the community around you and your church.

2. Share your plan from the Learning Activity, “Me and Prayer Walking,” with your staff and church leadership. Be prepared to share with the group their response and your long range goals and plans for prayer walking at your church.

3. Make it your goal to pray daily for a few people in your sphere of relationships who need Christ. Come prepared to discuss how you are personally engaging the community and how you are overcoming the on-going challenges you face in being outreach oriented. Fill out the “Me and the Harvest” worksheet prior to the next meeting.

4. Read the book entitled *Cultivating a Life for God* by Neil Cole and answer the Book Review Questions. To order this book, go to <http://www.cmresources.org/cultivating-a-life-for-god>.

45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**

- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**

- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**

- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**

- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**

- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**

- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**

- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



15-20
minutes

Learning Activity: (*Miracle* film clip)

Facilitator Instructions: Show the video clip from the movie *Miracle*. The scene starts at 38:40 and ends at 46:53. Set up the clip by telling the group a little bit about the movie and the background of the scene you are going to show them with the following:

“Miracle is a film that retraces the steps of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team. Twenty young players from around the country were thrown together seven months before the 1980 Winter Olympics, and Coach Herb Brookes was given the job of melding them into a team that could be competitive on a global scale. In this scene, Herb pushes his young men to the brink of utter exhaustion, with one goal in mind: transformation. Watch carefully for the dynamics between the players and coaches in this pivotal destiny moment for Team USA.”

Debrief the film with the group by asking the following discussion questions:

- 1) What dynamics did you see at play in this scene?

- 2) What was the coach’s objective and how did he accomplish it?

- 3) From this scene, what would you say are the ingredients of transformation (for a person or a team)?

***Facilitator hint:** One of the key points to drive home before you leave the discussion is the reality that we need other people to help us transform. We need other people to help us break through to another level of growth.

10
minutes

Learning Activity: Personal Story

Facilitator Instructions: Transition the group to some personal sharing. Break people up into groups of three or four and ask them to share a personal story of transformation by responding to this question:

Who was a person who helped you experience transformation or growth in your life journey? How did he or she help you and what impact has it had in your life?

15-20
minutes

Learning Activity: Transformation

Facilitator Instructions: Draw the groups' attention to the article entitled "Transformation." Ask them to read slowly and to underline key thoughts and principles as they go. After everyone has finished ask the discussion questions that follow.

Transformation

*A man is to be compared to a beast if he has no one to rejoice with him in adversity, no one to whom to unburden his mind if any annoyance crosses his path or with whom to share some unusually sublime or illuminating inspiration....He is entirely alone who is without a friend. But what happiness, what security, what joy to have someone to whom you dare to speak on terms of equality as to another self; one to whom you can unblushingly make known what progress you have made in the spiritual life; one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans. (Aelred of Rievaulx in *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction*, 12)*

It is significant that the word person (persona in Latin) comes from the Greek word prosopon, which can be translated 'face to face.' In other words, each human is a person as he or she stands face to face, turned toward another person, engaged in dialogue, involved in relationship. In contrast, the word individual, developed centuries after the word person, comes from the Latin word individuus, "not divisible." These derivations offer us important clues to understand how we grow. We are persons, face to face, in community, not separated individuals: we are a people in community who need others...we discover our identity in the context of community. We learn best together, with the help of other people. (Spiritual



Mentoring by Anderson and Reese, 21)

*It didn't take me long to get to the root of my reluctance: I didn't want to share what was most essential to me. I wanted to keep control. I wanted to be boss...I wanted to be in charge of my inner life. I wanted to have the final say-so in my relationship with God. (Eugene Peterson in *Working the Angels*, 118)*

The movie *Gladiator* tells the story of how men were trained to become individual fighting machines. Fighting to the death, brutality, and the human will to survive were put on display for the amusement of others in huge stadiums. In the middle of the film in which Russell Crowe stars, a most amazing scene unfolds.

For one particular event, a number of gladiators are hand selected to engage in an epic battle not against each other, but against an unknown foe. The gladiators have no idea what kind of clash awaits them. As the men march up the tunnel to the stadium, Russell Crowe's character, Maximus, implores the other fighters with this powerful injunction: "If we stick together, we have a much better chance of surviving whatever comes through those tunnels."

Once the dozen gladiators arrive in the stadium, a number of galloping chariots come flying into the arena. The odds of surviving, let alone winning, are minuscule in the face of such superior strength. Maximus again sternly reminds the other warriors to band together. With brilliant foresight, he instructs the men to form into a tight-knit circle with their shields facing outward. He repeatedly yells the encouragement, "Hold, hold, hold as one!" With this peculiar strategy the gladiators are able to fend off repeated blows and advances of the enemy chariots. One by one, the horses and riders are dislodged from their chariots and the gladiators score an amazing upset, much to the delight of the crowd.

Sadly, the gladiators who did not join the circle are picked off one by one with arrows or spears. But the fighters who joined the circle and worked together are able to prosper and survive.

The Apostle Paul would have liked that scene. Paul would have appreciated the depiction of life in the arena, the blood and sweat, the conflict, and the powerful image of men locking shields together. There are a number of places in the Bible where God challenges us with this central truth: we are designed to need other people. We were not created to fight through life on our own, and we certainly are not expected to try to build His church by ourselves.

And yet, there is a message subtly being conveyed in the Church today

which suggests that we can become more like Christ simply by ourselves. It is the notion that “individual spirituality” is truly the key. Self-made Christianity is now being peddled in any number of flavors, sizes, and shapes.

Yet in Hebrews 10:24 we find these familiar words: “And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...” The Greek word for *stimulate* is the word for *provoke* which was often used in a negative connotation such as when Paul’s spirit was provoked in Athens. The sense is that believers are to use intense effort to spur one another on toward Christian maturity. It is the notion that we need others speaking into our lives, sharpening us, and helping us to become more than we are at present.

For over a decade, pastor and church planter Neil Cole (*Cultivating a Life for God* and *Organic Church*) has been utilizing a simple yet powerful “stimulation” tool or method called Life Transformation Groups (LTG’s). Through Neil’s influence Life Transformation Groups have sprouted up all over the U.S. and in several countries around the globe. The genius of LTG’s or Triads is their simplicity and the core principles that drive their effectiveness.

Principle #1: Drench yourself in God’s Word

LTG’s aren’t about the latest and greatest discipleship tool or resource. It’s not about the three minute devotional reading before you rush off to work or nod off to sleep. Rather, it’s about challenging people to soak themselves in the Bible. Neil Cole discovered (or re-discovered) that people experienced true life transformation when they spent considerable time each day in God’s Word. He has found that the Spirit brings the needed conviction and transforming power as believers seek to become more like Christ.

Principle #2: Confession of sin

The book of James encourages us to confess our sins to one another that we might be healed. John Wesley took this mandate seriously when he encouraged believers to gather in groups to talk openly and honestly about sin in their lives. In recent times there have been a number of accountability groups that have sprouted up across the Christian landscape with the same goal in mind. LTG’s are a simple extension of our need for accountability in our Christian walk. Confession of sin both to God and to others is wonderfully freeing also as issues and struggles are brought into the light of a safe, caring Christian community.



Principle #3: Focused prayer for the harvest

LTG's are also a place where focused attention is given to praying for people in our harvest fields. In the busyness of life it is easy to lose sight of the primary objective of sharing the Gospel with our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and extended family. LTG's encourage consistent prayer for these people by name and for the boldness to be active witnesses of His grace in our lives.

Nuts and bolts of Triads

Group size: As their name suggests, Triads are no more than three people. Once a group has gone to four people it has become too large for the kind of personal sharing and accountability that is involved. At four, a group is ready to birth a second Triad, which is one of the beauties of the method: it is very easy to reproduce.

Who's a candidate for a Triad: Anyone can be in a Triad. The only requirement is that an individual is willing to work with the intended structure of the group. Even someone who is seeking after God could be enfolded into a group like this. Groups are gender specific though; men with men and women with women.

Frequency: A weekly format is suggested because of the nature of the group.

Format of the meeting: An effective Triad meeting can be done in one hour. Some groups may choose to go longer than this. In a one-hour format, 20 minutes can be devoted to sharing personal applications from a previously assigned Bible reading, 30 minutes can be devoted to the accountability questions, and the last 10 minutes can be devoted to prayer. The location of the Triad meeting is completely up to the group.

Accountability agreements: Two things need to be agreed on by the group: (1) How many chapters of the Bible will we read each week? and (2) Which accountability questions do we want to use? (See sample format in this module and Neil Cole's book *Cultivating a Life for God* for more help.) Cole suggests that the Bible reading goal should be 25-30 chapters a week and if one member does not complete the reading in a given week then the whole group re-reads the same chapters again. That's helpful accountability! The accountability questions can also be modified according to gender.

Helpful resources

Organic Church by Neil Cole
Cultivating a Life for God by Neil Cole

Helpful websites

www.organicchurch.net

Discussion Questions

- 1) Which of the three quotes at the beginning of the article do you like most and why?
- 2) What ideas or principles stood out to you as you read the article?
- 3) What were you most challenged by personally from the article?

**15-20
minutes**

Learning Activity: Sample Triad Format

- First Segment: Each person in the group should share:

-What did you learn from the Bible reading (what was new, intriguing, or challenging from the reading)?

-What specifically do you need to apply (live out)?

- Second segment: Each person in the group takes time to report in on the accountability questions by giving a score from 1-5 and the specific reason for the score. The scorecard on the next page can be used for 8 meetings.

- Third segment: Who are some specific people and ways that we can pray for the harvest? Spend time praying for them by name.



Accountability Scoring (one example):

1-doing poorly, 3-somewhat, 5-doing well

	1	2	3	4	5
Proper self-care: How well have I taken care of myself in the past week emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally?					
Family Development: How well have I met the priority needs of my wife and children?					
Purity: How well have I remained pure in my thought life and my exposure to sexually explicit material including TV, printed material, or the Internet?					
Anger: Have I remained angry at someone, or have I damaged another person with my words?					
Relational Evangelism: How intentional have I been about building a relationship with someone who needs the love of Jesus?					
Financial Integrity: Have I handled my finances with integrity and honesty?					

15-30
minutes

Learning Activity: Sample Triad

Facilitator Instructions: Break the group into twos or threes for this exercise, men with men and women with women only. Avoid cross-gender pairings. Instruct the group to work through this sample Triad format:

1. Share one thing you are learning from your Bible reading.
2. Pick two areas from the accountability questions on the previous page that you are comfortable sharing about. Tell the group what score you would give yourself and why.
3. Pick one person in your harvest field to pray for by name. After everyone has shared a name spend a few minutes praying together.

5
minutes

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

What is the next step for you personally? What will be your next step in forming or becoming part of a Triad?

1. Start a Triad in the next month. Invite one person in your congregation who you consider to be stronger in their faith and invite another person who is on the fringe of the church or may be completely outside of your church. The goal is to find somebody who is in the seeker category. The aim is to find two people who would be willing to begin meeting weekly to go through the triad format that has been suggested in this module.
2. Read *Shaped by God's Heart* by Mildred Minatrea and complete the Book Review Questions.



Book Review Questions

***Shaped by God's Heart* by Mildred Minatrea**

1. Reflect on the current member expectations in your church. What changes can you make that encourage a higher threshold for membership (Ch. 3)?

2. On the basis of what you have read and understood in Chapter 4, identify five means through which your congregation will begin to develop and cultivate authenticity within the Body.

3. Discuss the implications of the phrase "We will not teach beyond obedience" (Ch. 5). Predict potential changes in your church if you were to implement this idea.

4. What are some possible implications for your church from Chapter 6 regarding worship?

5. What lifestyle implications (Ch. 7) are there in the statement "Incarnation is always away from self and toward another"? How could your church better prepare disciples for an incarnational lifestyle?

6. If people in your community (Ch. 8) were to say “What you’re doing speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you’re saying!” what priorities would they attribute to your church on the basis of their observing your actions?

7. Respond to question #3 on page 109 (Reflection and Application) and Peter Drucker’s quote.

8. What are three of the most important insights you gained from reading this book?

9. What action steps do you need to take as a result of reading this book?



LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

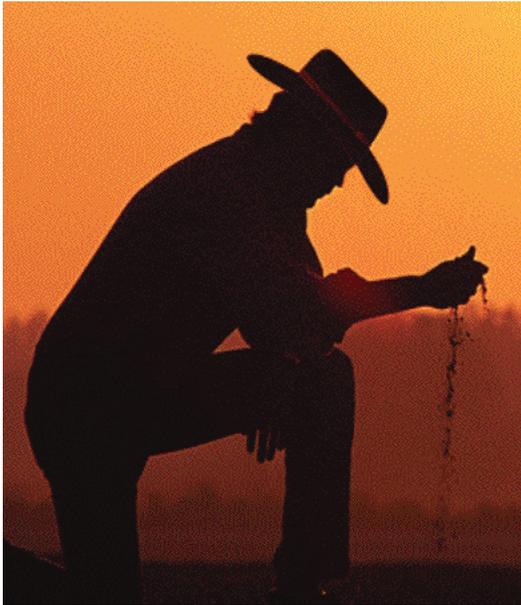
Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?