

**the**

**C.U.R.E**

**for Life**



**the**

# **C.U.R.E**

**for Life**

**GOD-CENTRED TRANSFORMATION**

## **Part 1**

**God-centred transformation for Small group leaders, Chaplains,  
Bible Colleges, Pastors, People Helpers, those in Mission and  
Ministry, Teachers and Health Professionals.**

**Dr JOHN WARLOW**

**ADULT, CHILD AND FAMILY PSYCHIATRIST. MB ChB FRANZCP**

the C.U.R.E for LIFE is a three part series.

Part One; God-centred transformation

Part Two; God-centred relationships

Part Three; Biblical Foundations

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the C.U.R.E for LIFE

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## Foreword

**M**y first notable connection with Dr John Warlow was some 25 years ago, at a counselling conference with Dr Gary Collins.

John had requested through me, as Senior Pastor for Kenmore Baptist Church, to host the conference at our church in return for free entry for any of our staff. John and I shared a great appreciation for Gary Collins' invaluable contribution to counselling literature and his emphasis on the integration of biblical truth with social sciences. Following the conference, John called together those people interested in forming a counselling network. The response was very positive and enthusiastic.

From that informal gathering emerged the Christian Counsellors Association of Queensland (CCAQ) – of which I became the founding chairperson. This filled a real vacuum in the Christian community in Brisbane which until that time had no such resource.

As John and I developed a personal and professional relationship through counselling, I became aware of John's passion and journey to integrate his psychiatric and counselling training with both biblical truth and everyday life – a journey we both passionately shared. Around that time, John and I met to discuss his aspiration to develop a "Christian Wholeness Counselling Centre" (CWCC) through which his developing concepts and practice could be freely expressed. John, being a man of action, has not only realized his aspirations of CWCC, but has progressed to develop easily understood concepts and reproductive training materials designed to transform lives spiritually, personally and socially. These materials are now being used internationally to train counsellors with great impact.

In his latest offering, *the C.U.R.E for LIFE – God-centred transformation*, John uses a simple stepwise process based on the word CURE, a necessary environment based on the word SAFETY, and various shapes or symbols of understanding of life such as the triangle, the circle, the square, the cross and the pyramid, to move people toward human flourishing and the experience of Shalom, God’s wholistic peace. John’s concepts are relevant and life-changing in all dimensions of life. This book is a valuable resource for all who desire or are assisting others to move forward and upward to genuine wholeness. Well done John!

Ric Benson, Church Pastor, Brisbane, 2017

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## Disclaimer

*The C.U.R.E. for Life* book series offers education and insight addressing God-centred transformation, God-centred Relationships and the biblical Foundations from which these have been developed.

The author and assisting publisher, Ocean Reeve Publishing (PTY) Ltd (hereafter referred to as ORP) maintain that this series is to stimulate discussion, an interest in, and improve information about the Christian faith and way of life. We have aimed to keep the information in this series accurate and consistent with current Christian teachings. Any errors brought to our attention will be attended to.

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## Preface

**Y**es, I am a counselling psychiatrist. It is my job to connect with and understand people and relationships and help bring about change.

I want to share amazing pivotal principles and practices that I, with the help of others, have discovered. These insights arose out of my struggles of loving and being loved, knowing and being known, and growing in a God-centred flourishing direction. They can be used in any situation where there are people.

My wonderful parents-in-law did not want my wife, Jill, to marry a psychiatrist. They thought psychiatrists were crazy and they may have been partly right. I certainly had struggles. I never thought I would be writing a book on people and change in the context of relationships. I did not grow up with much of a sense of relationships. Yet it was despite my own lack of understanding of people and relationships that I realised that there must be something deeper. As a Christian, I knew there was more than the physical. As a medical doctor, I knew there was more than the spiritual. I had a deep conviction that we were meant to be an integrated whole, something I certainly had not been.

It has been from this unsuitable background, in the context of relating with fellow life travellers, that for more than 25 years this framework for life and growth has developed. It is truly Christian. It is wholistic in an integrated way. It is a broad framework rather than a particular therapeutic model. This book is based on these three pillars: Christianity, wholeness, and a framework, which is why it is actually called *The Christian Wholeness Framework (CWF)*.

How about you? Have you ever found yourself thinking you need change in your life? Perhaps for yourself, or in your relationships with

others. This book presents an ordered set of principles for effective personal growth, and growth for others. It draws from my own and other's insights into people and relationships gained while living life, raising a family with five children, and counselling people for more than 25 years.

## About this book

I have discovered a series of steps that help me personally, and help me to help others. I keep returning to them not only in my work but also in my personal life. These steps are named **The CURE**, and as you will see, the order of them is very important as they are arranged in a way that prioritises relationships.

The CURE process can be applied to every imaginable relational scenario: marriage, family, friendships, your relationship with God or even within yourself. This book introduces you to the **Steps** and **Shapes** that are the backbone to this process. I hope it is an encouragement. Apply it in your life and use it as a resource to help those around you. Learn it, live it, give it!

What you will find here is a picture language which you can learn. Any language can be used at an introductory level, for example with young children, right through to being used in a complex way. However, any language needs to be learnt, and so in some ways this book is an introductory textbook of a new language.

Why do you need a new language when you already have your own? At a basic level, this language can bring together the essentials of life and relationships. A picture says a thousand words, and so do each of these Steps and Shapes. These pictures, describing the Steps and Shapes, will help you to put words to what is really important, and help you more easily to share what you learn with others. You will be freed to learn, live and give in your way, regardless of how young or old you are, and regardless of which culture you might be connected with.

The theme of this book is God-centred transformation. You will see it time and again – becoming more God-centred compared to self-centred or even other-centred, rising up into a better place of functioning in

your lives. Because it is God-centred, that flourishing will be used to bless or lift others up. That blessing will be to bless.

This book on God-centred transformation is the first part of three in the series of *the C.U.R.E. for Life*. It provides a beginner's overview of this picture language of the Steps and Shapes. It can be read in its own right, without having to read the others. The second part, on *God-centred Relationships*, goes deeper into the Shape of the Circles, while providing a simple yet profound example on how relationships work. The third part digs down into the biblical foundations of the CURE.

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the fellow travellers of the Living Wholeness community, who over the years have helped me to walk the journey of moving towards Christian Wholeness. In particular, I would like to thank the core team of Living Wholeness for being such a part of developing *the Christian Wholeness Framework* and also for their assistance with this book. Thank you, David Nikles and Susanne Nikles for our transforming connection for over a decade. Thank you also Carolyn Russell, for our fellow travelling for 20 years.

Thank you, John Leigh, for those 11,973 editorial changes! You have been a brother to me over these last 25 years. Thanks, Ric Benson, for our connection over these 25 years, with the most recent being your foreword in this book.

Thank you for contributions from my Living Wholeness colleagues – Daphne Austin, Jono Andrews, Ashley Withers, Peter Hayton, Andy Pocock, Peter Janetzki, Johanna Lynch along with Jason and KK Lee, Derek and Yoshi, GH, Joash and Shirley. Thanks also to Harry and Tina.

Thanks also for help with the book to Belinda Pollard, Phil Strong, Rod Drew, Andrew Wright, my mate of many years, with your great wife, Anne. Also, thanks to Prue Parsons, Murray Robertson, Don Todman, Rowe, Bex, Barbara and Parsa, as well as friends, family and church connections for your help. Thank you, Ocean Reeve, my publisher and marketer. Thank you, Daniel, my son, for your part in this book and especially the section authored by you. Joshua and Estelle, Benjamin, Luke and Hannah: thank you! A huge thank you to Jill, my wife, for your crucial role behind the scenes, for your sharpening, challenging, and crystallising the development of the CURE. Thank you

for being with me in the heat of the kitchen for so long, as the CURE has developed and now is ready to be served.

Thanks also to Mike Husband who, with his eye for structure, grammar and detail, massaged the text of this revision into a better form.

Most of all I'm grateful to God who has changed my life so much, for Him and all He means to me including giving me the amazing privilege of finding the steps and shapes. I dedicate this book to Him, and to followers of the body of Jesus throughout the world, that we might be more like Jesus and live more in the way He lived.

# REFLECTIONS

on

## the C.U.R.E. for Life

**H**ere is feedback to the first edition of this book (2017) regarding this book from people who have travelled with me in different contexts often over a significant period of time. Some have provided me with their thoughts and feedback on *the C.U.R.E. for Life*.

### **Derek, Teacher in Asia**

This is just the sort of book that is needed to bring CWF to “people helpers” and the interested reader. Great job! I plan to buy it as soon as it hits the shelves!

### **Yoshi, Teacher in Asia**

A very captivating book. Makes complex concepts simple to understand and remember. I recommended it to teachers who had attended the CWF introductory training. The personal testimonies are very powerful.

### **Joash, Teacher in Asia**

Loved reading *the C.U.R.E.*! Was useful, thoughtful and practical.

### **Barbara S**

How accessible this book is, with the authentic voice and your great desire to share what you have been working with over the last number of years. It is the sort of material that is great to have on your bookshelf so that you can go back and re-read sections.

John's book is a framework to continue to resource and help keep you on track. It has articulated the Steps in such a way that is not complicated but flows so that a person who is reading it would not become overwhelmed with the content or find it confusing. I love how the book is connected with John's personal journey. It makes your work tangible and real to the person who is reading this book. It is a fantastic tool for EVERYONE and a learning and development resource that can be picked up and put down at any time and still able to be followed.

### **Writer, Mother and Patient**

This book is so much more than great theories and strategies, this book has been lived out in my life as a parent of a broken and traumatised little girl. Dr Warlow has led our family through these Shapes and strategies with compassion and godly wisdom. As a result, we have walked forward together through a journey of healing and recovery. I have been able to generalise this valuable knowledge into other relationships including with God and in ministry bringing a new richness and depth to my life.

### **Philip Lye, Small Group Leader, Elder & Missionary, Th.D., Brisbane**

The CURE is a masterpiece into God's divine ways, leading the reader into a deeper relational experience with God and fellow man resulting in genuine change. There is something for everyone, from the casual reader to the practitioner. It is a manuscript which you will want to re-read as you seek to put these keys of truth into practice. Dr John Warlow has excelled again. Highly recommended.

### **Professor Emeritus Rod Drew**

#### **Prof of Horticulture Ph.D., D.Sc., Brisbane**

The further I read into *the C.U.R.E.*, the more God spoke to me and the more I saw it as inspirational. It is not only very valuable from a psychiatric/counselling perspective, but the way it weaves the message of the Bible and Jesus through *the C.U.R.E.* is inspirational.

The ABC of God-centred change is the best presentation of the gospel I have heard.

**Julie Loi, Missionary, Counsellor, Teacher, member of my church small group**

This book is highly recommended for Pastors, Bible teachers, missionaries, health professionals, families and anyone who wants to grow deeper in their walk with God and in ministry to others.

Dr John has collated practical principles, skills and strategies through his many years of psychiatry experience, helping others in their personal challenges, journeys and relationships.

John's unique framework, is a valuable tool, encouraging ongoing change through its application. Through strategies such as self-reflective questions and the visual representation of Steps and Shapes, you will be challenged to become more like Jesus, to grow in servant-leadership and will be equipped in helping transform the lives of others.

**John Leigh, Teacher, editor, friend, brother**

It has been an absolute privilege to walk with John for many years on the 'steps' of THE CURE and in the 'shapes' of a masterful systematic framework that provides life-transforming tools for personal and relational growth. There is so much wisdom, insight and sound advice in THE CURE. John encourages us to embark on a transformational journey of the human heart and provides life-changing tools for personal and relational growth. It has been an absolute privilege to work with John in helping to polish up his 'magnum opus', expressed through the blood, sweat, tears and prayers of his life's work – THE CURE! As I'm sure John would say, "To God be the glory!". Stay tuned ... there's more!

**Phil Strong, Presbyterian Church Pastor, Brisbane**

Really clear from this is the global nature of the CWF that makes it a window through which all Scriptures (like all human circumstances) can be viewed. Shows the strength of the Framework! I liked the theology of the seven stages in your document. I immediately sense how accessible this will be for ministry workers – what a great blessing to Jesus' people and the world to which we bring His light and life.

**Ashley Withers, Psychologist, Brisbane**

An excellent book! It has been an informative and inspiring read and I especially enjoyed how you tied in your personal story. The theological reflection and practical application are also excellent. You've made this very practical and accessible and I pray it assists many people in deepening understanding of themselves and of God's grace and purpose for life.

**Daphne Austin, Pastor and psychologist (retired), Fraser Coast, Qld**

The integration of self with the written text invites the reader to do the same, in SAFETY. Hold at arm's length to learn, but internalise to change, which in turn speaks to Wholeness and Oneness, whilst processing the material. This is an invaluable book. I loved most of all the explanation of the Square and the Shape of the Cross. It was very clear and as I read, I felt that for Christians in particular, it gave real hope – hope of His unconditional love despite sin; of the normalcy of sin for Christians and how easy it is to move from right to left and how to move back again. It offered a much easier understanding of Justification, Sanctification and Repentance. Likewise, the pyramid was well explained.

**Peter Janetzki, Counsellor/Educator & Radio Host**

Dr John Warlow has the most complex mind that I know, and it has been a pleasure for me to journey with him as a professional colleague and friend, for two decades. The concepts explained within this book, *the C.U.R.E for Life* have become the foundational blocks of my work in counselling couples and individuals as well as within my lecturing role of training under-graduate and post-graduate counselling students. Over the years John has explained these concepts in various media and formats, and in *the C.U.R.E for Life*, John has been able to explain not only these important concepts but also how they integrate with clarity and simplicity utilising his own real life application. If you want to grow yourself, then this is a must read.

**Dr Jonathan Andrews, Clinical Psychologist, Heart in Mind**

*The C.U.R.E for Life* has the audacity to touch on something that is not just for our time, but for all of us, all of the time. The CURE uses the

universal language of the Shapes, and is based on a wisdom grounded in psychiatry, neurology, developmental psychology, theology and ... common sense. It has been my great privilege to be one of the many beneficiaries of Dr John Warlow's wisdom. With the publishing of this book, many others can benefit from it also.

**Dr Carolyn Russell, Colleague, Principal of  
Foundations Counselling Centre,  
GP, Medical Educator and Counsellor**

John is a man who continues his journey of transformation into Christ-likeness daily. He does this by the application of his Framework, a biblically based and psychologically robust system for understanding how humans function and relate. This framework is for Connecting deeply with each other, and Understanding, with the outcome of being able to Respond as Christ commands, i.e. by 'each othering'. The Steps of CUR and E enable us to assess how we are Connecting and Understanding in many situations, both personal and professional. It is a joy to work with John and others using the CWF, and to enable members of churches to engage with each other more deeply. I encourage you to read this book so that you might do the same.

**Dr Andrew Wright, Australian Director, Yotkom Uganda**

In his book, *the C.U.R.E for Life*, John will help you achieve these goals. He does this by sharing his personal journey and clearly articulating his life work as a psychiatrist, developing a model and framework of wholeness. Reading this book will help us better understand ourselves and others and will provide revealing insights into the truths of the Christian faith. The content is relevant to our marriages, families, workplaces and organisations. For many years, I have had the privilege of being a close friend and travelling companion of John. During this time, he has shared the framework with me and taught me so much.

However, having the opportunity to read his latest book has inspired me to be more intentional about utilising this framework in my African primary healthcare setting.

### **Dr David Nikles, working in East Asia**

It's now more than ten years that I have been working with John Warlow using the *Christian Wholeness Framework*.

These have definitely been the most fulfilling years of my life as I have come to be able to fully accept myself, know who I am in God, and follow the calling He has given me. John does not only write and teach on the CWF, but every day he lives and breathes every Step and Shape with God's help.

This most recent of his books is John's best, expounding with crystal clarity and beautiful simplicity the profound depths of the CWF, facilitating access to it for everyone. No longer should the CWF be just for professionals and pastors, but this book opens the CWF for all to read and understand, to live and give.

Enjoy the decades of wisdom contained within these pages. It will bless you for life!

### **Susanne Nikles, Professional Counsellor**

The CURE gives us a much-needed gift for our lives and relationships. It is simple enough for everyone to use and yet will profoundly change lives and relationships. It unpacks how to practically love another person with mature love, how to really be there for another in a Christ like way. And it guides us through the harder part of seeing our own blind spots and weaknesses and shows us how to let God transform them for His glory. We then can live authentic lives that will attract others to the Kingdom, not fake imitations that leave us all dissatisfied. Using the CURE for our lives and relationships has enriched our marriage, strengthened our parenting, and is the corner stone of our counselling work. It is worth every minute of your time to digest its precious contents.

### **Dr Jill Warlow, Wife and GP**

This book is a picture of John's desire to equip people in all stages of life and learning: to know themselves, to relate better with others and to have God at the centre of it all. I'm proud to have been with him on this journey.

## About the author



John was born in India, received his medical degree in Birmingham England, and specialised in Psychiatry in New Zealand. He completed his Child and Adolescent Psychiatry specialisation in Melbourne and Brisbane, Australia, where he now lives with his wife Jill. They have five adult children, and an increasing number of grandchildren.

John has a deep Christian faith. He has worshipped with the Open Brethren, Wesleyans, Anglicans and

Baptists, and is currently at Hillsong Brisbane, a Pentecostal church where he has been for about 20 years. He seeks to be a follower of Jesus. John has a passion to see two things happen. Firstly, to facilitate the development of mental health professionals who are Christians to become more integrated in their practice. Secondly, for the Church to be sharing the teachings of Jesus in the present day, in a more wholistic way.

John is a practicing Clinical, Counselling, Consulting, Cross-Cultural, Christian, Child, Adult and Family Psychiatrist, and has been so since 1990. He began developing *the Christian Wholeness Framework* in 1989. In 1994 he founded the **Christian Wholeness Counselling Services**. For ten years, he directed the training in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for the Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Queensland.

John has had a broad range of clinical (assessment and treatment/therapy) experience. He assists children, adolescents and adults with relationship problems (including marriage and family), educational, behavioural, mood (depression, anxiety and anger), personality, and psychiatric challenges. He also provides therapy for those in severe stress, trauma and grief. Coming from a broad Christian background, he specialises in integrating matters of faith and practice. His consulting, teaching and supervision skills have benefited professionals, counsellors and churches.

# Introduction

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# Introduction

## The Writer

Who am I to be writing this book?! Life did not start off well for me. When I was young I was acquainted with aloneness, hardly knowing my parents. On top of that, I knew something of what teenage confusion was about, struggling to find out who I was. Not a good mix to help me move forwards into life. As I have mentioned, relationships often did not come easy to me. Truly, not surprising as I was brought up by a nanny and then from the early age of seven institutionalised in a boarding school! As if that were not enough, my shyness and sensitivity made relating with others even harder. No, I was not a natural at relating.

And yet, while my foundations were far from perfect, I am heading towards being transformed in the context of growing meaningful relationships not only with my family, friends and others, but also with God and funnily enough, relating to myself as well. I am extremely grateful for the relationships I have now and the history I have with other fellow travellers, those who also want to live a meaningful God-centred life. This CURE for Life was found in the furnace of my linguistic limitations and my attachment struggles. It emerged from my growing relationship with God and my fellow travellers, my being with patients, as well as my studies over the years of science, psychology, sociology and anthropology of man in the context of a robust biblical theology.

Academically, learning language at school really turned me off! I was not good at it. I seriously had to get extra tuition to help me pass my basic English exams. And yet now I am in a profession where

language is the tool of the trade! I cannot get over the fact that I am the one who out of my struggles had the privilege of finding this picture language, the CURE for Life!

However, learning a language can take time. Don't I know. My first language was Hindi, of which I still remember remnants. Learning Latin at primary school in England was bizarre. All I remember now was, "amo, amas, amat" which was to do with love! That was obviously not a great deal of help! Although France was just across the channel, and you would have expected it to have some relevance, I could hardly grasp French in my early high school years. Even worse has been my learning of Chinese, which has only resulted in my being able to say something along the lines of "hello" and "thank you", both with incorrect innuendos. You would not believe the amount of help I have needed to write this book in terms of the linguistics.

My wife said I looked like death warmed up as I walked off the plane from Auckland into the cold night of Christchurch, New Zealand. I had just unbelievably passed my fellowship exams to become a psychiatrist. The brutal process of having to undergo this challenge had driven me to have a need for a flexible and transportable structure, anatomy and anthropology of the person. That is the purpose of this book. To teach you this flexible structure of Steps and Shapes, without having to go anywhere close to having to become a psychiatrist. With this Framework, you can have a greater sense of connectedness and understanding within yourself and in your relationships. This happened to me. I put a lot of my personal growth down to being able to articulate the essentials for life, in this **CURE for Life**, which I found over 25 years ago.

### **The Reader**

Whom is this book for? You might be a natural at growing in life and relationships and might not feel the need to learn anymore about change, let alone another language! If this is the case, these Steps and Shapes will give you a way of articulating what you already know. Moreover, for some, especially those who are well endowed with skills and maybe have a significant attachment to a particular model

for change, this picture language can even be offensive. This may be all the more so because it is in essence taking complicated principles from the hands of experts and transferring them to the hearts of people through a simple, unique, universal and uniting picture language.

### **For whom is this book?**

This book is for anyone who wants to take change seriously. It is designed to help you start or continue your journey of change towards God-centred flourishing of every part of you – spiritually, personally and socially. You may well have tried what has been suggested in this book, but in the process got hurt. I encourage you to read this book, to see why you got hurt and even cautiously to try again. For example, some of you might have been turned off through others' lack of care or respect, or just pushing you to places where you didn't want to go. You'll see in this book how toxic that experience can be, but also how even that process can be reshaped, correctly and safely.

Whether you are spiritual or not, this book can be transformative. My hope is that you can take and use it in a life changing way for others and for those around you. Perhaps as yet you have not considered the spiritual aspect of life or have not desired or wanted to explore God stuff!

The CURE is now starting to emerge, getting into the hands of the masses, helping marriages and parents, people in all walks of life, through those who are learning *the Christian Wholeness Framework* and living and giving it to others. It is now going to churches, Bible seminaries, people helpers and professional counsellors. This picture language is helping orphans in Asia, street kids, church small groups, and adults of differing ages from a range of cultural backgrounds including in Japan, Brazil, Nepal, India, East Timor, Singapore, Thailand, China, Australia and the USA. You know that marriages, families, churches and even friends often struggle. Workplaces can come to a screaming halt just because the people there don't actually live out the essentials of life individually or together. How things could be different if they knew not only the bare essentials for life in these contexts but also lived them out! May I suggest that this CURE for life has authentic and practical answers!

## The Book

So, what is this book about? This Framework for change is not a fast fix. The book itself has matured over a lot of years and it can benefit you for many productive years! I have given to others what now I give to you, from my life lessons. I don't know where I would be without this Framework, for it invites me to grow spiritually, personally and socially. It is a picture language which is indeed God-centred, practical and transferable. This language can be used by you in your unique situation and yet it is also relevant universally!

As with any language, this also is a progressive learning process. That's why it is broken up into a number of sequential Sections. Best not to get onto the second Section about the Shapes too quickly until you have a firm grounding of the Steps. The Steps will particularly help you with probably one of your first questions of "how do I use this in this particular context?" The Shapes can help you strengthen your Steps and respond to other questions that you may have. When you have an overview of *Part One*, you may then want to explore the second book, *Part Two: God-centred relationships*.

This book will serve you best if you take it easily, one Step at a time, and ideally walk the Steps while sharing your findings with someone else. The CURE for Life has enough material to last you quite a while as you take it in and live it out in your unique situations! This is experiential learning – the book will help you with numerous prompts, assist you to ask yourself questions about the relevance of these Steps and Shapes, and to consider action points to help you live this out in your way. You may also want to refer to this book on an 'as needed' basis with whatever is coming up in your life. Trying to learn a language all at once is not only uncomfortable but can be totally overwhelming! I totally understand, so take your time!

Where does this book go, and what journey does it take? This book is written on a gradient of a learning curve. Like a climb up a hill, we start this first *Part One* gently walking the Steps. So, we start with the essential foundation of Connecting, which if not established, will collapse under the weight of the subsequent Steps. To love is essential. To be loved and known is a core need of all of us, whether we are Christians or not. If you like, we call that "common grace" as

God made us all that way – Christians or not. That’s why we need not only the Connecting Step to grow love but also the next Understanding Step so that we can be known. It is really on the foundation of these two Steps that things can change. Being foundational, Connecting and Understanding may not be too visible or tangible above the surface of the landscape. But it is on this foundation that change really happens in the context of the subsequent Step, the Response Step. If you like, this is the ‘fix it’ Step. Too quickly, we may just want to get onto that Step without sufficient undergirding of the previous Steps, resulting in a collapse of whatever building we are trying to make, or whatever change we are wanting to happen. It is in those situations that not only do we need to go back and get the foundations right, but we also have the option of moving from these three Steps onto the next Step from Responding, to Engage Help.

In the second Section of *Part One*, the gradient steepens and at times can be quite hilly. This is especially so as we combine the Square with the Shape of the Cross.

The real climb is in *Part Two* of the series, which is why that has been set as a separate book. It is for those who want to go further into understanding the person in the context of relationships.

Why the Shapes? All of these God-centred Shapes are there to help us to consolidate the Steps on which they stand. Because of this, you will see that the Steps and Shapes are linked. While they are all associated with each other, to make it easy, we highlight the preferred link between each Step and a Shape. Thus, the Triangle is especially linked to Connecting with God, with ourselves and with someone else. The Circles help us to Understand and to know the whole person. As this is the Shape which encapsulates all the other Shapes in a more complex way, only a brief introduction to the Circles is provided in *Part One*. The second book, *Part Two*, expands further on getting to know the person deeper in the context of relationships. The Square is really linked to both the Understanding and the Response Step. The Square helps us to Understand and to know where we are, and where we need to go and to grow especially in terms of setting a direction for a Response to our situation. The Pyramid shows from whom we Engage Help or support so that we can serve others.

In the second Section of this trilogy *Part Two*, we go deeper into the person. However far you travel, I hope that you'll find it worthwhile.

There are so many self-help books and so much information on how to do something, why to do it, whom to do it with and how to do it.

For me, all of this gets too complex! I don't need multiple recipes which I have to remember for how to live life. What I want is more in the way of principles which I can apply in different situations. These principles are predominantly to do with people and relationships, which over time have become a significant passion of mine. I long to see people become God-centred and whole in an integrated way. Yes, these principles have been an indispensable part of my journey as I move towards living a whole life, a Christian life in all its wholeness.

### **The Cure: More about the Picture Language**

The power of language. Yes, the CURE is a common uniting transferable picture language! Language is critical to life. Imagine what it would be like without a language and not being able to communicate with each other! The mind boggles! But do we really get the power of language?

Centuries ago, a group of people in the Middle East were becoming more and more powerful in terms of doing whatever they wanted. Having a common language, there was nothing to stop them. With this power they started building a huge monument for themselves which became known as the Tower of Babel. In the first book of the Bible, in Genesis chapter 11, it says that God had a simple way of stopping this rise of self-centredness, just by stopping them from being able to communicate with the same language. It was that simple; now they could not really communicate, let alone relate with each other! They started to separate from each other. The building came to a grinding halt! Positively speaking, straight after that God used language to make promises to Abraham about how God would ultimately bless every tribe and language group of the world through Jesus. It's the promise of the good news of Jesus – who Himself is the communication from God that crosses all boundaries and barriers and reconciles people to God and to one another!

Language is highly relevant to you and to your relationships. Regardless of how old you are, where you live in the world, or in what context you find yourself. You know what it's like when others try to fix you without really trying to understand you, let alone having hardly any connection with you. It is as though whatever they might be saying just does not help. Their words hinder connection and understanding, and the relationship deteriorates! Likewise, language is important to developing, or on the other hand has the power of devastating, relationships. This CURE for Life is a condensed life changing language. What would it be like to have a language which brought together the essentials of what is meaningful for living? This is what the CURE for Life does! It provides a simple language for growth which can respond to questions such as:

- Why am I here?
- Who am I and how am I going?
- Where am I at in life and where am I heading to?
- What is important anyway?
- How do I change?
- How do I grow and become a leader?

It also speaks, to questions such as:

- Why do good people suffer?
- Why can bad people do well?
- Why can Christians be so hypocritical?

The CURE for Life is not only about individual growth, but also about families changing, and groups of friends having healthier relationships. What if this CURE language could help the Church to grow and to become more like what it was meant to be, as Jesus would be, here and now? As mentioned, how would it be for this simple language also to be used to transform places of work to become places of personal and corporate growth? You will find that this book is not just a self-help book, but also very much a people helper manual, transforming you and supporting you, so that you in turn can serve others.

Again, if you are not a Christian and/or the spiritual side does not interest you, you might want to focus more on the other aspects of the Steps and Shapes.

There are some natural repetitions in this book. The Steps are so integrated that one aspect often significantly affects another and vice versa. It is only natural then that a particular feature in one part of the Framework will also reappear in another part. Also, as in learning a language, letters from an alphabet will be repeated to make different words. To some extent, likewise here the Steps and Shapes may be seen as letters of the alphabet which will be repeated throughout this picture language. The Steps and Shapes can also be seen as an underlying operating system to any app, as on a smart phone. So, with the CURE the Steps and Shapes can also be seen as an operating system which functions in a repeated way but for different applications. Finally, with the links between the what, why, who and how of the Steps and Shapes comes obvious overlaps and repetitions. The bottom line is, be patient with repetitions. They are there for these reasons.

So, by now you will be starting to get the picture that this book is not so much a light read, but more can become your reference for self-help and for other people help. To maximise the benefit of this book you may want to read it slowly, over a period of time. As is relevant, refer back to particular aspects of it. As you go through the book, the reflection and action prompts will help you to change. It may be helpful to evaluate how you are actioning the change over time with someone else. Finally, for anyone wanting to grow small groups in a church the CURE can provide a transformative approach which can be transferable to small groups. You will particularly see aspects relevant to this when talking about the church throughout the book.

### **What is the CURE?**

The CURE is a series of principles to help people and relationships flourish and thrive. It can help you navigate a difficult relational landscape, and when you are doing well, it can help you do even better. So, let us briefly look at what the CURE is? Why use it and what are the benefits? Whom is this for?

Since this is an introduction, and not a full explanation, don't expect this to make full sense on your first reading! Read on, learn something, see how you can live it out and share it, and then read again! Before looking at the benefits, let me preface them by a few brief

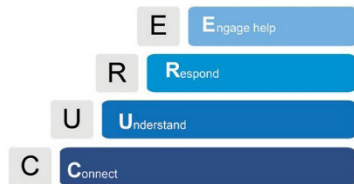
sentences on the CURE. The CURE is made up of a picture language of Steps and Shapes. Often in relationships, our instinct is to leap first into a response. However, before we respond, we must:

1. **C**onnect with the person and,
2. **U**nderstand their point of view. Then we can
3. **R**espond. This response can go further as we
4. **E**ngage Help from others, so we can serve and connect even more.

You **C**ONNECT when a person is sharing something with you and you put yourself in their shoes and actively listen, by rephrasing or paraphrasing what they have shared with you. You have empathised with them and you now **U**NDERSTAND a little more and have encouraged them to say more. You can now **R**ESPOND appropriately: “I understand that could be frustrating for you. I wonder what it would be like if you were to ....? Also, I am wondering how I may be able to help you through this?” If you provide some options about outside help, you have now **E**NGAGED HELP.

These are the four Steps of the CURE that we will explore in the chapters of Section 1.

The Steps of the CURE may seem simple enough and even quite obvious. Sometimes, however, we need to have important things brought to the forefront of our minds, even if we’ve learnt them before.



Yet it must be said that the power of the CURE is not in just knowing what it means. It is through the ongoing application of it that real change happens.

We will introduce the Shapes in the second Section of this book.

## **An overview of the benefits of the CURE**

The CURE is for individuals who want God-centred transformation in the midst of life’s challenges (personal, social and material). The CURE may seem simple, but its effects can be profound. Let’s look at some of the areas of growth that could lie ahead for those who apply these

principles. As we unpack the book, we will see how to access these benefits.

The Steps and Shapes offer a simple way to grow in the three core areas of our lives – our spiritual life, our personal life, and in our relationships – but like everything worthwhile in life, it will take some work to master them. Again, learn them, live them and get them to others. Fortunately, like acquiring a language, the CURE can be learnt gradually and in a straightforward way. As you develop the skill, it can become a lot easier because you will not only learn it but start to live it. Yes, and as you then give what you have learnt to others, in your own particular way, the language can become more of a framework for the God-centred principles guiding your life. As you walk the Steps and are empowered by the Shapes in the CURE, you'll find that with the help of God and from others, you can grow towards God-centred transformation in these three core areas. Remember that God-centred transformation has the two dimensions of change. Firstly, it is God-centred as opposed to self-centred or other-centred. Secondly, if possible, it is towards flourishing, positive and safe. Here is a quick breakdown of the possible benefits. Some of these may be relevant to you and some not.

### ***1. Spiritual growth***

This book invites you to grow spiritually. For many of us, spirituality is relevant to our everyday lives. As mentioned, this may not be the case for you, or you might belong to another faith tradition. But read on and see what applies to you and what may not be so relevant in your context.

You may be a Christian and may want to share this with some others who don't share your faith. The beauty of this picture language is that, while it highlights the essentials of our Christian faith, aspects of it have also been used effectively, extensively and acceptably with those for whom faith is not relevant at this point in their lives.

Being a follower of Jesus is to respond to what He has said, and to become more like Him as we link with others who themselves are also disciples following Jesus. Jesus summarised this in the New and Great Commandments. We are to love as Jesus did and to make disciples

as Jesus did. Yes, the CURE can help us to live Jesus' Great and New Commandments.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength ...  
Love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:30-31)

A New Command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34)

These spiritual beliefs become all the more apparent with the other part of the picture language – the five Shapes, which are linked into the CURE Steps later on in this book. They are all God-centred. You will also be able to use all of the five Shapes to help you grow spiritually.

## **2. Personal growth**

Personally, as mentioned, I'm not sure where I would have been if I had not been helped by the CURE. I have felt all of the experiences listed below and have found that being able to transform them is life-giving. This book invites us to grow personally in a wholistic way and to change us from the heart by exchanging:

- shame for love and connection
- lostness for being known, forgiven and understood
- despair for hope and freedom
- self-centredness for God-centredness and
- being defensive and “stuck”, for becoming open with others and growing.

These benefits of heart change are focused on even more in the second book, *Part Two* of this series.

## **3. Relationship growth**

I have already mentioned that relationships haven't come easy for me. So often I have fallen back on the CURE to help me grow with others. I have found these essential Steps to be so safe, secure and reliable in terms of understanding my relationships. When they go wrong, I can see fairly clearly which Step has not been properly established. On

the other hand, when a relationship goes well, I can see how that has happened. It makes sense. It becomes easy to see essential ingredients of how relationships work. It is not hard.

This book can also help your relationships to grow. The CURE invites us to develop to a greater capacity for walking the Steps of life together, so we can:

- **Connect** in safety, relating more warmly – i.e. to **love**.
- **Understand** and know another person in a deeper way – i.e. to **know**.
- **Respond** to God, to oneself and to others, and to develop stronger in a godly and positive direction – i.e. to **grow**.
- **Engage Help** to increase the capacity to **serve and to lead**.

The benefits to relationships are unpacked further in *Part Two, God-centred relationships*.

### **Whom is the CURE for? Where can it be applied?**

The CURE is for everyone. It is worth re-emphasising that while it has a universal application, the Steps and Shapes can be helpful in unique ways for any situation involving people. Feel free to see if any of the following four areas of living include you and maybe focus on that part!

#### **1. For home use**

Over time, probably all of my children have told me to Connect and Understand before I Respond to them as I've been learning to walk the Steps with them. I need these Steps on a daily basis to grow my marriage in easy times as well as when there are hard challenges. For families, it can assist with marriage enrichment, conflict resolution and parenting. As you go through this book you will see how the Steps and Shapes can be applied in these settings.

#### **2. For churches**

Over the last number of years, using the CURE principles has provided a structure in our church small group which has now become transferable to other church groups. It is working. The CURE can help churches grow. It can also enhance evangelism and discipleship. With the CURE,

the church can learn to love more effectively. We can connect more warmly with each other, know more of each other in a safe way, and grow towards God-centred transformation so that we can serve and lead as we Engage Help from others. This is because the CURE can help the church body to love and to know each other in a deeper measure, fuelling the critical sense of belonging and the motivation for service.

The vision of the CURE is to empower church leaders to facilitate a greater level of involvement within their congregations as people move from acceptance through to a sense of belonging and on to a place of service. For those more serious about wanting to be a part of growing the church, the vision of the CURE is to facilitate the development of the three levels of local church involvement, namely: Fellowship, Discipleship and Servant-Leadership. Level 1 describes those who attend church just for the fellowship, acceptance and love. The CURE can help people learn to move on to Level 2, where they have a sense of belonging in the family, are getting to know others in the church and are starting on their journey of discipleship. It can then assist people to move on to Level 3, serving and leading, and perhaps becoming a small group leader or a church volunteer with a passion to grow the local church. More of this as we go through the book.

Application of the biblical principles described in the CURE can help the church, the body of Christ, move further forward. Relationship with God and connection with the church can become more relevant and important. People may also want to be more in the community of the body of Christ in an energising way.

When I asked a church pastor how the Steps and Shapes could help in his local church, he highlighted their value for helping people change, especially in the hard times. While change can certainly occur when things are going well, personal and relational growth can be helped by using the CURE as people move through:

- life's challenges, crisis, trauma, grief and suffering
- spiritual challenges, or finding a reality gap between their faith and practice
- personal challenges – feeling disconnected, disheartened, distressed, diseased with sickness

- social challenges including bereavement, relationship breakup, school/workplace problems and dysfunctional relationships/marriages/families
- material challenges, financial hardships and deprivation.

When working through the biblical principles of the CURE in a local church there may be greater emphasis not only on evangelism but especially on discipleship. People can be transformed as a result of their faith, and become different from what they would otherwise have been. They can begin to develop a more consistent Christian life, and move away from a self-centred or perhaps even an incongruent, hypocritical life, to become more like Jesus.

Ministries and missions that have developed from local churches may be helped to become more linked with the whole church. The whole church can be assisted through the CURE to become more relevant in the school setting and to the workplace.

### ***3. For people helpers and parachurch organisations***

A people helper is basically anyone who wants to help people. In essence, as stated at the beginning of this book, people helpers are those such as small group leaders, Chaplains, Bible College lecturers, Pastors, People Helpers, those in Mission and Ministry, Teachers and Health Professionals. The parachurch is the serving and specialised arm of the church. In Asia, there have been 120-hour courses for people helpers using the CURE within their ministries and their local churches. Some of these wonderful participants have gone further, and have completed a two-year course with 16 weeks of intensive training, and now use the CURE in a more complex way that helps them to counsel and to coach others. The CURE can help create a greater sense of continuity between the church and people helpers and parachurch organisations, facilitating greater access to the local church for people in the community. This enhances the expression of the local body of Christ. At times, it may not be easy for churches and ministries to partner well, but the CURE can help facilitate better partnership between different entities for His kingdom work.

#### **4. At work or school**

Whether you are earning or learning, the CURE Steps and Shapes may help you to see where students and staff are in their life journey, and even where an organisation or institution may be at! The CURE can be an invaluable tool for places of work or learning to help them move towards becoming a flourishing setting.

In my place of work as a counselling adult, child and family psychiatrist, I walk the Steps with my patients and see them through the lenses of the Shapes. For professional counsellors and coaches, the CURE can be used in specific ways, developed from *the Christian Wholeness Framework* (CWF) which, in a much simpler way, this book is based on. The CWF facilitates integrated approaches to understanding and assisting with problems and issues in the context of varying developmental and cultural expressions. It provides Christian counsellors with a common picture language, empowering people helpers to serve the local church which then better serves the local community. It is through local communities being served that cultures can be transformed in a God-centred way.

In terms of your immediate first impressions of the CURE, reflect on these questions:



- *How is your spiritual, personal and social life growing?*
- *Which of the four settings mentioned above are most relevant to you?*
- *Which do you think needs the most change in your context?*

#### **Going further**

So, welcome to the CURE, a picture language not only of the Steps we have just introduced, but also of the Shapes which you will meet later. These can help you on your journey to grow towards God-centred transformation in the whole of your life, be it social, personal or spiritual! If you decide it's time to go deeper, there is *Part Two: God Centred Relationships* and subsequently *Part Three: Biblical Foundations*. Beyond that, there are books about *the Christian Wholeness Framework* for different situations such as marriage and depression, for those who are

working in ministry, and for counsellors and coaches who are professionally involved in people change. These can be obtained from the website [www.livingwholeness.org](http://www.livingwholeness.org).

Let's begin to study the CURE.

# SECTION 1:

## The Steps to Transformation

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## **The Steps to Transformation**

### **Introduction to the Steps**

Here are the Steps to help you relate to anyone who is in your life in whatever context and some underlying universal principles that you will be able to apply to your unique circumstances. Here are the Steps for anyone, including yourself, to love and be loved, to know and be known, and to grow stronger so that you can serve and lead others in the same way! Learn how to stand on the first Step of Connection, not only with others, but also with God and with yourself!

Remember, if you are not a Christian don't freak out about the Christian side. Take what you need and leave the rest. This can still be so relevant to you. Understand yourself, others and also, if you choose, understand God at a deeper level.

This Section will not only help you to know what these Steps are, why to use them and with whom, but in particular it will help you to know how to walk the Steps.

The Steps are steps, not rungs of a ladder, where you do not need the previous rung to climb higher. They build on each other, each having to be strong enough to support the next. As you will see they are in a particular order for a reason.

The small group boxes at the end of chapters arise out of our fortnightly church small groups. Have a look, take what is useful to you and leave the rest. Although the demographics, agenda and other pragmatic aspects of your group may well be different, be encouraged to consider how the Steps and Shapes may assist. The major emphasis in these boxes is on the process of the group as illustrated by the Steps and Shapes rather than the content of a particular group. However, generally there are "teaching points" included as well. It is this process which may be universally transferable, even possibly to your church small group. These boxes are only a brief introduction to the use of the CURE in small groups.

### **Walking the Steps in a church small group**

Key Teaching Points: The Steps are the picture language which can help the group:

- Connect to love and be loved more
- Understand to know and be known
- Respond to grow
- Engage Help to show God's love as we go to each other and grow as disciples of Jesus.

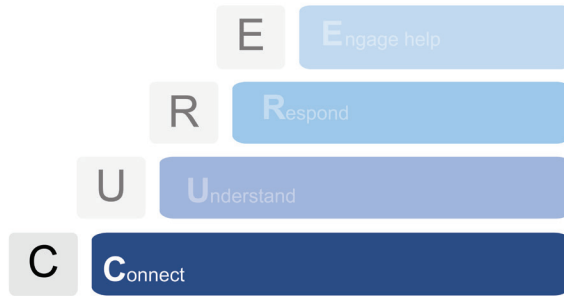
### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group.**

One of the major things I do is highlight the Steps over the Shapes. Not only are they easier to learn than the Shapes, but also the Steps answer the first thing which most of us want to know, which is, "how do I ....?"

I try to emphasise the sequence of the **Steps** in line with our small group agenda and timetable of:

- **Connect:** 7 – 7:30 PM and ongoing
- **Understand:** 7:30 – 8 PM and ongoing
- **Respond:** 8 – 9 PM
- **Engage Help:** at and between small group times.

## I. Step One: Connect – to Love



I started my life fairly disconnected. Because of my parents work as medical missionaries in India I was brought up a lot of the time by a nanny. Then from the age of seven I lived in an institution (boarding school) and saw my parents twice a year! Thankfully over my years my Connections have grown! I know personally why wholistic Connection is so important! I have had to work on this process.

Here we will think about:



- *What is the foundation of relationships?*
- *How do we establish that foundation?*
- *How do we know if it is starting to break up right underneath our feet?*

There are foundations to relationships. At times in relationships these foundations can crumble. The first Step, and thus the foundation of the CURE, is Connection. Let's look at four questions:

- What is Connection?
- Why do I need to connect?

- Whom do I Connect with?
  - Social, personal and spiritual
  - Connecting in three directions at the same time
- How do I do it?
  - Connect in S.A.F.E.T.Y.

## Jesus and Connecting

When I asked Derek, who provided a reflection for this book, about what he thought was the Biblical basis for Connection, he replied with two words, “The incarnation”. That means Jesus coming from Heaven to be with us on earth. Jesus was called “Emmanuel” for a reason. It means “God with us”. A God of Connection in the form of Jesus.

When Jesus was with the woman at the well (John 4:1-42), he spent quite a time Connecting with her, showing that he Understood her, thus allowing her to make the Response she needed to make. That Connection was just being with her, where she was at as she was getting water from the well. The Connection needed to be even greater with Jesus breaking social norms of a man being with a woman, let alone being with a Samaritan.

Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (John 4:6-7)

## What is Connection? To love and be loved

When I broke up with my first two girlfriends (I had only two before my wife), it was like tearing two pieces of paper that had been stuck together. It hurt. It took two years to get over. I can also feel disconnected at times when my wife and I are not on the same wavelength. Because we are so strong and so different, those ‘at times’ can be more often than we would want. Over the years, I’ve found a few friends with whom I can walk in each other’s shoes. I’m learning to Connect.



- *What does Connection mean for you? Think of the times when you have experienced Connection.*
- *If you want to see it more clearly, contrast it with its opposite: times of disconnection. What was happening?*

- *Who was there?*
- *How many people were there?*
- *Have you talked to anyone about those times?*
- *If not, maybe consider giving it a go – Connection is such an important thing to get a handle on.*

We are more easily Connected with someone who is not only travelling through life in a similar direction, but whose journey has a lot of overlap and similarities with our own. It is easier where the two have similar ‘shoe size’ as it were – more of a natural fit. Connection is more natural when people are on the same wavelength. Connection, like a radio, is when you are on a similar wavelength with another, attuned to each other. It is as though at least one tunes into the other.

Connection grows where there is a sense of safety. That sense of relational safety in turn grows further Connection.

Connection is love. In the Bible, Paul in one of his letters described this love as being a Connection which is kind, doesn’t put down another in order to lift oneself up, and is not self-centred.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Indeed, Connection hates evil and destruction and wants the best. It doesn’t give up. Connection believes and hopes. Connection gives.

Connection is what you see when a mother and her young baby are glued together, when a young child begins to explore but always returns to base, when children are having fun with their friends, when an old couple walk side-by-side holding hands. It is when you sense that people can just relax and be safe together. You’re aware of care and trust. Connection doesn’t push another person where they don’t want to go. Not only with the mother and baby, Connection is the glue for the whole of life. Connection is *being* with another. Connection is

relationship, being attached to another in a positive and constructive way. Connection happens when someone actually pays attention to another. Paying attention costs a lot! Connection occurs when we can be truly present in the here and now with ourselves and with another. I'm sure you know what it's like when someone is physically with you but not really present! The body is there but it's as though they are in another world.

Disconnection can be just as intense. The pain of a boyfriend and girlfriend breaking up. A married couple being torn apart in the throes of divorce. A child rejected from the 'in' group at school. An adult child who will no longer speak to their parents.



- *Which of these examples of Connection resonates most with you?*

### **Why Connect? It is foundational and central to life**

Connection is vital for everyone, from when we are babies right through to the end of life. It is as important for men to be connected as it is for women, and for boys as for girls. Connection is a foundational part of any growing culture.

Connection is the foundation for life! When things are not working out in my relationships with others, with God, or even with myself, I try to fall back on what may be happening with the underlying Connection. Connection makes things happen. In China, progress happens once there is some *guanxi* or some kind of Connection. Frankly, it is not just for China, this is a universal phenomenon.

No relationship can grow or be repaired without Connection. Connection gets deep into the heart. When you aim for Connection, you act in a way which shows you care and that you value the other person. When there is Connection between people, they feel valued and not alone. It's a lot harder to understand someone or tell them something if you don't have a sense of being Connected, of being with them. It's hard to receive advice from others if we feel disconnected from them. This is why Connection is the vital foundation on which the remaining three Steps of the CURE must stand. Connection is the priority before anything further can be achieved. You're not just trying to help fix the person, but you are

interested in the person, pretty much as why Jesus is more interested in who we are than what we can do for Him. That is love.

Connection is the purpose of life – we were made to Connect! We were made to Connect with God, with others and with ourselves. Connection between God and man is present throughout the Scriptures. Right from the beginning He wanted relationship, because He, the triune God, embodies relationship.

Thus, in the very first book of the Bible, it says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image’” (Genesis 1:26). After seeing so much was good, God then said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18 NLT). In the Garden of Eden, there was so much Connection between Adam and Eve and God as they walked together. You can see the importance of Connection right from the first moment when Adam and Eve disconnected. God, who is all-knowing, could have shouted out loud, “Adam and Eve! Why are you hiding among the trees? Get out now!” But He didn’t. He sought to Connect with His creation and called out to them (as if He didn’t know where they were) “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). All through the Scriptures we can see Connection between God and others and ourselves, which is why nearly anything which does not connect is kind of a waste. It is almost as if without Connection, or love, I am nothing.

Connection is critical for brain development. When there is good Connection, there is a release of dopamine and oxytocin which in turn grows the brain for more Connection. The opposite occurs with disconnection.

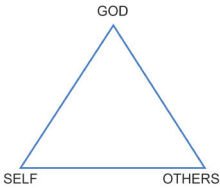


- *Reflect honestly on how important or not Connection is for you, at home, with your friends, at church or at school/work. Maybe use a scale from 0 – 10 from ‘not important’ to ‘vital’ regarding the relevance of Connection for you in any of these settings.*

### **Whom do I connect with?**

I am not sure how it has been for you, but for me it seemed that I Connected first with God around the age of seven years old. It was as though there weren’t too many others around with whom I could

safely Connect. As time went on, I started Connecting with others. It has only been more recently that I have become aware of the importance of Connecting more with myself. The developmental ideal is that as we Connect with others we can have a greater Connection with ourselves and thus a greater capacity to experience a Connection with God.



### **Connections: social, personal and spiritual**

Just as a triangle has three sides, so there are three directions for Connection: horizontally with others, vertically with God and internally with yourself. Yes, we also need to Connect with ourselves! While this might sound obvious, stay with me at this foundational stage.

#### **1. Connecting horizontally: Socially**

Look around you! Whom do you see around your life? You may not want to Connect with some of them! It may be easier to Connect if you are an extrovert. However, even if it is hard, you need to Connect with at least someone even for your own sake! Connection is critical to family life, marriage, parenting and just being part of a family. Friendship is based on Connection. For churches to grow, there has to be underlying opportunities for Connection – and that occurs most in smaller gatherings. Connecting regularly in ‘twos and threes’ as well as in small groups grows the cells of the body of the church. Without these Connections, the larger body of the church can’t keep on growing for too long before imploding.



- *While in this age of social media, virtual connections can lose some sense of reality. How many actual connections do you really have? How would you rate how they are going?*

Connection enables the first level of church – of being accepted and enjoying fellowship. In other settings such as the workplace, the school classroom, the social group or sports team, Connection is the foundation.

## **2. Connecting internally: Personally**

Maybe you have never thought of Connecting with yourself. It may be easier if you are more of an inward-looking introvert. How Connected are you with yourself? How much do you care about yourself, attend to what's going on in your body and in your mind, and tune into the heart of your being – right now in the present? Take a moment. Stop! Slowly become aware. Feel your breathing. Notice the places in your body where you feel relaxed or stressed, needy or full. Connect with what you are thinking about. How's that Connection for you? We all have a need to Connect with ourselves.



- *How often do you Connect with yourself? How do you do this?*

So many of us are disconnected from what is happening within us. At times, we might not even recognise the feelings we are having. We might not even feel that heart pain and emptiness within us that may be related to underlying aloneness, confusion or feeling out of control. Some do not want to Connect with themselves as they don't like themselves or feel they are not important enough to do so.

The whole emphasis of what is now called 'mindfulness' is helping us to become more Connected with what's going on inside us – now, in the present. The 2015 animated children's movie, *Inside Out*, helped viewers to zoom into the story and take a look at what was going on inside the girl and her family. As time went on, she started to become Connected to her different feelings. It showed from a child's perspective that there can be a lot going on in our lives that we need to be Connected with.

For us to have any understanding of what's going on inside us, we firstly need to have that Connection with the core of ourselves. We need to ask ourselves, "How are you?" Maybe we need to be more like Africans on a long journey. As the story goes, they stop daily at a particular time, to let their soul, their core, catch up with them so they can stay internally Connected.

### 3. Connecting vertically: Spiritually



- *How important is the spiritual side of life for you?*
- *What is your Connection like with God?*

I don't know where I would be without my God Connection. God has been my source, my centre, my foundation and home. He has been my goal. He is the head of the body of Christ in which I function.

However, often we project onto God the experiences from our horizontal, social Connections, especially from authority figures such as our parents and our past experiences of school or church. Absolutely, church should reflect who God is, but sadly sometimes it doesn't.

For example, if we grew up with a poor relationship with our father, and we had to perform to try to please, then we might in turn try to please God. This pattern is based more on our own experience than from a spiritual freedom which facilitates a positive Connection with God.

The vertical Connection – the Connection with God – is even deeper than the horizontal, social Connection. In the pages of the Bible you will find the theme of Connection from cover to cover. The Bible is full of stories about how we lose Connection with God through breaking trust and following our own way. Right from the story of Adam and Eve through to the time of Noah and later with Abraham, God was really wanting them not only to flourish, but more so, to Connect with Him. He also had a deep desire to have a people who were Connected with Him more than with others. While He at times enjoyed that Connection with His people, the Israelites, they so often forsook their Connection with God's love for them when attracted more to their own selfish ways. Ultimately, God Himself came to earth to Connect in the form of Jesus, to provide a way back to Himself. Jesus showed the full measure of His love and His desire for Connection with us to the point of being crucified, to pay the price of the ultimate sacrifice of love to save us from the guilt of turning to our own ways. Ultimately, as we will see more in this book, God's passion for Connection will only become fully realised at the end of time, in a place called Heaven!

With the break in our vertical Connection with God comes the loss of Connection with others and with ourselves. Yet the Bible clearly tells the story of how God proactively continues to seek to restore that relationship between Himself, others and ourselves.

### **Connecting in three directions at the same time**

Once, a man approached Jesus to know what was most important in life. Jesus basically answered: “Connection”. He said the most important thing was:

‘... love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second [command] is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31).

Jesus said that Connection – love – is not only the most important thing in life but it is actually something we are commanded to do. For us to really live, we need to love in these three directions: towards God, towards others and towards ourselves. If you haven’t started a Connection with God, and you want to, you can go to *God’s CURE for our Broken Relationship with Him* on page 215 of this book. (When you have taken your first steps of Connecting with God, try to find someone else you can share this with.)

There is a powerful dynamic at work when we are able not only to Connect with someone else, but also at the same time to Connect with ourselves and with God. We call this a ‘Trialogue’, a conversation for three. Later, we will highlight this in the Shape of the Triangle which is the predominant Shape linked with this Step of Connection. This Trialogue is what happened in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of the Bible, when God, Adam and Eve all walked together – and it is what Heaven will be like. There, God will be with us and we will be His people, and He will be our God. What wonderful Connection, between each other and with God! Practising this Trialogue can make a huge difference in your life. For example, when you are with someone you trust, sharing in-depth and you have a sense of safety, make sure

there are three of you there. Include God. Bring it all to him. See what happens.

### **How do I connect? Connect in S.A.F.E.T.Y.**

Being brought up with little Connection and somewhat lonely and shy, I did not know how to Connect. But everyone knows how to Connect, don't they? It is so basic!

So you may think. But the fact is that many problems in families, amongst friends, in the church, in ministry and mission, as well as in school or the workplace, occur because something has happened to Connection.

Use these simple guidelines to check how good you really are at Connecting with others and with yourself. We can measure Connection by the SAFETY acronym. In fact, Connection is pretty well spelt SAFETY.



SAFETY is a great filter to have in terms of what sort of friends to invite into your life. It also helps clarify which people we perhaps should not be Connected with more deeply. Using this filter can save you so much time and heartache.

Connection needs to be safe. Relationships might not always be easy. Challenging things may need to be faced. But in solid relationships there is that undergirding sense of safety. The ground on which you stand needs to be solid and stable.

**S** stands for *Smaller numbers and people and starting with Smaller issues.*

You'll find it easier to connect with someone who is more similar to you. They are your type – more like you, rather than being poles apart. As mentioned above, it is easier to walk in another's shoes if

they have as it were, a similar ‘shoe size’. There is a natural fit. You know what happens with Connection when it is just you and a friend compared to a big crowd. There may be fun with a group of friends, but it is often safer to share a deeper Connection when it is just one-on-one. You will be able to feel safer with a smaller number of people rather than showing everyone what is really there underneath your smiling face.

You may ask, “What about connecting with those who are different from us? Isn’t that so much at the heart of the gospel?” Absolutely it is, but connecting with people who are very different is made much easier if we have a foundation of safe Connections for ourselves, and those are often with people who have some similarities with us. It is from this safe base that we can then go out to others. Jesus had that base especially with His Father and with those close to Him.

While opposites attract, the more different a couple are, the more challenging will be their relationship. Added to this, each aspect of an attraction can become the same reason for a challenge, just as there are two sides of the same coin. I needed a strong woman to walk through life with me. I was attracted to Jill’s strength. It is that same strength in both of us which has also provided the most challenges in our relationship. Do you have one other person who is easy to Connect to and get on with?



*A stands for Attitudes.*

The three main attitudes which are important for Connection include **trust** or **care**, **respect** or **confidentiality**, and **giving people a choice**. Having a caring attitude is a fairly obvious requirement for Connection. A caring attitude grows cooperative Connection in a system such as a family, a church, a place of work or a school.

As for the attitude of **respect**, it is important to be mindful of keeping appropriate **confidentiality**. No one likes their deepest sharing and secrets to be publicly aired in the open, and breaking confidentiality can really hurt. Unfortunately, this can happen in churches and it breaks relationships. Therefore, it is important for us to be respectful of what we have received from each other by keeping confidence

of deeper matters (unless it is unsafe – for example when the person shares that he wants to hurt/kill himself, or others). A respectful attitude grows Connected and clear communication.

It is so easy to get the last attitude of **choice** wrong. In some ways, it might seem easier to push/persuade someone in a particular direction, rather than walking beside them. You may be able to look ahead beyond what they can see, but you can still give them options. We call this the ‘invitational posture’, where we invite change rather than force change – it is so much more effective! Choice grows constructive Communication.

You can act out this invitational posture with another person who takes the part of someone wanting help. Both of you stand up and walk together. Act out two scenarios. In the first, try to force the other person to go the way you think is best, or even feel pity for the other and pick them up so they don’t have to do the work. Then try the other scenario where you might see various options for the person wanting help. Stand one step beside and one step behind. You may see ahead, but don’t go ahead of the other. Invite them to look at the options to help them to choose. Prioritise being with them over changing them. Now think about how you could apply similar principles in personal interactions.

You may previously have found yourself more often saying: “You should be doing this and that”, rather than asking, “What do you want, where do you want to go from here?” You may want to cultivate more of this attitude by giving more choice. After all, from the very beginning in Genesis, God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose to obey or disobey Him. This choice has continued throughout church history, and is still there. He gives us a choice to connect with Him or not.

Clearly, as children grow, they move from a situation where they are predominantly under parental influence to having greater choice. Different cultures will allow this process of handing over choice to occur at different rates and stages. For example, in the West, this time of increasing choice particularly occurs during the teenage years. In some more remote communities, there may be no long teenage phase. Instead, there may be a distinct rite of passage which at a young age, such as 12, takes someone from being a child to being an adult, from being dependent to independent.

**F** *F stands for having Fun and Facing the reality of things.*

Children sometimes seem to have a monopoly on defining Connection as fun, which so often gets lost in the seriousness of adult life. Fun certainly does help Connection, but being real and facing the issues at hand is just as important. Being able to face the reality of what's going on in a safe way – as opposed to putting on a face or faking it – grows Connection. How real can you be in your close relationships?

**E** *E stands for Empathy.*

When was the last time someone tried to empathise with you – to walk in your shoes and get inside your skin, to feel what it would really be like to be you? What was that experience like for you? This getting into your shoes and skin is quite different from someone getting under your skin! How often do you Connect with others with empathy? Think of someone close to you who may be facing a challenge. Pretend you are them. Look through their eyes. Stand in their shoes.

**T** *T stands for Time.*

Relationships don't work unless there is time for those relationships. When relationships are struggling, they actually need more time invested to get back on track. For small groups in churches, if one week a few people turn up and at the next meeting a different set of people turn up, there is less consistency over time to build safe relationships. By people routinely turning up late for no clear reason, this simply reduces the time to connect! If this does happen, maybe check out what they feel about their Connection with the group! That Connection and sense of safety may be lacking, but they may be finding it hard to say what may be going on for them in ways other than by not turning up so much for the group. Their not turning up so often in turn reduces the sense of safety and Connection for them. There may however be appropriate practical reasons interfering with their turning up regularly, which also can be explored, in safety.

With all of this, it is important to apportion time to Connect with different people, and for that to happen you will have to look at your relationships, your priorities and your diary!

**Y** *Y stands for 'You' questions, linked with 'I' statements.*

Finally, relationships work better when they are two-way, where each asks of the other, “How are you?” The ‘Y’ stands for ‘You’. We need to learn to master the ‘You’ questions, and understand that it is not ‘all about me’. However, don’t confuse ‘You’ questions with ‘You’ statements such as, “This is what you should do”. Instead, pair ‘You’ questions with ‘I’ statements. Rather than preaching at others or telling them what to do, it is so much more effective to use ‘I’ statements such as, “So, what I do in this situation that you are talking about is .... What do you think about that?” The approach needs to be other-oriented rather than self-centred. When we use ‘I’ statements, we are not trying to boast about how great or clever we are, but we are aiming to express something we feel or think about an issue so that we can Connect better. And when we use ‘You’ questions, we are not trying to blame, criticize or put someone down; rather we are showing we are curious and interested in the other person so as to connect better.

An example of helpful ‘I’ statements versus unhelpful ones can be: “When you make this remark, I feel uncomfortable because it reminds me of ...” versus “I don’t understand why you make this remark, you are such a #0%\$%&!”. Or as mentioned: “So what I do in this situation that you are talking about is ... What do you think about that?” versus “So what I do in this situation you are talking about is ... and I think you need to follow what I do!”

‘You’ questions can help us not only Understand the other better, but also help them to Respond and grow in a better way by giving them choice and thus responsibility. As we walk the Steps based on Connection, we will refer to these ‘You’ questions as ‘Understanding’ questions, ‘Response’ questions and ‘Engage Help’ questions, depending on which Step we are on at the time. This pervasive use of ‘You’ questions and ‘I’ statements is another illustration of the Connection Step being so foundational for the other Steps.

So, there we have it ... Connection is spelt SAFETY! A simple transportable checklist for you to carry with you anywhere! It works in the home, with friends, at church and in the place of work or at school!



- *Think of a relationship in your life now and check out how much of a sense of safety is present. If there is not much, what are your options?*
- *How's your Connection with God, with others and with yourself? Which area do you want to work on the most?*
- *On a scale of 1 to 10, how Connected are you with yourself? What could you do to Connect better?*
- *Which part of SAFETY do you find most challenging for you? Why?*



- *What is the one most important thing about Connection you could share with someone? How about doing just that maybe the next time you meet?*

### **Points to remember**

Connection is the glue of life. It is being on a similar wavelength, getting inside the other's shoes. We were made to Connect with God, with others and with ourselves. Connection is the basis for any relating. Family and friends, churches, work and school are just the same – they can only really function with Connection. Connection is a major reason for being. The love found in Connection invites us to go further and deeper into our journeying towards wholeness. For this to happen, we need to build on the essential foundation of Connection and move on to the second Step, Understanding – the Step of knowing and being known. Yes, Connection is spelt SAFETY and Connection = love!

Later, when you get a greater grasp of the Steps and have learnt more about the Shapes, you may want to review the Connection chapter and then jump to the chapter of the corresponding Shape, the Triangle.



- *God of Connection, Connect with me, just as I am, as you did with the woman at the well. Let Your love be my foundation and the source of my Connecting in safety with others.*

### **Connecting in a church small group**

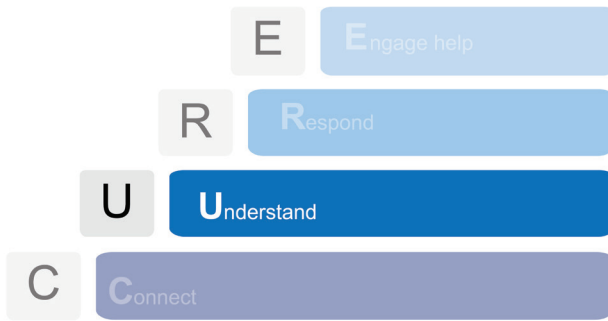
Key Teaching Points: Connecting is about being with another in a relationship which is attuned to the other. It is being present, in the here and now. Connection needs SAFETY. This seems to be a keyword that small groups need to become familiar with.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

7 – 7:30 PM: Set the scene for Connecting with God and with each other. This undergirding Step continues right through the evening. After brief and often informal catch ups, sometimes we:

- Sing a song to turn our hearts together to God after a busy day.
- Ask anyone if they would like to share with us what has been going on between them and God since we last met.

## II. Step Two: Understand – to Know



What is meant here by Understanding is so much more than intelligence or knowing the right answer. It is about knowing another and being known! Not surprisingly, with my fairly abandoned and disconnected upbringing, I didn't really want to Connect with or Understand myself – let alone for someone else to know me! Maybe they would not like me if they really knew me! The first person I remember whom I could trust enough to know me and still love me was God! It was in a church service, where the preacher asked if anyone wanted to respond to come to know Christ, that I raised my hand. It was much more than raising a hand. Unbeknown to me, it was the start of a whole new dimension and direction in my life. As mentioned, I was around seven years of age.

We all to some extent have a capacity to Understand. Some people are just natural at this, but most of us struggle. Here are some of the questions this chapter seeks to develop.



- *How do you get to know someone more deeply and be really known, in the whole of your being, from what may be happening in your outside life, socially or materially, right through to the depths of your heart? That is quite a question!*
- *What keeps a group of people from really getting to know each other safely? How can we even measure the depth of conversation between people?*

How good it is to be safely Understood and known! It feels so different from when someone else just does not get you or Understand. There is a skill in knowing and being known, right to the depths of the heart. There is a lot that can get in the way of this safe Understanding, whether it is between two people or within a group. Thankfully, there is a way of measuring the capacity people have for deeper relationships.

Let's look at these four questions:

- What is Understanding?
- Why do we need to Understand?
- Whom are we trying to Understand?
- How do we Understand?
  - Use 'You' Understanding questions.
  - Attitudes that build Understanding.
  - Playing relationship tennis. An introduction.

### **Jesus and Understanding**

Going back to the story of Jesus and the woman at the well in John chapter 4, Jesus really wanted her to know that she was Understood. It was this Understanding which really got home to her and resulted in her wanting to know more about Him.

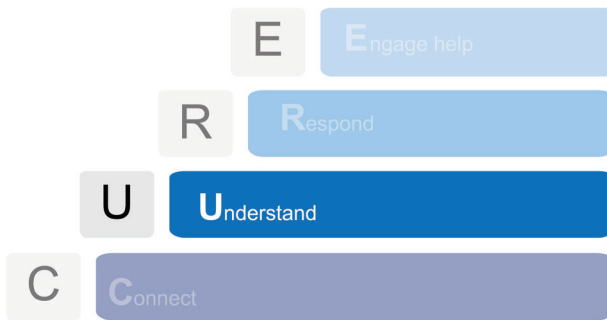
Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?' (John 4:28-29)

### **What is Understanding? To know and be known**

I know when I am Understood! It means a lot to me. Remember, Understanding here is not so much to do with intellect and IQ; rather it refers

to a deep heart knowing, along with an emotional and a social aspect. If you like, a wholistic Understanding includes our intelligence or IQ and a knowing about something, but, more than that, real knowing includes an integration with HQ (heart quotient) EQ (emotional quotient), and SQ (social quotient)! How do we really know and how are we really known?

Let's Understand Understanding! Understanding is the second Step of the CURE, and as we will see it is about knowing someone, ourselves or a situation in a deeper way. It is also about knowing God and being known by Him.



Understanding sits on the Connection Step. Understanding becomes much more effective when there is the underlying Connection which we have already started to build in Step 1. Understanding happens when we listen to someone and when we really choose to see something from their perspective. Choosing to Understand somebody genuinely can sometimes be hard, especially when our instincts are urging us to react, advise or argue. As Proverbs 18:2 says, “Fools find no pleasure in Understanding but delight in airing their own opinions”.

Understanding comes before the Response Step. The CURE is spelt this way and works this way for a reason. Understanding must happen before Response, and Connection must happen before Understanding. Response is Step 3 of the CURE. To Respond before establishing Connection and Understanding can be very off-putting for the other person. The last thing an offended person wants to do is to stop

and connect, let alone be listened to and be Understood by the other person. The advantages of this second Step are huge.



- *On a scale of 0-10 how well do you think or feel you Understand yourself?*

### **Why do I need to Understand? It prepares for change**

I've found that when I don't Understand another, generally things don't turn out so well! As mentioned, you know what it's like when someone doesn't Understand you or get you. That's why we need to Understand and be Understood. When we have better Understanding, we are more likely to have clarity and less likely to be confused. We are more likely to find direction instead of disorientation. Understanding allows truth to come to the surface so it can be faced.

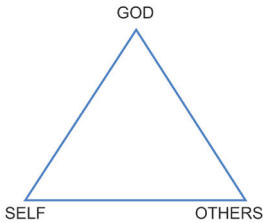
In a situation where we want to advise another, we will be much better equipped if we first have greater clarity about the person and their problem. They in turn will be more open to advice if they sense we are Connected and Understand their position. Think of how many conflicts in life are based on misunderstandings, assumptions and presumptions. Taking the time to Understand creates a much greater likelihood that the cause of the problem will become clear, and this is a vital step on the road to resolution. Understanding clarifies future directions. Missing out on this second Step can result in a conversation where Responses collapse in a heap. Taking time to Understand saves time!

Understanding is an essential prerequisite for change. A marriage without Understanding is travelling an uncharted and dangerous course. Any relationship without Understanding will remain in the shallow parts of life or may just break up. A person who Understands himself or herself is going to have a greater sense of being an integrated whole. There will be greater clarity of purpose which aligns with the plans, practices and people with whom you will be involved. Life balance will come more easily!



- *How important has this information about Understanding been to you?*

## Whom am I trying to Understand? Understanding comes in the Shape of a Triangle!



Just like Connection, Understanding has three directions. We are not only trying to Understand others, but also God and ourselves. It is also important that we are Understood and known not only by others and by God. Why? For any relationship to go deeper, there has to be a process of knowing and being known, even between us and God! Actually, God already knows and really Understands us. As David says in Psalm 139:1, “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me”. He goes on to say that God still wants to know David, and to know Him in reality.

Understanding ourselves means we have first to connect with our self. As mentioned, easier said than done if we don’t really like who we are! That means being able to face what is going on inside of us, whether that be in our actions or words, our thoughts or feelings, or right in the depths of who we are!

Understanding others is so relevant for any part of our life. The closer and deeper the relationship, the more important it is to have Understanding. Thus, in the family, with your spouse or children, or with your parents, Understanding is that much more important. Friendships grow when there is not just fun and Connection, but when there is a greater depth of knowing each other.

What is your experience of knowing others and being known by them in the church setting? For churches to become stronger and go deeper, those who have entered the first level of church for fellowship and acceptance as ‘attendees’ need to go deeper. This is entering a place of belonging and knowing each other more as family. This is the second level of growth in a church.

For churches to grow big they have got to grow small. For it is in the small groups and ‘twos and threes’ that people can really start to know each other more deeply in safety.

School classrooms and workplaces likewise work better when there is more Understanding based on the foundational Step of

Connection. The school principal or the boss at work is the one responsible for forging this culture of Connecting and Understanding in these settings.

As with Connection, so with Understanding. Being known and Understood is important right from birth through to the end of life. It is just as important for a man to be Understood as for a woman. Understanding is an essential part of any culture.



- *How much Understanding happens amongst the relationships of your family, amongst your friends, in your church and at work/school?*

## **How do I Understand better? Skills for Understanding**

### **1. Use ‘You’ Understanding Questions as you rise from the Connection Step**

In my work as a psychiatrist, I am asking questions all day long. I’ve also found the power of asking questions to be so significant in my whole life with others, and also with myself! Asking questions is relevant in any context. How much do you use questions – which sorts of questions do you use and how do you use them?

One place to start Understanding is not to forget that ‘You’ questions arise out of the Connection Step, where the letter ‘Y’ of SAFETY stands for ‘You’ questions. Yes, ask questions, but only while you stay connected! If you can ask helpful questions and master the attitudes for the Understanding Step as described later, you will be on the forward foot and a step ahead. If you can then bring these questions and attitudes together into an interaction of Understanding, your second Step of the CURE will become even stronger.

What are the right questions to ask? We don’t give you the exact words to say, but instead the types of questions that can help bring more of yourself into this process. Remember, it is not a cookbook approach but a set of principles and tools which you can use in your own God-given way.

There are three very helpful types of questions to ask. You can ask these of another person or of yourself. How about even trying to ask them of God, and let Him ask them of you?

***a. Entry questions: “How are you?” Knock on the front door***

When was the last time someone asked, “How are you, really?” When was the last time you were asked that question by someone else? When was the last time you asked yourself that? A person’s life is like a house. When you understand someone, it is as if you experience that person letting you into their house. You can then start to see what’s really going on inside, and not just what’s presented on the façade. How about starting off with a question like, “How are you?”

An entry question is like a knock on the door of someone’s life. “How are you?” can be said in different ways. You can make up your own words along these same lines. Some use the, “How are you?” in a defensive way to stop any focus on themselves. Someone might be walking past you and say quickly, “Hi, how are you?” They are really just providing a greeting rather than wanting to actually know how you are. Here we aren’t talking about this type of greeting salutation question, but more about the times of going deeper with another. It is so important to re-emphasise that deeper Understanding and knowing can happen when there is enough safety (remember our acronym for Connection, SAFETY) from the undergirding Step of Connection.

***b. Centring questions: “What’s that like for you?” Be invited inside***

Who has tried to Understand you more deeply, in a safe way? If you are welcomed into another’s life, into their ‘house’, they might want to keep you in the front hallway until they really know you are ‘safe’ enough. Where do you go then? So often conversations will then go back into more superficial topics that are spoken, as it were, outside of their front door. However, often the other person will go on to say something about their lives which has a little bit more depth. For example, they may share their deeper feelings such as, “I feel quite hurt by ...” or relating to some positive feelings such as, “... so inspires me!” As you listen and pay attention, you are now not outside the front door, but you have truly been invited into the house of their lives.

This is the time when you can ask a centring question such as, “What is/was that like for you?” Again, this is just an example or a template. You can make up your own words.

Now the other person has a choice to possibly invite you even further into their lives. You can go deeper with them and move into the centre and core of their being. Using the house analogy, you move from the front door maybe into their living room – as they tell you more about their life.

Again, never forget when you are invited into someone's life, it is so important to be firmly grounded on that ongoing underlying Connection Step of safety, of SAFETY. The Connection Step is like the floor of the house in which you stand. If that Connection starts to fade, the next thing you will know is that you will be back out on the street – well away from their front door. If the Connection and Understanding is strong enough, they may want to invite you further in yet again! What happens now? You can just keep asking Connected centring questions, in your way. See how that goes. From here you may consider using the next approach to questions. But be careful.

### ***c. Linking questions, to the present, past and future***

As a word of caution here, while linking questions can provide a lot more depth to a relationship, they can also get you out of your depth when you're with another person! That is why it is so important that you know your limits and practise the 'invitational posture' offering the other a sense of choice which, as mentioned above, is essential for safety! As you become more comfortable and experienced to Connect and Understand, you might want to start looking at linking questions.

Have you ever thought that what may be happening in the present, in one relationship say at home, may be similar to or linked with what is going on in another relationship but in a different setting, such as at church or at work? In fact, these relationship issues may be driven, linked with or transferred from a similar source, perhaps from what happened in a significant relationship in the past. For example, someone having a problem with a church pastor may (or may not) have had difficulties with other authority figures and may (or may not) have had problems with their parents, which they are linking or transferring into the present. Mind you this is not to say that authority figures in church or work settings always get it right. This is where linking becomes important for developing greater breadth and depth of understanding.

Normally people don't even get to this stage of asking the other person how the current situation might be linked. It could be linked with the present: "Is there anywhere else in your life at the moment that is like this?" It could be linked with the past: "Has this experience ever been like this before for you?" It could also be linked to the future: "If it continues like this, where could this possibly be heading to?"

Again, these are templates, so use your own words. In the context of Connection, you can find yourself asking appropriate Understanding questions in your own way. Borrow from these three types of questions while walking on the foundation of the safety of the Connection Step, and at the same time use the attitudes to build Understanding.



- *In the next 24 hours (or week if you prefer), try out some entry (how are you?) and centring questions (what's that like for you?) in your way.*

*Note: stay away from linking questions until you have mastered the first two types of questions.*

## **2. Attitudes that build Understanding: awareness, curiosity and discovery**

How do you ask questions? Questions in themselves can be unhelpful. I have found that as I have the right undergirding attitudes, while staying on the Connection Step, I can ask the right questions in my own way which are relevant to the situation. That is what I want for you. Having the right attitudes allows you to be able to ask others (and yourself) questions which are powerful and unique to you.

Attitudes, motivation and processes for Understanding are probably even more important than the content of what you actually say. Reemphasising this, if you have the right types of questions and the right attitudes with the questions, you will be able to put words together in your own unique way which will allow you to get to know yourself, others and God more deeply. The right attitudes will stop the questions from becoming an interview or an inquisition!

So, what are these attitudes? Understanding another is made easier when you have questions which arise from inner attitudes of just trying to be aware, being curious and seeking to discover, to explore and to find

what it might be like for the other person to be in a particular situation. These attitudes help you to notice what is going on for the other person, and for yourself. Remember, having a questioning approach does not mean that you have to become an analytic psychologist or psychiatrist nor an interrogating boss or lawyer. You can be yourself in a compassionate and curious way! In fact, by having a desire to be aware of another, in a safe way, you'll find your relationships with others will grow so much deeper.

Attitudes are positioned on all of the CURE Steps. So even beneath the questioning attitudes are the attitudes of Connection which as we know make up the 'A' of SAFETY. These attitudes are **care**, **confidentiality** and **consent**, and these wonderful attitudes are lost unless we remain fully Connected. Attitudes also flow up from the Connection Step through the Understanding Step to the Response Step, and we will go into these later. To whet your appetite though, Response attitudes are founded on a desire to see the other person and yourself grow in a God-centred transformed and flourishing direction. What does that look like? That's exactly it! You don't know until you've Understood. So just stay with these attitudes of Connecting and Understanding, use your types of questions and see what happens. This is not just for others, but also for yourself. Having a desire to be curious about yourself will grow your Understanding of who you are and that will empower your capacity to Understand others. Likewise, the attitude of wanting to Understand God more and seeking after Him will result in your finding Him more.

### 3. Playing relationship tennis. An introduction



- *If I asked you to imagine your relationship with someone fairly close to you as a game of tennis, what would it look like!? Have a think about this!*



- *Ask someone else the same question about a relationship of theirs. See what they say. It could be that they might describe the happy game of tossing the ball to each other, but sometimes one might slam a serve (technically called an "ace") or another might just walk off the court.*

I started to discover this game in the early stages of our marriage. I needed something to help. I was pretty desperate to get our relationship to work. I had never lived with someone for so long in such a way, even by the end of the first month of our marriage. The tennis metaphor actually started off in the early days with a Ping-Pong ball, and slowly got morphed into the tennis game. I still have that table tennis ball with the instructions written on it! Early on our relationship was not like an ideal game. I think we both may have felt the other smash the ball, or the issue, over the net, let alone one of us walking off the court (that often would have been me).

Metaphors are helpful. If you were to illustrate a relationship through a metaphor, which would you choose? For some it may be a dance or doing a project together. David and Susanne Nikles use the illustration of a garden in their book, *Your Marriage Garden*. For me, I have found the tennis metaphor encapsulates many of the dynamics of relating. It is important to realise that this tennis metaphor is about a relationship, it is not a competition or a battle! Many people have a picture in mind of how a good tennis match will flow. Having built firstly on the questions and then on the attitudes of understanding another person or even yourself, we now can bring these together in a sequential way in a pattern of interaction, somewhat like a tennis game. The idea of tennis is to particularly illustrate the importance of taking turns at seeing the other person's point of view, which is critical to being able to action the Understanding Step.

For example, what happens when it is all one-way in a relationship with no give and take? That can end up a bit like in tennis when one keeps on serving and the other just returns the ball or lets the ball go past or knocks it out of the court. What about when you just don't feel heard by the other person or when you just don't really want to talk? What about those times when you want to state your view about something, but you just hear the other person slam their view of the issue at you, like a ball (or even a bullet) being shot over the tennis net?!

The tennis illustration is a helpful one for looking at communication and relationships. But it is not just about how two people communicate and relate with each; the tennis illustration also helps

us to Understand where the players are at in themselves. For a good relationship to occur, both players need to be functioning reasonably well. In other words, it will be much harder for a depressed person, who doesn't even want to be there, to play.

Remember that the purpose of Understanding is to get ready to move to better Responses, which we will talk about when we look at this next Step. This will mean that you and another person can both grow more into God-centred flourishing, as your relationship heads in that direction. This process can be seen as a triple win process, a game being a win for the other, a win for yourself and a win for the relationship. One way of remembering this is calling it a **WWW** (win-win-win) game. Your relationship will become more positive and you will be more able to face the challenges ahead. The more fun there is in addition to facing each other the better. That is why we call the tennis metaphor a 'game'! This tennis metaphor is expanded on significantly in the second book, *the C.U.R.E for Life Part Two: God Centred Relationships*.

### **Points to remember**

Understanding arises from and consolidates the underlying Connection Step setting a great foundation for the Response Step. The Understanding Step in turn affects the strength of the Connection Step. It is as we Understand another person that our loving Connection deepens. I'm sure we have all experienced a sense of growing Connection with someone as we have learnt to Understand who they are and what they are going through. On the basis of Connection and Understanding, a relationship can move into action and change in a greater way on the Response Step.

The key to understanding is asking questions which are undergirded by God-centred, other-focused attitudes such as **awareness**, **curiosity**, **discovery**, and **exploration**. These questions also follow a sequence, of introductory **entry questions** and then moving deeper into **centring questions**. Caution needs to be used with the next stage of understanding in linking the present together with the past and the future. This is in view of the power of these **linking questions**. Feel free to find a metaphor which is useful for you for describing the

Understanding process. The one offered here is the metaphor of tennis. Dance could be another example where in order for the dance relationship to work, there has to be a mutual Understanding.



- *What is the first thing from this chapter which you would like to start to work on?*
- *How much do you ask questions of others?*
- *What do you do if someone is trying to score points over you for a win/lose, rather than a win for them, yourself and the relationship?*



- *Share one thing you have learnt with a person close to you.*
- *Discuss with them the question, “If you are to liken our relationship to a game of tennis, what do you think it would look like?”*
- *If you want to find out more, go to Part Two, but in the meantime, feel free to play around with this metaphor and see how it can help you get a greater Understanding of how good you are at Understanding and relating with another!*

When you become more familiar with the Shapes later on in the book you will find your capacity to be effective on the Understanding Step will be increased. In particular, the Circles will help you to understand a person more deeply, and the Square will help you more clearly to identify where the person is at. When you get a grasp of the Steps and the Shapes, you may want to re-read this chapter and then jump from here to the chapter on the Circles and then beyond that to *Part Two* on getting to know the person more deeply.



*God of Understanding, search my heart, my mind, and my actions. You know me. May I know You more.*

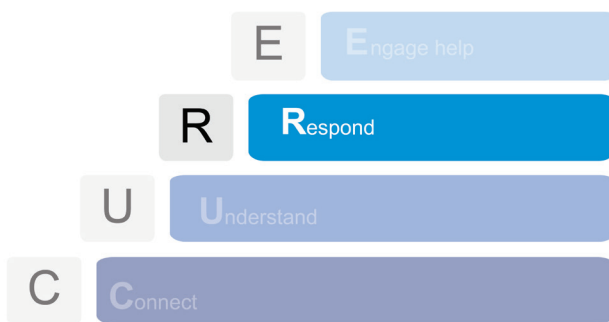
### **Understanding in a church small group**

Key Teaching Points: True Understanding can only happen when it is based on the **SAFETY** of the Connection Step, particularly the use of **Facing** and being real along with the use of **Empathy**, over a period of time where ‘You’ questions are used in conjunction with ‘I’ statements. It is these ‘You’ questions which activate the Understanding Step, particularly questions along the lines of, “how are you?” followed by “what is that like for you?” This Understanding brings a sense of the life essentials of being heard and of belonging.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

7.30 - 8.00PM: A group text/SMS message would have normally been sent by myself on the preceding Sunday, assisting people to start to think about what’s happening. It is also a helpful reminder that the group is on. On the night at around 7:30 PM we look at the Scriptures and one of a number of questions provided by our local church. The purpose of this time is to Connect and Understand with God’s word and with each other, as we ask ‘You’ questions and make ‘I’ statements about the passages and the associated question. Yes, it is absolutely to learn more about the Bible, and it is also a time to learn more about each other and how we may see the Scriptures as well as differing ways to apply them to our own lives. We end up Understanding more about God, each other and ourselves. This time of looking at the Scriptures is where the ‘You’ question is so helpful to minimise preaching and maximise sharing. Mind you, I do find myself asking the one who is sharing, “and for you ...?” when I hear a mini sermon coming on. This helps them to personalise their little preach, change it to an ‘I’ statement and continue with “for me ...”

### III. Step Three: Respond – to Grow



I have seen a lot of changes in my life as I have become connected more with God, others and myself. I have also started to understand and to know Him and others better, and have been understood and known by them; I have changed and I am continuing to grow. Changes and Responses have been made for the better. I have been moving more into a life of wholeness, of Christian wholeness! I am now a far way off from where I started! But I had to get onto the Response Step!

We have looked at how we can develop relationships further by remaining Connected, with deeper Understanding. Now, we look at how to grow stronger in a God-centred transforming direction.

The next Step of the CURE is Response.



- *What is it like when someone tries to solve your problems when they don't really get you?*
- *What happens when you're sure that you can see the answer to someone else's situation, and you tell them – but they just don't seem happy with your advice?*

Let's look at four key questions:

- What is Responding?
- Why Respond?
- Whom am I Responding to?
- How do I Respond?
  - Use 'You' Response questions
  - Use the Steps to help you Respond
  - Use attitudes that build Responsiveness
  - Play relationship tennis in Responding

### **Jesus and Responding**

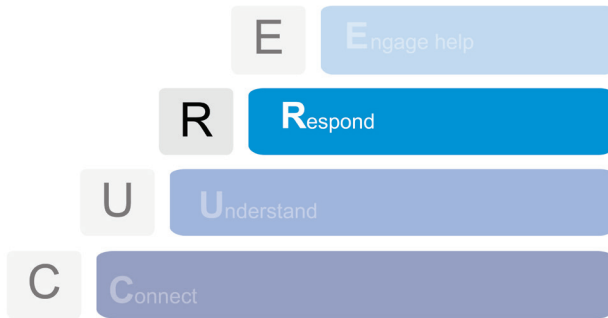
Jesus Connected and Understood. But He also moved on to Respond. Jesus often stood on the Response Step in His ministry especially with His disciples. He had no problems telling people how it was, on a basis of Connection and Understanding. Jesus responded in a very invitational way to the woman at the well. He did not force himself on her. Her biggest need, more than for physical water was to meet with the One who is the Water of Life. Jesus did not metaphorically bash her on the head with a Bible, but together they came to the point where she herself brought this need up.

The woman said, 'I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am He'. (John 4:25-26)

He said He was the One who she was really looking for. This was very different from the way He Responded to those who thought they knew everything and were proud self-centred religious people. There was a group of people Jesus didn't really even try to walk the first two Steps with – He already Understood the hardened and proud ways of the Pharisees and Sadducees. There was no Connection between them and Jesus. He stood up strongly on the Responding Step. However, Jesus Responded very differently when he saw the need of others who were struggling.

### What is Responding? To grow and be transformed

The Response Step is about growth and change. It is on this Step that we become more transformed in our attitudes, and can grow in our skills and knowledge. It is here we can grow into emotional and spiritual maturity. But the Response Step is where people often want to start. They want to get things fixed and sorted out, but this can't happen until the first two Steps of Connection and Understanding have been built and practised over time.



The Response Step at times involves moving up to the fourth step of Engaging or receiving Help and support. The Response Step is really helped by the undergirding Connecting and Understanding Steps and by the availability of the Engaging Help Step.

Being helped to find our own Responses is incredibly powerful. We will see that this can again be facilitated by asking ‘You’ questions and ‘You’ Response questions, questions to help the other Respond and change. Responding might well include problem-solving, where we look at the pros and cons of the situation and balance out the best way to go. In churches, a lot of pastoral care and different types of ministry can be activated on this Step. Counsellors and coaches are trained in various Response approaches. In a counselling setting Responding could be giving advice after hearing a problem and after that assessment providing therapy. In a conflict resolution scenario in the home, being on the Response Step could be coming up with practical alternatives to consider.

One of the biggest responses we can all undertake is to turn our backs on a self-centred way of life, to die to that way of life and be born again into a new place of belonging, a new family, in God's kingdom. Moving onto the Response Step has a capacity to transform everything we do from the inside out.

### Why Respond? The purpose of change

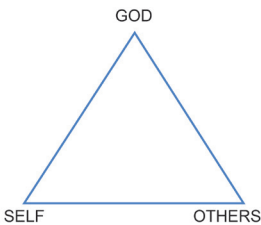
For some, this is a no-brainer question! Why Respond? To fix or change something, of course! However, for real change to emerge, it needs to be more than just a change of attitude or thinking. We need to move into a change of action. When it comes to change, actions speak so much louder than words. Even deeper than that, the primary purpose of Responding is to change, to become more like Jesus as we follow Him, to grow towards God-centred transformation, spiritually, personally and socially.

We will see that we are personally made for wholistic transformation in every part of our lives: in our spirit, heart, mind and body as well as socially. Remember, we were made to live in this Triangle of Connection with God, with ourselves and with others. It is why we are here, to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Even more so, to love as Jesus loved us.



- *When you are relating with someone close to you, how much do you keep in mind wanting to have a positive outcome or response for yourself, for the other person and for your relationship?*

### Whom do I Respond to? To God, to others and to myself



As with Connecting and Understanding, again there are three directions of Response. Response also comes packaged in a triangular shape. We can Respond in the three directions – to God, to others and to ourselves. When we go beyond ourselves and prioritise our Response to God over and above our own issues or reacting to others, then we will grow to be like Jesus in a God-centred direction.

We can follow these Steps to grow into a better person. We ourselves are responding. We are changing.



- *What responses may God be challenging you to make?*

However, there is a whole other side to this. Change is not just about our changing. As we are invited, we aim to help others grow too. It is not just about growing ourselves, but also about growing the other's capacity to walk the Steps of the CURE and to change in their whole being. That is why this book is not just a self-help book, but more so a person-helper book. We and others are transformed wholistically, from the inside out, so our attitudes, skills and knowledge can grow in a God-centred flourishing direction.

The Response Step applies to all ages and cultures. There may be times where following the Steps in order seems impractical, such as in the family where the parents need to urgently tell the children not to run impulsively onto the road. This is especially so in the earlier days. However, these quick Responses work a lot better if there is a bank or reservoir full of Connection and Understanding in reserve. This is really important with teenagers, where things can go badly wrong. If parents jump up and down on the Response Step without Connection or Understanding, there is a likelihood of the outcome descending into chaos in one way or another. As a parent of a teenager, if all you have managed to do is remain connected, you are winning. If you force years of unwanted Responding on your teenagers, you may lose them for a lot longer.

The Response Step can also be facilitated in a church setting and is helpful particularly when relationships are getting deeper and more important issues are being discussed. How do you do this? We will show you.

The Response Step of the CURE also helps members in a local church to move to Level 3 of church growth – to serve and to lead. It can take us beyond Level 1: being attendees who want acceptance and fellowship, and Level 2: becoming family, with a sense of belonging and a desire to grow in discipleship. Service and leadership in the church is not just for pastors but for everyone, whether it is at home, at work, in the community or in the local church setting.

In church teaching and preaching, as well as in the school or work setting, if we build Response questions on Connection and Understanding, people will be able to Respond more effectively. This is especially true when the teaching is relevant to the questions which might be asked by the recipients.

Being Responsive to each other on a foundation of Connection and Understanding is also very important in marriage and friendships if they are to last. These relationships will grow more effectively as we have the goal of God-centred transformation in mind for the other person as well as for ourselves.

### **How do I Respond? Skills in Responding**

Get on the Response Step! Some are so focused on Connecting and Understanding that they never get onto the Response Step. This Step is an essential part of the CURE.

#### **1. Use 'You' Response Questions**

Again, remember the 'Y' in the acronym SAFETY on the Connection Step stands for 'You' questions, asking questions about the 'You', the other person. From there we went to 'You' Understanding questions and 'I' statements based on the Understanding Step. On the Response Step, we are still linked with the 'Y' of SAFETY from the Connection Step, but asking 'You' Response questions. These are questions about the other person, for the other to use, as an invitation to change. By contrast, 'You' statements e.g. "You should do this", may lead to unhelpful forced outcomes. Again, make sure that Response starts after Understanding and is based on Connection. It is helpful to follow the rule of using 'You' questions and 'I' statements. That could look like a 'You' Response question such as: "What would happen if you ...?" And an 'I' statement could be something like: "I have found in my life that ...."



Surprisingly, using questions can be one of the best ways to Respond. Questions are powerful! So rather than telling someone what to do, it can be more helpful putting advice in the form of a question. We call these ‘Response questions’, such as: “What difference is God making in your life?” This approach is particularly constructive if you have God’s heart for the other person, that you share His concern for others to rise to a God-centred flourishing place, so that they can also serve and lead others.

## **2. Use the Steps to help you Respond**

Responding to a person or a situation is certainly an art. Some people go too far and Respond too soon or too much. Others Respond too late or not enough. Although Responding immediately can be instinctive, it is usually not wise to make it your starting point. Remember, if we are jumping straight to the Response Step, having bypassed the Connection and Understanding Steps of the CURE, then our Responses will be far less likely to be received or applied by others.

It is important to re-emphasise how we all know that receiving advice from someone when there isn’t a sense of Connection or Understanding makes communication difficult. This is because we find it much easier to listen to someone’s Response to us if there is a good Connection and they Understand our situation or opinion. If it becomes clear that Connection has been lost with someone, the CURE shows that you need to go back down the Steps and regain it before progressing further in any meaningful relationship. Walk back down the Steps. Understand more. Even just go back, have a break and regain Connection. It can be easy to agree with this concept in our minds, but the challenge will be in going against our instincts, which so often put Response as the first Step, so that the CURE becomes more like the RUCÉ! Choosing to practise this in the right order will result in our Responses being far more effective in all areas of our lives. This is so important that we have developed a bit of a catchphrase in addition to, ‘You questions and I statements’, which is ‘Connect and Understand before you Respond and then Engage Help’.

When you are trying to help someone and it doesn't seem to be working, do you now know what to do? Remember the rule of thumb and take a step back down onto the Understanding Step. So often we get ahead of thoroughly Connecting with and Understanding a person and walk too quickly up the Steps. One of the biggest skills on the Response Step is to learn to go back down the Steps for greater Understanding and Connection. For example, you can try saying something such as, "I may have been getting ahead of myself. Let me go back a couple of Steps". Back on the Connection Step, we reinforce the invitational posture which belongs to that Step. We ask more 'You' Understanding questions and when we then return to the Response Step, there can be greater clarity and strength to move ahead. As we do this, the Connection and Understanding Steps beneath the Response Step become even stronger.

The bottom line of all this is that same slogan: "Connect and Understand before you Respond!" Sometimes when you Connect and Understand with another person that can be enough to facilitate a Response as it helps them in turn to Connect with and Understand themselves and to know what to do. In this context many may say, "I don't need you to Respond to me, I just need you to Connect and Understand". Finally, another option if you're stuck, as you will find out, is to move straight onto the Engage Help Step. Maybe saying something like, "I'm not sure about where to go with this. How would it be for you if we/you were to contact ...?"



- *When you are relating with someone else, to what extent do you try to change them to your way, to what you think might be best?*
- *What do you think of the need to maybe spend more time on the Understanding Step and even on the Connection Step in these situations, rather than moving quickly to Response in your desire to promote change?*

### **3. Attitudes that build Responsiveness**

As with Understanding, our questions are undergirded by attitudes, which will determine the success of this Step. With these attitudes we

won't be asking rhetorical questions, which is when we are trying to make our point rather than helping them to find their Responses. An example can be when someone uses questions like a legal proceeding to push one into agreement with the inquisitor. These rhetorical questions don't work so well in normal relationships when it comes to change.

To recap for a moment, we saw that the Connecting attitudes are care, confidentiality and choice; the Understanding attitudes are being aware, curious and wanting to explore and find the other person's point of view, how they are and where they may be at. The correct Response attitudes are also vitally important. It is easy to have an attitude of competitiveness, pride or seeking our own agenda when Responding. However, healthy, empathic and God-centred Responding attitudes seek to grow another. This takes time and patience. Effective Response attitudes encourage a person to move forwards and upwards toward God-centred flourishing so that they can become more strategic in whatever situation they are in. Response attitudes are those that want to help build, encourage and perhaps challenge someone towards growth. At the same time, the relationship between you and that person can provide encouragement in itself. It is all about motivation and momentum. It is wanting action and results to happen, but it is not pushing our agenda on to others.

#### **Playing Relationship Tennis and Responding**

Once we have established useful questions and underlying attitudes, there is the whole process and sequence of Responding, which again fits well into the tennis metaphor. As mentioned, this dynamic example brings a lot of the essential principles together. Let's get back onto the tennis court! Don't rush onto the court. Warm up gently. Remember, take turns and take it easy! Get into the swing of that safety on the court. Feel the firm ground of that Connection Step on which you stand. The hardest place to use Connection and Understanding when you want to Respond is with close relationships: in the family with our spouse, parents or children. However, where there is Connection and Understanding which establishes respect, it is so much easier.

Bringing this back into the illustration of tennis, the Response Step is like a second set of tennis. Remember this sequence: getting onto the tennis court and warming up is like walking on the first Connection Step. Playing the first set involves Understanding the other person and the issues which might be served on that firm ground of Connecting. Responding is like playing the second set.

The purpose of the second set is to respond to the issue/s and attempt some kind of positive, constructive, God-centred resolution. Once there is a good Understanding, this Response Step will be much easier and quicker for everyone. The Response can include brief practical problem solving, being together in the presence of Jesus, or encouraging the other person (and oneself) to move towards a place of God-centred flourishing. For example, both take turns to serve their point regarding what should happen to resolve the issue, and then both take turns again to listen. If need be, it may be appropriate to have a break, catch your breath, reconnect back on the court, and even go back to do more Understanding before resuming back into the second set of Response. For example, “How about we have a break and maybe get a better Understanding of where we need to go?” Find out more in the second book, *Part Two*.

### **Points to remember**

The Response Step is indeed important, but we need to resist the temptation to try to start on this Step. It’s from the foundation of the Connection and Understanding Steps that personal growth will emerge. This is where goals and options can be turned into strategies and habits, and where change is actioned.

For things to change, we need to get onto the Response Step, responding primarily to God, but also to others and to ourselves. This will help us to move towards God-centred transformation in the whole of our life.

To recap, Response is made so much easier when there is Connection and Understanding, where you are not pushing your agenda on to another person and where you have the capacity to walk back down the Steps if things are going too fast. The Response Step is where action and movement occur.

Just as with the Understanding Step, the metaphor of tennis is valuable. As the Steps move on from one to another, so does the game of relationship tennis from getting onto the solid and safe court (Connection) to the first set (Understanding) and then onto the second set (Response).

The key to response is again by asking questions which are undergirded by God-centred, other focused attitudes such as seeking to build the other person up, champion their cause and challenge them to grow. These attitudes seek for the other person to fly even higher than oneself, to be motivated and to gather momentum into new or established areas of life with specific, measurable and achievable strategic results.



- *What changes do you need to start thinking about?*



- *Share what you have learnt with the person closest to you.*
- *Spend more time with someone who really wants your best, who wants to speed you towards God-centred flourishing. See what Response options arise.*
- *Do one thing within the next 24 hours from what you have learnt.*

Finally, your capacity to be on the Response Step will be increased as you become familiar with the Shapes in the second Part of this book. In particular, the Square and the Shape of the Cross will help you to Respond more strongly. So, when you get a grasp of both the Steps and the Shapes you may want to re-read this chapter and then jump from here to the chapter which combines the *Square and the Shape of the Cross* on page 149.



- *God of action, just Your being and all that You have done demands a Response from me. Yet You give me choice. You seek for me to grow. Help me to be Responsive to You.*

### **Response in a church small group**

Key Teaching Points: True Responding, can only happen when it is based on the undergirding strength of Connection and Understanding. Borrowing from the Connection Step, the ‘You’ questions emerging on to the Understanding Step can now be reapplied on the Response Step, with a similar process in terms of the use of attitudes, but with different content in terms of the actual questions. The Response attitudes arise out of the questions you prayerfully ask yourself, about what would the other person look like in a more God-centred and, even if possible, a greater flourishing experience. The usefulness of this sort of Response question will be further enhanced by understanding the *Square and the Shape of the Cross* which you can learn about more in the second Section of this book.

When it seems that the Response Step is not working, rather than pushing on, it is more effective to go back down the Steps. First go back to the Understanding Step, asking yourself something along the lines of, “What am I missing here?” On the other hand, you may also want to ask the other person something around the helpful question of, “How is this conversation going for you?” If the other person thinks that you have a good Understanding, but the Response Step is still not working, then it may be helpful to go right back to the Connection Step, and especially check through the SAFETY acronym in your head to see where things might be going wrong. It is okay at times to say to the other person, “I’m feeling a bit lost here – I’m wondering what you think may be happening?” Finally, it can also be helpful just to carry on going up the Steps to the Engage Help Step and ask something along the lines of, “I’m wondering if it could be helpful if maybe someone else could also get involved?” It can be really important here not to give the message that you are just trying to pass the buck. Otherwise they might feel that you have put them, even more than the problem, in the too hard basket! More about this in the next chapter.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

8:00 – 9 PM: Moving onto the Response Step. At this point, we divide into men and women, moving into separate areas of our house where we meet. This ramps up the strength of the Connection Step by going smaller in our numbers and more similar, in terms of gender proximity. Remember, smaller and similar are the two “Ss” of the SAFETY acronym. With safety increasing there can be a greater openness to God-centred responses for change.

My wife facilitates the ladies while I try to keep the men in order! Being facilitators, we try to ensure that everyone has a chance to be heard. That can be hard, particularly if there may be some more extroverted people who are used to their own voice, or those who speak so much that maybe they don’t get to reflect on their own issues. The flipside is safely encouraging those who might not feel open enough to share.

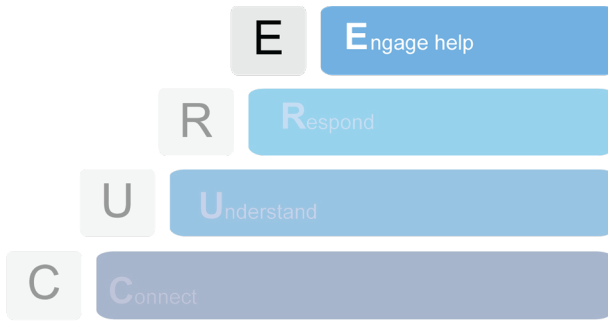
Keeping up the catchphrase, ‘You questions and I statements’, facilitated by asking “and for you...?” can be useful here, especially if someone is tending to preach. It is not hard to detect this, for example when someone is speaking in the second or third person, ‘you’ or ‘we’, when they are more preaching rather than sharing about themselves.

As we sit down together, I see where the conversation flows. It may be connected with the Bible study we have done but is more often where people are at in their own lives. I try to allow each one to have their point of view and an opportunity to express that, as if they were serving the tennis ball to the rest of us on the other side of the net. Part of that process is trying to make sure that that person’s point of view is seen and heard. I also try to keep my ear out for any common themes which may be developing. These could be to do for example with a particular area of our lives like our work or family life or maybe a struggle or expression of gratitude. As we share, from the foundation of Connection first and then Understanding, we gently move towards

the Response step for each person if possible. Here, my thought emerges ... “What would this situation or person look like in a more God-centred and flourishing way?” which then prompts a Response question, “What would happen if you were to ...?”

As is appropriate, but particularly by the end, I encourage everyone to bring what we shared together, and any themes which God may be laying on our hearts, back to God.

## IV. Step Four: Engage Help – to Serve



The focus of this step is on being supported to serve, so that we can ‘show’ or demonstrate what has happened within us. As I have grown, I have been more able to serve others. Over the last 34 years and more, I have grown in my ability to be there for my wife. I have grown in giving my (now adult) five children a better developmental experience than I had. I have increasingly been able to build up my friends, and have sought opportunities to be a positive influence in my local church. I have found a group of fellow travellers whom I receive from and also serve in the Living Wholeness Community, as we have grown together over the last 25 years.

The Living Wholeness Community, or those who learn, live and give out the Steps and Shapes, has certainly passed through its ups and downs. It has passed through near death experiences, like the meta-morphosis of a struggling caterpillar, to where we are now having a positive impact with people from many different nations. In my medical practice as a psychiatrist, the *Christian Wholeness Framework*, with the CURE as its centrepiece, enables me to show love and care as I

serve children, teenagers, adults, marriages and families to the core of their beings.

Interestingly, although I obviously have received from others over time, it is only in more recent times that I have been intentional in learning the skill of being supported, of Engaging Help and receiving – from my wife and adult children, from my friends and church, as well as from my fellow travellers in the Living Wholeness Community. Yes, I also learn so much from my patients.

As I'm supported and Engage Help, I serve better. As I then link with others who are also serving in the same setting, a synergy happens which makes that service even more powerful. It is only very recently that I have realised that in many ways what I have been doing is not only serving, but also leading. At times, I might just be leading one person by setting an example for them to get alongside someone else and to serve them. This mentoring could even be considered a form of 'discipleship', as I seek to follow Jesus, to be a disciple of His and to make disciples of Jesus. It is a copy-and-paste form of leadership where someone I am serving can themselves go and spend time with another, serve them and in turn provide an example for that other person to serve yet another. This form of serving and leading is what we call 'servant-leadership'. We can all do this in our own unique ways, God working through us to someone else. As we ourselves are followers of Jesus, we are actually walking the road of the New Commandment, to love one another, as Jesus would, the Great Commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and the Great Commission, to be and to make disciples of Jesus. But not alone!

This is what this chapter is about – being supported to serve as we link with others.



- *How would you compare your story with mine in terms of serving others and also of being supported?*

Here are some questions this chapter seeks to address.



- *How good are you at knowing when you are beyond your abilities?*

- *What do you do then?*
- *How often do you go to others, Engaging Help from them?*
- *Do you tend to be someone who is always helping others and then collapses exhausted?*
- *Or are you someone who is always receiving help but never really serving others?*
- *How do we achieve a balance of serving and being supported?*
- *When we are serving others – our family, friends, church, a particular ministry or in our school or work setting – whom else can we link with to serve them better?*
- *What is servant-leadership all about? For some it is harder to serve. For others, it is harder to ask for help. Either way, this section can help you!*

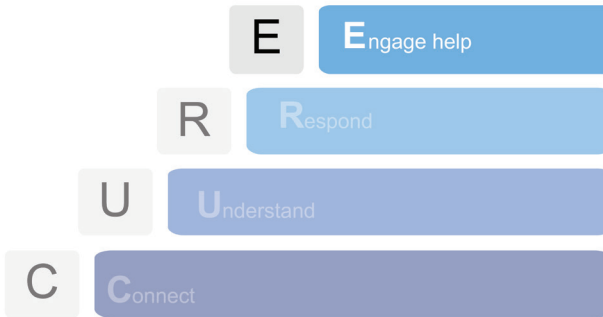
Let's now look at four key questions related to the above:

- What is Engaging Help?
- Why do we Engage Help?
- Whom do we Engage Help from?
- How do we Engage Help?

### **Jesus and Engaging Help**

Jesus gave three years of his life to training and equipping a small group of people to live and love as He did. They were His disciples, and He was of greater help to them than anyone else had ever been. Jesus didn't want this group just to be receivers. He wanted so many more people – the entire world in fact – to experience His love and life-changing power. He said to them in Matthew 10:8b, “Freely you have received; freely give”. In John 13:34 He gave them a New Commandment – “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”. This is a step further on from the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) where we are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbours not as Jesus did, but as we love ourselves. Now Jesus wants us to love others even more than ourselves. He wants us to love others ‘as He has loved us’.

## What is Engaging Help?



Step 4 of the CURE, Engaging Help, is about looking outside of ourselves and bringing in others to assist in change (for ourselves or for others). A couple may be dealing with an issue that is bigger than they are able to cope with, or a teacher may feel at a dead-end with a student and out of options. They could be doing everything right in Steps 1, 2 and 3 (Connect, Understand, Respond) and yet nothing is changing. It feels as though the Response Step is not working! There are two options: to go back down to the Understanding Step and even to the Connecting Step as previously mentioned, or to rise up to this next Step. Step 4, Engaging Help is an invitation to call in support and to involve others in our life situations.

### **Why Engage Help? To be supported, to serve, to show servant-leadership**

Engaging Help can give new perspective, new ideas and new solutions to problems we thought could never be resolved. The truth is that the only way we can be a receiver of help is when someone else has chosen to become a giver of help. The exciting principle of this Step is that as we receive support from a range of sources, we can be empowered to become more of a support to others. As we Engage Help and are served, we can grow to serve others, to empower them to grow in a God-centred and flourishing direction. Engaging Help and support helps us to serve others in an intentional way. This is the

grounding for showing or demonstrating a life to serve and lead, a life of servant-leadership.

When we apply the first three Steps to ourselves, Connecting with ourselves, Understanding ourselves and Responding to ourselves in a God-centred way, this in turn helps us to love ourselves in a healthy way. When we love ourselves in this non-selfish way, we can truly love others and we move towards the goal of loving others as Christ loves us. It is an expression of the New Commandment to love others as He has loved us.

Engaging Help, the fourth Step of the CURE, is very much about both receiving and giving help. It is about releasing people into the Great Commandment, the New Commandment and the Great Commission. This is servant-leading. Yes, as in my story, we can all be servant-leaders, even with one other person! As we do this, we find ourselves with others who are also serving. We can look around and link in with these others, and support one another to serve more effectively. This shows and demonstrates the body of Christ with its different parts working in a united way.



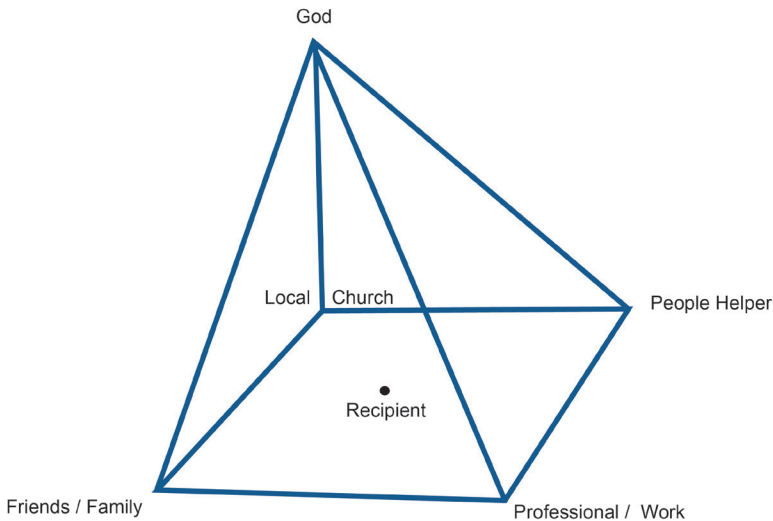
- *How do you go about getting the support you need so that you can serve others better?*

### **Whom do we Engage help from? There are five main sources**

We have Connected, Understood and Responded to God, to others and to ourselves, as in a triangle! As we bring a series of different sources of help together, these separate ‘triangles’ end up becoming linked with each other, producing yet another shape, the shape of a Pyramid. As we will see, the Pyramid is actually the combined shape of these multiple Triangles. We will look in more detail at the Pyramid later. For now, though, it is helpful to know that the Pyramid has five corners, representing the five main sources from which we can Engage help. The point on the top of the Pyramid is one corner and then there are the four corners at the base of the pyramid, five in total. When we are receiving help we place ourselves in the middle of the base of the Pyramid.

The first and main source is from God himself, the source of all comfort. Paul highlights this in a letter to people living in Corinth.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. (2 Corinthians 1:3-6)



Then around the base there is family, especially when we are young. There are also our friends, particularly as we move through teenage into adulthood and onwards through our lives. The Church can also be a real source of help, particularly the smaller parts of church – the ‘twos and threes’ and small groups. Another tremendous source of help, especially in areas of particular need, is the specialised arm of the Church, which we call ‘people helpers’, ‘lay support’ or ‘para-church’. This specialised group of people can help, for example, with marriages, personal growth and addictions. This form of help can also come in a virtual way – in books or material online. Finally, there

are professional people such as counsellors or coaches from whom we can also benefit. Generally, we need to pay for these services, as we do for other general services.

When two people in any context – marriage, friends, in a church or at work – realise that they are not getting very far on their own, it can be very helpful to get back to the example of relationship tennis. It is as though the game has come to a standstill. Now is the time to Engage Help and to get a coach and referee, just to facilitate the win for him, the win for her and the win for the relationship: www – win, win, win.

It would be better still if a couple, even in the early stages of building a marriage in the courtship days, before problems become more entrenched, have a supportive Pyramid. This could include another trusted couple in the stands around the tennis court. They could also maybe even go to a church small group for young couples. Books and marriage enrichment courses on relationships can also be helpful and part of that support around the tennis court. And of course, professional referees such as coaches or counsellors can be a tremendous resource.



- *Whom are you currently being supported by?*
- *Whom do you need to get more support from? From within the family or your friends? From the church? From non-government organisations or programs? From professionals?*

Whom do I serve? If Engaging Help is so that we can serve more effectively, which other people are we meant to be serving? We can serve from any of the points on the outside of the Pyramid such as to the family, to friends, in a church context, in our school or at work. We will talk more about this in the chapter on the Pyramid.



- *Whom are you serving? Are you serving too much or too little?*

### **How do I engage help to servant-lead?**

In real life, what does Engaging Help to support others look like? In our younger years, it is easy to receive support, and sometimes people tend to stay in that position of receiving in a self-centred way with a sense

of entitlement. It is important for teens and young adults to practise moving into serving and leading rather than just being the recipients of being served. In our older and more generative years we can end up being people who just support others. The best scenario is to be able to receive and to serve simultaneously if possible. This occurs most in reciprocal relationships as we will see are illustrated in the Triangle.

How do we get support? Just say, “Can you please help me?” It is not complex! To get to that question though, we must realise that we have a need, and that there are people around us who are willing to help. However, this may not always have been the case, so it may be a lot harder to ask for help again. In this context, where we may have been let down, we can grow a sense of independence which may look good from the outside but is not really the best way to cope in the long-term. Engaging Help requires the attitudes of humility to receive and willingness to give.

On this fourth Step of the CURE, how do you help others to Engage Help? As with Understanding and Responding, helping others to Engage Help starts with a ‘You’ question, a ‘You’ Engaging Help question: Whom do you have and whom do you need for support? Let me ask you that question: “Whom do you need ... Now?” It is as we Engage Help that we can better serve. Let me ask you these questions:

- How are you serving as a disciple of Jesus?
- How closely are you following the ultimate Servant, Jesus, in terms of living the
  - New Commandment (John 13:34)
  - Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31)
  - Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)?

Personalising these questions:



- *How able am I at calling out, “Help” to God and to those around me?*
- *In what ways do I say, “How can I serve you?” to God and to those around me?*
- *Whom is there that I can link with who is serving in a similar area of ministry, mission or place of work ... or family situation ... as I am, to help me serve better, in a combined and synergistic way?*



- *Share what you have learnt with the person closest to you.*
- *Actually, ask someone to support you in a particular area of your life.*
- *Likewise, in your own time frame, do an act of service for someone, intentionally.*

Finally, your capacity to be effective on the Engage Help Step will be increased as you become familiar with the Shapes. The Pyramid in particular will help you to be supported as you serve. When you get a grasp of the Steps and the Shapes, you may want to reread this chapter and then jump from here to the chapter on the Pyramid.

*God of community and love, You, through your Holy Spirit are my main source of help. You are my “Helper” in time of need. And yet You said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Help me to find the best supports that I too might, like Jesus, serve others.*

### Points to remember



**Engage Help** can be a “go to” step, even when you don’t know how to Respond. However, you will still need that level of Connection and Understanding to undergird asking that important question arising from reflections and good foundational attitudes of, “I’m wondering who else you could be with at this time?”. That “being with” could be to have another for support, to serve or to link with. The options of such people are clarified by having a greater Understanding of the Pyramid which illustrates these three processes. Remember, right from the beginning, God never meant us to do life alone. The Engage Help Step helps to validate the fact that at times the challenging process of being able to face issues rather than to “save face” and pretend we can do it by ourselves.



- *Read the first part of Romans 12, all of One Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4, keeping in mind the Engage Help process.*

### **Engaging Help in a church small group**

Key Teaching Points: People who come to our small group know that a significant purpose of our group is that as we Engage Help, we can become servant-leaders. We want to grow to do a ‘show and tell’ as it were of the Great and New Commandments and Great Commission in whatever way God has laid on our hearts. Thus, as they come on a Tuesday night in the context of their busy weeks, my prayer is they go out better than they came. If in need, they have received and been supported. If flourishing, they have served and leave even more equipped to serve. While we encourage people to look at growing their own small group, most of all we want people to flourish in their own God-given gifting, whatever that looks like.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

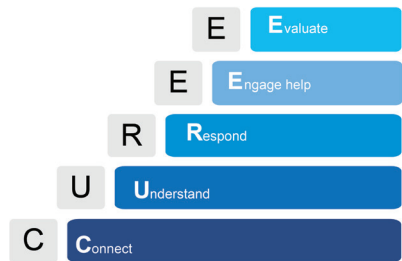
8 PM – 9 PM: During this time, we are asking ‘You’ questions – not only Response Questions but also Engaging Help questions. “Whom else do you need to help you in this context?” Or, “Whom could you be serving in light of what you’ve just been saying?” It is a great relief to see ourselves as only part of the supporting community around anyone. That should become clearer when you learn about the Pyramid in Section 2.

# Evaluation

There actually is a 5<sup>th</sup> step, the step of Evaluation. We have lifted it out of the acronym “CURE” to make the Steps easier at this level of learning the language. For years, I have regularly not just planned ahead but have also assessed and reviewed what has happened in my life. In pre-computer days, I wrote those reflections down in a paper diary. Now I write them down on my smartphone. I mainly do this at the end of a month, a quarter, six months and a year. I also try to get the big picture of the last five or even ten years. More recently I went away by myself in my caravan for a 24-hour retreat and looked back over my life to see what themes were emerging. I realised that what had been important to me was marriage and family, medicine and my work, mission and ministry, travels (which I called mountains to keep the M’s going!), as well as music. That evaluation clarified for me my direction, my passion, and where I need to be more intentional in the future. I realised that I had let music go by the way, and I needed to take some intentional initiative regarding that. Evaluation is really important as it allows us to look back so we can see more clearly in the present and in the future.

## What is Evaluation?

This very helpful exercise of Evaluation is emphasised in the more advanced uses of the CURE. It is at the top of the Steps because it benefits from the underlying Steps of Connect, Understand and Respond (which ideally are specific and measurable) as well as being within the support and service of others. It is hard to Evaluate or accept



Evaluation if there is no Connection or mutual Understanding, or if no Responses have occurred. However, the Evaluation Step takes us back to each Step again so that they can all be evaluated in an ongoing way.

We need to reflect and Evaluate continually as we walk the Steps of the CURE. It helps us to adjust goals and direction, to fly to greater heights so that we can servant-lead even more. How often do you take the opportunity to check out how you are going in terms of your walk/steps with God, with others and with yourself? It does take time to evaluate, but it's worth it for the clearer perspective it brings.

An aeroplane without constant evaluation in terms of its direction would end up in a very different place from where it was meant to be going! In the Bible, there is so much about Evaluation – about being real in our own lives and in our relationship with God and with each other. No wonder the Psalmist prays for wholistic Evaluation in Psalm 139:

Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.  
... Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my  
anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and  
lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139: 23-24)

You can evaluate how you are going spiritually and personally, right through your Circles and out to your Pyramid such as with your family and friends, your church or small group, your ministry or mission, your school or place of work.

It is helpful to have times to evaluate, and also to know how actually to evaluate.

### **Why evaluate?**

Evaluate in order to adjust your flight path, recalibrate your instruments, consolidate and celebrate changes, raise efficiency and effectiveness levels, get feedback to feed forward, and prioritise your goals.

### **Whom to evaluate with?**

Yes, evaluate with yourself, share with a trusted other and bring it to God! Churches, mission and ministry, school and work, also need to evaluate. That can best be done by the presence of the undergirding CURE Steps.

## How to evaluate?

Evaluate by walking back over the Steps.

For personal Evaluation, Connect with God, with yourself and with another – for example, with your spouse or close friend – in SAFETY.

Understand by asking evaluating questions of yourself or others to know God more deeply, to know yourself and the other person, whoever that may be. Become more aware by brainstorming, being curious and discovering more in order to explore and to find out more – for growth. Ask questions of yourself and of others – big, constructive, effective, and at times, direct questions.

From here move on to the Response Step. Respond to the challenges that arise from your reflections/evaluation to help you to grow stronger. Apply the truths you have come up with to your life, build strategies, be challenged to do something, be encouraged, expand your capacity, look forward for growth. Heighten your horizons. Become an influence. Be motivated and get momentum. Have new opportunities and possibilities. Use powerful questions to plan for God-centred results which will be strategic in your life.

Now ask the question: “Whom do I need to help me more with this?” In so doing, evaluate the Engage Help Step.

Take this opportunity to evaluate the four Steps of the CURE in the context of this book.

- **The what:** if someone asked you what the CURE acronym meant, what would you say to them?
- **The why:** Why do you think there is a sequence to the CURE? Why is it important to Connect, Understand, Respond, Engage Help? How are you going with this?
- **The who:** Whom do you walk the Steps with? Do you walk the Steps with God and allow Him to walk them with you?
- **The how:** How are you going walking the Steps? You might even want to give yourself a subjective score, 0 – 10 where 10/10 is going really well and 0/10 is that it is not happening at all! You can also evaluate each Step in turn.

Ask yourself these 'You' evaluating questions:

- *Step 1: Connect to love: how much am I loving and being loved? What is my Connection like with God, with others ... and with myself?*

Score/comment:

- *Step 2: Understand to know: how much am I Understanding others and being Understood? To what extent do I really know God, others and myself?*

Score/comment:

- *Step 3: Respond to grow: how much am I growing and also helping others to grow?*

Score/comment:

- *Step 4: Engage Help to serve and to show love. How's that going for me?*

Score/comment:



- *How much are you evaluating throughout the book as you reflect on yourself, using the moments of reflection? (This is actually a 'You' evaluating question!)*



- *Make a time now when you can evaluate yourself, spiritually, socially and personally over a past period of time, say this last month, year or even the last five to ten years. You may want to get away somewhere even for half a day or for a 24-hour retreat by yourself or with someone else.*
- *See what themes come out of this and what changes this evaluation might invite you to consider.*
- *Look forward to the next week, month, year, decade or season. Start to pray, purpose, prioritise, plan, get perspective, look at the practicalities and the people whom you want to move ahead with.*
- *Plan for some time to go over the first Section of this book. See what you Connected with and what resonated*

*most with you. From this make some action plans even for the next six months or a year.*

- *If this is helpful, have a look over the chapter headings for the up and coming Section 2 and possibly preview the contents. As you initially Connect with these, again see what resonates most with you and what questions rise within you. You might even want to take a note of them. Try to plan ahead to see what you might want out of this next Section. As you plan, then you can evaluate how it is working out for you when you complete the book.*



*Pray this evaluating prayer:*

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139: 23-24)

*Help me to be like You, who so wants me to love and be loved, to know and be known, to grow and not to do this on my own.*

### **Evaluating a church small group**

Teaching points: Evaluation can occur at any stage. For example, at the end of a small group meeting it can be helpful to go around and ask anyone if there is one thing they can take away and remember, and even how they might action that between now and the next time. Evaluation has that purpose, to enhance planning in an accountable way as it is undergirded and based on the Steps. However, this exercise may become controlling if the experience is more self-centred, rather than God-centred. Evaluation can also occur in other time frames such as on a quarterly or annual basis. Evaluation can look back over a period of time and then use that to look forward to the next period of time.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

We try to action the teaching points. This is helped by us having a “quarterly” time when we meet. This is normally in February, May, August and November, 4 to 9 PM on a Saturday at someone else’s house, with the August quarterly becoming a weekend annual retreat.

For me the health of the group is partly determined by looking at how we are going in terms of walking the Steps with each other, and as you will see in the next Section, how we are going with the Shapes.

# SECTION 2:

## The Shapes

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## The Shapes

### Introduction to the Shapes

I am known for taking the salt and pepper shakers, knives and forks, chopsticks, cups and plates, and whatever is between me and someone else, to share the Shapes. No longer am I a PowerPoint fanatic causing death by PowerPoint and no longer do the Shapes need a PowerPoint. If we were together, depending on whatever topic we were talking about, I would use what is on the table we share, to illustrate our conversation. I have applied the Shapes with others, digested them and made them part of my life, so I want to share these with you.

The Shapes help unpack and visualise the CURE in a deeper way. They are valuable tools or maps to help us understand where we are at in our lives, where we need to get to, and how we can create a plan to get there. God is central to every Shape.

The Triangle, Circles, Square, Shape of the Cross and Pyramid, although relevant to all the Steps, are each specifically linked with one main Step of the CURE. The Shapes if you like stand on the Steps or are embedded in the Steps. Let's move on to discover what these are. Walking the Steps is the foundation. The Shapes then help us to get 'into shape' for the journey which lies ahead of each of us! In this brief introduction of the Shapes, we will also be linking the Steps with the Shapes to start to show how the Shapes can help you to Connect, Understand, Respond and Engage Help even better than by knowing just the Steps by themselves.

The Shapes demonstrate key principles. Take them, use them and give them to others as you illustrate your conversations with them. You can start to use the cutlery and crockery in front of you or whatever

is on the table to lay out what you're talking about. Translating conversations into Shapes adds a whole new dimension to what is being discussed.

The Steps are complemented by Shapes which provide a map to help us, whoever we are, to move towards a God-centred transformation. They help us understand and answer the following important questions:

- Why am I here?
- Who am I?
- Where am I at and where am I going?
- Who am I journeying with as I walk the steps of life?

Use this short introduction to gain an initial understanding of how the Shapes work. Don't be troubled by anything that doesn't yet seem clear. All will be explained more fully in the chapters ahead to help you apply the principles to your own life in real and practical ways.

Although the Shapes are connected with the Steps, try not to move on to this Section until you have a firm grounding of the Steps. Remember this book provides you with a progressive sequential learning experience. As you learn the Steps and take time to live them out in your daily walk, you will have a greater capacity to learn, live and give the Shapes. When you reread this book as mentioned, you may want to zigzag between the Steps and their respective Shapes to get a greater understanding of them.

That could look like reading the chapter about the Connection Step followed by the chapter on the Triangle; reading the chapter about the Understanding Step followed by the chapter on the Circles, and then even going on to Section 2 of the second book, *Part Two: Going Deeper into the Person* which focuses further on the Circles. And so on.

For now, let us consider:

- A brief introduction to the Shapes
- Linking a Step with a Shape
- Linking the Shapes with the Understanding and Response Steps.
  - 'You' Understanding questions raised by the Shapes.
  - 'You' Response questions raised by the Shapes.
- Combinations of the Steps and the Shapes.

## A brief introduction to the Shapes

The Triangle will help you in your walk with God and with others.

The Circles will help these relationships grow in depth as you are Transformed (T) and then your Attitudes (A) are transformed, as well as your Skills (S) and Knowledge (K). To help you remember these four words, we talk about growing in your ‘TASK’!

The Square will help you plot where you are in various parts of your life and where you need to get to.

The Shape of the Cross encapsulates a God-centred anthropology of change. Again, if you are not a Christian, don’t freak out about the Christian side. Take what you need and leave the rest. However, feel free to bypass. The choice is yours if you want to read or leave this chapter.

The Pyramid will help you to be supported as you serve and lead.

## Linking a Step with a Shape

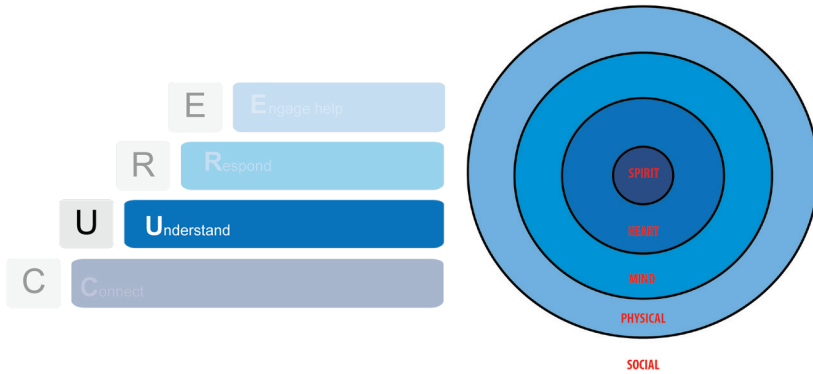
### *The Triangle*

The first Step of the CURE is to Connect in this Triangle with God and with others – and also to be in touch with ourselves. The Triangle highlights the purpose of why we are here, to Connect or to love in a threefold direction, towards God, towards others and towards ourselves.



### *The Circles*

The second step of the CURE is to Understand God, myself and others in each of the five Circles of the human person, who has been made in the image of God. The Circles help us to see ourselves in a more wholistic, deeper and integrated way, so we can know more who we are and how we are going.



The Circles also expand our view of what it means to become fully holy or God-centred in a wholistic way. We all have various parts of us which need to grow. These parts can be likened to different layers of an onion or of a Russian doll. We call these layers the Circles of our Spirit, Heart, Mind, Body and Social/External Life. We see that we are integrated beings, that all of these parts of us are interrelated and each affects the others. For example, if our self-esteem in our heart is low, it could create depressive feelings in our mind and this in turn results in not being confident to go for a job interview in our physical and social world.

Paul had a wholistic view of change when he prayed in 1 Thessalonians:

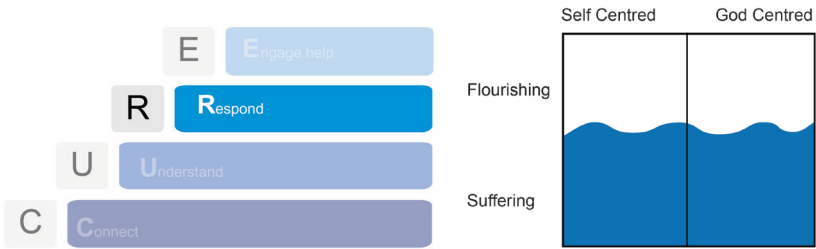
May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

### ***The Square***

The Square sits on the Understanding Step leading us to move up to the Response Step. The second Step of the CURE is to Understand not only our Circles but also to ask ourselves the Square shaped question of, “Where are we at?”

We can live our lives in a self-centred way or a God-centred way. Also, we can be flourishing or suffering. The Square allows us to locate

where we might be in any of the four quadrants. As such, the Square can be placed on the Understanding Step.



The third Step of the CURE is to Respond to God, self and others in new ways as we grow towards God-centred flourishing. This is represented by the top right-hand quadrant of the Square. The Square helps us to ask ourselves the Response question of, “Where should we be?”

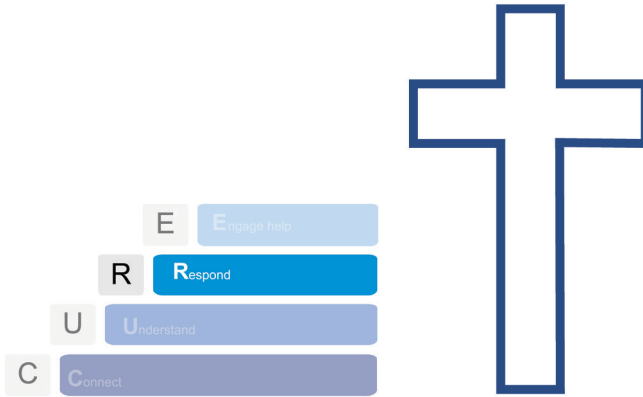
As we will see in the third book of this trilogy, *the C.U.R.E. for Life: Part Three, Biblical Foundations*, our goal is God-centred flourishing in any or all the five Circles of our lives – spirit, heart, mind, physical and social. However, this will not be fully materialised until we get to Heaven.

Through the Square, we can immediately visually identify where we are right now and where we need to be. In some cases, we may need to seek professional help to move from under the water level (suffering) to above the water level (flourishing). For example, you could be feeling that you are struggling in the bottom left-hand quadrant as a result of feeling disconnected from your family. You realise your selfish ambition has allowed your work to take over your life. You decide to back off some of the workload, which in turn causes your relationships to improve, so that you are now starting to rise above the water level and beginning to move in an upward direction.

### The Shape of the Cross

Our capacity to Respond to God, as on the Response Step, is illustrated by the Shape of the Cross, the central place of change. This Shape is used to remind ourselves of what happened on the literal Cross of Jesus. However, being a Shape like the others, we also use it to symbolise something else – our spirit position.

Our spirit position is critical. It indicates where we are with God; whether we are born again and have been made alive to God, or if we are still dead in relation to Him. As the Shape of the Cross is located in the central Circle of our spirit, our whole life should show it.



### **The combination of the Square with the Shape of the Cross**

When we come to this, you'll see how important this combination is. Just in terms of a brief introduction here though, when we combine the Square and the Shape of the Cross it helps us to visualise what it means to take up our cross, to die to our selfishness and to become mature followers of Jesus.

One day Jesus called the crowd to him along with His disciples and said:

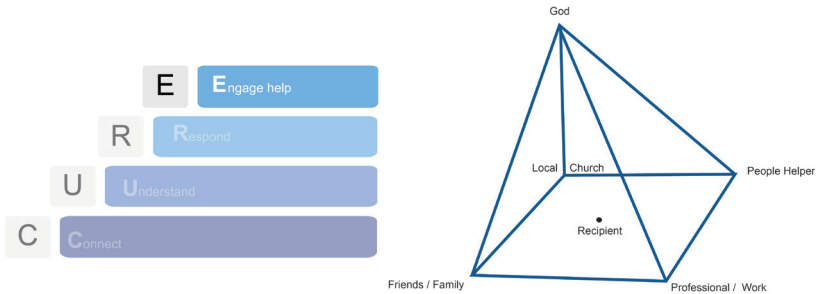
Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Mark 8:34-37)

A believer is called to become a follower or disciple of Jesus, rather than of oneself. Some of what He said might make no sense to you, such as His telling you to take up your cross in order to save your life! Just store it away for the moment and it will make more sense as you

work through this book. At this point note that the Square refers to life in practice. The Shape of the Cross refers to our spiritual position ... whether we are spiritually dead or alive.

### **The Pyramid**

The fourth step of the CURE is to Engage Help so that we can serve as pictured in the Pyramid. We can grow our Pyramid of support and learn new ways to serve others.



The Pyramid helps us to Understand what the Church is really meant to be and how it is meant to function. The Pyramid has five corners, each representing a part of the whole Church, linked together in a stable structure. As has been said, at the top corner is God. Jesus is the top or the head of the Church. Paul in Ephesians said that the Church is like a unified body, speaking a language of love and truth, being like Jesus and serving like Him. The Church should function the same way as Jesus would if He were to come into your town or city, or even into your own home, now! Paul's passion was that the Church would become:

... mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole

body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:12-16)

We need to ask ourselves whether we have a support network around us to help us to thrive, and to serve others. We are all called to serve others in our unique callings. Some of us may be gifted in Christian ministry, pastoral care or psychology (spirit/heart/mind helpers). Others are physical helpers such as nurses or builders, or working in retail or hospitality, or someone who might volunteer to repair a brick fence. Some of us are part of a family or a church where you are able to be there as a listening ear or support where it is needed. Others are social helpers and may choose to run a small group within the church. Then there is serving family and friends. We all have a place.

When we combine the Pyramid with Step 4 of the CURE, Engage Help, this can provide an action plan for us to grow as disciples of Jesus and servant-leaders, as we fulfil Jesus' Great Commission:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

### **Linking the Shapes with the Understanding and Response Steps**

This section will assist the reader to grasp what the key questions are that can be used. These Shape based questions are placed particularly on the Understanding and Response Steps.

#### **'You' Understanding questions raised by the Shapes**

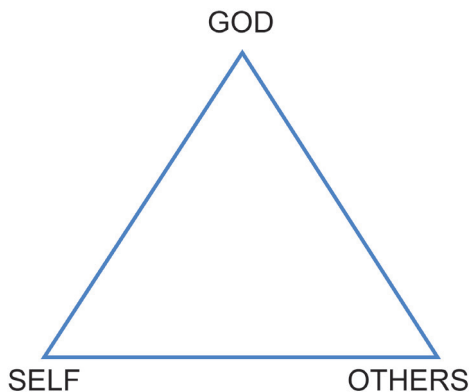
'You' questions, remember, are questions asked about 'You', or the other person, arising from the 'Y' of the SAFETY acronym embedded in the Connection Step. This 'Y' for 'You' which focuses on the other person, is a major part of Connection which can then feed into the 'You' questions of the subsequent Steps.

The Shapes can be used to help us ask better questions on the Understanding Step. Looking at other people and myself through the Shapes and seeking to Understand them is what I try to do with others and also, in my personal life. Because I base this on Connection and the right Connect, Understand and Response attitudes, as outlined previously on the respective Steps, then this process does not have to look like a psychoanalysis so much as just a natural attempt to understand.

We have had a brief introduction to the Shapes and will look at them in more detail in coming chapters. However, let's take a brief tour to further introduce them and to consider how you can use the Shapes to guide your questions as you seek to Understand another or yourself.

As you ask these 'You' questions on the Understanding Step, using the Understanding attitudes, for example of curiosity, these Shapes will help you even more to ask the right Understanding 'You' questions in your own way. Although the main Shape for the Understanding Step is particularly the Circles and also the Square, you can see here that you can use any of the Shapes on the Understanding Step. While we focus here on the other person, you will be best prepared to Understand them if you have already asked yourself the questions mentioned in the context of each Shape below. So as you read these questions, just replace, 'they' with 'I'. There will be some reflection points to help you evaluate yourself further. A lot of these questions will be unpacked in the respective chapters.

**a. The Triangle**



As you stand on the Connecting Step and are rising to understand the other person, before asking a question of them, first prayerfully ask yourself some of these Triangle shaped questions about them:

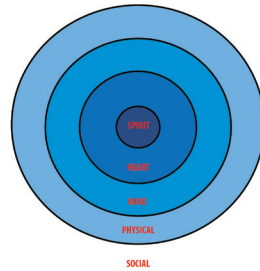
- Are they on their own?
- Do they have someone else with them?
- How are they with God?
- Do they ever bring the three of these relationships together with someone safe enough – someone they can share and pray with?



• *Also Understand yourself: How is your Triangle going?*

### b. The Circles

Stay on the Understanding Step as you ask yourself these Circle-shaped questions about the other person – you will then more easily find the right questions to ask in your way:



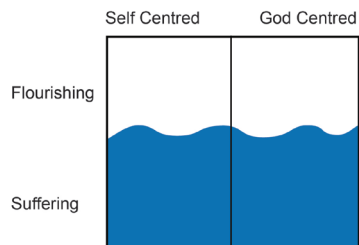
- What, or who is their centre?
- Could their centre be God, themselves or another person, for example their spouse or place of work?
- How balanced are they?
- How integrated or connected are they as a person?
- How whole are they?
- Which part of their lives are they over-emphasising and which part are they neglecting?
- How are they being transformed in their attitudes, skills and knowledge?



• *Also Understand yourself: How are your Circles going?*

### c. The Square

Keeping the Connection, and standing firmly on the Understanding Step prayerfully, look at the other person and ask yourself these Square shaped questions:



- Which of the four quadrants are they in?
- Which direction are they heading in, in the various parts of their lives?

You can take the Square up to the next Step, the Response Step and ask ‘You’ Response questions as we will see.



- *Also Understand yourself: Where are you at in the Square?*

#### **d. The Shape of the Cross**

Keeping the Connection and standing on the Understanding Step, firstly ask yourself and then think of the other person for these questions:

- To what extent are they experiencing God’s provisions of unfailing love, forgiveness and freedom?
- Have they ever been born again?

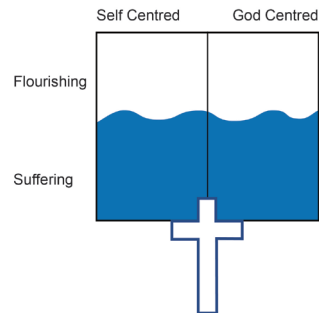


- *Can I ask you: Have you ever come to Christ and been born again?*

#### **e. Bringing together the Square and the Shape of the Cross**

While we predominantly place this combination on the Response Step, we can still use it on the Understanding Step. Again, prayerfully consider these combination questions firstly about yourself, as mentioned above, and then about the other person.

- What difference is being a Christian making in their life?
- To what extent is the presence of God within them making a difference in their life?
- To what extent is their actual life consistent with who they are in God and with God’s main purposes for them?

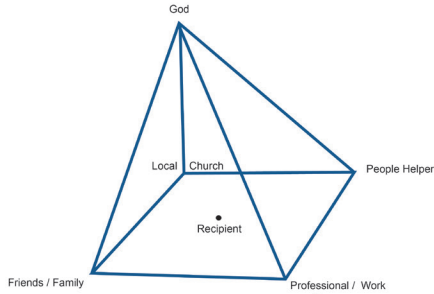




- *You will find out more about this later, but if you are a Christian, how do you respond to these ‘You’ Understanding questions about the Shape of the Cross for yourself?*

**f. The Pyramid**

This is mainly based on the Engage Help Step, however, as with all the Shapes, this Shape can be on the Understanding Step. You can ask Pyramid shaped questions such as:



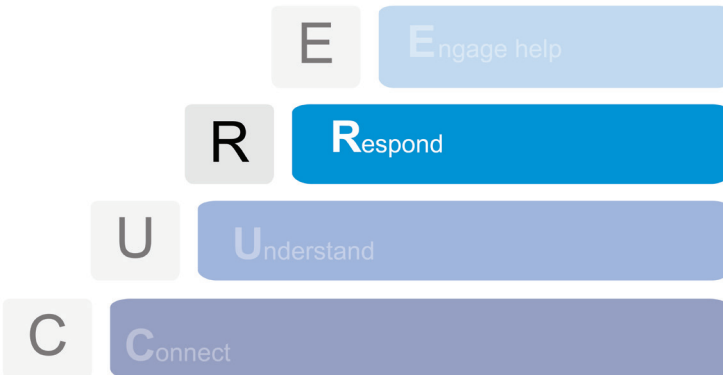
- Who are they getting support from?
- Who are they serving and even leading?



- *Also understand yourself: Who serves you and whom are you supporting?*

As you can see, you can apply these questions as you get on the Understanding Step for yourself. How about trying these questions? Practise them with someone else you are close to and possibly also those in your small group at church. You might like to try them again when we have studied the Shapes in more detail later.

**‘You’ Response questions raised by the Shapes**



In addition to asking ‘You’ questions on the Understanding Step, we can use the Shapes to help us on the Response Step. Ask yourself what the Response questions could be in your own mind, just as you would have done when on the Understanding Step with those ‘You’ Understanding questions. Keep an eye on the Shapes and check out what Response questions come to mind. For example, as you look at the:

- **Triangle:** Could they bring a particular issue to God together with you? Or could they find someone else to share and pray with about the issue?
- **Circles:** What if they lived life from the central Circle of the spirit instead of allowing other things to dominate their life, such as moods or relationships?
- **Square:** What would it look like if they were living more in the top right-hand quadrant – God-centred and flourishing? What changes would need to be made for this to happen?
- **Shape of the Cross:** Could they come to the foot of the cross into the presence of Jesus for the first or millionth time with someone else (or yourself) and receive Jesus’ unfailing love, forgiveness and freedom in relation to wherever they are at in practice or in their experience?
- **Shape of the Cross combined with the Square.** What do they need to do to allow God to make a greater difference in their life? In what ways are they taking up the cross, denying themselves and following Jesus? What would the next steps be?
- **Pyramid:** Could they engage other help from a range of people such as the church, friends, a particular ministry or even a professional person relevant to the issue?

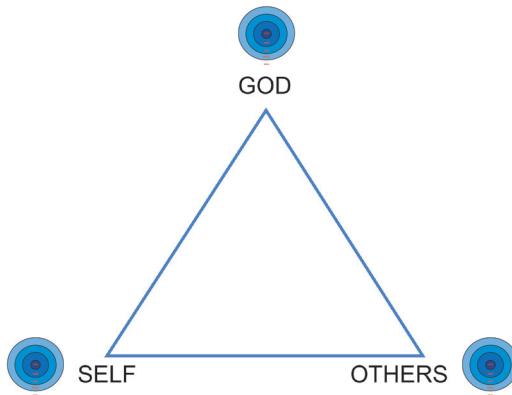


- *As you apply these questions to yourself, what do you become aware of?*

### **Combinations of the Shapes and Shapes with the Steps**

As you become more familiar with the Shapes, you will be able to see that there can also be various combinations of these. Just to give you a head start, here are some of the options:

- The **Triangle** with the **Circles** increases our understanding of how to love God, and our neighbours as ourselves, with our whole being.



- Any of the **Circles** can fit into any part of the **Square**, as shown in *Jesus and the Square* on page 114.
- The **Shape of the Cross** resides in our inner Circle of the spirit and helps us to see where we are changed when we become Christians. This is shown in *Jesus and the Cross* on page 147.
- **The Shape of the Cross** and the **Square** (see page 163) helps us to unpack what it means to take up our cross, to die to our selfishness and to become mature followers of Jesus. Combining **the Shape of the Cross** and the **Square** together will challenge you to Understand more about your own (and others') alignment and congruence (or hypocrisy) with who you really are in God. That is if you are Connected with God! If not, you'll find a simple ABC on how to do a U-turn from your self-centred ways to Connect with Him to start the journey! This is described in *The ABC of using the Shape of the Cross. Where U-turns are permitted* on page 157.
- The **Pyramid** is made up of multiple **Triangles**, as described on page 203.
- The **Four Steps** of the CURE and the **Pyramid** can fit together. The base and the sides of the **Pyramid** are made up of the CURE **Steps** which help us Understand what the Church is

really meant to be and how it is meant to function. The Pyramid as well as the **Steps** of the CURE help us to grow the body of Jesus by speaking the truth in love within the context of our various gifting.

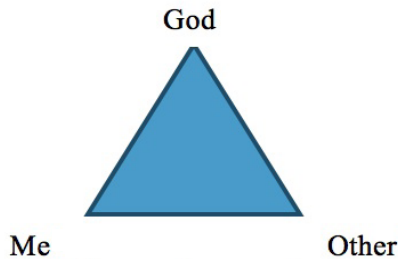
- The first three **Steps** link to the Heart **Circle**. This is explained more in the chapters on the Circles and *Getting to know the person deeper*, in the second book, *Part Two*.

### Summary

Bringing these together, these Shapes are based on *the Christian Wholeness Framework*, which, as mentioned, has been used for over 25 years. It is indeed Christian. It is a Biblically based anthropology, illustrating many core aspects of the Scriptures. It is wholistic and invites you to a balanced and integrated life, aligned to being a follower of Jesus. Being a framework, the CURE provides a broad and accessible structure which inherently points in a direction towards God-centred transformation. Because it is biblically based and the truths in the Bible are universal, it makes sense that the CURE could also apply to all cultures and in any context.



## I. The Triangle of Connections



**Y**ou may remember my saying that while I started off life somewhat alone, even in my aloneness I seemed to have a connection with God. It wasn't until my late teens and early 20s that I started to find meaningful relationships with other people. As I journeyed further, I became increasingly aware of the connections I had both with God, with others and with myself. These triangular shaped relationships ranged from just doing God-centred things together with others to sharing thoughts and even the deeper aspects of what was going on with ourselves, at times being conscious right there of the presence of God. These connections deepen in the safety of the 'small' of SAFETY, with one or two others, or groups of twos and threes. While these have been so meaningful, the experience of this Triangle of Connections is something I also appreciate in the context of other settings, such as with small groups, and also in larger church gatherings.



- *How are your relationships going?*
- *How constructive or destructive are they?*
- *How close or distant are they?*
- *How much is God a part of your relationships?*

- *How reactive are you to other people or to situations compared to being intentional and proactive?*
- *How often are your close relationships two-way or reciprocal, where over time both parties are winners?*
- *How much are they three-way – to include you, the other person and also actively involving God?*

The Triangle is about relationships. Relationships can be constructive or destructive, close or distant. God can be in our relationships, in a healthy way. Sometimes people can at times appear to be obviously over the top into God; that may be because they are using a ‘super-spiritual’ defence, because they have poor relationships with others and with themselves. The Triangle helps us work out what’s going on in relationships.

A lot of people seem to have one-sided relationships, focused more often on themselves. On the other hand, some have one-sided relationships which are so focused on the other person, it is almost as if they themselves are not part of the equation.

Let’s look at four questions about the Triangle:

- What is the Triangle and what is the direction of flow in the Triangle?
- Why do we need the Triangle?
- Whom do I use the Triangle with?
- How do I use the Triangle?

## **Jesus and the Triangle**

Jesus himself participated particularly on two Triangles.

The first was the Triangle of the Trinity, where He from the beginning related with God the Father and God the Spirit. Back then God said within that Triangle: “Let **us** make mankind in **our** own image, in **our** likeness ...” (Genesis 1:26). Jesus was a part of that, as stated in John’s gospel:

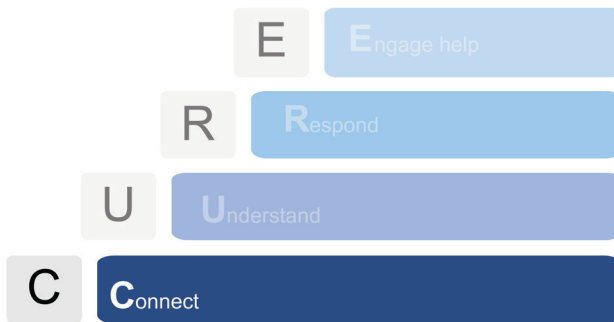
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:1-4)

Note, as Jesus was the **Word** of God, He was the ultimate picture language.

The second Triangle was when He was on earth, relating in a horizontal way with other people, particularly His disciples, and in a vertical way with His Father and the Holy Spirit.

### **What is the Triangle? The points of Connection. The flow of relationships**

Many good relationships come in Triangles! The Triangle, our first Shape, is primarily linked with the first step: Connection.



The Triangle is a big picture perspective of the Connections that exist between God, others and ourselves. God made us to be like Him as a relational being, who Himself is the Triangle of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As a threefold relationship grows, it becomes like a threefold cord, which is stronger than a twofold one and even stronger than a single strand cord.

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

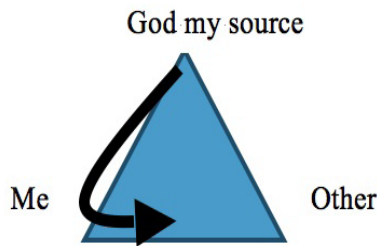
As will be mentioned particularly in the second book, *Part Two: God Centred Relationships*, this is what a God-centred marriage is meant to be like. Structural engineers like to use this triangular shape in constructions because of its strength. We can call this healthy Triangular way of relating a Triologue. We will see later that this way of relating

can be at different levels or at different depths. Two is good but three can be better!

However, this is not always the case. Threefold relationships can sometimes not be good, such as when two is company and three is a crowd. It can be even worse when the third person is getting caught up in the problems of the others, like a child in the marital discord of their parents. In this context, the two warring parties may use the child as a tug-of-war rope, trying to pull for greater contact with the child towards their own side. Similarly, the parents may use the child as a weapon or grenade between each other, for example blaming the child for the marital discord. We call this situation “triangulation”, which sounds like (and for the child feels a bit like) strangulation!

## The direction of flow in the Triangle

### 1. *The first direction: from the Source*



I have found this concept so helpful in all of my relationships, right through to my marriage. How can I be intentional in my relationships – proactive rather than reactive?

Proactive, intentional relationships are more stable than reactive ones. The direction of flow of relationship from God (the Source of relationships) through you to others sets you up to relate, even in the harder times. This is so different from the instability caused by primarily reacting to another person or even having one’s own issues get in the way.

The Triangle also shows the difference between a covenant God-centred love, and a consumer/contract type love. God-centred

love in the original Greek language of the New Testament is called *agape*: the highest form of unidirectional unconditional love. God took intentional, proactive initiative to come to us! So it says in John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that he **gave** his only Son ...”. Consumer/contract love is reactionary: if you meet my needs, I will meet yours. If you don’t, I will fight you, leave you, or just fake my way through, pretending all is okay.

The most human form of a covenant love relationship is a God-centered marriage where there is a proactive rather than reactive relationship. At times that unidirectional love will look like, “I will still love you even though I hurt and at times don’t like what you do because of what I experience at these times”. It is a love coming from God through me to you, which is stronger than my reacting to you. God becomes the Source of the relationship even more than you are or I am. As this threefold relationship grows, it becomes stronger – like that threefold cord, stronger than just a twofold one. It provides a solid grounding to the marriage as the base does to the wedding cake (imagine a wedding cake without a base!).

God’s proactive covenant Connection was shown in that while we were His enemies He still loved us so much that He came in the form of Jesus, searching for us, inviting (not forcing) relationships with Him. Paul highlights this in a letter to the people in Rome.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:6-11)

God being my Source of love is so important that it will be reemphasised in *Whom do I use the Triangle with* below.

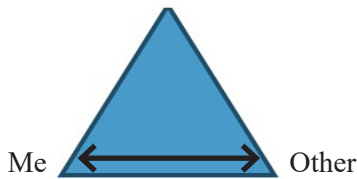


- *How hard or easy is it for you to take a positive, constructive and intentional initiative, particularly in your close relationships? Why?*

## **2. The other direction: between us and others**

While I try to be intentional in a one-way (towards others) direction in most of my relationships, I am so grateful for the reciprocal, two-way close relationships I have.

Re-emphasising what has been noted, relationships work best when they are two-way – when both can give and both can receive. A two-way relationship is where, over time and ideally close to simultaneously, the arrows go in both directions.



This is called a bilateral or reciprocal relationship. What does this look like? It is when you can still be intentional and proactive but at the same time, be able to receive from that interaction. The more safety there is in the relationship, the easier that is. However, in our times of ministry or mission, or at work, these relationships may not be so two-way. There is more often a serving of one to another. It is much harder when this unilateral direction happens at home, because we have relationships which are meant to be two-way, such as friendships and marriage. However, at times they can be one-way. In these situations, we need to have enough resources within ourselves from God to still be able to give.

If you are in a relationship for a friendship purpose (I'm not talking about marriage here) rather than for work or mission, and you find it is one-way and always about the other person, you may want to consider whether or not you should stay in that context. Ongoing friendships are

meant to be two-way. Moving onto marriage, this dynamic of a two-way relationship is so important to look for when choosing a lifetime partner. Marriage functions a lot better the more two-way it is. As each has their source in God and unilaterally loves the other, the relationship is most likely to be able to pass through any of the harder dry times where it may only otherwise be one-way. These times may be short or for a season.



- *Do you have any two-way, reciprocal relationships?*



- *If so, be very thankful!*
- *If not, think and pray about this and maybe share this even with the other person. This book can help you do this more safely.*

### **Why use the Triangle? It holds the purpose of life**

The Triangle helps us answer the question, “Why am I here?” Whenever we ask what the most important thing in life is, the answer is often found in love or relationships. The Bible story illustrating the Great Commandment happened when someone once asked Jesus what the most important thing in life was. Jesus’ answer was this: to live in a Triangle of Connection, of love. He said the most important thing we can achieve is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). How challenging is this! Often love in this Triangle way may not be exactly on top of our to-do lists.

The Triangle shows that we were designed to exist and thrive with strong, healthy Connection (relationships) on all three sides of the Triangle, not just one or two. For some, the Triangle highlights the opportunity and pathway to gain breakthrough in the struggles of trying to do life on their own, as they realise it doesn’t have to be that way. For others, it is the realisation that ultimate fulfilment comes when we are connected not just with others but also with God.

We were not made to live just in one part of the Triangle. Some people have a strong spiritual life. While our vertical relationship with God is paramount, sometimes this can become unbalanced, even as mentioned, to the extent of becoming ‘super-spiritual’ where spiritual matters are used dysfunctionally and in a self-centred way of coping.

Others (easier for extroverts and the altruistic!) have a strong social life, which is great. However, the personal and/or spiritual aspects may be lacking. Again others (easier for introverts) may be content just to be more reflective, which is also good, but the social and/or spiritual aspects may not be very strong. It can be helpful to look at which directions of the Triangle you may need to work on most. God made us for all three, to be strong spiritually, personally and socially. That is where real strength resides.

It gives us a picture of how God, others and ourselves can relate to each other. Without taking away from the importance of horizontal relationships with each other, this Triangle of relationships shows that the best horizontal (social) connections we can have are those that include the vertical one with God. Life is designed to be transforming in the three dimensions of the Triangle: spiritually, personally and socially.

The church as a group or system is to be a people who live in this Triangle of:

- being in close relationship with God – the spiritual vertex or corner of the Triangle;
- being together who we are meant to be as the body of Christ, like a whole Jesus shaped person – the personal vertex or corner;
- being the body of Christ on this earth, so that we can move out – the social vertex or corner – to the whole person and the whole world.

As mentioned on the Connection Step, but reiterated here for emphasis, the Triangle shows the way God intended us to relate. The Garden of Eden is described in the first book of the Bible as the perfect place where humankind began. It was a place of relationship where God, Adam and Eve were all in a Triangle of Connection. Disconnection occurred as Eve then Adam went their own way, rather than God's way. Disconnection led to destruction and death, as shown in the very next chapter in Genesis with their two sons being in a fight which ended in the murder of one of them. Jesus came to restore threefold Connection.



- *How important could this shape become for you?*

### **Whom do I use the Triangle with? With anyone and especially in marriage**

While the Triangle of relationships is relevant in any setting, a great place where the Triangle can be used is in marriage. It is the threefold cord of a couple doing life together with God. Their relationship is so much stronger because, as mentioned, they can be proactive in the relationship since their source is God, rather than being primarily reactive to each other or to their own situation. We can be responsive to God, take initiative and be intentional to the other person even when it is needed, in a unilateral way.

This whole thing of God being our Source of love and Connection is so important for any relationship passing through hard times, whether in the family, with friends, in church, in mission/ministry or in the school/work setting. It allows proactive love to happen. When the “who” of all three corners are present, it makes relationships stronger. Remember, as just mentioned, in the Bible this initiating love is called covenant love. It is an *agape* love, a love which means: “despite you, I will continue to love you, even in the hard times”. As mentioned, it is not a love based on a contract or a consumer arrangement.

So often in marriages nowadays, when feelings of love fade, the contract is over and a better or different model (person) is found. However, be aware of taking this to an extreme. For example, an unsafe violent or abusive relationship is a different scenario from a jaded, lifeless, stressed relationship. The former may not be sustainable. These latter relationships need to be worked on, but we are not made for abuse.

In hard times, when couples feel little Connection towards each other, they can turn separately initially and then together to their mutual Connection with God. From here, retaining that link with God, the two can have a greater capacity to reconnect. We will show you how to do that later in the book.



- *How much is God a part of your closer relationships?*

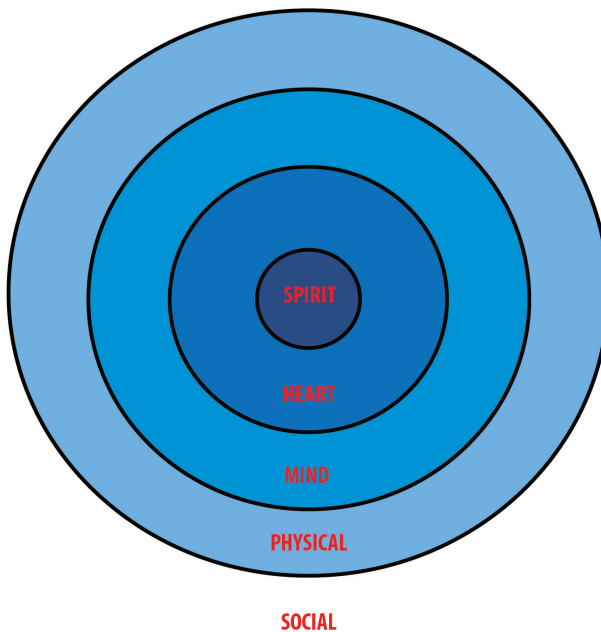
### **How do I use the Triangle? You can relate at different levels**

As mentioned, you can use the Triangle at different depths or at different levels of relating. This can happen when you are just being with others,

doing things, or using your minds and sharing thoughts and feelings, or right through to being heart-to-heart together.

Happy are those who can actually be heart-to-heart with each other and with God, whether things are going well or in the hard times. This triangular way of relating can occur at different levels which correspond to the five Circles.

We will look at the Circles in more detail in the next chapter, but let's look briefly now at how the Circles intersect and interact with the Triangle, by way of an introduction to the Circles.



In the **Social Circle**, Triologue is about being together in the presence of God. We can easily do this in a group such as in a church or in an informal setting.

**Physically**, we do things together for God – or even more, with God. This can happen when we are doing a common God-centred task. For example, it may be cooking a meal for a person in grief, helping in the car park at church and so on.

In our **mind** we think, learn and grow in our awareness of God, together with each other and with Him. This can happen at church and

in small groups as well as just with friends and family. For example, it may be a from sermon, in a Bible study or sharing with another the amazing beauty of creation.

In the **Heart** and **Spirit Circles**, we can be heart-to-heart with each other and with God. This is where deeper healing, encouragement and core growth can occur in the context of bringing forward whatever issues are at hand while being with another in the presence of God. While this is the essence of prayer ministry, we can all do this as a form of Basic Trialogue. It may be a fresh way of prayer for you to experience. As mentioned, we are truly blessed if we can find someone else safe enough to be with us while we bring the burdens, blessings and passions of our hearts to God. This deeper step of Trialogue certainly needs that safety of Connection and Understanding.

Some practical approaches of being in this deeper heart level Trialogue, in the context of standing well and truly on the Steps of good Connection and Understanding, could be as follows:



- *An invitation to pray with (rather than for) such as, “How would it be for you if we bring this issue to God together?” This gives a sense of choice. If okay, then carry on. Become more aware of His presence.*
- *Be aware of whatever is happening such as, “Just wondering what you might be noticing/are aware of?” If there is nothing, don’t worry, and use those Connection and Understanding skills we talked about just to be with the other person.*
- *Invite God into the situation, using such questions as: “Can God be a part of this for you or not? Would you like to bring this to Jesus, or not? What could that look like or be like for you?” The “or not” words promote choice. Clearly from God’s perspective, He can be and is here. We are now asking questions from their own point of view. If this part is hard, it may be best not to go further, but just stay together, even focusing on what may be blocking this next step. If, however there can be an awareness of God’s presence. When the time is right, move on to the next stage.*

- *Don't rush this. Create a pause. Be with God. Linger in God's presence, together (for example, at the foot of the symbol of the Cross which we will explain later). As it happens, whether it be a thought, a feeling, a memory, a picture or even the deeper experience, then use such questions/comments as: "Stay with that. What is that like for you?" Be aware that if the person has a sense of God which is not biblical, they might be for example, projecting their own past issues about other authority figures onto God. If ever you think that there might be other things going on which are not Godly or biblical, you might want to engage further help.*
- *Just carry on spending time together with God, and as you can, remain in God's presence. You may then want to debrief over what has happened and see what that could mean, again using your Connection and Understanding questions, and even Response questions if appropriate.*

### Points to remember

The Triangle shows the way God intended us to relate with Him, with each other and within ourselves.

The best relationships are three-way, including ourselves, others and God. God is the source of unconditional *agape* love, which flows from Him through us to others.



- *What main point can you take away from this chapter?*



- *Find someone who has a similar spiritual walk as you do and share about the Triangle.*
- *In the next week, when you're having coffee or tea or even a meal with someone, and the Triangle comes to mind regarding what you're talking about, use the articles on the table to form that Shape. Share what you see with the other person and ask them for their point of view.*



*I receive Your strong proactive initiating love. You so love me that You sent your Son to die for me. I believe this. Help me to grow in loving You, and those around me as Jesus loved me.*

### **The Triangle in the small group**

Teaching points. The more a small group can actually experience some form of Triologue, the better.

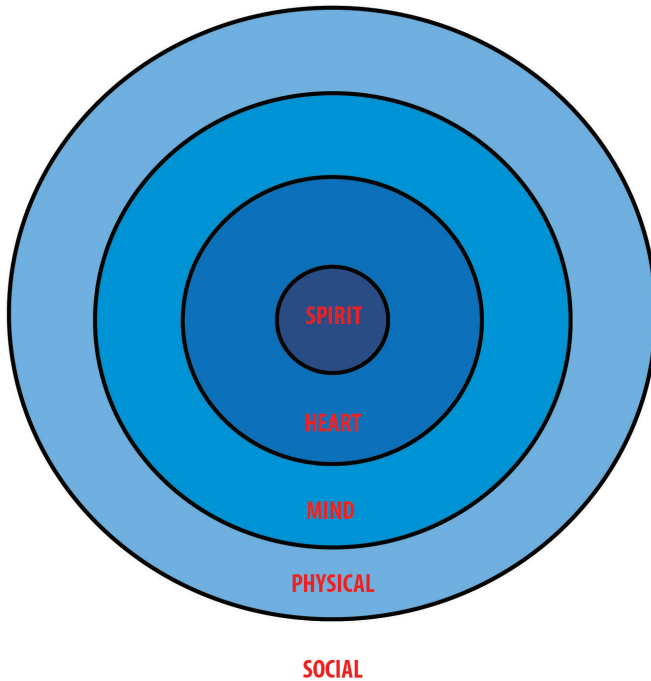
### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

I start the evening having the Triangle in my mind. From 7 – 7:30 PM, as we Connect I am encouraging not just a social interaction on a horizontal level which we normally start off with, but also one which includes God, with the vertical aspect of the Triangle. So early on we may have a worship or God directed song (which may just be a recording) which allows us to be aware of God's presence. An opening prayer is all part of pointing us to God.

Now the Triangle is being set up, I then invite anyone to share how things have been going between them and God. People might share a range of Triangle type topics which when brought into the collective space become part of our Triologue. These can be about what Scripture meant to them or a particular experience which for them had a God part to it. Over this time on the Connection Step, we are growing the Triangle. Thus our small group is not just a social group or just a spiritual group, but both at the same time. My prayer is that people leave at the end of the night having met with each other and with God.

The other aspect about the Triangle for me as a leader is the unidirectional flow from the Source through me to others described above. In other words, I am there to serve, and to focus on the others individually and also on us as a group more than on myself. I try not to use this in a defensive way so that I don't have to talk about me. If someone asks me about my point of view or how I am, I am glad to take the opportunity as it fits in to the group process.

## II. The Circles: What Makes us Whole? Introduction



Allow me to introduce the Circles by sharing more of my story. My story also illustrates in part how I found the CWF. You may have gathered by now that I did not start life feeling very whole! In some ways, my central circle, the spirit, was the first part of me to really come alive. Yes, I was sort of functional and other people would not have known that there was much of a problem inside of me. I had people around me at boarding school there in India, but from that age

of seven, if not before, I felt very lonely. My body was growing and was generally healthy apart from when I nearly died of food poisoning at the end of a three-day trip in the train from school to home in India on my annual holiday. In my mind, I was learning at school, although what impressed the teachers most seemed to be that, “John is keen!” Funny, that is the only thing I remember from my school reports, and I am still keen!

My deeper heart, however, was pretty empty. I had a low sense of self-esteem and not much of a sense of identity. Being an introvert and somewhat sensitive and shy, it was not hard for me to carry my aloneness into high school. Thankfully, social trauma such as being bullied was not a significant problem for me. I was never physically abused and was not sexually abused. That could possibly have led to a different story. For me the heart aloneness diminished the noise of my underlying teenage confusion. But despite all of this, the central circle of my spirit was alive. I had that deep core sense of Connection with God, starting even from my early boarding school days. God was far more than a crutch or a coping mechanism for me. Absolutely, He helped me to cope, but much more, He became the centre of my being, and has continued to be so. The “Christian” part of the “CWF” was starting to develop. This scenario continued as I left India around the age of eleven and went to England where I started boarding at high school.

Socially, in my late teens I began developing more friendships and my circle of friends increased, as did my social life in general. Amazed and thrilled to get into medical school on my second attempt, I began to learn more about the importance of the physical aspects, and in particular the systems of the human body. While we learnt these systems, such as the cardiovascular system and so on as fairly separate entities, slowly the amazing picture of the integrated whole body appeared. From two cells, we become such a complex organism, so integrated in a homeostatic stable balance. My awe and wonder of what a united and carefully knit together body we have made it harder to believe in its possible random origins. Such design easily led to gratitude for such a Designer. My excitement with all of this no doubt helped me to get a distinction in embryology and anatomy; the only ones I ever got

were in these subjects, I expect partly due to my being enthralled by the amazing structure and functions of the human. However, with all these experiences, I was left realising that I was made up of body and spirit and not too much else. The most important things for me were that people, including myself, were Christians and healthy. The inner and outer parts of us were covered!

After completing medical school and my two postgraduate years, I spent a year at Theological College, deepening the understanding of my central spirit circle. I lapped up the social life. Bible College became Bridal College. Here I met my wife to be, not realising that we were going to be so powerfully different from each other in just about every way! Yet it was her strength of love which so attracted me to her, and even while we have often felt stuck with each other, even more so we have stuck to each other! We have also learned to really value the differences between each of us. My growing heart circle started to fill even more. It was there at the Theological College that for the first time I experienced inner healing in the core of my being, in my heart. With my then fiancée Jill and one of the staff present, it was not hard to go back in my memory as I saw my mother standing on the train station back in India disappearing as we started our long three-day journey back to school after the Christmas holidays. Not only was Jill's love coming into my heart but deep pain with its uncried tears was being outwardly released. My once depleted heart was starting to come alive. As this happened, I was beginning to realise. I was not a whole person. My pursuit for the "Wholeness" part of finding the "CWF" was now underway. There was something between the spirit and the body.

Jill and I then moved to New Zealand where in the latter part of our 20s we got married and started to grow our family of five amazing children. This was the time for me to really grow in studying the mind, as I joined the Christchurch psychiatric training program. In my desperation to try to get through the approaching fellowship exams, and finding the study of the mind to be so abstract, I stumbled, as it were, across the first of all the Shapes I have developed, the Circles of the person. The "Framework" part of the "CWF" has started to be found. It was as though I had the amazing privilege of being the finder of the Circles, or if you prefer the founder of what was to become *The*

*Christian Wholeness Framework* (CWF), the Steps and Shapes. The Circles gave me something concrete on which I could map not only the mind, but also the whole person, and allowed me to grasp enough to pass the gruelling fellowship exams. I was as shocked as my colleagues when I was one of less than 20% of New Zealanders to pass that part of the exam process on the first sitting. Simultaneously I now felt I was beginning to have a grasp of my spirit, my heart, my mind and my body together with a growing social life, especially at that time with the birth of the first two of our five children.

We moved from New Zealand (which as Kiwi's would understand, especially referring to the beauty of the South Island, is the centre of the world) to Melbourne, Australia for two years to further my studies in child psychiatry, and eventually ended up settling in Brisbane where we still live. They say that here it is beautiful one day, perfect the next. Not always true however!

Now was the time for integration, for bringing all of these aspects of my spirit, heart, mind, body and social together! Here I have had the amazing privilege of travelling with other like-minded people, on a journey towards God-centred wholeness, balance, alignment and integration. The Steps and Shapes slowly emerged in an integrated way. While I continued to develop the CWF with others including Dr Carolyn Russell who has had a significant influence on the development of the CWF, and grow my clinical practice of integration of the whole person as a clinical adult, child and family psychiatrist, I set up the **Christian Wholeness Counselling Centre**. I was now turning 40 years old. That Centre lasted 21 years and has since metamorphosed into what is now **Living Wholeness Community**, an organisation which is more like a diffuse organism of people who learn, live and give the CWF, the Steps and Shapes, in their own ways. It was not only in my clinical practice where I was becoming more integrated, but also within myself.

It was after I turned 50 years of age that I was invited by David and Susanne Nikles to take this Framework with them into Asia. I have since journeyed with this couple, along with my other fellow travellers. From prayers at medical school right through to now, my strategy for maximising impact has just been to link with a few others who themselves can link with more people in turn. My prayer was that all of us

be increasingly transformed in becoming disciples of Jesus, expressing our God-centred heart attitudes through our minds' knowledge and our physical skills.

It was a bit of a shock to me when I was asked to share my story in that particular South East Asian country, not far from where I had experienced so much destructive abandonment. I thought I did not have a story worth telling. It was hardly dramatic nor exciting. However, it certainly resonated with the people in that country, and now the Steps and Shapes are helping them to journey from abandonment and destruction towards a life of God-centred wholeness.

It is the shape of the Circles which brings together the essence of the Framework. The central position of the Spirit in the Circles illustrates that the CWF is truly Christian. Secondly, the Circles particularly demonstrate that the CWF is indeed wholistic.

In medical school, I learnt about the separated parts of the human body. As I was able to bring the individual systems together over time, I could start to see the whole. Similarly, I know there are rigid lines demarcating the Circles; however, when they meld into each other and become integrated, they allow us to understand what it is to be truly whole.

Finally, the Circles present themselves as a Framework, somewhat like a jigsaw picture made of various jigsaw pieces, which are aspects of our lives. Similarly, when we at times reflect on ourselves, we can be puzzled by what looks like a mess of jigsaw pieces. Of all the five Shapes, the Circles in particular help us to bring this puzzle together and make it a more cohesive picture. The Circles encapsulate the Steps and Shapes of the CWF. This is unpacked in the second book, *Part Two*. As mentioned at the beginning, this *Christian Wholeness Framework* is also like a language which has been demonstrated to work across ages and cultures, in a universal, unique and unifying way. This chapter responds to some of these questions which you may want to reflect on, and you may want to journal your answers to these thought provoking questions:



- *How integrated and whole do you feel?*
- *How balanced are you?*

- *Who are you really?*
- *How deep do you go with others?*
- *How deep do you go with yourself?*
- *How much are you aware of the different parts of yourself?*
- *How aligned are your purposes with your plans and actions?*

*The whole of us is important – every part of us. And most important is that the whole of us is God-centred rather than self-centred.*

Let's look at the four questions about the Circles:

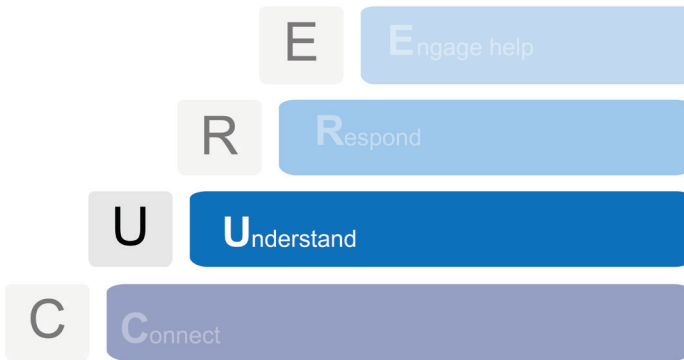
- What are the Circles?
- Why do we need the Circles?
- Whom do I use the Circles with?
- How do I use the Circles?

### **Jesus and the Circles**

Luke 2:52 talks about Jesus growing in a wholistic way – “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man”. “Wisdom” is located deep in the heart of a person. It is deeper than just knowledge. “Stature” has to do with our physical health. “Favour with God” has to do with our vertical spiritual Connection and “and man” has to do with our horizontal social life. In other words, He was growing in a wholistic way: in his heart as well as physically, spiritually and socially. Moreover, Jesus looked at the person in a wholistic way. He was aware of the social and physical needs. He healed and fed. He gave knowledge for the mind, grew disciples' hearts in both love and truth as well as calling for God-centredness in their lives. The woman at the well, as introduced previously and described in John 4, was seen wholistically by Jesus. She was social (with husbands), physical (with thirst), mind (with questions), heart (in terms of her need for love and respect) and spiritual (needing the Living Water, needing Jesus)

### **What are the Circles? There are five Circles**

The Circles are primarily linked with Step 2 of the CURE: Understanding.



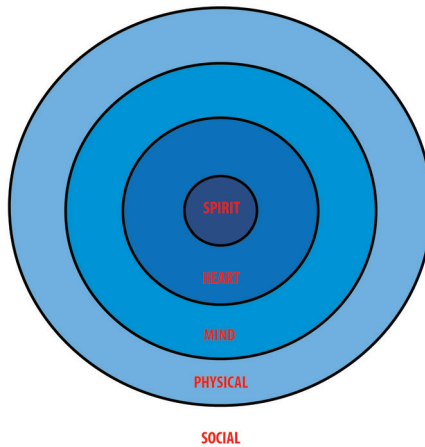
How many parts are we? In the CURE, we talk about five Circles which seem to include all of the aspects of a person as mentioned in the Bible. The approach presented here is a practical and integrated view of the person, which helps us to understand the various composite parts. Although there are five interrelated Circles – social, body, mind, personality or heart and spirit<sup>1</sup> – in fact we are one.

We are a unity, and our unity is made of various different parts. All the parts Connect into each other and overlap with each other. We consider the parts of a person in order to Understand the whole. As already alluded to, while it helps to dissect the parts out from each other, in reality these parts are not contained in nice, neat Circles. They interact and blur together. The Bible does not categorise the individual into a certain number of watertight compartments. While the Circles are drawn with clear lines for the sake of clarity, in reality the best way to draw them would be with a mix of five colours, radiating from the brightest in the centre and blending together as they each in turn cascade out through the whole person. This has been depicted in David Nikles' picture below. The same principle applies when understanding not just a person but also a system such as a family or a church.

<sup>1</sup> You will sometimes hear people refer to three parts of a person: body, mind and spirit, or two parts: body and spirit. Whatever view we have, it is important to include all the aspects of a person. You can explore the issues and come to your own conclusions. A concern of the body/spirit view is that it tends to eradicate the psychological or the mind, which has also been created by God. Moreover, it can result in the age-old extremes of seeing the body and spirit in a dichotomised way that describes the body as bad and the spirit as good.



## The Five Circles



There are five concentric Circles which provide a broad-brush illustration of the parts of us. They are all important. They are all Connected in an integrated way. They are all made to be in balance, as a unit, working together in unity. As we grow in a wholistic way we grow in our transformation, attitudes, skills and knowledge. We take the first letters of these words to form the 'TASK' of our life to help us remember this. This has been and will be repeated due to its importance and this wholistic language.

### ***1. Spirit Circle: the main source of transformation***

This is the innermost Circle, the place where God through His Holy Spirit enters and lives when we become Christians. Before that we are spiritually dead! It is here we can place the Shape of the Cross and all it symbolises. We will learn more about that later. The spirit is the place where we have God's presence, His purposes, provisions and more.

### ***2. Heart Circle: where our attitudes are***

This is the core of our personality. In advanced use of the Circles, we see that the Heart Circle is made up of a number of parts or "sectors". In these parts, we find our:

- sense of worth and esteem, adding capacity for trust and love;
- identity, purpose, and awareness of right and wrong. It is the place from where our beliefs emerge;
- sense of control or choice which when functioning well, grows hope. This part of us is a bit like the steering wheel of our lives;
- priorities and what is important, or central to us;
- how we cope in life and express what is in our hearts;
- how sensitive or thick-skinned we may be regarding taking things to heart.

### ***3. Mind Circle: where we grow in knowledge***

This is where we learn and retain knowledge. Much more than just rational, left-brain intelligence and IQ, it is also where we have our more-right brain functioning of emotions, sense of energy and enjoyment, a bit like a petrol tank, where part of our EQ (Emotional Quotient) resides. It is also here in our mind where we perceive things through our five senses.

### ***4. Physical Circle: where we grow our skills***

The Physical Circle is the outer part of us, where we appear to the world. It is the place of our behaviour and actions and how we use our time. It is where we receive and send out communication. It is also here that our physical bodily systems reside – like our cardiovascular system (heart and blood vessels) or our endocrine system (hormones).

What is inside us comes out through one or more of these aspects. The Physical Circle is to do with our health in relation to these systems, our sleep, and what we take into our bodies in terms of food, alcohol or drugs. Our fitness and amount of exercise is also relevant to the Physical Circle.

### **5. Social Circle: the place of our relationships and environment**

Social Circle: the place of our relationships and environment. This is outside of us, where especially our relationships exist in terms of family, friends, church, school or work. While God is not so much a part of what we normally call our ‘social life’, God is not only in us, in our spirits, but is also with us in this external space.

Out in the external space is also our physical environment, particularly influenced by where we might live. This can demarcate the standard of living we have, and also our exposure to the natural elements including the possibility of disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Someone living in a tsunami prone area in slum-like conditions is going to have significantly more challenges impacting them from outside of themselves compared to someone living in a secure open spaced middle-class housing arrangement in a stable climatic zone.

Should we have called this the “External Circle”, or have two Circles for “Social” and another one further out for “Environment”? We have not done this partly because we see the “Social”, or relationships with others to be of such a high priority. The second reason is that we are trying to establish a clear demarcation or boundary between what is inside the person and what is outside, which includes Social and Environment.



- *Which circles in your life are stronger and which are maybe needing more emphasis?*
- *Which parts of your life are more God-centred and which are more self-centred*

### **Why use the Circles?**

The Circles provide a structure to help us make sense of who we are and how we are going. The Circles can be seen like the circles of a

cross-section of a tree. As with a tree, we have our roots in our past which affect our present and also what type of shoots and fruit we will grow right through into the future. The Circles then start to make some sense in regards to the timeline of where we've come from, where we are at and where we are going. There is not only a cross-sectional aspect to the Circles, but also a chronological time-based feature to them. The Circles can help us to think of the whole of us in an integrated and more balanced way. They can show the need for our transformation, from inside to out, overcoming the wholistic impact of evil on us as humankind. In this context, they can show which areas of our lives we need to work on more and which aspects of our lives might be going well. The Circles help us to detail more what we may mean when we submit ourselves to God, asking Him to take our whole life and to let all of it be His. They help us to understand more about what Paul meant when he prayed for the church in Thessalonica:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The Circles can help clarify our heart's purpose and align that with our priorities, our plans and their practicalities, as well as with the people with whom we journey.

### **Whom are the Circles for?**

The Circles can be used by any individual. Anyone can use the Circles in any situation where there are people! Just as for a 40-year-old Indian man, so for a 12-year-old American girl entering adolescence; either can be in any of the five Circles. The Circles will have different colour brushes (representing age, culture and gender) over them. However, the structure of the Circles will be the same for both.

While the Circles help us to understand others and ourselves as individuals, they can also help us to get more of a grasp of what is happening in a whole system, like within a family or a church. Because we as people are made so complex, consistent with this professional

counsellors and coaches can use the Circles to help guide them in a much more detailed way in their understanding and in their responses. This elaboration and expansion on the Circles is introduced in *Part Two*, the second book.



- *Using the example of the different circles of the cross section of the tree, what aspects of your past possibly shine light on where you have come from, how you are going now and even where you may be heading?*

### **How do I use the Circles? Use them like a depth gauge**

One of the most significant ways of using the Circles is to help us to understand ourselves and others. That's why we particularly refer to the Circles as being linked in with the Understanding Step.

In particular, the Circles can be used to help understand the depth of relationships, like a depth gauge of the conversation within that Connection. As part of this, they also show how deep a person or a relationship is able to go. We may want to just talk at a more superficial level about what's been happening in society or with other people. We might want to talk about the Bible in a theological or theoretical way. These levels of conversation, while important in their own right, can end up focusing on surface issues where we do not get to really know each other, ourselves or even God. Absolutely, there is a place for talking about these and a place where everything is not too deep or meaningful but more to increase our knowledge or just to be light-hearted.

As we go deeper, we can talk about our Physical Circle in terms of what we are doing or how our health is. Going deeper again, we can share our own thoughts and feelings. The depth gauge is closer to its limits when we are talking about our very selves, in terms of our sense of worth, and who we are at the core. A healthy relationship can talk about all of these levels. You can measure the depth of your friendships or church small groups by these guidelines.

Other ways we can use the Circles are detailed in *Part Two* and include the way the Circles provide us with a map for change to help direct our next steps. Also, as wheels on a car can be out of balance or might even be falling off the axle, so the Circles can help us to see

where we need more balance in our life. The Circles can help us to see where the centre of our being is, the centre of rotation, where the axle of our life is positioned. We may revolve around other people, or around physical fitness or intellectual issues where sport or study override everything else. However, the only safe place to revolve around is our central Circle, the spirit, where God Himself can dwell. The Circles help us to see whether we are living God-centred intentional lives, from the inside out, or whether we're being more reactive to others being defined or determined by whoever that 'other' may be. Again, these are elaborated in *Part Two* of this trilogy.

- *How deep do you think your relationship goes when you are with your friends, or even in a group you might be part of?*

### Points to remember

So, in a very brief way we have introduced you to the various parts of yourself. You have heard more of my story. Maybe you have been challenged to think of your story. Learning about the Circles will help you to understand yourself more as a whole person. The Circles can help you to have the balance you need between deep and meaningful relationships and the more light-hearted and fun aspects of life.



- *What are the aspects of the Circles you can most readily apply to yourself?*



- *Draw out the Circles of your life, reflect on how they may be going and talk with someone whom you can trust and who knows you. Reflect on these.*
- *Share with your friends or a group you might be in, and discuss how deep or shallow your relationships may be.*
- *Read Section 1 (about the Circles) in the second book, Part Two of this Trilogy if you want to go deeper.*



*God of Understanding, search my heart my mind, and my actions. You know me. May I know You more.*

### **The Circles in the small group**

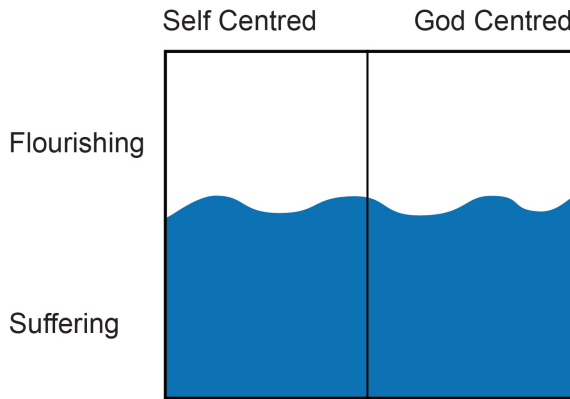
Teaching points. The Circles allow us to measure the depth of relationship within a small group. You can have a very spiritual group which is also very shallow. You can have a very deep and meaningful group which is not spiritual. It is a matter of having a group which can become deeply spiritual in a practical way which can be shared with each other.

The Circles also allow us to look at becoming more holy or God-centred in a whole way, with God affecting every part of our lives.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

After 8 pm when we divide the larger group into men and women. As the leader of the small group, I am measuring the depth of our relationships. If our conversation is becoming more superficial and we are heading in an outward direction, I might be wondering what's going on. It may be defensive, or it could be for a bit of light relief if the conversation might be getting too heavy or unsafe for someone, or it may be even just changing from one focus and allowing for another.

### III. The Square: Two Dimensions of Change



I am so grateful for this Shape. It helps me to be so much more real about where I am in any particular part of my life at any particular time. It also helps me to see where I need to get to, in relation to what my overall goal is. In our small group at church, this Shape has become the easiest and most common Shape we use for the same reasons. The Square also helps me to be clearer as I read the Bible that God’s major concern, over and above whether we are suffering or flourishing, is whether or not we are God-centred. This is seen with Jesus’ letters<sup>2</sup> to the seven churches in *Revelation*, the last book of the Bible, where God’s primary concern is whether the churches are faithful; and if they are not being God-centred, then they need to change or do what Jesus calls, “to repent”.

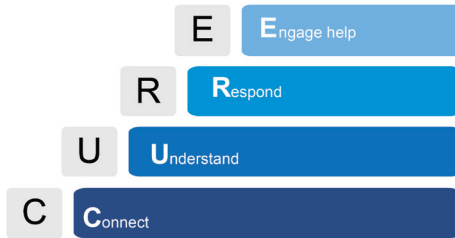
<sup>2</sup> These letters were given by Jesus to John in his Revelation.

Some questions to consider when looking at this chapter:



- *Do you know where you're at in life and where you're heading?*
- *What are your strengths and what are your weaknesses?*
- *This might sound really obvious, but how important is it for you to grow?*
- *How God-centred are you or how self-centred are you?*

The shape of the Square can sit on both Step 2, Understand, as well as on Step 3, Respond, inviting such questions as, “Where are you?” In fact, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) is the third thing God said to man in the garden. He was wanting to love, know and relate with Adam and Eve who were hiding from Him.



This Understanding question also begs and needs a Response question in terms of, “Where do you need to be?”

Let's look at four questions:

- What is the Square?
  - The structure of the Square.
  - The Bible and the Square.
- Why use the Square?
- Whom is the Square for?
- How do I use the Square?
  - Put the Circles on the Square.
  - How do I rise above the water level?

### Jesus and the Square

As we will see, Jesus, who though He Himself was doing very well, specifically went down to those who were struggling and to those

who were sinning, who were living a life separated from God. In the language of the Square, we say He went from the top right-hand quadrant of the Square, to below the water level.

Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners'.  
(Mark 2:17)

Likewise, this is emphasised in the letter to the Philippians, where Paul says about Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; Rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of the servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as man He humbled Himself becoming obedient to death even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8)

### **What is the Square?**

Take a moment to look at the four quadrants of the Square, and what each quadrant stands for. The Square highlights two dimensions of living and of change.

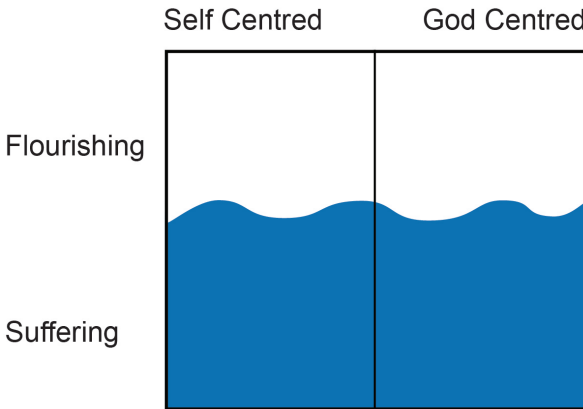
The first dimension of change is in the vertical direction, moving from an experience of suffering and struggle to an experience of creativity and flourishing, where there is a future and a life. It is a place of safety which is positive with possibilities. Going above the water level is moving towards a place of strength which we also sometimes call success. This dimension of change can refer to any of our Circles apart from our central Circle, the spirit. As mentioned, our spirit is either dead or alive.

The other dimension of change is from left to right, from self-centredness to God-centredness. The Christian walk should be a journey moving in the right-hand direction. It is the journey of becoming centred on God. The Bible calls this becoming 'holy' or the process of being 'sanctified', which also means to be set apart for Him. It is being, thinking and doing what He wants more than what we want.

These two dimensions make up four quadrants. To find what quadrant our lives are in, or any aspect of our lives for that matter, we can ask ourselves two main questions:

1. What am I centred on? God or myself?
2. How am I going? Flourishing or suffering?

Some parts of our lives may be going better than others, and thus be located in different places in the Square at any time.



Our diagram for the Square has two columns, self-centred and God-centred because the most common centredness which is not God-centred is to be self-centred. Self-centredness is when ‘I’ am in the middle or the centre of my life. This in essence is a definition of what is also called ‘sin’. This word describes itself quite well, literally having the letter ‘I’, the self-centred ‘I’ in the middle. While there are two columns and two rows, these dimensions of change are really on a continuum. It’s as though you could put a 0 to 10 rating going from bottom to top and also from left to right.

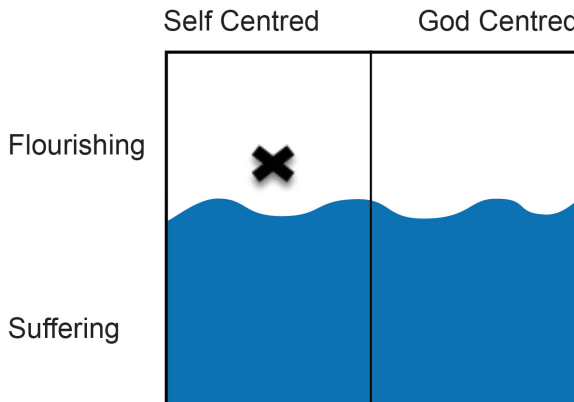
Technically, we could have three columns like this ...

	sIn		God-centred
	Self-centred	Other- centred	
Flourishing			
Suffering			

because in fact anything which is not God-centred, is in its own spiritual category, whether it is other-centred and altruistic or self-centred and narcissistic. Both are sin in that they are not God-centred. That is why we focus on two columns rather than three. While altruism is so much nicer and so much more helpful than toxic narcissism, it still may not be God-centred. So, the Square could be depicted as above, but for ease and simplicity, let's get back to the Square with two columns and two rows and thus four quadrants.

### The structure of the Square: the four quadrants

Let's look at the left side of the Square.



The top left quadrant represents self-centred success. For example, someone might be here if they are succeeding but only caring about themselves, or if they are succeeding at the expense of others. This sort of person may let down or put down another for their own gain, a variation of being true to evolutionary theory and survival of the fittest. In this context, this quadrant starts to respond to the question, “Why can bad people do well?” This is an issue, which a person who wrote Psalm 33 considered.

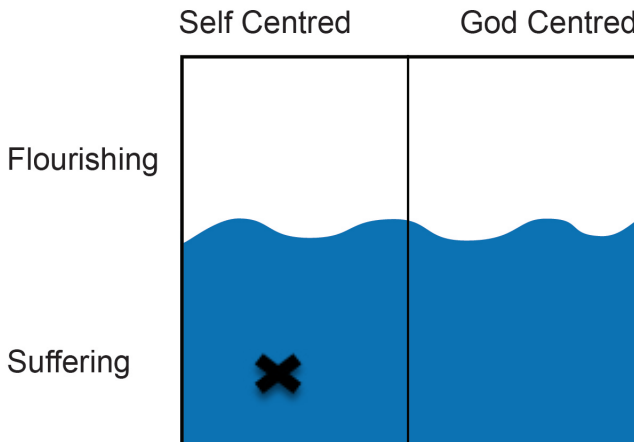
For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure ... till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny ... But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge. (Psalm 33:3- -28)

Being a Christian is not an insurance against bad things happening, for we live in a world where there is evil, and this is not yet fully the kingdom of God. As mentioned later in this Section, the time when there will be no more tears of pain will come in the end, when Heaven arrives. Thus, the prayer for that to happen, in the penultimate verse of the whole Bible: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

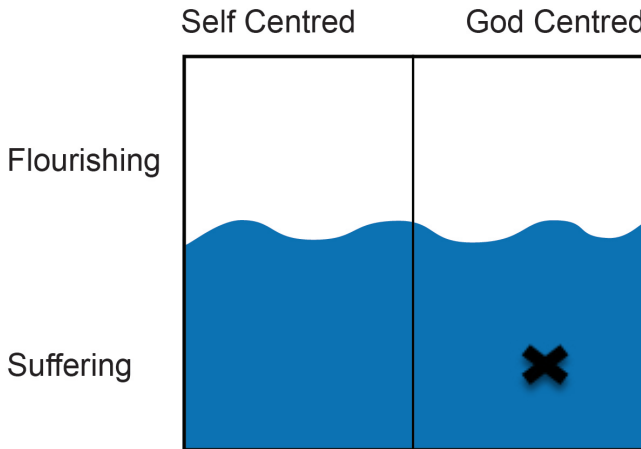
The Pharisees and Sadducees in the Bible were like people who inhabit the top left-hand quadrant. Jesus was not able to, nor did he try to walk the Steps with these people, because of where they were at.

Although I would not like to admit it, I find myself trying to get there particularly if I feel put down or let down. It is really easy to try to get to this place when there are relationship conflicts with people who are close to you, where you experience that they might be letting you down or putting you down in the context of, for example, home, school or work, or church. It feels like a natural response to hurt the other person or see them put down and also to put yourself up.

Some churches teach a form of prosperity gospel saying that if you become a Christian, give more in the offering or are a ‘better’ Christian, you will be blessed. In these churches, if you are doing well it is because God is blessing you, which may not always be the case. This type of teaching can be a top left quadrant, self-centred promotion type of Gospel.



The bottom left quadrant represents those who are living for themselves and not doing so well, so they are below the 'waterline'. They may well be there as a result of what has been done to them by people who are trying to move up to the top left. It is also often a place where top left-hand living ends. The story in Luke chapter 15 of the 'Prodigal' younger son is an example of this. He left his father to put himself up into the top left-hand quadrant, indulging himself, only to come crashing down into this bottom left quadrant of self-centred suffering as the famine around him started to bite.



The bottom right quadrant shows that even when we are centred on God, we can go through really tough times such as persecution or a time of testing for character growth. If we find ourselves suffering in life, it doesn't necessarily mean that we are away from God. See:

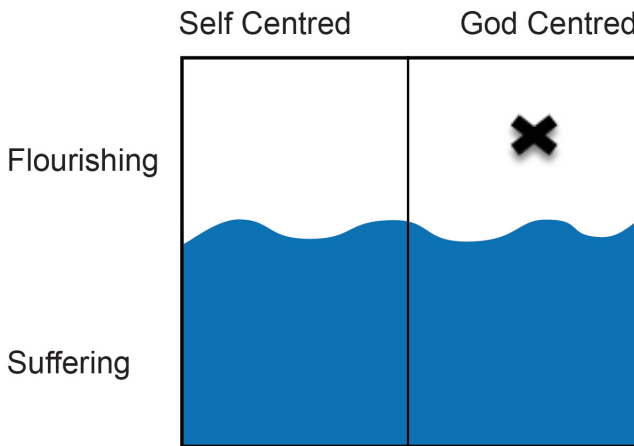
Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)

We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

The bottom right quadrant was the place Job experienced in his sufferings, having been previously living in the top right-hand quadrant. His counsellors did not think such a place existed. If he was suffering, he must have sinned was the basis of their approach to and reproach of Job. You can read more about this in the book of Job in the Bible.

This quadrant is also a place we experience at times when we are being obedient to God. The classic example here is Jesus who was indeed suffering in a godly way as He faced His death. This is also where the persecuted church is. Personally, this is where I saw myself as a missionary kid in India, where as a family we suffered, where, as children, we hardly saw our parents. In many ways while this could have broken me, it has been formative as I have allowed it to train me.

Finally, this quadrant speaks to the issue of, “Why do good people suffer?” The bottom line is that there is evil in this world as will be detailed in this chapter. As mentioned, the Kingdom of God is not fully here until Heaven arrives. While we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, evil does appear to have a randomness about it which can touch anyone at any time. Yet God can take what was meant for evil and make something good come out of it.



On the top right quadrant of the Square we have the place of highest flourishing. Life is going really well and centred on God. Here, like Jesus, you go down to bring another up. As described in Philippians 2, Jesus, though he was in the form of God did not grasp onto it but let

go of it all. He came down to earth to bring us back up to God. That is servant-leadership. This is also the place where Job returned to at the end of his story when his God-centred flourishing was restored. This is where the Bible starts and finishes – in Eden and in Heaven. I feel I am moving more into this quadrant in a lot of areas of my life as I journey on. This will be the ultimate end when there will be no more pain and suffering or under the water level, and a clear answer to the fate of bad people who do well (the issue raised above when talking about the top left-hand quadrant). There will be no more left-hand side.



- *Overall, which quadrant would you locate yourself in?*



- *Share what you have learnt with someone else and even ask them ‘You’ Understanding questions to see where they may be at and where they may be going. Remember to keep your Connection with them.*

### **The Bible and the Square; the Square illustrates the Bible story**

The Square can help us visualize and plot the big picture of God’s story within history. This story is detailed throughout the whole of the Scriptures. In some ways, what follows is a summary overview of the Bible, as illustrated through the shape of the Square. The Bible begins with God creating everything in a God-centred and flourishing way. He himself said it was very good! This top right-hand quadrant is also where the Bible ends in the book of Revelation, a prosperous and rich place where God is central. Let’s now go back to the beginning of the Bible.

#### ***Genesis 1, 2 – Eden: the top right quadrant***

So, the bookends of the Bible, Genesis 1 and 2 (Eden) and Revelation 21 and 22 (Heaven) depict the top right-hand quadrant of God-centred flourishing. There in Eden, the command was to flourish even more – to go and multiply and take mastery. Thus, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). God wanted them to take possession of what was good. There wasn’t even the call to be holy and set apart for God, for they were already God-centred.

### ***Genesis 3 – Adam and Eve: the move to the top left quadrant***

When in Genesis 3 sin became an option, Adam and Eve initially moved to the top left-hand side, self-centred success. Humankind had chosen to walk away from God, wanting essentially to swap God out of the centre and put themselves in that position. The fruit tasted really good. We all now know this in our lives. Temptation never really presents itself as a bad option. In their hearts they had already left the top right-hand quadrant of the Garden of Eden.

How come there was even that top left-hand quadrant? One way of looking at this is that for there to be genuine love, there must be genuine choice. Thus, in some ways this could be illustrated that in that top right-hand quadrant where humanity was originally, there was also a door, providing a choice whereby one could leave that place of God-centredness and become self-centred. In essence, the evil one who was considered to be at one stage a worshipper of God, preferred to go his own way and walked through that door, out of God's presence. Adam and Eve were shortly to follow the evil one. He had become self-centred, and in doing so, became the master not only of deceit but also of destruction. Thus, the development of the bottom left-hand quadrant to accommodate destruction, danger, death and deceit. In some ways, the evil one could be portrayed by the character of the "Joker" in the Batman movie, who just delights in destruction. One of the worst parts of this deceit, right from Adam and Eve to now, has been the belief that God, not the evil one, was the author of suffering.

### ***Genesis 4: the move to the bottom left quadrant***

Shortly after Adam and Eve's moving away from God, suffering quickly ensued and led them to the bottom left-hand quadrant. Chapter 4 of Genesis talks about Adam's dysfunctional family. Here was sibling murder, when Cain killed his brother Abel.

### ***Genesis 6 to 50***

From Noah, Abraham and his son, Isaac and his son Jacob/Israel and on to his son, Joseph: they were trying to get back to top right quadrant. Despite the way things began, God still wanted humankind to be in the top right-hand quadrant. Yes, he did want them to possess, to occupy

and to live in what was good. God wanted to restore a brand-new world. He started with Noah after the flood described in Genesis 9:

God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth’. (Genesis 9:1)

He repeated this same desire for God-centred flourishing later with Abraham in Genesis 12:

Go from your country ... I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3)

Following on from Abraham, was his son Isaac, and then Isaac’s son Jacob. The family then rose well above the water level, having left their struggling homeland to live in Egypt. This was through the success of Joseph and the favour they initially experienced there. However, for some reason, they then plummeted as they were persecuted by the Egyptians.

### ***Exodus to Joshua***

Through Moses and Joshua, God wanted the Israelites who were now positionally His people, His nation to take mastery and in practice, to possess a good land, in a God-centred way. Things were looking good as they returned to what became Israel, fully equipped by the spoils they were given from the Egyptians. That top right-hand God-centred flourishing quadrant was experienced for only a short time. So quickly the people turned again to doing their own self-centred things.

### ***Judges to 2 Chronicles, the prophets from Isaiah to Zephaniah***

The Judges and the Kings never really lasted in that top right-hand quadrant for long. Throughout the Scriptures we see that as people turned back to God or repented and became God-centred, they also rose to top right-hand quadrant living. They then so often became self-centred again (top left) and consequently suffered. Of the 40 kings

after David and Solomon, my reading of the Scriptures is that only two seemed to last to the end on the right-hand side: Hezekiah and Josiah (If I am right, that is a 5% success rate!). The true prophets tended to live a lot of their lives in the bottom right-hand quadrant: God-centred but suffering as illustrated by being below the waterline. However even so, there were still the false prophets living on the left-hand side of the Square, promoting falsehood and selfish gain.

### ***Job***

Job, as mentioned, was a man who lived in the top right-hand quadrant, known to be a close follower of God and flourishing. Satan accused that Job only loved God because of his prosperity. But due to some cosmic events happening between Satan and God, unbeknown to Job, he went to the bottom right-hand quadrant, turning towards God in his suffering. God was showing that people could love Him even in suffering. God knew Job had not sinned. His counsellors mistakenly thought that Job was in the place of suffering because he was in the bottom left-hand quadrant. It is as though they had no concept that the bottom right quadrant of God-centred suffering could even exist. Their thoughts were, “Job must have sinned! That was why he is suffering”. It was as if he must have been on the left-hand side of the Square. However, Job’s insistence on his righteousness and being on the right-hand side of the Square eventually itself became self-centred, and when he saw God near the end of the book, he then realised he needed to change or repent from this.

### ***The Psalms***

Many of the Psalms were written from the bottom right-hand quadrant, as have many of the hymns of the last couple of centuries. There is a significant need for an increased number of modern church songs to come from songwriters familiar with this quadrant, to help us when we suffer despite our faith.

### ***Daniel, Ezekiel: the Exile***

At this stage, Israel was at its lowest place pretty well ever, at least within biblical history. As they continued to sin against God, to seek

that top left-hand quadrant in the context of injustice and selfishness, they ended up in that place of suffering as illustrated by the bottom left-hand quadrant. There were taken away or exiled from Israel for about seventy years.

***Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and the post exilic prophets: the return from exile***

Finally, in the Old Testament came Nehemiah and Ezra, two significant men who helped the Israelites return to possess the land which was where they belonged. Yes, there was a repossession of their now devastated and broken land. But again, despite the prophets of this time (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi), the people quickly moved to the left-hand side, away from their devotion to God. Four hundred years passed. The top right-hand quadrant had never become established.

Something had to change. Enter the New Testament.

***The Gospels – Jesus***

But God didn't leave the old way as it was. He Himself came to the earth in the form of Jesus. Amazing! Jesus lived the life we should have lived: God-centred flourishing, loving God and others in a perfect way. He also chose to do something amazing: He died the death we should have died, even though He didn't deserve it – He took on God-centred suffering. He did this on the cross, taking all the wrongs of those who will ever have faith in Him upon Himself. Three days later he came back to life again, defeated death and offered life to anyone and everyone who believed in Him. Jesus willingly left that top right-hand place of Heaven and came down well below the water level to those who were suffering. He was put to death by top left-hand people, that He might bring those who were suffering firstly to the right-hand side, to God-centredness and eventually to what will be our final possession, Heaven.

The death of Jesus: Philippians 2:8 shows how in God's strange design, He himself took on human form and came from the top right-hand quadrant, right down from Heaven and right into the bottom right-hand quadrant, becoming obedient to God even to death. Charles

Wesley<sup>3</sup>, commenting on God's 'strange design' as shown in God's coming from the top right-hand quadrant in Heaven to join people in their suffering below the waterline, wrote:

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviours blood?  
Died He for me who caused His pain, for me who Him to  
death pursued!?  
Amazing love, how can it be that thou my God should die  
for me?

Re-emphasising this, Jesus was always God-centred, but incredibly, chose to go down below the water level to suffer our punishment so that we could move from left (self-centred living) to right (God-centred living). Martin Luther called this along the lines of 'The Great Exchange'<sup>4</sup> I call it the 'unfair exchange' as we receive so much in return for what offence we have given Him! Now we are in a period of what is known as "grace". Grace has been referred to as 'God's Riches At Christ's Expense'.

### ***Acts: the story of the early church***

As stated elsewhere, the early church took on exactly what Jesus did with doing miracles of healing and deliverance, as well as preaching (evangelism), and making disciples. Although Jesus had returned to Heaven, He through His Holy Spirit was still around in the world, in the context of the early church. A lot of what the early church experienced was in the context of God-centred suffering, at times to the point of martyrdom.

### ***The letters (Romans to Jude) and Revelation***

We have a window to the ongoing life of the early church through these letters, which are all a call to living a God-centred life, as illustrated by the right-hand side of the Square.

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<sup>3</sup> Justin Taylor, Charles Wesley's "And Can it Be: Background and Scriptural Allusions", The Gospel Coalition, accessed 2017, <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2013/12/14/charles-wesleys-and-can-it-be-background-and-scriptural-allusions>

<sup>4</sup> Theodore G. Tappert ed., Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel, "Instructions to the Perplexed and Doubting, To George Spenlein, April 8, 1516," Library of Christian Classics Vol 18., page 110.

Whatever quadrant we might find ourselves in, the amazing news is that God has made a way for us to encounter God-centred living by His grace. Just as Jesus went from above to those who were suffering below the waterline, so the call is there for those saved and transformed by God to do the same, and to love as Jesus loved. The only thing is, it is much harder for top left-hand quadrant people to do this, as illustrated by the Pharisees and Sadducees. In their religious self-centred top left-hand quadrant lives, they missed what Jesus had done for them.

Thus, God brought in a new ‘land to possess’ for His people – His people of the New Covenant. This was no longer Eden where Adam was or the land of Canaan where Abraham and later Moses with Joshua led them. If it had been, God would not have spoken about another day of rest (Hebrews 4:8). This place of rest was to be found in a relationship with Him, as expressed throughout the book of Hebrews and especially in 4:14-16. This new place for us to possess is Connection with God.

Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

This place results in us being able to live on the right-hand side, whether above the water level or below the water level. The experience of rest is founded on being positioned in a place of rest. This position is illustrated by the Shape of the Cross which we will see shortly.

Unfortunately, the top right-hand quadrant has still not become fully established, so again something has to change. Then suffering and struggle will finish. The world as we know it will end. Enter Heaven.

#### ***Revelation 21 and 22: the future – Heaven***

Ultimately, God’s desire for us to live in that top right-hand quadrant will be finalised in Heaven. It will be so much better than Eden. It will be such a good and God-centred place. In Heaven, there won’t be any suffering or tears and no more sin or left-hand sided living. Heaven is the final place for us to possess.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (Revelation 21:1)

In ancient middle eastern thought the sea referred to chaos. What is referred to as “the sea” is illustrated by the waterline in the Square. In Heaven there will be nothing in the bottom row under the water level in terms of suffering.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. (Revelation 21:4)

Heaven will be very much above the water level. It is hardly a shack; it’s an amazing place described with incredibly expensive gems and jewels. Eden with its river of life running through it and the tree of life will now be restored:

Then the angel showed me the river of water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ... (Revelation 22:1)

There is nothing in Heaven but the top right-hand quadrant. In addition, there will be nothing on the left-hand side in terms of sin and evil, for the old world and its evils are gone forever. It is truly a right-hand sided place.

Look, God’s dwelling place is now among his people, and he will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)

In the end all that will be left will be the top right-hand quadrant, which is where it all began in Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

### **Why use the Square?**

**To Understand: Where are you? To Respond: Where are you going?**

The Square has many uses including facing ourselves to meet our reality, rather than saving face to defend from the same. It can be like a map to look at where our lives are and where we want them to go. As in *The Bible and the Square* above, the Square can also help visually

explain the core message of the Bible, where we can visualise and plot the big picture of what God wants for us.

In real life, the Square allows us to see where we are at individually, where we are at with our family including marriage and parent-child relationships, and where we are at with our church. By knowing where we are at, then we can be more intentional about changing directions or carrying on growing in a God-centred way towards the right-hand side. The most important thing for us is to live on that right-hand side, whether we are suffering or flourishing.

The Square helps us to see whether we are living a life consistent with who we are or not. A consistent Christian life is living a God-centred life on the right-hand side of the Square, even if we are struggling beneath the water level in our experience. What should happen is that our life experience and practice, as also illustrated in the Circles, should be in line with our spiritual Christian position. If we say we are Christians, our life should show it. We should be living a God-centred life in the God-centred quadrants of the Square even if that involves suffering.

An inconsistent Christian life is living a self-centred life (left-hand side of the square) whether we are succeeding or suffering. So often, individually and as a church, we find ourselves in the left-hand side of the square, which does not match up with who we say we are. It is as if what God has done in us and for us has little relevance or effect. We may so often see ourselves living not much differently from before we first believed, or from non-Christians. Sometimes our churches can look as if they are little different from other organisations in the way we at times can treat each other, and sometimes it's even worse than outside the church. At these times, we can wonder and doubt if anything fundamental really happened to us when we became Christians. Why do we live hypocritical and inconsistent lives? It is because we don't know, believe or put into the practice what has positionally happened to us. We will look at this in more detail below through what the Shape of the Cross symbolizes.

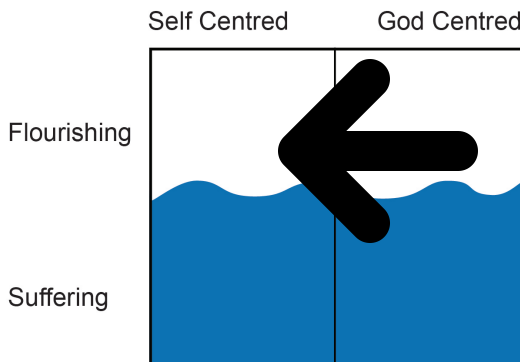
The Square helps us to prioritise the two dimensions of change. While it is important to develop and to succeed, the Square reminds us that it is more important to be like Jesus and to live a God-centred life. The second dimension of change refers to the process of what is

called ‘sanctification’. As mentioned before, being sanctified is being set apart for God, being holy in the whole of us. This is the theme from Genesis to Revelation.

The Square helps us to plan. It helps us to see the map of the journey of our life in practice. It is a journey towards the top right-hand quadrant, a God-centred, positive and flourishing place. This map also reminds us that we have not yet arrived at the top right-hand corner, where Heaven is. We will be neither sinless nor perfect or free from problems till we are there. The Square also makes us aware of how much we need to care lest we drift into the left-hand side of the Square away from God-centredness.

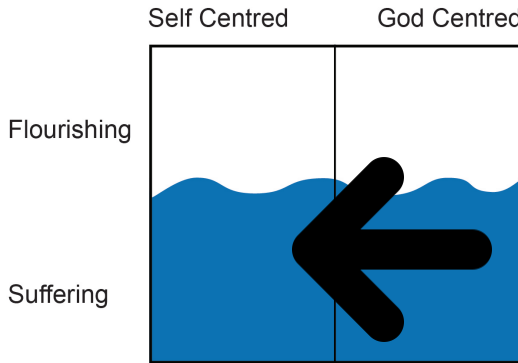
### ***The slipstream effect***

The Square helps us to recognise that when we are going well, we can become proud and self-centred and forget God. It is as though when we rise higher in the Square we can get into a slipstream which just takes us to our own left-hand sided selfish ways, without a need for God. This pattern is described so often throughout the Scriptures, particularly as mentioned with the kings of Israel. What a challenge for us to continue to move to the right-hand side throughout life.



### ***The undercurrent effect***

Conversely when we are right down below the water level in our suffering, we can get into the rip of the undercurrent which can drag us to the self-centred side on the left. This is often then expressed by succumbing to the deceit of the evil one and blaming God for what has happened.



The person who wrote this section of Proverbs prayed against drifting to the left by the slipstream or undercurrent effects like this:

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:8-9)

The top right-hand quadrant of living is exemplified by us giving to others in whichever quadrants they may be. If we are below the water level in either of the lower quadrants we can receive from others and from God. The most dangerous quadrant to be in is the top left one, the place where the Pharisees were, the place where it seemed Jesus could rarely reach them. In this quadrant I am doing well on my own and not giving what I have to those who struggle beneath the water. Here, as mentioned, we might passively let others down or actively put them down instead of going down from the top right-hand quadrant as Jesus would, to bring them up. By using the Square, we can be more honest. We can ask ourselves questions such as:

- Are we falling and suffering below the water level, or succeeding above it?
- Are we God-centred or self-centred?

The Square can help us to be real about ourselves.

The Square helps us respect those who have spent time in the bottom right-hand quadrant, suffering but focused on God. As mentioned, many of the great songs and hymns of old were written as a result of difficult times in this quadrant, which resulted in a vivid Connection with God. The bottom right-hand quadrant is never bad and often faith enhancing. Jesus spent much time there.



- *Draw out the shape of the Square and ask God to search your heart regarding which quadrant you may be living in, in various aspects of your life.*

### **Whom is the Square for? For any individual, system or situation**

Just as for the Circles, the Square can be used by any individual. Anyone can use the Square in any situation where there are people! Just as for a 40-year-old Indian man, so for a 12-year-old American girl entering adolescence; either can be in any of the four quadrants of the Square. The Square will have different colour brushes (representing age, culture and gender) for both of them, in terms of what colour it looks like. However, the structure of the Square will be the same for both.

The Square can also be used not just by an individual but also by any system. For example, the systems of a marriage or a family or a group can be in any of the quadrants.

The Square can be useful for churches. The local church is another system which can be reviewed to see which quadrant it may be in. For many Western churches, the biggest danger is not struggling below the water level. In fact, God-centred suffering is often associated with church growth. It would seem that significant growth in the Church in China has been evidenced through the persecution the Church has been experiencing. The biggest concern for churches is moving towards the top left quadrant of prosperity teaching, using the gospel for our own selfishness. Some people, as mentioned before, have called this the ‘prosperity gospel’.

Take the Tower of Babel. This has already been mentioned in the introduction when talking about language and is a clear illustration of left-hand sided living. In Genesis 11:4 they said, “Come, let us build

ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves". They had what it took, in terms of unity with each other and a common language. So, the Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them". As noted in the introduction, the way God dealt with this was simple. He stopped them speaking the same language. No longer could their self-centred plans work. The people were scattered throughout the world.

For us individually and in our churches, this can be a warning for us as we build for ourselves rather than for His kingdom. We are to live lives on the right-hand side, building the church not for our own selves, but for God. As we individually live on the right-hand side, and as we come together in twos and threes and small groups in the context of a local church, we can serve and become the change agents. As Dr Chris Wright noted, this is the church bringing the whole gospel through the whole church to the whole world. In this context, the church has a servant-leader, that is Jesus.

In the church context, the Square emphasises the need for interaction between those who are doing well, succeeding and flourishing, and those who are suffering and struggling below the water level so that they go down to help them. The church is a place where everyone should be involved, in either giving or receiving, and best of all, doing both depending on where one is at the time. The Church is the body of Christ. The more relational the church setting, the more expression there is of reciprocal interaction within the body of Christ. In this context, there will be a meeting of those who can give with those who can receive. This is more likely to happen in the context of small groups and twos and threes than in the larger gatherings.



- *Where would you locate your church within the square?*

#### **How do I use the Square?**

The Square is like a map inviting us to the right-hand side. Right now, yes right now, where am I in the Square? The Square can help me to

articulate this. As I am writing this, in my body I'm tired, physically feeling a bit under the water level. I got up early as I am on a roll, wanting to get this book completed. In my mind, I'm excited that I am involving my son Daniel, who wanted to participate in this project, as well as a professional editor. The end seems to be in sight for this book. My heart is in the top right-hand quadrant as I know I am fulfilling my purpose in seeking not only to learn and live the CURE but also to give it to others, including living the Steps and Shapes with my wife. Because we can really deceive ourselves, I am more cautious to place myself in the top right-hand quadrant compared to other quadrants. Nevertheless, I am experiencing more of that now than I did early on in my life.

Yes, the whole thing about the Square is to help us to Understand where we are at and to Respond, to grow to where we can get to. It is indeed like a map. If I am trying to get to that top right-hand quadrant of God-centred flourishing, how can the Square help me do that? Remember firstly, that God wants us to flourish and to grow above the water level. Yes, he can use the suffering we go through, especially to help us move from the left-hand side to His primary concern, the right-hand side. It is often through this furnace of suffering that we are changed more into the image of Jesus. In this place we can be of immense influence. Indeed, it was in this experience of the bottom right-hand quadrant that Jesus Himself had such an impact. Jesus suffered and was God-centred at the same time. But God did not leave Him there; God raised him up to that top right-hand quadrant.

As we have opportunities to move into a more flourishing place, we may also become better equipped to go back down to others, to serve them and to lead them to the right-hand side, so that they in turn can go to serve others. But we can only do this right-hand sided work if we ourselves are on the right-hand side and when we are living in that God-centred place! When we link the Shape of the Cross with the Square we will see more clearly how we move from left to right. However, one way we move to the right is by allowing God to use suffering experiences which are below the water level to turn us more to Him, towards what is called holiness, towards Him. While a lot of the letters are written in the context of suffering, in particular the

beginning parts of Romans 5, James 1 and 1 Peter 1, all talk about being in the place of God-centred suffering, in the bottom right-hand quadrant.

## **Integrating the Circles and the Square**

As well as locating our whole life on the quadrants, it can be helpful to look in more detail at the parts of who we are and see how they are going. By doing this, we can see more clearly not only where parts of us are at, but where we need to head to as a whole integrated person. This may help us to know what Responses we need to make.

When we look at different layers of the Circles we can take one at a time and see how they are going, by putting our Circles on the Square. For example, you may be going well financially, but socially you might be struggling under the water level. There may be some parts of your life which you let God into, but other parts of your life which you close off to Him. There may be some behavioural habits or addictions in the physical Circle, or some thought patterns in the mind Circle, which are no different from what they were like before your conversion or from the way non-Christians live. So, place each of your Circles on the map of the Square.

### **1. Heart Circle**

Remember, this is the core of our personality.

Applying what we have already been learning, and reiterating here because of its importance, where would you now locate your heart on the Square? Various parts of your heart may be in different quadrants. Where do you see yourself in relation to your sense of:

- worth and esteem, and capacity for trust and love; compared with shame, low value or aloneness;
- identity and purpose, and awareness of right and wrong; or feeling lost or confused. This is the place from where our beliefs emerge;
- control and hope; or chaos and despair;
- priorities and what is important to you;
- how you cope and express what is in your heart?



- *So where would you place your heart as a whole?*
- *What difference is God making to this part of you?*

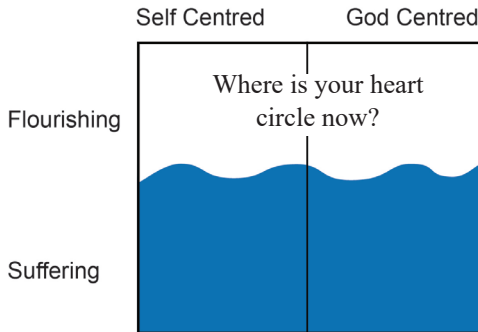


- *There is an old song by Frances Havergal, which in referring to the heart says, in the last two verses:*

*Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.*

*Echo this as a prayer of yours, even if your heart is broken under the water level?*



## **2. Mind Circle**

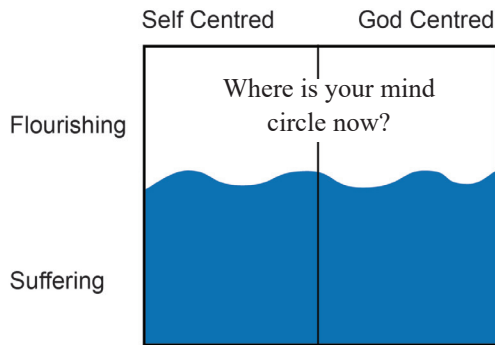
Again, where would you locate your mind in the Square? Remember, the mind is where we learn and have knowledge. But as stated, it's much more than just rational, left brain intelligence and IQ; it's also where we have our emotions, sense of energy and enjoyment, and the place where we perceive things through our five senses.



- *So where would you place your thinking and what you spend time looking at?*
- *What about the use of your intellect as well as the content of your thoughts?*
- *Do you let your emotions rule you or bring them to God, the One who gave us emotions*



- *The song mentioned above continues, praying for God to  
Take my intellect and use  
every power as You should choose.*
- *How would it be if you'd pray that, now?*



### 3. Physical Circle

Again, where would you locate your physical Circle on the Square below? This is the outer part of us, where we appear to the world. It is the place of our behaviour and actions. It is the place where we receive and give out communication. It is also here that our physical bodily systems reside – like our cardiovascular system (heart and blood vessels) or our endocrine system (hormones) and so on.

A lot happens in our physical circle, so here are quite a few questions for you to reflect on.



- *Where would you place your physical circle? Including:*
  - *The amount of time you spend on your appearance (too much/too little)?*
  - *What you actually do and how you spend your time?*

- *What you say and how you say it?*
- *What messages you convey with your life?*
- *Also, where would you place your health, including how you use your bodily functions in terms of sleep, what you eat and drink, your exercise and your sexual activities?*



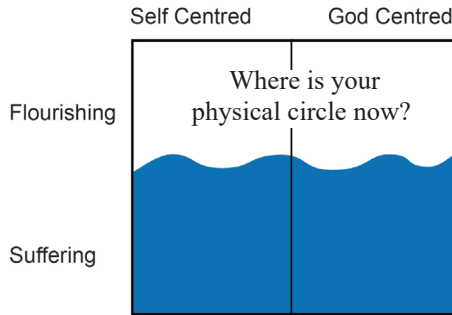
- *Carrying on with that old song by Frances Havergal, can you echo the first three verses as a prayer of yours, even if your physical Circle may be broken under the water level?*

*Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in endless praise.*

*Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing,  
Always, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.*

What about your spiritual activities or behavioural disciplines, the physical acts or disciplines of your spirit life, such as when you spend time to read the Scriptures and pray? Remember these spiritual behavioural disciplines may be in any quadrant of the Square. The Pharisees were very spiritual, but in the top left-hand quadrant of hypocrisy.



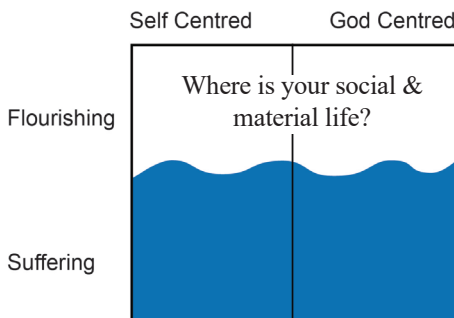
#### 4. Social Circle

Finally, where would you place your social Circle on the Square? Remember, this is outside of us where our relationships exist in terms of family, friends, church, school or work. While God is not so much a part of our ‘social life’, God is not only in us but is also with us in this external space. This external circle is also where our material life is.



- *Where would you put the experience of your spiritual relationship? Is it more top left, using God for me where I am the centre? Or is it truly right-hand side? Is it even there?*
- *Where would you place your social life in terms of how you are going with your family, friends, church, or in a place of work/school?*
- *Again, in that old song, there is the prayer,  
Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold.*
- *How true to you would that prayer be?*

Again, various parts of your social life and our material possession may be in different quadrants at any one time.



### **5. Spirit Circle – can't be in the Square**

What about the spirit Circle!? The spirit Circle is the one Circle which does not fit on the Square. While we may place our spiritual disciplines on the Square as mentioned, our spiritual position, which is what our spirit Circle is about, is illustrated by the Shape of the Cross as described on page 145. It is either dead or alive. It is not above or below the water level.

#### **How do I rise above the water level? Grow your T.A.S.K.**

So how do I move from below the water level when I am struggling, to above the water level where I can more positively express my potential and start to succeed? What we talk about here can apply to Christians or non-Christians alike. Non-Christians can rise up above the water level and flourish, but not in a Christ-centred way. It is as here in this context there is a growth of the “A.S.K.” Rising up in the Square occurs when we gain Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (the A, S and K: A- Attitudes, S-Skills, K-Knowledge). These growth processes can help us develop in the context of all our Circles:

- **Social Circle.** We can grow in our marriage, parenting, family lives, in small groups and in our church, as well as how we relate generally. There are so many books and courses for these. Sometimes we also need professional input not just in these contexts, but also to make our place of learning or earning (school or work) a better relational environment. We can also grow materially. There is no lack of people trying to assist us with this process in terms of becoming more financially and materially successful.
- **Physical Circle.** Sometimes what we may think is a deeper problem is simply related to our bodies, the container God made for what is inside of us. We need to ensure we look after our health and bodily functions: sleeping, eating and drinking, exercise and the physical part of our sexuality. Getting regular check-ups as needed from professionals including the family doctor is also part of this. Providing sufficient rest for our bodies can be sometimes very challenging in a highly driven

world. There is so much knowledge available for us regarding growth in these areas. For example, how to use our time, or how to behave differently and communicate better can also be areas where we can all learn and develop skills.

- **Mind Circle.** We can grow in our knowledge, which is what school, various courses and tertiary education is all about. We need to grow not just our intellect and learning, but our whole ‘mind quotient’ as it were, including being able to help grow our emotional capacity especially for example through the arts and music. In this way, we grow both the left-hand rational side and right-hand emotional side of our brains. Sometimes we need professional help, especially when our mind Circle might go below the water level, or even become ill in the context of depression and anxiety, or psychotic illness. Coaching can help us grow our mindset in a more positive direction.
- **Heart Circle.** As we walk the journey with other people who have a good heart, our essential attitudes develop. These include a caring attitude through Connections which feed into our love sector, a respectful attitude through our Understanding and being Understood, which feeds into our truth sector, and a responsible attitude through our healthy relational Responses which grow our control sector. Learning good ways of coping and also watching what gets into our heart is important. It tells us in Proverbs to “guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23). All of these areas of growth are available to anyone in the context of God’s ‘common grace’ which He bestows on everyone.
- **Spirit Circle.** This is different! Here we are not looking at our spirit Circle being above or below the water level, succeeding or suffering. For sure, the experience of our spiritual life and our various spiritual disciplines might be flourishing, or on the other hand may be in the valley or just neglected. However, what we are talking about in these contexts is the expression of our spiritual life from our central Circle in our other Circles. If we have been born again, the manifestation and expression of what has actually already happened in our central Circle of the

spirit should be aligned. The spirit Circle is the place where we can move from a dead spiritual position on the left-hand side to an alive one on the right-hand side. The spirit is the place of transformation, the 'T' of the 'TASK'. The spirit Circle, as mentioned, is highlighted in the next chapter on *the Shape of the Cross*.



- *Which circles do you sense you could grow in?*
- *How could you do that?*



- *Make a list of some next steps to take in the areas you need to grow in.*
- *Share with someone else the shape of the Square, using crockery or cutlery or whatever is on the table beside you. As you explain this to them, see what they think about how it applies to them or to yourself.*

### **Points to remember**

The Square allows you to Understand in a real way where you or any part of yourself is at. It also challenges you to grow in a God-centred and flourishing way. God made us for God-centred flourishing. The evil one wanted to take that place of God, and wants to allure us into going his way, tricking us to believe it will be good, but it ultimately goes only to destruction.



*God of action, just your being and all that you have done demands a response from me. Yet you give me choice. You seek for me to grow. Help me to be responsive to you.*

### **The Square in the small group**

The Square is a common shape to use in a small group. This is because it allows for greater Understanding of ourselves, challenging us toward God-centred wholistic Responses.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

We particularly use the Square when we get together with the men in the second part of the evening, as we move onto the Response Step. It helps us prayerfully to Understand where each one of us might be in terms of the four quadrants and where we might be heading regarding the two dimensions of change. Moreover, the Square helps us to be on the Response Step with each other, moving into prayer for each other firstly to move more towards the right-hand side and then if possible, in an upward direction. We commonly talk about the influence of the slipstream wanting to take out those who are succeeding towards the top left-hand side, towards a life at a greater distance from God. The Square also helps us to be around those who are in the bottom right-hand quadrant, struggling but pressing into God. We validate, and encourage them, being aware of the undercurrent which would want to take them out to the left-hand side where their faith in God will be distorted and diminished.



## IV. The Shape of the Cross: The Place of Change



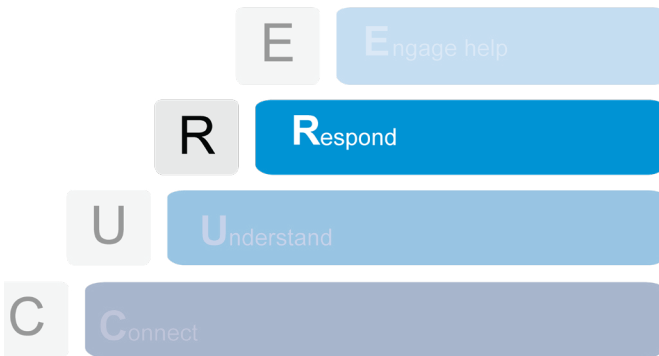
I am very grateful for this Shape of the Cross. Not only does it remind me of what actually happened when Jesus died and rose again, but it also illustrates for me the massive changes that happened in the centre of my being when I was born again as a Christian. These changes are even greater than the changes which happen to us when we are literally born physically.

I had no idea at the time, but I have since learned that at the point of my physical birth suddenly my cardiovascular system changed so that my heart could stop pumping my blood through my umbilical cord around my placenta, which had been the source of my oxygen and nourishment, to finding a totally new pathway of pumping it through my lungs. The umbilical cord later shrivelled up into a redundant bellybutton. This change occurred within seconds while I was being physically born! I didn't realise it, but at that point I was in a totally new

environment, out of the womb and into the world. I now had a new status, a birthdate and a birth certificate.

Likewise, when I was born again as a Christian around the age of seven, frankly I had no idea of what was actually going on inside of me, just like when I was physically born. However, since then I have learned that I was transferred from one way of living to a totally different way of life. Not only did I then get a birth certificate into the family and kingdom of God, I also got a death certificate to a self-centred and dead way of living. I was now in a new home, a new place. No longer was my foundation on an insecure base, but on the rock, on Jesus.

The Shape of the Cross sits predominantly on Step 3 of the CURE, Respond, as it is the Shape which demands a Response even if the Response is one of ignoring Jesus and what He did for us.



- *How do you go about being a ‘better Christian’?*
- *Do know what repentance is really about and how often do you do it?*

Let’s look at four questions:

- What is the Shape of the Cross?
- Why use Shape of the Cross?
- Whom is the Shape of the Cross for?
- How do I use Shape of the Cross?
  - The ABC of change

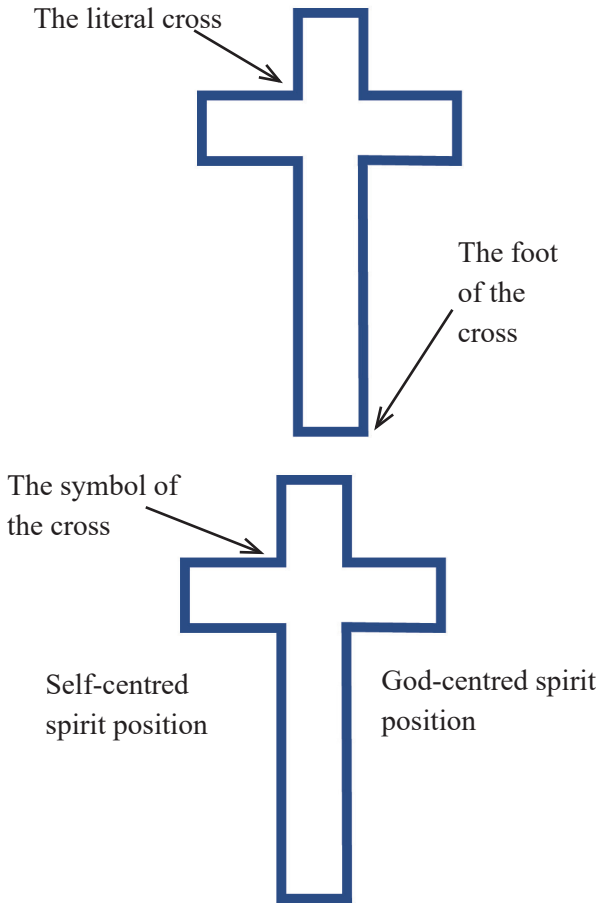
## **Jesus and the Cross**

The death of Jesus on the cross was pivotal not just to our forgiveness from God but also to our freedom to live a life to God. This literally happened at a place and time on this planet. In Israel, about 2,000 years ago. Prior to the end of this world, this strange act was the penultimate method of God to bring us back to the right-hand side of God-centredness. The Old Testament approach was now over. No longer was it laws and regulations in order for people to possess what we now know as the land of Israel, but it became possessing the outcome of positional transformation towards God-centredness. The ultimate method of God for bringing us to Himself will be Heaven. This will be for those who have accessed what Jesus has done in terms of applying the cleansing of His blood on the cross, who have, as it says in Revelation 7:14, “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”. Here will be the end of this evil and suffering world, taken over by Heaven.

In addition to the literal cross, as we will see, the symbol or the Shape of the Cross embodies the teaching of Jesus in terms of moving from one place to another, from self-centredness to God-centredness. His two major teachings for change were based on our having a total change. Firstly, we must be reborn and secondly, we need to enter into a new kingdom. These are brought together when in John 3:3 He was speaking to a man called Nicodemus saying, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”.

### **What is the Shape of the Cross? It refers to our spirit position**

The Shape of the Cross is the simplest one to draw. It is just two lines. However, it seems to be the hardest one to understand in terms of what can happen as we believe in Jesus. What follows is an exposition of grace. The reason why we refer to this Shape as ‘the Shape of the Cross’, rather than ‘the Cross’ is that while it does refer to the literal cross on which Jesus died, it also like the other Shapes, serves as a symbol and an illustration through its component parts.



The two concepts of the shape of the cross.

There are two concepts highlighted within the Shape of the Cross, (as shown in the bottom diagram) and both are illustrated by the spaces on either side below the horizontal cross bar. They are both to do with our spirit position, what state our central spirit Circle is in. The left-hand space beneath the horizontal crossbar illustrates a self-centred spirit position, where we live according to a life based on ourselves. This space is where we are dead **in** sin, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who

is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

The space on the right-hand side, again below the horizontal crossbar, illustrates a God-centred spirit position where we live according to the Holy Spirit. This space is where we are not dead in sin, but we are dead to sin, and have been born again into God's family and His Kingdom. Here we are now in a right relationship with God who is both in us and with us. For Christians, this place illustrates our home, our source, our centre, our rock and foundation. It is our place of relationship with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, Paul goes on to say that when we become Christians we changed our spiritual position from death to life, to a place where we can be in a responsive relationship with Christ. Thus, Paul says in Ephesians 2:

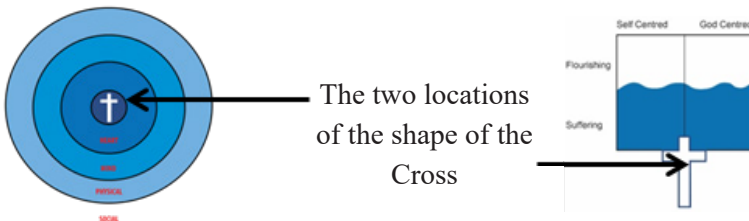
But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

For those who follow Jesus and put their faith in Him to save them, in their central Circle their spirit status moves in that very moment of believing from a self-centred position as illustrated by the left-hand side of the Shape of the Cross to a God-centred position, demonstrated by the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross. It is as though we have changed countries, governments and homes where we belong. When you become a Christian, you receive not only a birth certificate (being born again) but also a death certificate (of dying to your old self-centred nature). This is like other certifications and documents relating to changes regarding such scenarios as our level of academic learning, work-related capacities, our marital status or our birth certificate, which states that we are in a new position. We are out of the womb and into a very different environment. We now have a new spiritual

passport with all that this entails. We are actually now foreigners in this world. We belong to a new country, to a new kingdom. In this kingdom we can't have multiple passports. We can't belong to the evil one and to the kingdom of God at the same time.

We now have the option to live in line with who we are, as children of God. When we don't live a life congruent and consistent with our changed nature and changed spiritual position – which is a daily event for most of us even though we might not admit it – we can return (repent) to this place of rest and find His unfailing love, forgiveness and freedom; we are free to get up again to be who we are in God.

In preparation for the next section on the combination of the Shape of the Cross with the Square, while the Shape of the Cross can stand on its own, the Shape of the Cross is also positioned in the context of two of the other Shapes. Firstly, it is located in the shape of the Circles, occupying the central core spirit Circle, where our spirit is. Secondly, it is also positioned underneath the Square, as we will see below, with the combination. It is so important to grasp these two places where the Shape of the Cross is situated. Remember from the chapter on the Square and the chapter on the Circles, that all of the Circles except for the spirit Circle can be in any of the quadrants of the Square depending on how they are going in terms of being more or less God-centred in action, or more or less flourishing in practice.

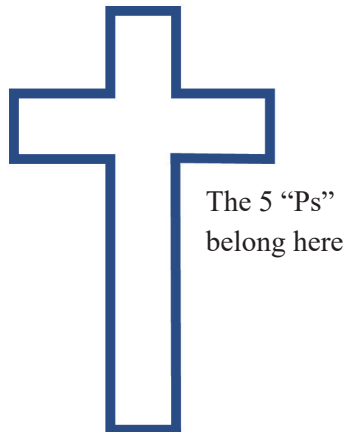


The Shape of the Cross illustrates the central place of change. It is associated closely with the Square. As we will see, the Shape of the Cross sits predominantly on the Response Step of the CURE. A place of wholistic change. This pervasive change is further shown by the close association to the central Circle where it also resides. Its core

position allows our spiritual changes to be well-placed to have this whole of person impact. For sake of ease, in the next section we will be focusing mainly on the combination of the Shape of the Cross with the Square more than with the Shape of the Cross with the Circles.

What does the Bible say? The Bible states that when we become Christians the core of our being, our spirit, changes. This is highlighted in the Gospels, in Paul's writings as well as in the writings of Peter and John. These writers emphasise this core truth that when we became Christians we moved in our spirit position from being dead in sin to being alive in God and dead to sin.

Jesus says we changed positions through, as mentioned, being born again and entering a new kingdom. Paul says that we enter this new kingdom as children of the Father through being in Christ and being filled with the Spirit. Peter talks about us being born again, being foreigners in this world, and that we have God's promises and His power so that we can become partakers of the divine nature. James goes on to say that we should put our internal changes into external and outward practice. The issue of living in alignment with who we really are is right through the Bible. It is even emphasised in the Old Testament, which highlights the experience of God's people who were meant to be aligned with who they were in position and living out a God-connected life in practice. This is further expanded on in *The C.U.R.E. for Life Part Three: Biblical Foundations: A Theology of Change*.



At the time we become Christians, whether we believe or know it or not, in our central Circle of the spirit as illustrated by the Shape of the Cross, we are positionally changed. This is an unchangeable fact. We now have these five “Ps” within us which are God’s:

- **Provisions.** God’s provisions of unfailing love, forgiveness, freedom and fullness, equipping us for the fight of faith.
- **Purposes.** His purposes for us to be imitators of Christ; and for us to interact with Him so that we grow to be more like Jesus.
- **Placement.** The place where He has located us in Him ... being a child of the Father, being Spirit indwelt and being in Christ.
- **Presence.** His presence within us as we abide in Jesus, like the sap within a tree, as a branch in the Vine. We can sit down at table as it were and commune with Him, be at home with Him in His presence.
- **Person.** The person of God the Holy Spirit who is now living with and in us in all His fullness. This highlights the fullness of the Holy Spirit, right in the core of our Circles, in the depths of our foundation. This includes His heart and mind in us. We have His promises and His power. Peter in his second letter highlights this when he says:

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

While here, it is worth mentioning that Peter then goes on to emphasise that these are the basis of our change. Thus, in the next verse, verse 5, he says, “For this very reason, make every effort to .... [change]”.

These are massive changes which are highlighted in *Part Two* as we look deeper into the person and God-centred Relationships.



- *I understand that there is a lot here, but what has become clearer for you as you think about the Shape of the Cross?*



- *Bring this to God and see what happens as you share it with Him.*
- *While with someone else, take two pieces of cutlery or whatever is in front of you, to make the Shape of the Cross. Try to explain it to them and see what they think. Linger here. Share your feelings and your findings with each other.*

## **Why use the Shape of the Cross? For evangelism, discipleship and repentance**

### **Three functions of the Cross-shaped church**

The Shape of the Cross is central to, and helps us to understand, these three fundamental processes towards God-centred transformation. A Church which seeks to be true to Jesus, and to what He did through His life and death will amongst other things be emphasising these three activities. Through the processes of evangelism and discipleship, people can admit their self-centredness, believe in Jesus and can change or repent. These three activities of a church are personalised in the ABC approach to change. We will see how the ABC of change can be further applied in the six Stages of Change when we later combine the Square with the Shape of the Cross. In the meantime, let us consider these three functions of a Christ-centred church:

#### **1. Evangelism**

While a lot of evangelism is through preaching, most of the process of evangelism appears to be through relationships, through walking the Steps with each other as someone comes to Christ. Evangelism is helping others come to Christ for the first time and is illustrated by the move of position from the left-hand side of the Shape of the Cross to the right-hand side, becoming alive in God, and being born again into a new kingdom and being dead to sin. The Shape of the Cross reminds us about an important role of the church in terms of helping others to

become a Christian. When they become Christians, they come to Him and to what He has done for them on the literal cross. This is what evangelism is about.

When evangelism is internalised within the person, as we will see, the Shape of the Cross and all that this represents is, as it were, implanted in the centre of that person's life, in their spirit. God changes them there and then, right in the centre of their lives, in their spirit, beneath any aspect of their disheartened heart, their distressed mind, their dysfunctional behaviours, diseased body or disconnected relationships. The theological name for this is 'justification' or 'positional sanctification'. We will unpack this later when we turn our focus off the church, onto the person.

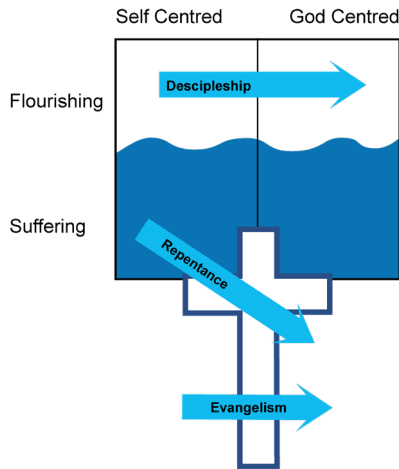
## ***2. Discipleship***

We will talk more about discipleship when looking at the combined shapes of the Square and the Shape of the Cross. For now, it is enough to state that this was a key ministry of Jesus and of the early church as it is now of any Christ-centred or Cross shaped church.

## ***3. Repentance***

When we come to Jesus for the first time, often through some sort of evangelism, we repent for the first time and take that first step on the journey. The Shape of the Cross reminds us of a place that we can then return to again and again, where we turn back to God through what we call repentance, as we continue our journey.

For Christians, when we go on our own selfish ways there is always another chance with God. Once born again it is not hard for us to repent again and to return to our changed place of origin, the God-centred space shown on the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross below the horizontal crossbar. Cross shaped churches facilitate this process of repentance in the large and small gatherings. Again, we will talk more about repentance for Christians when we look at the combined shapes of the Square and the Shape of the Cross. For now, it is enough to make mention of this combination which is shown here.



The 3 functions of the Cross centred church:  
evangelism and discipleship, both involving repentance.

In coaching or counselling practice, change becomes so much easier when people can access what is already theirs in their spirit position, right in their central Circle here at the foot of the literal cross. Whilst for ethical reasons these settings are not a place for proselytising, they can certainly play their part in the client's move toward God-centred direction, if they so choose. Taking away that self-centredness frees us from so many problems and releases us into so many possibilities.

### **Whom is the Shape of the Cross for? For everybody!**

What is illustrated by the Shape of the Cross is for everyone. It doesn't matter what age, culture or gender. We can all benefit from what the Shape of the Cross represents – God's salvation! The only people who don't access this are those striving to stay in the top left-hand quadrant of the Square, who are successfully self-centred. Paul says in 1 Corinthians that most humans want self-centred power and knowledge to help things change. He goes on to say that those who are more likely to apply the Cross to their lives are likely to be not so clever or powerful.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not

many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of the world and despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one can boast before Him. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Paul says that God shows that what Jesus did through the literal Cross is even more powerful and wiser than human ways when it comes to change. People might see this as strange or even foolish, but the Bible declares that real core change and transformation only comes through the Cross.



- *Ponder on the fact that what the Cross represents is for everybody.*
- *What does the Cross mean to you?*



- *Seeing that this Shape can apply to anyone, can you think of one person now you could share what you have learnt with, using this Shape?*
- *Pray and plan for when and how this could happen.*
- *Remember to use the Connect and Understand Steps.*

### **How do I use the Shape of the Cross? The ABC of Change**

The Shape of the Cross is about a totally different dimension of change. This dimension of change is not about rising up in the Square from struggling towards success and flourishing, but it is about moving across from self-centredness to God-centredness, from death to life. Remember it is like moving your dwelling, your base or your home from one place to another place. You are moving your centre and source of life from one place to another, a shift which then influences the whole of your being, doing and relating. So rather than striving in an upward direction as permitted in the Square, or struggling to become a better Christian, the Shape of the Cross is much more about falling, falling down on your knees. Here at the foot of the Cross, we all can receive all that Jesus has done for us.

The Shape of the Cross provides us with three steps to follow for God-centred change. Indeed, it gives us a simple ‘ABC’ for God-centred change.

While the ABC steps apply to us whether we are Christians or not, there are some differences as will be noted. As Christians, because we are on this journey of change already, we may become aware and need to admit that there are more parts of our life in which we could be somewhat self-centred. For those who are not yet Christians, these are the first steps taken on this journey of change from left to right, self-centred to God-centred. The change here would rightly seem so much bigger, even as being born and taking one’s first breath comes across as a bigger event than our just as important, ongoing breaths.

These three steps will be unpacked even further into six stages of change when we look at the Square and the Shape of the Cross combined.

### **The ABC of using the Shape of the Cross. Where U-turns are permitted**

#### ***A – Admit***

The first step of God-centred transformation is to admit your self-centredness. ‘I’ has been in the middle where God should have been. As mentioned, we define this by a word which literally has ‘I’ in the middle of it. This is not a popular word even in churches – ‘sIn’. So, whoever you are, you can pause now, and actually do this! Using your words, you may choose to say something along the lines of “I admit that I am the centre of my life”. Face it, rather than save face! If you have not started this journey before, this is an opportunity to admit that not only is your life not God-centred, but neither has your spirit position been that way. It has been dead.

#### ***B – Believe***

The next thing is to turn your eyes off yourself and onto Jesus, believing that He died there on the literal cross for you. If you are doing this for the first time, you can say something along the lines of, “Jesus I meet You here. I look to You. I hear Your voice saying, ‘come to me’. I believe in

You. Come into my life through your Spirit. Be the centre of my life”. If you are a Christian, you can say something like, “Jesus, I meet you again here. Again, I look to you and hear your voice saying ‘come back’ to where I belong. Your Holy Spirit is already in me. In reality, you are the centre of my life. Be that centre in the reality, the practice and the experience of this situation (whatever that might be) of my life, now”.

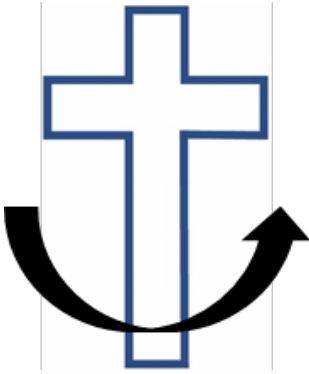
### ***C – Change***

Similar to sin, the word ‘repentance’ is not a popular word. Basically, it simply means to change direction. In Australia, not only do we have a road sign saying “Wrong Way Go Back”, we have a road sign which says, ‘U turns are permitted’. That is exactly the same for us. We can leave one way of living and do a U-turn into the opposite direction. This ‘C’ for Change has two parts. One is leaving the old road. The other is going down a new road. We will unpack this now.

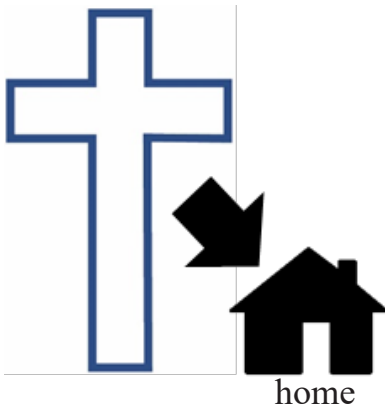
How do you make this change? It is nearly as simple as making a decision to turn the steering wheel from one direction to another. If you have not started this journey, leave now that death row of the life of self-centredness. Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 that while that road is an easy road, it is actually signposted to destruction. So, it is not only a death road, it is being on death row, awaiting God’s judgement. However, God punished Christ in our place on the cross. He was executed instead of us.

If you are not a Christian yet, make this decision to change. This will be the first time you have actually left not only a self-centred (or even other-centred) way of life but in particular also a self-centred source or base camp. You are changing your spiritual passport.

As mentioned, you now have a birth certificate into God’s family and a death certificate to your previous place of belonging. If you are a Christian who has been living a hypocritical life over a long time or for just minutes, you are returning to where you belong, back home, to the source of your life, to Jesus. Here you are not being saved again or becoming a Christian for the millionth time. We cannot, as it were, keep on pushing you back into the womb, to be born again and again and again! You have been saved, you are a Christian. You are just returning to where you belong. Welcome back!



The 1st U turn in becoming a Christian, coming to Jesus and what He did literally on the Cross.



The ongoing U turns once you are a Christian, coming back home to the foot of the Cross, and also to all that is yours as represented on the right-hand side of the shape of the Cross

So okay, how do I actually do this ‘C’ for change? Because of its importance, it is helpful to reemphasise the U-turn above. There are two things you need to do. As mentioned, the first is to leave your old way and the second is to come and enter into a relationship with God; for Christians, it is to re-enter and return to where you belong.

Leaving your old road is the first part of the U-turn. You do exactly what the dishonest tax collector did in Luke 18. He was someone who had tried to rise up in the Square on the left-hand side in a self-centred way.

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’. (Luke 18:13)

Pause now and you too can say something along those lines, in your words, such as: “I turn from my self-centred place and way of living. Forgive me, I am a sinner”.

The second part of the U-turn is coming to God. If this is the first time you are doing this, you are right now being born again into a new relationship with God. Here you enter a new family, a new country with the new king, who is no longer you but God. You now have a totally different God-centred map to read from. You now have a true north on your compass as you enter onto another road, a road which Jesus said in Matthew 7 leads to a totally different dimension of life, God-centredness.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Having done the U-turn, it is now time to be driving off and living life in a new direction of God-centred transformation.



- *When you do a U-turn in your vehicle on the literal road, use it as a trigger to remind you of the process of repentance.*
- *Can you think of someone who you can share the ‘ABC’ of change with?*

### **Points to remember**

The Cross reminds us firstly of what Jesus did for us in terms of his sacrifice through his unflinching love, giving us forgiveness and freedom. Secondly in terms of his literal death, the Cross reminds us of what has happened to us positionally in our spiritual life when we admit our failings and fallings, believe in him and choose to change.



*Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, for the Cross. Holy Spirit, show me more of what this really means for me.*

### **The Shape of the Cross in the small group**

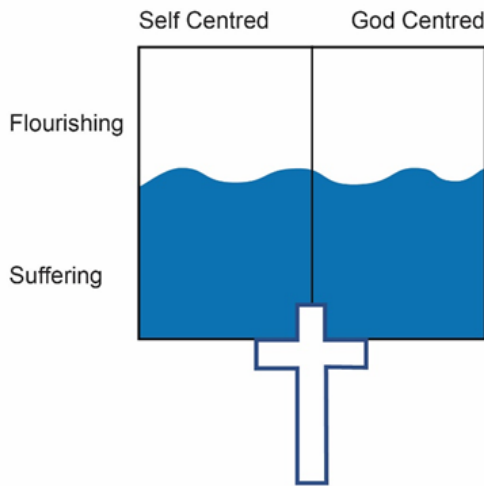
Teaching Points: The Shape of the Cross is the central place of changes in the presence of Jesus, where His Holy Spirit can fill places which were closed to His access. It is the place of change, of rest, of the presence of God. Here are His provisions where small group members can come just as they are, receiving His forgiveness and freedom to be responsive to the fullness of the Spirit.

### **What we do in our fortnightly 7 – 9 PM group**

In our small group, it is as though the Shape of the Cross is present at all times. I see us gathering in that one place where we can be all on the same level, brothers and sisters in Christ. This changes the whole attitude of the group from exclusive to inclusiveness, to that saying of “whoever will, may come”.



## The Combination of the Square and the Cross: for Transformation

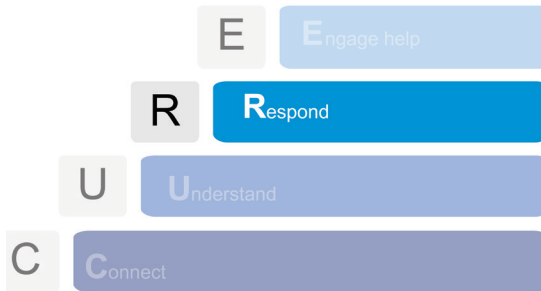


For sake of clarity in this chapter, I will focus on the combination of the Shape of the Cross with the Square rather than emphasising the combination of the Shape of the Cross with the Circles. For me and others the combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross has been life changing. It is only over time that I realised that I can keep coming back to this place where I belong regardless of how many times I drift away, and how undeserving I feel of this. The door for my returns has always been open. When I live in self-centredness my Father always awaits my return to Him, to His kingdom and His family, to His presence, to my place of belonging, my home. As mentioned, the sheltering rock has not moved, neither has the home closed down. Here I find again my core purposes and the provisions I need. Amazing!

How I as a Christian move from the left-hand side way of living to the right-hand side experience, as shown in the Square, is illustrated in more detail in the combination of the Shape of the Cross underneath the Square than with Shape of the Cross on its own.

We now know that the only way to move from self-centred to God-centred practice is via what is emphasised by the Shape of the Cross. Regardless of the amount of altruism or how much life we pour out for others, there is no other way of moving from left to right in the practice of our lives, which are shown in the Square, other than by applying what Jesus has done in His life and His death on the actual cross. What I like about the Shape of the Cross being beneath the Square is even when I am at my worst, at the bottom of the Square, I am as it were, closest to the Cross and all that it represents.

The combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross sits on Step 3: Respond. As with the Shape of the Cross on its own, so here, this combination demands a response.



- *How do you go about being a “better Christian”?*
- *Do know what repentance or God-centred change is really about and how often do you do it?*

Let’s look at the four questions:

- What is the combination?
- Why use the combination?
  - The three mechanisms of change.
- Whom is the combination for?
- How do I use the combination? You can learn:

- How to use the six stages of change.
- What stops us from using the life changing combination?

Warning. There is a steep learning gradient ahead. Read slowly, or possibly if needed, review some previous chapters or even divert to the next chapter!

To understand God centred change, it is absolutely crucial that we understand the way the Shape of the Cross connects with and locks into the Square, and because this is so important it will be necessary to repeat and reemphasise some of the key aspects of this combination for the sake of clarity. Be sure that you go just to the depth you are comfortable with at this stage, and skip over the rest for another time. Seriously.

### **Jesus and the Combination**

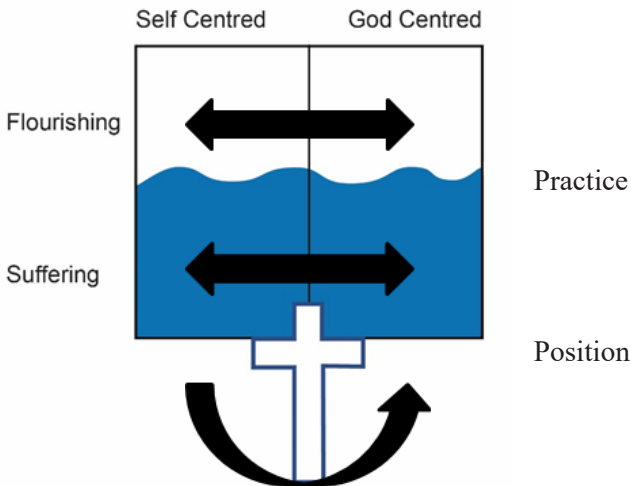
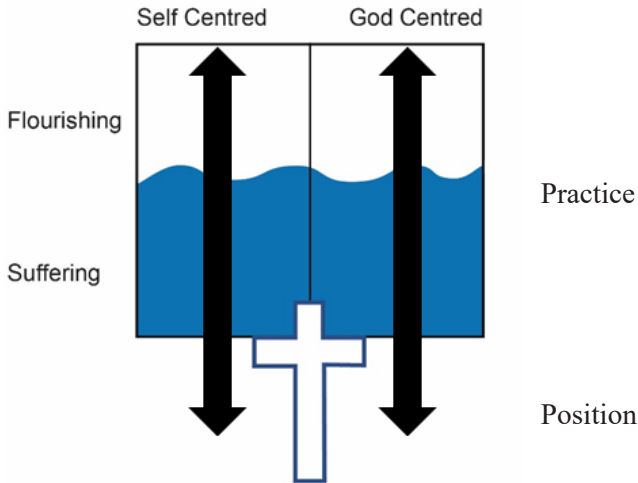
Jesus was about bringing together internal heart change aligned with external life change in a person's experience. One of the big words Jesus used when talking about change was to "repent" or to turn and change direction. Thus, the first thing He said in the book of Mark was: "The time has come ... The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:1). In these words, Jesus brought a spiritual, practical and shareable process of change. Jesus provided the tools, as it were, and the way for us to do this, by His literally dying on the cross.

### **What is the combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross?**

The combination of the Square with the Shape of the Cross beneath it brings together our daily practice (as in the Square) and our spiritual position (as in the Shape of the Cross) respectively.

The layout of the combination is that there are only two columns to both of the Shapes. These relate to centredness as introduced in *What is the Square?* on page 115. The two columns in the combination transcend the areas of our spirit position as illustrated by the Shape of the Cross and our practice as illustrated by the Square. Regarding the horizontal rows, we are already familiar with the two rows of the Square, defining

our practice or experience in life being either one a flourishing/succeeding or suffering. There is another row in this combination. It is below the crossbar, and now you know it is to do with our spirit position, as detailed in *The Shape of the Cross* on page 145. Thus, in the combination we end up with a total of two columns and three rows.



Note that the bottom row has only one direction. This is highlighting the overall emphasis, firstly that the only way we can ever even be on

the right-hand side is to have our change of spirit position by being born again. Secondly it illustrates that we cannot be unborn again in our spirit position. There is much debate about this. My reading of Scripture is that while there are some verses regarding losing one's salvation, they are a significant exception to the general rule of in essence, "once saved always saved". However, yes, as with the arrows in the Square, in the practice of our lives we can backslide from God-centred to self-centred. But we can also grow in our journey of sanctification from self-centred to God-centred.

When I was initially finding this combination, the Shape of the Cross was placed in the centre of the Square. This was done to highlight the integration between our position and practice. The Shape of the Cross was not placed on the top right-hand quadrant as could also be a possibility, highlighting that the Cross is a place of God-centred benefit. However, over a significant number of years of prayerful reflection and sharing this with others, it was thought best to place the Shape of the Cross in the place as shown. It provides both a link between position and practice, particularly as demonstrated in the stages of change, and yet also a separation of the two, even as the central Circle is different from the other Circles.

Let's bring this together more, facilitated by a brief recap:

The Square: Having reviewed the Square we are familiar that our daily practice is where we are at in any of our Circles at any particular time, as located in any of the quadrants of the Square. It is where we are at in our social lives, physically, in our mind, or where we are at in the heart of us. We might be doing well or struggling, be self-centred or God-centred.

The Shape of the Cross: Our spirit position, highlights what happens to us when we first come to Christ. In the context of the illustration, we now know that we are transferred from one side of the Shape of the Cross to the other. We become born again.

The combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross: We know that so often our earthly practice does not match our spirit position. We say we are Christian but don't act like one. What do we do about that? This is where the combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross becomes very helpful.

The combination shows the way we can change our practice in real life, through accessing our spiritual position. This central positional change can permeate any of our Circles. We know that despite our spirit position being as illustrated by the Shape of the Cross, our practice can be in any of the quadrants of the Square. Remember, we changed our spiritual position when we became a Christian, so we now have the option regarding which side of the square we live in, in practice. As it says in Romans 6, in practice we now have the choice either to be slaves again to self-centredness, or to have the freedom to be slaves to God. Before our spiritual rebirth, regardless of how altruistic or nice or other-centred we were, we could never be God-centred. In Romans 6 Paul says:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:15-18)

However, despite our positional change, our practice often betrays who we really are. Hypocrisy at times screams in our face saying, “Your Christianity is all a farce, a fake. It does not work!”

How often have you heard sermons on your spirit position changing when you become a Christian? Some church denominations emphasise this more than others. However a lot of people, have not heard many sermons on this. Why? Even over twenty-five years ago Leon Morris, Australian theologian who was highly acquainted with the positional and practical aspects of sanctification or God-centred change as illustrated here, when I asked him why the church did not appear to be more familiar with these matters, he also appeared to be unsure. One reason he thought was that it may be because it seems to

be hard to grasp. However, this is despite the issue of our position in Christ being so central in New and Old Testament theology. In the Old Testament, as mentioned, it was all about Israel's position being God's people, belonging to Him, from which they should have lived a totally different life. This was illustrated by moving homes from one kingdom of being slaves in Egypt where they no longer belonged to another country where they could express and practise who they really were. In the New Testament, as you are now becoming more aware, a new position is described as being in a new kingdom, born again, being in Christ and Him in us through His Holy Spirit. We have a new home. It is as we combine the Shape of the Cross and the Square that we can understand this more.

Using Jesus' language, and reemphasising this, our spirit position, as illustrated by the Shape of the Cross, on the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross is on a foundation of solid rock, but on the left side of the Shape of the Cross is on one of sand (Matthew 7). As we become Christians and transfer our foundation to the rock, to use another metaphor, we can be grafted into Christ, the vine (John 15). It is here that we can become a part of God's family as children of God and part of His kingdom.

I know this is being repetitious. I'm not the only one who repeats. Paul also frequently repeated this concept in terms of us being 'in Christ' and 'Christ in me'. This reality lines up with Jesus' example of the vine. For when we are grafted into the vine we are then in Christ, and the sap, or the life-flow of the vine, being His Spirit, is in us.

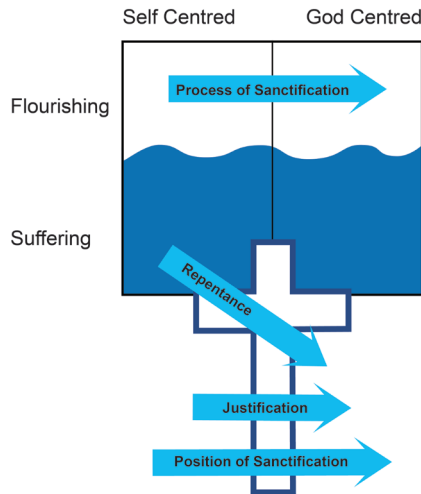
We call this a 'Theology of Change'. Yes, the CURE and *the Christian Wholeness Framework* on which it is based invites a robust approach to change in terms of a solid sociology, biology and psychology as well as of this theology of change. That sounds very theoretical – but here is where we start to apply it more!

### **Why use the combination? For justification, sanctification, repentance**

Here we expand on the ABC of change. You are blessed if you are in contact with a church or a follower of Jesus who facilitates what we have already talked about, the ABC (or the "Admit ... Believe ... Change")

through the functions of a Cross shaped church which engages in evangelism and discipleship, both of which involve repentance.

This is a reminder that a God-centred church or a follower of Jesus will also be engaging in God-centred change through these three mechanisms of change.



3 processes of personalising the 3 functions of a God-centred church.

The main purpose of this combination is to help us personally to take on these changes which may be in the context of a God-centred church. This results in a wholistic shift to the right, as it were, towards God-centredness through the three general mechanisms which we will talk about of justification, sanctification and repentance now personalised as illustrated here.

The advantage of linking the Square with the Shape of the Cross is that we can be real about our hypocritical self-centredness and have a way to change. Together they help us to have a way of thinking about change from a Christian point of view, and show what repentance is about. The combination helps us in our process of transformation and helps us to understand why we can live hypocritical and inconsistent lives. It is because, as mentioned, we don't know, believe or put into practice what the Shape of the Cross symbolizes. Paul, particularly in Romans 6, asked the same question about why Christians sin.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Romans 6:12)

The problem occurs when we don't live from our centre, from who we really are and from what God has done in us. Our core and centre is our central Circle. It is here that all that is represented by the Shape of the Cross abides. We so often forget, don't fully realise or don't believe what God has already done in our spirit. Thus, we don't live it. Paul says we should know and we should believe (or count) ourselves to be changed:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him ... so count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:6, 11)

We forget, or never knew, the fundamental change which occurred in us through evangelism in terms of justification and sanctification.

### **The three mechanisms of change**

Why use the combination? It helps us to get a greater grasp of God-centred change, especially through these processes. Let us turn to these processes of change: justification, sanctification and repentance.

#### ***1. Justification***

When we took our first steps towards becoming a Christian and let Jesus into our lives, in response to some form of evangelism, we were born again. When we were justified – we were made 'just as if we had never sinned'. We were forgiven. This happened as we saw, by our admitting and believing, as in the ABC.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. (Romans 5:1)

Why put justification in this combination picture? It is this very process which provides the basis for the combination to work.

## **2. Sanctification**

There are two aspects of sanctification. One is displayed by the Shape of the Cross, to do with our position. The other is demonstrated in the Square, to do with our practice.

**Positional sanctification:** At the same time of our justification in our position we were set apart for God. This change is called “positional sanctification”. We then live a life of being a follower of Jesus, a life of discipleship, leading to an ongoing journey of sanctification. To live this life of God-centred change, we need to frequently walk the path of repentance. We know that not only were we born again into a new family, but we entered into a new kingdom, with a different king other than ourselves or others, submitting ourselves to the lordship of Christ. Because we became connected and united with Christ, just as He died on the cross, we also died to our selfish nature and self-centredness.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with ... (Romans 6:6)

We were made holy in this act of positional sanctification. Paul wrote a letter to some Christians in Corinth who were often living on the left-hand, self-centred side of the Square in practice. He reminded them of their positional sanctification when he said to them:

you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.  
(1 Corinthians 6:11)

He wanted them to live from this base, from an alignment with who they were positionally, with how they were to live in practice. Rarely is someone warned at the end of a church service that if they commit themselves to God, they not only receive a birth certificate but also a death certificate to their self-centred base. Even though they may not have been warned about this or were not aware of it, it happened!

Jesus at times warned people prior to them making a commitment to Him. He told them to weigh up the pros and cons, to count the cost. So, in the context of Jesus talking about the cost of following Him (death to self-centredness), He said:

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish'. (Luke 14:28-30)

He certainly did not have a self-centred prosperity gospel, that if you become a Christian all will go well for you.

**Process of Sanctification:** The Practical outworking of Sanctification is also linked with the process of Discipleship, usually assisted by being with a follower of Jesus or in a Christ-centred church. So much happened inside of us that at least theologically we should become very different people. The theological is really highly practical. Over time, on average we should be moving from the left-hand side to the right-hand side, in the practice of the Square above the Shape of the Cross. We should in reality be more like Jesus now than we were in times gone by. Theologically, this is called the “process of sanctification”, or becoming more like Christ.

Why the combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross? It is to link our position with our practice. It emphasises the need for alignment and congruence with who we are, and shows us what to do when this doesn't happen. It is only from the positional change which occurred in our spirit (our central Circle) that we can truly live a life aligned to what has happened to us when we became Christians. It is from the Shape of the Cross, our position in Christ, that we can express in practice a God-centred life. The Shape of the Cross challenges us about how much or how little we access and use our spirit position, who I am in God as a result of my rebirth. Here, as mentioned, we already have His provisions, His purposes, His placement of us, His

presence, and indeed the very person of God not only with us, but also within us.



- *If you have already moved from the left to right when you became a Christian, how much of the above do you realise has happened to you?*
- *How much do you believe this?*
- *When you became a Christian, God changed you right then. What difference does that make in your life now?*

### **3. Repentance**

We first really came across this when we were looking at the Shape of the Cross by itself in the context of the ABC and the U-turns of God-centred transformation (on page 156). There, repentance was taking that first step of the journey. Here with the combination, it helps us to see the next steps of the journey, the ongoing U-turns at work. Why use the combination? It helps us to highlight the importance and need for ongoing repentance. Wholistic and holy Christian living happens as we keep on coming back to the foot of the Cross. The theological name of this, as stated, is ‘repentance’. Here at the Cross, with all that it represents, we receive again what is already ours and is located in our central Circle of the spirit.

Repentance does not have to be hard. The comforting thing for us is that the Shape of the Cross and all that it represents is beneath the bottom of the square. At times, we might find ourselves in our failings and fallings, under the waves and the rubble and chaos of life. Here it is particularly easy for us to fall further down, through the floor of the Square and the Cross bar as it were, to the foot of the Cross to receive again what we as Christians have already been given in our central Circle, the spirit. In the meantime, the chaos of the waves of our experience and environment might storm above us in the practicalities of our life as located in the Square. Turning away from self-centred chaos back to God is what is called repentance. This is why the Shape of the Cross is placed beneath the Square.

So why use the combination? These shapes help us to see the importance of and to visualise the process of God-centred transformation through justification, sanctification and repentance.

### **Whom is the combination for? For us all**

The combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross is indeed for anyone. As just mentioned, if you have never come to Christ, you will find using the ABC of the Shape of the Cross (page 156) to be the first steps you take into this new journey of life. By applying the ABC, you can be born again and start to take those baby steps. These steps of a new way of life are part of that journey which is now a new direction, as illustrated by the right-hand side of the Square. If you are already a Christ follower, ongoing Admitting, Believing and Changing become integral to the ongoing journey of walking in Jesus' steps. Again, combining the Shape of the Cross with the Square helps us to see the link between what happened to us when we first came to Christ and the difference this should make in our living from inside to out, through our Circles. While this transformation has been described in the ABC of change which is especially helpful for people taking their first steps, all this is about to be described in greater detail in the six stages of change. This can help us to zoom in on how as born-again Christians we actually go about the ongoing process and steps of God-centred transformation.

### **How do I use the combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross?**

We are here now at a critical place in this book as we unpack a God-centred process of change. We are demonstrating this in a number of ways, so you can pick and choose which means the most to you. At the same time, this description of God-centred change is being rolled out in a sequential way, going from one level to another in terms of detail and application. However, don't worry at this stage if you are starting to get a bit lost. As I mentioned in the introduction to the combination of the Shape of the Cross and the Square, just go as far as you choose, and maybe come back at another time to review this basis for God-centred transformation.

Here is a summary of these ways to experience God-centred transformation. So, the three church functions facilitate the personalisation of the three processes of change. These three processes are acted on by the ABC of change and flow into the ongoing cycles of Transformation as explained in the up and coming six stages of change.

Thus there are:

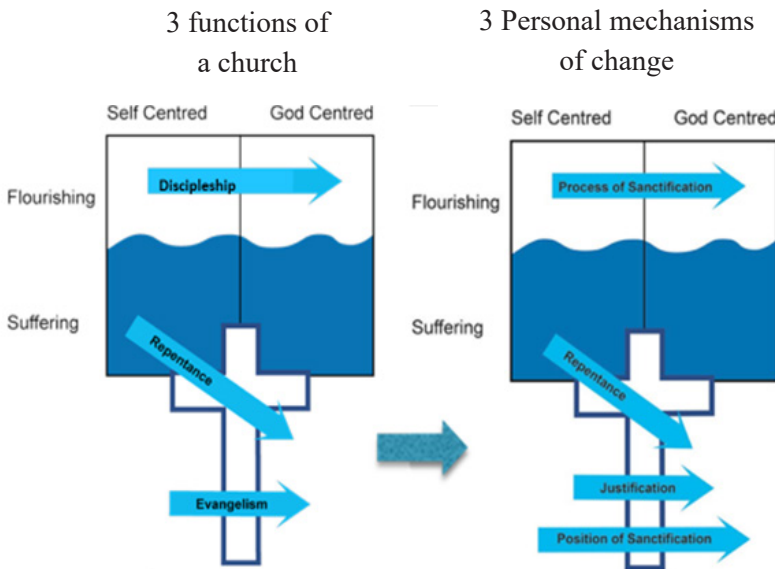
- three functions of a cross shaped church or a follower of Jesus: evangelism and discipleship which both involve repentance. These help another person to use and personalise the:
- three mechanisms of change, justification sanctification, and repentance.

These can be acted on by:

- the three processes of change activated by the ABC, as we saw when looking at how to use the Shape of the Cross, especially for the first time in becoming a Christian. This is actioned by the U-turn.

These develop into an ongoing cycle with repeated U-turns of:

- the six stages of transformation (which also refers to the name of one of our books: *Cycles of Transformation*).



The three functions of the church personalised using the three mechanisms of change by doing U turns... as simple as “ABC”.

How do I change? Do I even have a theology of change? How do I become more like Jesus? Firstly, become a Christian and be justified.

Use the ABC of change. Once Christian, then what? How do I continue to change? How? You are now free to be moving from the left side towards the right of the Square, towards God-centredness, towards God-centred transformation. This ongoing process is done through repeating the ongoing U-turns of the ABC which are explained further in these six stages of change where the ongoing U-turns become more cycles of transformation moving in a God-centred direction.

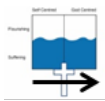
It does help to learn and know this. Summing up to this point, remember the Square rests on the crossbar. The Square is to do with our practice and our daily functioning. Below the horizontal crossbar is our spirit position, in terms of where we are at in our central Circle, in our spirit. Regardless of where our functioning is in the Square, our spirit position is the place where we belong. It does not change. It is our foundation, our home, and our source of life. We are born again.

Thus, in the bigger picture, change in our practice from left-hand side to right-hand side living, as illustrated by the Square, comes as you choose to live from your position as illustrated by the Shape of the Cross, by keeping on returning to that place where you belong. Combining the shapes of the Cross and the Square is quite simple, but in order to apply it, it does need to be looked at carefully and repeatedly. We do not become unborn.

Let us now unpack these six stages of the cycles of transformation.

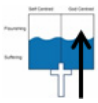
### The six stages of God-centred transformation

The six stages of change, like an ongoing cycle of transformation, result in a net movement in the practice as illustrated in the Square of our lives towards God-centredness, becoming more like Jesus. These cycles of change are an expansion and an unpacking of the three mechanisms of personal change, outworked in the continuing U-turns of the ABC process for change. Let's look at the cycle of change, stage by stage.



1. When you become a Christian, your spirit position changes. I don't have a memory of what happened on, or when the exact date of my physical birth, but it happened. My spiritual birth is illustrated by my moving from the left side of the Shape of the Cross, to the right-hand

side where I am born again. This change or process, as mentioned, is called **justification** and **positional sanctification**, the first mechanism of change. I am justified. It is ‘just as if I’d never sinned’. This is the starting block, the first step into a totally new journey. This stage is doing the first part of the U-turn. I have left the old road and am pointing now towards a different direction. Positionally, I am now sanctified. I am set apart from an old direction to a new one, from an old master of the evil one to a new king, King Jesus. How do you do this? Go back to the Shape of the Cross and read again the ABC of change. Pray, “Jesus I come to you. Come into my life. Now”.



2. From this essential place of being born again, I can start to practise a different life. For me, after I was born again a whole different way of life has continued to open up compared to if I hadn’t made this fundamental transaction. Because I have now moved to the right-hand side, as it were, in my spirit position, I can now rise up, as illustrated into the right-hand side of the Square, and practise a God-centred life. As mentioned, the apostles Paul, Peter and John highlighted this positional change in their letters. In the first part of their writings they talked about our spirit position, and in the latter part, our spiritual practice in every area of life. This is particularly the case in Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, 2 Peter and 1 John and is detailed more in *Part Three, Biblical Foundations*. This vertical move of putting position into practice is revisited time and again, as shown in stage 5 below. It is the upward part of the U-turn. It is moving in a different direction. How do you do this? Go back to *The ABC of using the Shape of the Cross*. Where U-turns are permitted on page 156. This is actioning the change of the ABC. Pray, “I am yours Lord Jesus. I take up my cross and follow you today”.



3. However, because I still live in this world and I have my Circles outside of the central Circle of the spirit all wanting to become central in my life (the Bible calls this the ‘flesh’ or the ‘sinful nature’), I often sin again. Maybe other people would not notice it, but maybe just in my thought life at times I can follow the ways of the world or be quite selfish. I follow the way of the evil one. As mentioned, Paul refers to these three influences in Ephesians 2:

... you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. (Ephesians 2:2-3)

John says we actually do continue to sin:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8, 10)

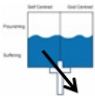
In doing this, sadly I move from a God-centred way of life towards a self-centred practice, as illustrated on the left-hand side of the Square. This is despite my spirit position still remaining unchanged as illustrated on the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross. I live an inconsistent, incongruent life.



I have not gone back from Israel to Egypt using an Old Testament example or been unborn again. But now I am simply not living in alignment with who I am in God. I am living an incongruent hypocritical life, because my spirit position is on the right-hand side, as illustrated

below the crossbar, but the practise of my life is on the left-hand side of the Square.

With all this, remember that there is a difference between sin and temptation. Temptation is when we might see things which are on the left-hand side which appear to be attractive to satisfy our needs. That is different from actually going and acting on that temptation. Remember Jesus was tempted, but unlike Adam and Eve who acted on their temptation, Jesus did not give in to the desires which He saw for fame or satisfaction (Luke 4:1-13).



4. So then, where do I go when I sin? I am so grateful that there is a place I can return to. This path of repentance has become well-trodden for me and a familiar process. I return to where I belong, to that place as illustrated below the horizontal crossbar on the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross representing the place of His presence, the throne of grace, where I can keep on coming back again and again. Home. Real home. Here I can remain and abide. Here I can sit at the table and have communion with God. Here I find the Throne of Grace, where I receive His mercy. Here I can rest. When I fail and fall as a Christian, I can keep coming back to the foot of the Cross in repentance and find again who I am, where my centre is, and what I have already received. At the foot of the literal Cross, as it were, where Jesus died for me, and that space represented on the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross below the horizontal bar, I find again who I really am in God and allow the Spirit of God within me to influence me. I can now live according to the Holy Spirit rather than according to my selfishness.

How do I do this? It is at that place of rest, where my heart is at home in Christ, that I again receive all the provisions he has for my heart. Here I can exchange His unfailing love for my shame, His forgiveness for

my guilt, and His freedom for my despair. I receive the fullness of His presence to pervade the parts of my heart. In kneeling in this place, as at the literal cross and all Jesus did there, I return to and re-enter again what is already there, my activated spirit position. I do yet another U-turn as I admit, believe and change (ABC) again. There is this word, “again”. In 1 John, the apostle John seems to write such high standards for our living in terms of loving and purity. They seem impossible. I have to keep on coming back again to 1 John:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness ... My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2)



5. From the foot of the Cross I can stand up again as in stage two in conjunction with the Scriptures mentioned there. For me, I find myself frequently arising from this place. Rather than striving harder to go from the left to the right of the Square, I’m slowly developing the habit of falling down and rising up again in a different zone of the Square. This is similar to the time when I took my first baby steps, but now I am empowered to step out again, maybe for the millionth time, so I can reveal this position and His presence more effectively in practice. I complete my U-turn to get back on track. I can get up again and find my practice again in the right-hand side of the Square, to live for a period of time (often much too short) in a more God-centred way. I can rise again and fight the fight of faith.

You can rebuild your house, now on the rock as opposed to building on the sand. You can drink of living water and let the spring of water flow through your outer Circles. You can remain and abide in Jesus, the Vine and produce the fruit of the Spirit. Where there is hate and aloneness in your heart, love can come into and through your heart. Doubt and confusion can be replaced by faith. Where there was despair, hope can now come.



6. So, as we live from our activated spirit position as represented by the foot of the Cross, our Circles change ... from inside to out! We can now live according to the Holy Spirit rather than according to my selfishness. He can start to influence our Circles. Our hearts can be filled a bit more with His love, His identity and His control. Our mind Circles are transformed in our mood with feelings of love, joy and peace, replacing or at least influencing our anger, sadness and stress. Our passion, imagination and ideas can be influenced by and conformed to God's presence. Because of the changes in our minds, our physical Circle can be more of a living sacrifice in terms of our actions and words being conformed to the image of Jesus. Our physical actions and words can now be different as we live according to the Holy Spirit in us rather than arising primarily from our selfish nature. With our mind and physical changes, we can have God-centred cognitive behavioural growth. Paul puts it this way in Romans 12.

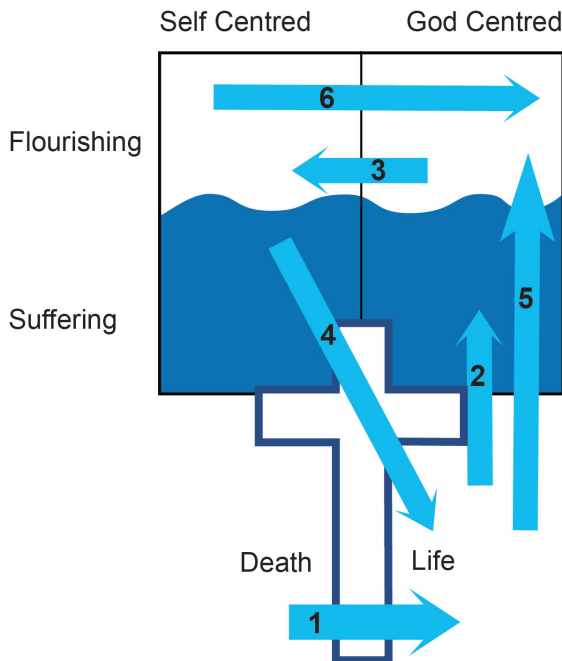
Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and

approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Understand that as we grow in becoming followers of Jesus, we ourselves take up the Cross; we choose to live out of our spirit position, to deny our selfishness and to follow Him. We obey Jesus who said:

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

This is essentially an overall shift in our life practice from the left-hand side to the right-hand side of the Square. It is as in the Old Testament, a moving into a practical possession of a God-centred land, of a God-centred way of living. This journey, as you are now becoming aware, is called the process of sanctification. It is a journey, not an easy one, but one of ongoing growth. I've certainly been challenged by this process of sanctification, to be more set apart in action in my life, to be more like Jesus and a follower of Him.



These ongoing acts of repentance can become a familiar and accepted, regular part of our lives. As we repent and do the U-turn again and again, through cycles of transformation we can slowly move through the process of sanctification (6), from the left to the right-hand side of the Square. As we move in this direction, we are also more likely to rise to a higher level in the Square, enhanced by growth in other circles such as knowledge (mind Circle) and skills (physical Circle). So, we grow our Transformation, our Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge, our TASK. We can be so grateful for the Shape of the Cross, representing our spirit position, which remains unchanged in our central Circle, despite what may be occurring in practice in the more superficial Circles and as illustrated in where our life practice may be on the Square. We need no longer let the shame of our sin hinder us from being transformed. These ongoing six stages of change can be brought together in this dynamic diagram.

These changes don't just have to be individual or private; we can initiate them with a trusted friend, or with family and church. Real church is a place where we can come and be with others in this place, as illustrated by the foot of the Shape of the Cross. Although the Cross is very personal and the centre of our own individual lives, we can come together at the Cross in that space representing our spirit position, and receive with others who we are in God. By doing so, we practise Trialogue, as illustrated especially by the Triangle. Here we are truly home, with other Jesus followers. Here we change together.

Particularly in our families, behind the walls of familiarity in our home, we become more aware of our inadequacies, especially in our roles as a spouse or as a parent. At these times, the foot of the Cross can become our familiar place of comfort and reassurance, where we receive the presence of God with us and in us, the provision of God's unfailing love for our shame, His forgiveness for our guilt and His freedom for our despair. Remember, it is a place of rest where we can

also come together with our spouse and close friends. Here is a place of safety, without pretence, from where we can rise together. For the married, this becomes a marital journey of sanctification.



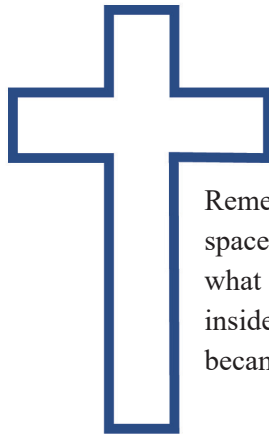
- *Which of these six steps are most familiar to you?*
- *Which of the steps do you need to work on?*



- *Again, use pieces of crockery, cutlery or whatever is on the table before you, to combine the Shape of the Cross and the Square. If drawing or plasticine is your thing, use that!*
- *Share with someone about these six stages of change as cycles of transformation.*

### **What stops us from fully using the Shape of the Cross?**

What hinders us from fully accessing both the literal work that Jesus did on the Cross as well as all that the Shape of the Cross represents, including our being born again? A significant reason is that we often don't see being a Christian working out in the reality of our lives or sometimes in the life of the church. We say we have become Christians. We say we have been moved from the left-hand side of living according to our self-centred nature, to the right-hand side of the Shape of the Cross, becoming fundamentally God-centred. However, as has been explained, this positional change at the level of the Cross often may not match the practice of our lives which in many situations can remain not much different from before we became Christians. When we become Christians we often fail and fall. We sin and may not be very different the next day we wake up, and even sometimes after years of going to church. It is easier to believe our experience, that Christianity may not work for me, than to believe what God has done inside of me. It is as in the Old Testament, as mentioned in the section on the Square. We too can so easily drift in the slipstream of success or the undercurrent of suffering, rather than holding on to a God-centred way of living.



Remember this space represents what God has done inside of me when I became a Christian.

Rather than believing God's word, it can be easier to believe and respond to the experiences of our lives. Lack of integrity and authenticity makes it harder to believe what the Shape of the Cross symbolises. It can be easier to believe that:

- (in the love part of my heart) I am alone and of no worth because of some bad experiences I have had, rather than to believe that I am loved, and that God is indeed with me. It is easier at times to be preoccupied with my sense of shame because I mess things up, rather than to receive His unfailing love.
- (in the truth part of my heart) I am lost and do not belong anywhere, with the result that I have little respect for myself or sense of clear identity as to who I am, rather than remember the truth that I am a child of God and connected with Christ, sealed with the imprint of the stamp of ownership of the Holy Spirit. It can be easier to believe my guilt when I have done something wrong than to receive His forgiveness.
- (in the control part of my heart) I am out of control because of the situation around me, rather than see myself as being free to respond to God, who is ultimately above all situations regardless of what is going on in this evil not-yet-heaven place.
- (in the centre part of my heart) I am self-centred when in fact, in

biblical reality, when Christ died on the Cross I died too, and I was freed from my self-centredness.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin ... (Romans 6:6)

I forget this and don't believe it when my experience says I am self-centred, so I just don't live out my crucified life.

- (in my mind and physical circles) I am not a Christian because of my thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences, which are self-centred and in the left-hand column of the Square, are easier to believe than to remember and to believe that God's presence is already within me, even though I am living a hypocritical life that is not consistent with what God has already done in my central Circle, the spirit, through the literal work He did on the Cross.



- *How often do you access what is represented by the Shape of the Cross?*
- *What stops you from using what is represented here?*

### Points to remember

The Square is possibly one of the more accessible of the Shapes. It asks of us not only where we are at in the practicalities of our lives but also where we need to be heading towards. The Square encourages us to rise up in a God-centred way.

While the Shape of the Cross is the simplest Shape to draw, it can be the hardest one for people to understand because it speaks of our spirit position.

When we combine the Shape of the Cross with the Square, this is the part of the Framework which most significantly embodies a theology of change. They bring together a map of, and a theological

basis for, change. It shows us how we can take steps to change from the left-hand side to the right-hand side in our practice, undergirded by the foundational changes in our spirit position. This combination includes key theological doctrines of the fall, sin, justification, repentance and sanctification, in terms of both our position in Christ, and the ongoing process of our becoming more God-centred in our living.



- *If you are able to live more by what is illustrated within these shapes, what difference do you think that could make in your life?*
- *In what ways are you becoming more like Jesus?*



- *Share what meant most to you about the shapes of the Square and the Cross with someone else.*



- *God, because of Jesus I receive my justification, (just - as if I had not sinned). I receive that I have been set apart for you, to be holy (positionally sanctified). This is in spite of me.*
- *Help me to live a life which is consistent with who I am in You, to so abide and remain in and with You, that I am always living from that connection with You, from my real home which is Your kingdom.*

**The Combination of the Square and the Shape of the Cross in the small group.**

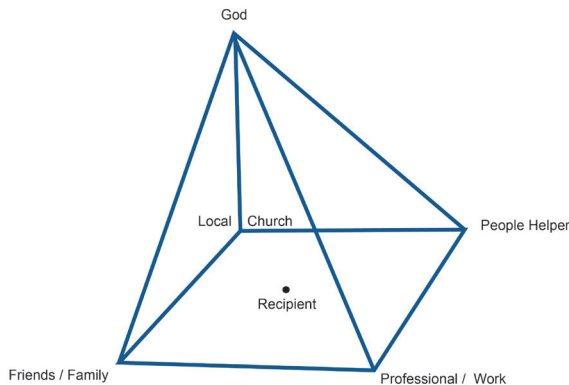
Teaching points. If you are a small group leader, become familiar with this life changing combination. Don't rush into teaching this until people have grasped both of the separate shapes of the Square and the Shape of the Cross. Normally the small group will understand the Square before the Shape of the Cross.

**What we do in our small group quarterlies**

I try to introduce the combination when there is greater time to be together as in our quarterly 4 – 9 PM retreats on a Saturday or on our annual weekend away. It seems to be a real struggle for our group to grasp this. Don't be surprised if that happens with your group.



## V. The Pyramid: Support and Service



**T**he Pyramid is about who is supporting us and whom we are serving. Let me tell you about my supports. In the early stages of my life, I was being totally supported. In fact, when I was born, I could do nothing other than be supported. My support came from my medical father using his obstetric skills in India while my mother was giving birth to me. I had very little to do with either my conception or my delivery! In my early years, I received some support from my parents and my nanny. Returning to England around the age of 4, I received educational support when I started school. After a couple of years, when I went back to India that support continued to some extent, although during a lot of my childhood there were big support gaps. I did not have much ongoing support from my parents in the context of their seeming to be more committed to the mission work. While some might sacrifice mission on the altar of the family, what I experienced was that my family was being sacrificed on the altar of my parents' mission. I did not have much in the way of friends. Church was not really supportive, and at that stage there was very little in the way of people

helpers or professional input. I was certainly grateful for the medical support I received from the British High Commission Hospital in Delhi when I could have otherwise died of a severe bout of food poisoning!

Returning to England as I entered my teens, I still did not have much contact with my parents as I was again at boarding school. With my father having boarded himself, this appeared to be a family tradition. The school provided me with education, amongst other things, and I slowly gained friends. Medical school was an amazing gift in terms of the learning opportunities from Birmingham University, with such a wonderful focus of learning about the human body. Church had become more of a support, especially with the youth groups. From there in my later twenties I went to a Theological College called All Nations Christian College, north of London, again receiving education that was now more geared towards the central Circle of the spirit. I had lots of fun and Connection, which I lapped up.

Now to my serving. As the years went by, I was more able to serve. While at medical school I took an active role in serving in the church and in the people helper group for kids called “Crusaders” from which I also received support. Sundays were taken up with five services. In some I received. In others I served. After completing medicine, I was thrust into serving others in the context of my new profession as a doctor. This was initially as a resident in hospitals before I moved to General Practice for a short while, working initially with my father.

Moving into marriage was a huge growth curve in terms not just of being supported but also of serving. That growth curve turned into more of a mountain climb for me through serving five children while at the same time helping to set up the Living Wholeness Community. It seemed that the tables of being supported and serving had been turned. Now it seemed as though it was mostly about serving. At times I felt so dry, receiving little in comparison to the amount I thought I was giving. My support/service ratio was out of balance

Years later another pastor was sharing about his gratitude for having understood the Pyramid and was describing how it had helped him to become more intentional in terms of receiving support, trying to get a balance of serving and being supported. Despite being the one who had ‘found’ the shape of the Pyramid, the truth and application of it through this conversation was still an ‘aha’ experience. It came

afresh to me again – I needed to actively engage support and also be aware and grateful when I was receiving it. This aspect of intentionally seeking support has increased over the last ten years or so.

These are simple but profound life-changing questions. As we journey through life, the Pyramid helps us answer these questions.



- *Whom are you with?*
- *Who is with you?*

Let's look at the four key questions:

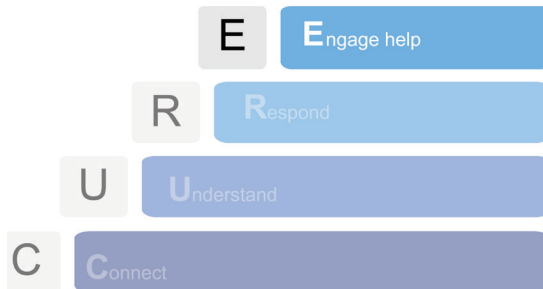
- What is the Pyramid?
  - The three functions of the Pyramid.
  - A Pyramid of triangles filled in by the Steps of the CURE.
- Why do we need the Pyramid?
- Whom is the Pyramid for?
- How do I use the Pyramid?

### Jesus and the Pyramid

Jesus so strongly believed in His Church. His prayer and passion for the Church is described in John 17 which was that we be loving, one, and united. He prayed that we be different from the world, and that that would be obvious to others. He saw the Church as being the continuation of His life on earth through Christ-centred, spirit filled people. The Pyramid is really an illustration of the whole Church in action.

### What is the Pyramid?

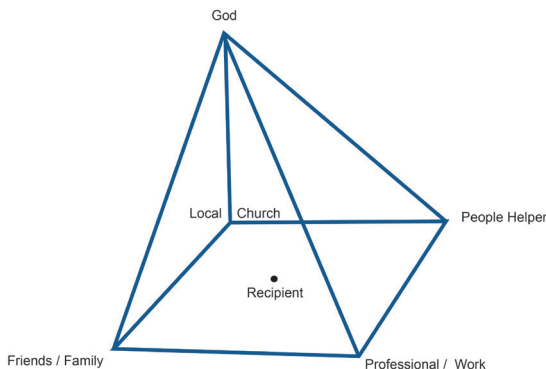
The Pyramid is linked primarily with Step 4 of the CURE, Engaging Help, where it was introduced.



It fulfils three major functions of support, service and linking with other service providers. While it is possible to divide these functions into three separate Pyramids, it is helpful to have one generic and comprehensive template. As introduced previously on the Engage Help Step, the Pyramid has what we call five corners, or more technically, a 'vertex' where God is at the top of the four-cornered base, whether we acknowledge Him or not.

Then there is a range of roles which people may have in life spread around the four corners at the base. One person may have a variety of roles in different contexts. For example, a person can wear different hats, depending on their role at any particular time in reference to whom they might be serving in the centre of the Pyramid. At one point, I have a role or hat as being a father. In another context, I am a church small group leader with that hat on, as it were, and again in my work context I am a medical specialist, working as a Counselling Psychiatrist. The corners can also represent not only one person with different roles, but also different people in their predominant serving role. While the corners are highlighted in the basic structure of the Pyramid, those who use this shape in a more complex way also refer more extensively to the sides of the 4-sided base of the Pyramid. We will introduce the relationship between these lines and the corners later.

The Pyramid is not some kind of Egyptian piece of architecture. In reality, although in possibly a clumsy way, it is seeking to emphasise in practical terms what the body of Christ, the Church, could look like. In this regard, the body is made up of parts which are supported by each other, and which link with other parts to serve each other.



## 1. The three functions of the Pyramid

Highlighting the aspects of its function and purpose helps us to understand what the Pyramid is. This also obviously overlaps with the next section on *Why use the Pyramid?* and also the one on *Whom is the Pyramid for?*

### **a. To Receive Support**

A couple of years ago one of my friends within the Living Wholeness community sent me a picture depicting what they thought of me. It was a silhouette of a person flexing his muscles on top of a hill! I think he was wanting me to take more of a leadership role in the community. I quickly searched online for, ‘fellow travellers’ and eventually found a picture of a group of people going together in a particular direction. That was much more like me. While I needed to serve and to lead, I also needed to receive support and not be on my own.

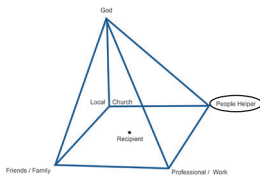
You yourself may well have had unsafe experiences where you may have been let down or even put down, where confidentiality may have been broken or you felt disrespected. Control battles may have disempowered you. Or you may simply have asked for help and none came. These experiences can make it hard to return to the community. However, there is a safe way to be with others – through actioning the CURE.

Imagine this: with the help of the diagram above, place yourself right in the middle of the base of the Pyramid looking outwards at those around who are serving you and upwards to Jesus, the head of the body. Receive this support with thanks. Here you can be Connected with, Understood and Responded to. Here is the place where you Engage Help. This is the place of being supported by those around you. You are blessed if this is indeed your reality. Receiving support is the first function of the Pyramid. All of us do better with a support base around us. Involving others or Engaging Help is a key step towards flourishing growth. We were not designed to do life on our own. The Pyramid is a visual representation of the different support options that we can have around us, but it can also be a picture of the type of support we ourselves might provide as we in turn serve someone else.

As mentioned on the Engage Help Step, we all need support at times from family and friends. We could also perhaps seek support from, the local church or people helpers, and possibly also from a mentor, a professional counsellor and/or a coach. The church can and should be a place of support. This occurs particularly when members are encouraged to be in Connection with at least one or two other followers of Jesus. We call this ‘twos and threes’. Small groups of say up to a dozen should also be a place where we can be safer, particularly if the numbers are small and people are fairly similar – remember the “small” and “similar” refer to the S of SAFETY. Not all at once, but over time, all people in all of these differing roles can help us flourish and grow. We will refer more below to family and friends as well as to church.

In the middle of the base of the Pyramid there may be more than one person receiving support. There may be a whole system or group, such as a couple, a church, a mission group or even a school/workplace.

As whole people, we need support from a range of others. As we now look further into this, we will focus especially on the people helper and professional/work corners. Keep the picture of the Pyramid in mind. Maybe draw it out on a piece of paper to help you through this.



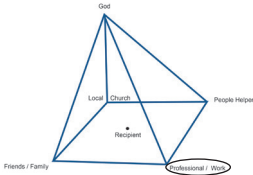
In the **people helper corner** we might receive help from various groups or agencies including Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and church-based ministries or missions. Again, God being at the top makes things different. A church-based ministry providing excellent specialised programs allows a much greater expression of the whole body of Christ.

The people helper corner is the place of the specialised arm of the church containing volunteers who often are not salaried in areas such as prayer ministries, people growth, family and marriage growth, and relationship change. Ministries can be specific to demographic groups such as youth, seniors, singles, or separated people. They can also involve issues groups such as substance/alcohol abuse and others, as well as intervention groups such as recovery or growth groups, and

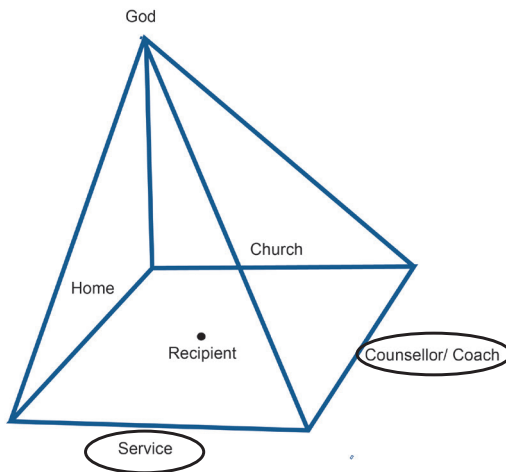
activity groups such as sports and crafts. A lot of the material support that Christian books offer can be seen as coming from this corner.

It is important to realise that while ministries and mission groups can be located in this corner, the actual process of mission and ministry is done by every corner of the Pyramid. Mission and ministry are part of our lives, whether we are with family, in the church, at work, or in our place of learning.

Nevertheless, a good secular NGO can be invaluable. Many church-based agencies have initially arisen from a strong Christian tradition but gradually lose the significance of their Godly roots in terms of their practice. They might not overtly look too different, but they are gradually drifting from God-centredness through to self/other-centredness, from right to left in the Square. Remember, the left side can be other as well as self-centred; in other words, anything which is not God-centred. This slide or drift to the left of the Square may be particularly noticeable as the Christian NGO becomes more dependent on Government funding.



In the **professional/work corner** amongst others, we have coaches, counsellors and mentors. It's at this point that we will introduce the lines between the corners.



Introducing the counsellor/coach and general service lines: some counsellors and coaches might be somewhere along the line between professional and people helper, depending on their level of training in a particular area. The more trained they are in their area of work, the further they are along that line towards the professional corner. We generally pay these people for the support they provide. Broadening this out, while this is not a comprehensive list, we will need support for various needs from people with different professional skills.

In the professional/work corner, service needs are met by service providers. It is the same with general service providers, as with professional counsellors and coaches, being spread now along the service line, depending on training and experience. This general service line starts on the other side of the family corner and reaches through to the professional/work corner. People here at the professional/work corner are more likely to be at the top of their trade/occupation. These service providers meet such needs as:

- Environmental and Material needs – from financial advisors and accountants, through to shopkeepers and checkout workers in the supermarket. Also, people who look after our other material needs such as housing, transport, travel, tourism, hospitality, IT and so on.
- Social and work needs – recreational or sporting clubs, family-based pubs, administrative assistance.
- Physical needs – medical and allied health professionals, hospitality.
- Educational and mind needs – providers of education in schools and universities, entertainment industry, authors, bookshops and websites.
- Heart and psychological needs – remember also the counsellors and coaches who are on the line from the people helper corner reaching to the professional/work corner.
- Spiritual needs – pastors and ministers who, while being professional in their own right, for ease of understanding are generally placed on the church line.

It is important to realise that the providers of support are not limited to those particular areas of need. For example, in hospitality people may

be providing for our physical needs as well as our social needs when we go out for a meal with friends or family. Clubs might provide for social gatherings at the same time as meeting physical needs in the areas of sport and exercise.

The acknowledgement of God being at the top of the Pyramid, as mentioned, makes things different. The more our supporters are connecting with God and He with them, the more we can experience being held, healed and helped by the active body of Christ. However, often this acknowledgement of God is not the case, and we still need professional input from secular providers. It may not be so important from the skills and knowledge point of view if I have a Christian or non-Christian car mechanic. However, from an attitude and ethical point of view, if there is a good car mechanic around who is a Christian, I would prefer to go that way. Conversely, I would generally prefer a top surgeon who is not a Christian to operate on me rather than a Christian surgeon who might not be so skilled. Again, it is important to realise that God is at the top, regardless of whether He has been acknowledged or not. Indeed, He is the Provider of all good things through what we call ‘common grace’. However, when it comes to counselling and coaching, as the mind and heart are closer to the spirit, it is often more helpful if one can find a God-centred counsellor or coach.



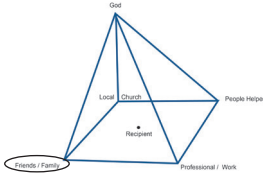
- *Who supports you?*
- *Where do you need more support from?*

### **b. To Serve**

While I have needed the support within the Living Wholeness community, I have also served. In fact, that is actually the way I lead. I find myself in a servant-leadership role in the context of relationships: serving and leading.

Place yourself on the perimeter at the base of the Pyramid, looking in at the person or system you are serving. Here it is more important to Connect than to be connected with, to Understand rather than to be understood, to Respond and grow rather than to be grown. Serving another is the second function of the Pyramid which arises as we have

enough to give from our own experience of support. Service may be formal or informal. People or groups at the different corners and along the Connecting lines can provide service to a person or situation in the middle of the Pyramid. Let us here focus more on the family and friends corner and the church corner.



The **family and friends corner** refers to our social life. When you are here you are serving family and friends. The main helping role of family and friends is to Connect and to Understand using the attitudes and skills of these Steps of the CURE. Parenting responses are also vital, especially the younger the person in the middle of the Pyramid is. We normally put more distant relationships further along the home line towards the church corner. This includes friendships, ranging from close to distant. Discipleship ‘twos and threes’ merge towards the church corner. Twos and threes are best shaped according to the degree of fit with personalities rather than which church people go to. Appropriate Responses in this family and friends corner can include the use of Response questions, providing practical support and possibly some problem-solving. Here is also the place for basic Trialogue, being with God and that person together in whatever situation they might be in.

The **church corner** refers to the local church led by the pastor, as well as to small groups and twos and threes. When you are there you are serving in the context of your local church. These services spread out onto the church side of the Pyramid, moving towards the people helper corner.

As we move along the church side of the Pyramid towards the people helper corner, there are those who are serving, for example as small group leaders in the local church. There are also volunteers. Further along, there are Pastors and Ministers. As mentioned, while they are professionals in their own right, they are specifically placed here as this is their predominant area of service.

In the church context, although the local church is one corner of believers in the Pyramid, we see the whole of the base of the Pyramid being made up of the whole body of Christ. All the corners on the base of the Pyramid, from family and friends to the local church, through

to people helpers, church ministry and mission, and on to counsellors/coaches and other workers, are in fact part of the whole Church. As there is greater continuity between these corners, the whole Church will become more united and relevant to the whole world and to the whole person. ‘Churching’ is not just a Sunday event. It occurs throughout the week through whatever roles we may have.

God being at the top, as mentioned, makes every part of our lives a mission and a ministry. The more populated the Pyramid is with followers of Jesus, the more the whole body of Christ can be active, doing what Jesus would do in the context of our different giftings.



- *Whom do you serve?*
- *How many different roles do you have, or hats do you wear where you serve others?*

### **c. To Link with others**

Again, place yourself on the outside perimeter of the Pyramid, but now look around you along the sides of the Pyramid. There are people who have different experiences and capacities to you, but all can help to support the same person in the middle. This place of linking on the outside perimeter of the base is a mixture of being supported by others as we link together, and also of providing service together to the same person or group in the middle. So as a church small group leader, in this role, I may be serving one of our small group members who is going through a hard time in his business. He needs other help than just a small group around him. He attends sporadically in view of all that is going on for him. So I ask another member who is in a similar line of business to him to try to link up with him on a more regular basis, even for a weekly drink. I ask myself who else can we link him up with at this time, so together we can serve Him.

Remember again there actually might be more than one person in the middle. It might be a system like a marriage, a family, a group, a place of work or even at times the local church. As you look around you, you can have a greater capacity to serve the person or system in the middle. This can be the case wherever you are in the Pyramid, whether you are linking with someone else in the family such as a spouse,

getting friends together to help another friend, working together as a church, having coordinated programs serving the community, or even in the work context.

Unfortunately, there is also possibly a greater capacity for harm with more people linking to serve, particularly if there is a confusion of roles around the people serving the person/system in the middle, and a lack of safety such as inappropriate lack of confidentiality which can worsen when there are a lot of people involved. This can certainly occur in the local church setting. In these contexts, it is as though the Pyramid goes more to the left-hand side of the Square, and the person in the middle is left with an unsafe ‘under the water level’ experience!

This linking with others is the third function of the Pyramid. Ideally, all corners and sides of the base of the Pyramid are places of safety where the Steps of the CURE can be walked together with those in that corner. The base of the four-corner pyramid is flat and on the same level. One corner is not higher than another, nor is one corner less needed than the other. In the same way, a professional is no more important or higher than someone in the church or in the family.

Since the corners are joined by lines, this represents a continuum of service. Likewise, people serving someone need to be linked together to optimise the power and coordination of that service to the person in the middle. In the advanced application of the Pyramid, as mentioned, there is a greater emphasis on these lines in addition to the corners.

Linking can take the form of up-skilling ourselves through those around us in our area of gifting or work. We should all be seeking to receive from those further along the line from ourselves. This is particularly the case in the context of an apprenticeship or supervision experience. Secondly, we should seek to give support, coaching, mentoring or supervision to those who are not as far along the line in that particular area of gifting. In other words, we should all have both input and output so that we can link better.

In addition, this linking can also be expressed in mutual referrals of work to one another depending on the level of complexity and skill needed. Thus, in the area of counselling or coaching, a beginner counsellor starting along the professional line could be referring some of

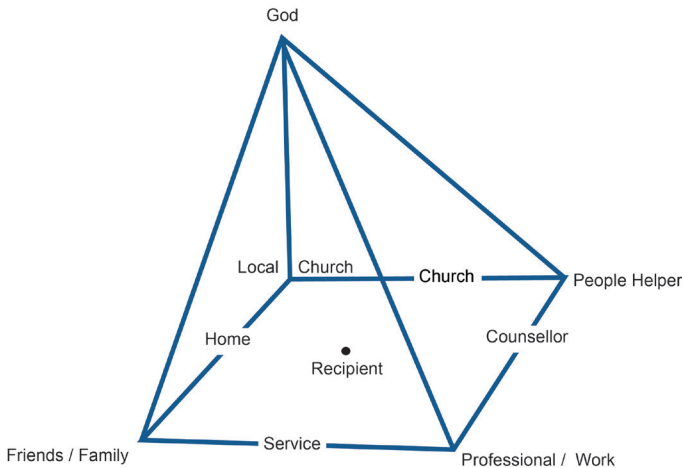
the more challenging situations to someone further along the professional line, while also receiving referrals from people helpers and other people who are not as skilled in this particular area.



- *Whom do you link with to serve others better?*

## 2. A Pyramid of Triangles, filled by the Steps of the CURE

As you can see, the Pyramid is made up of a number of Triangles. This provides a tremendous opportunity to use the shape of the Triangle in multiple forms and contexts, adding to the power of the Pyramid. Remember, the Triangles are made up of horizontal social relationships of people who Connect and Understand each other, who are Responsive and who Engage Help of each other, and vertically with God. Where the whole of the base of the outside of the Pyramid works together, in the context of continuity and unity, it becomes more like a whole body, linking in a synergistic way, where the total sum of the whole has more impact than if all the parts were to do all their bits individually on their own. People who also serve together in the Pyramid at times go into the centre of the base of the Pyramid to be supported so they can be better equipped to serve. With the linking occurring as mentioned above, there is an emphasis on the lines. Here we see the Pyramid combining the corners and the lines together.



## **Why use the Pyramid?**

In addition to using the Pyramid for support and service, here are more reasons to use the Pyramid.

### ***1. The Pyramid can bring balance in types of support***

I need a range of supports. The Pyramid can reveal if there is a lack of balance in our lives when it comes to seeking help from those providing care. It can help us to identify what support options might be missing in our lives. A lack in one corner can lead us to lean more heavily upon the other corners of the Pyramid.

We can be supported the most when we are surrounded by a structure as symbolised by the shape of the Pyramid. So, we can be optimally supported when we have constructive connections with family and friends, the church, helping programs within the Church (parachurch groups or people helpers) as well as from coaching and counselling professionals – with God at the top, linked with them all. We also clearly need general service help whether it be for material, social, physical or educational and psychological needs as mentioned previously.

### ***2. The Pyramid can bring balance in the support-to-service ratio***

I am blessed if I have enough support to serve. The Pyramid can also help us to see the balance between our serving of others when we are on the outside of their Pyramid, and also being supported by others when we are on the inside of a Pyramid. In 1 Corinthians 12:15-21, Paul uses an illustration of the body to emphasise the need for all of us to be serving and also to be receiving support. He says that none of us can say we're not needed – we all need to be needed and to take up our role along the outside of the Pyramid. Also, none of us can say, "I don't need you" – we all need to be in the middle of the Pyramid!

When it comes to balance, some people serve so much that they end up neglecting themselves, which ultimately comes at a cost to themselves and to others. There is a reason why airlines advise passengers to secure their own oxygen masks before helping secure others. Unless you yourself can breathe, you won't be able to help others!

These people, or over-servers, will most likely burn out one day unless they make time to gather and access a Pyramid of support for themselves. I used to be one of those martyrs. However, there are times when there is a primacy of serving even when little support is around. Nevertheless, sustainability may be compromised by extended periods of serving without support.

A key principle from this Shape is about having the humility to access the Pyramid of help when you need it, and having the generosity to be a part of someone else's Pyramid of help when they need it. At times, maybe depending on where you live or even how little you have in the way of finances, there might be a situation where there is not someone around who is safe or skilled enough to provide a particular type of support. While it can be extremely challenging in situations like that, at least the Pyramid provides clarity in terms of where you may be in the context of the current lack of resources. If there are too few resources for you where you are, you may need to review ways of accessing support. Keep looking to find support, even from charitable organisations at no or low cost. Maybe search more for an agency which can direct you to more support themselves. Don't do it all by yourself.

Conversely, there are some who mainly take and hardly ever give. They are like babies, still on milk or ice cream and not mature in the meat of their faith, which otherwise challenges them to serve and sacrifice, to be a steward, submitted and surrendered to God. These receivers need to start to get on the outside of the Pyramid and to serve family and friends as well as in the church context.



- *What is your support/service ratio?*

### **3. The Pyramid can bring clarity**

I don't have to be the whole Pyramid. I was recently speaking to a Pastor of a church that has started taking on the CURE, especially in their small groups. He said that the shape of the Pyramid had brought much relief for small group leaders. They don't have to do everything. They can be part of a team around someone who could be struggling

and who might be attending their small group. This clarity has helped small group leaders to define their role. It has shown them which hat to wear when they are in that particular role with that particular person in the small group. They don't need to have all the roles needed to help this person, rather just have one hat at that time.

No, we don't have to be the whole Pyramid to everyone! This is particularly hard for those who have a serving heart in areas of significant need where there is no one else to provide those needs. There, there may seem to be limited options other than wearing a lot of hats and taking on a number of roles virtually at the same time. Be as clear as you are able with what you can/cannot do.

#### **4. The Pyramid promotes being linked with others**

While this has been mentioned, it is worthwhile re-emphasising. Jesus never meant for us to do things alone. We can imitate those who are further along the journey, as they in turn imitate God. We can receive support, mentoring, supervision and help from those more skilled, while at the same time providing this kind of support to those who are less experienced in that particular area of service. In all, we can be fellow travellers with each other.



- *Where do you think you could benefit most from the shape of the Pyramid?*

#### **Whom is the Pyramid for? We can all be supported, serving others and linked with others**

The Pyramid is for everyone, regardless of culture, gender or age. However, as we get older and have more experience, we spend more time around the outside of the Pyramid, serving the person or group in the middle of the Pyramid. That person we are serving might be someone in our family, at church, a member of our ministry or mission, at work or at school. However, all of us can be starting to serve others and develop servant-leadership from our younger years. If you are a student at school, you can be in the centre of the Pyramid in terms of the education you are receiving, while you might also at times be on the outside as you take on a mentoring role for younger students and also as a friend to your friends.

Remember, the roles will change depending on the person who is in the middle. One person on the outside of the Pyramid can wear a number of hats, each defining a particular role.

As we get older, we need to keep being reminded (hence this repetition) of the importance of being in the middle of the Pyramid, where we ourselves are being supported. When we are serving along the outside lines of the Pyramid, remember that we will need to link to and receive support from those further towards the professional end of that particular area, and in turn provide support to those less skilled than we are.

All of us can be servant-leaders as highlighted by the Pyramid, and as has been outlined on the Pyramid's corresponding Step of Engaging Help. All of us should be disciples of Jesus and be making disciples of Jesus, regardless of age, gender or culture. This is about the mobilisation of the laity into an increased level of involvement in the body of Christ. Everyone has a vital part to play. So, the expression of the Great and New Commandments and the Great Commission need not be compromised, so we can be more intentional in our mandate to take the gospel to the whole world.



- *If you have children, in what ways can they grow to serve another person?*
- *In your church, are people encouraged to be supported in their service of others, or is it more that a small percentage tends to do most of the service while most of the others tend to be supported?*

### **Focusing on those in Christian service**

Those who are in full time mission or ministry need to be in the middle of a Pyramid themselves, where they are being supported in all four corners. Supported by:

- family and friends, including being in 'twos and threes';
- a local church and a sending church;
- people helpers (those who are helping people), for example by member care and other extensions of the whole church, including mission sending agencies and human resources

departments – these agencies and resources may well have professionals working in those settings to further empower those in full-time mission or ministry;

- those in the professionals/work corner – whether it be for financial, relational, medical, psychological or spiritual assistance. As mentioned, some of these people may be included in the sending agencies and human resources departments.

Full-time ministry workers are also on the outside of the Pyramid. Here they serve:

- their own family and friends;
- their local church, and to some extent their sending church;
- parachurch groups and people helpers in various ministries, missions and member care groups;
- in the professional/work corner, where they themselves may sit, often as professionals/workers in their own right.

Mission agencies involved in member care supporting missionaries can be seen as being located in the people helper corner, as they are the specialist arm of the church. The agencies could also include those in the professional/work corner, especially if the agency is bigger with more paid staff, and providing more significant Human Resources.

### **How do I use the Pyramid? It's not hard!**

Carrying on from how to use the Engage Help Step and also what has already been said, the Pyramid is not hard to put into action if you're serious enough not to do life alone! Look around you and locate where you are in the Pyramid for purposes of serving, linking with other servers and being supported. As you pray and discuss the issue with others, you might like to ask yourself the following questions.



- *In my general life, am I receiving enough support so that I can serve and lead?*
- *Who is my Christian mentor/spiritual director?*
- *Whom am I intentionally seeking to disciple?*
- *Does my local church seek to discover and release the gifting of individuals within the body?*

- *To what extent do I try to serve and empower the vision and direction of my local church?*



- *What action do you need to take regarding the above?*

### **Points to remember**

The Pyramid is a place for support, service and linking with others who are on a similar journey to ourselves. Remember, it is not referring to an Egyptian piece of architecture, but it illustrates the very stable and strong capacity the body of Christ has when we are working together in the context of our differences.



- *What strikes you most about the shape of the Pyramid?*



- *Find a square (or rectangle if that's all that's there), such as a table mat, and share what you have learnt with someone else, using other bits of material or crockery/cutlery to demonstrate parts around or in the middle of the Pyramid. Put your hand or an object up above the table when you need to talk about where God is in the Pyramid.*



*Help me to receive support from a range of parts of Your body, particularly from You, the Head of the body.*

*Let the life from Yourself and from Your body flow through me that I also might serve as I link with others, to be a disciple of Jesus and to fight this fight of faith, but not alone.*

### **The Pyramid and the small group**

Teaching points. The Pyramid will help you to see that you don't have to be everything to everyone in your small group. Your small group is just a part of the whole picture. May you be blessed enough to have others to link with around someone in need of being supported in your small group. May you have someone within your group with whom you can join up to serve another in need of support.

### **What we do in our group**

The Pyramid can take a bit of teaching, so I have tried to do that more in one of our quarterly retreats. Also, we often break during school holidays, so I routinely encourage everyone to link up on a weekly basis with another follower of Jesus, even if the other person is not a part of our small group or even part of our church. When Engaging Help from our church, I try to be careful about issues of confidentiality, which is one of the Attitudes which brings about Safety. It may be helpful to also refer to the small group entry on the Engage Help Step on page 56.

## Summary

**T**ake this book like food. Eat it slowly, adjust it, absorb it, and let it become part of your life. As with food, don't just eat on your own but share this with others. That in turn will help you to grow and change towards God-centred flourishing, spiritually, personally and socially.

As you grow, you will be more able to walk the Steps, and get into shape, using this common picture language. You may find it has universal application and yet can be relevant in a unique way. This is because the CURE is a framework rather than a specific theology of transformation, model for change, or a therapy borrowed from one particular theory. It provides principles for change which you are invited to apply so you can develop the practicalities of these changes.

This picture language has two sets of diagrams. One is the Steps and the other is the Shapes. The Steps respond to the questions: "How do I Connect, Understand, Respond and Engage other Help?" – whatever that might mean with regards to people, yourself and God! They help us to Connect and Understand before we Respond, and to understand that we don't have to do it all by ourselves, because we can Engage Help.

While any of the Shapes can fit on any of the Steps, there is a predominant Shape which tends to more naturally fit on a particular Step. The Triangle fits well on the Connection Step and provides the essence of why we are here: to love and to Connect in three directions – with God, with others and with ourselves! The Circles respond to the questions: "Who am I/who are you?" and "How am I/how are you?" The Circles naturally fit on the Understanding Step. The Square takes us from the Understanding Step, helping us to know where we are at, and moves us

onto the Response Step in terms of where we are going and invites us to look at what we need to do to change. The Shape of the Cross invites us to look at what Jesus did literally on the cross and also illustrates all we receive as a result of coming to Christ. This is the central foundation for God-centred change and so again fits naturally on the Response Step. The Pyramid helps us not to journey life on our own as we stand on the Engage Help Step, and it helps us to have a balance of serving and being supported. All of these Shapes are God-centred.

The Steps and Shapes arising out of the *Christian Wholeness Framework* (CWF) have now been well seasoned for over 25 years, and have been reviewed by numerous people in different contexts. The underlying Framework allows for the functional use of a robust theology, psychology, biology and sociology of change.

As you walk the Steps and use the Shapes, you may find that you can have a greater capacity spiritually, to know and to live out the Great and New Commandments, and to do the Great Commission. Spiritually, you will be able to allow God to make more of a difference in your life, and be more engaged in the body of Christ, the Church. You will personally see yourself increasingly changing from inside to out in a wholistic and integrated way, right through to your social relationships. Socially you can grow in loving, knowing and growing so that you can show and demonstrate Jesus through your own individuality in a God-centred way. You can apply these principles at home, with friends, in the church and in your work area.

Here are essential questions the CURE enables us to respond to:



- *What is your life purpose?*
- *Where are you at?*
- *How are you going, really?*
- *What difference is God making in your life?*
- *Who supports you and whom are you serving?*



- *Share what has meant the most to you about the Steps and Shapes with someone else.*
- *As you learn, live and give, you will in turn notice your life changing all the more.*



- *Help me to Connect with and to love You, and love others as myself.*
- *Help me to Understand even more than to be understood. God, I want to know You more as well.*
- *Let my life be so Responsive to You that I might grow to be so God-centred even more than flourishing.*
- *Thank You that I don't have to do this alone. You are my Helper. Thank you for those around me whom You have given me that I also might grow to be more of a disciple of Jesus, a servant-leader.*



# God's CURE for our Broken Relationship with Him

Guest contributor – Daniel Warlow

The CURE is an ordered set of principles for effective personal growth and growth with others. But the same priorities of the CURE can give us a wonderful insight into God's priorities with us.

## **Step 1: Connection comes first as a priority before all other things.**

I have seen many people who feel they have to earn Connection with God. Sometimes even long-time Christians slip into this mindset. They feel that if only they could know enough (Understanding) or do enough (Responding), then maybe God might have a relationship (Connection) with them.

Yet Scripture informs us that this couldn't be further from the truth. The cost of restoring relationship with God is so high that we could never pay it ourselves, and a partial payment is insufficient. It's actually impossible to earn our Connection with God by first trying to do things or by knowing enough. It would be like a child trying to 'achieve' the title of son or daughter. This title can only be received, not earned. So, God in his mercy made Connecting with us a priority, and most incredibly, a free gift to be received, not achieved or earned.

The amazing news is this:



We are **Connected** to God first, by his grace, not because of anything we've done, but because of what He's done. Not because of who we are, but because of who He is. It is a gift of God.

There's nothing we can do to earn it. There are good works for us to do, but they come as a joy-filled Response to God's Connection with us, not as a payment for it.

**U** Then, we **Understand** who God is and Understand what His plan is for our life. This can happen through reading His word, the Bible and by listening to Him in prayer. It is on this Step, undergirded by His covenant love, that we can start to know God in a deeper way.

**R** We **Respond** to who God is in worship and we Respond to His plan for our life in obedience. On this Step, we can move more towards God-centred flourishing so that we can go down to others to raise them up. This is servant-leadership. This is what the Bible is about. The first thing God said to man (Genesis 1:28) was to go and take mastery. Everything at that stage was God-centred and was good. From Genesis 3 right up until the last two chapters of the book of Revelation, instead of taking mastery we have moved more and more to the left-hand side of the Square, to a self-centredness. This is called sin. As mentioned in this book, sin is anything where 'I' is in the middle instead of God. In the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 & 22, we see again a place like the Garden of Eden, a place of God-centred flourishing. In this place, there will be no more under-the-water-level suffering. There will be no more left-hand sin and evil. There will be just the top right-hand quadrant of God-centred flourishing. Check it out. Heaven is better than a thatched hut!

**E** All the while, in all that we do, we **Engage** the Help and power of the Holy Spirit, without whom it is impossible to serve God. We Engage guidance through God's Word, the Bible. We Engage the support and care of other Christians, in twos and threes, small groups, the church and people helpers.

This is such good news: God's gift of Connection through Christ to all who will believe. If you don't have this and you want it, then: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (The words of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 7:7).

### **And more from John ...**

If you have not started this journey, remember the 'ABC' process of change as illustrated on page 156 in the Shape of the Cross. Admit you are a sinner, **B**elieve in Jesus and **C**hange. The very core of your central Circle can become alive. The foundation from which you live will change. If you are a Christian, you can again apply the process of change. Just come back to where you already belong, to the person of Jesus, to His presence, where He has placed you, and what His purposes are for you. Here you will find His provisions of unfailing love, forgiveness, freedom and fullness that you might go and indeed fight the fight of faith!

So, may the CURE help grow your biblical understanding of yourself, of others and of God. May it become a helpful picture language in all of your relationships – with family and friends, at church, in your mission/ministry and at work or school. May the CURE challenge and assist you to change, to become more Christ-like in a flourishing way. May you walk the Steps and be empowered by the Shapes. In doing so, may you increasingly live the Great Commandment, grow in Jesus' New Commandment, do the Great Commission, and be transformed to be holy and whole, dedicated to God in the whole of your being: your attitudes, skills and knowledge. Finally, may the CURE equip you with a vision which you can apply in your life and relationships.



## **NEXT STEPS: Joining the journey with Dr John and the CURE**

### **The C.U.R.E. for Life, Part Two**

*The C.U.R.E. for Life: God-Centred Relationships* is the second book in the *C.U.R.E. for Life* series. This book now turns to assist you to explore the more intriguing depth, breadth and beauty of the human soul, inviting you more fully to understand yourself, and how you function. Far from being a mechanics guide to an engine, it is personable, interactive, and – frankly – fascinating.

Knowing yourself empowers you also to know others more fully – so an approach to interpersonal relationships is presented – equipping you both more completely to understand others, including those who are close to you, and then to develop more effective and mature processes in your relationships. *The C.U.R.E. for Life: God-Centred Relationships* provides a new but well tried and tested process of Steps to safely negotiate the challenges of any personal relationship in a Godly and healthy way.

The *Christian Wholeness Framework*, on which this *C.U.R.E. for Life* series is based, presents a unique approach that has benefited a growing community of people from different ages, cultures, and backgrounds. This approach has also stimulated the personal and professional development of many integrative lay and professional Christian counsellors, for over almost 30 years.

*The C.U.R.E. for Life: God-Centred Relationships* is for individuals, couples, families, pastors, chaplains, small group leaders, Bible colleges, mission workers, teachers, lay counsellors, health professionals, and their clients/patients.

### The C.U.R.E. for Life, Part Three

*The C.U.R.E. for Life: Biblical Foundations* is not only the foundation, but also the flagship and the final book of this trilogy. It provides a pictorial commentary on every book of the Bible from a Counselor's perspective. It is an opportunity to drill down into the bedrock of *The Christian Wholeness Framework*, from which it arose, into the Scriptures. This CWF, being a simple and easy picture language will give you a visual of the Bible. With about 500 diagrams of the simple five Steps and five Shapes, you are invited to picture and to frame the themes of the Scriptures of wholistic God-centred Transformation. Through the story of the Bible, right from the beginning of the Old Testament through each book of the Bible and reaching to the end of the New Testament, you will find a roadmap of the consistent theme throughout the Scriptures on how this transformation actually occurs.

This book can help portray the Bible in a fresh way. *The Christian Wholeness Framework* takes complex theological truths, and can clearly place these essentials into your heart. The third and final part of this series, *the C.U.R.E for Life: Biblical Foundations*, does not shy away from words like "sin" or "repentance" when it comes to wholistic God-centred transformation. Why not? Because these are integral to the story of the Scriptures. In the context of the biblical narrative, this book tracks the great doctrines of God, sin, salvation and the church in ways which can be easily understood and transferred to others. Yes, this book gives you a way of inviting others to see the core of the Gospel, the fullness of salvation, and of our journey to grow to become more like Jesus.

This introductory illustrated commentary on the Bible using the CWF, will invite you to travel through the Scriptures at your rate and even to zoom in on aspects of Scripture you want to explore further. You can then take a more in-depth journey into just one of the books of the Bible, i.e. Ephesians, to give you a taster of how you can then look back in turn on the Scriptures through the lens of the Shapes, and bring aspects of the Bible into a clearer focus. You will be more able to show and tell the narrative and storyline of the Bible in any context where there are people, regardless of their culture or age.

You will get so much more from this book if you have already read the first two books of the trilogy, *the C.U.R.E. for Life, Part One: God-Centred Transformation* and *the C.U.R.E. for Life, part two: God-Centred Relationships*. You will be richer if you can walk this journey with even one other person, or better still, with your small group from church.

The community of the CURE, are those who learn, live and give this CURE is called **Living Wholeness**.



# Living Wholeness

## God-Centred Transformation

### What is Living Wholeness

Living Wholeness desires to support the person to grow to Godly wholeness (healing and sanctification) across the spectrum of spiritual, psychological, physical, and social areas. This is within themselves, their relational settings, within marriage and family, within communities, within societies, within nations and regions of the world. Living Wholeness is both for those who are disheartened, disconnected, despairing, distressed or deprived, and also for those who seek a way to walk with these people towards lives of wholistic God-centredness.

**Vision:** Wholistic God-centred transformation of the whole person.

**Purpose:** Offering people a way, through *the Christian Wholeness Framework*, to live out the Bible's Great Commandment, New Commandment and Great Commission: intimacy with God, imitating Christ, influencing for the gospel, all through being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**Values:** Living Wholeness values love and acceptance, truth and integrity, choice and hope, God-centred lives and relationships, personal vulnerability, and facing life's issues in a healthy way. Living Wholeness also values healthy relational processes, by offering choice, respect and value to individuals and people within systems.

**Strategy:** To encourage and equip people who together, relying on God and walking relationally with others, learn, live, use, and give to others *the Christian Wholeness Framework* (CWF). To offer education and training, (primarily train the trainer), supported by relevant resources, and growing the Living Wholeness Community. This is all increasingly undergirded by research.

## Living Wholeness as a Community

Living Wholeness Community is a small part of the whole church, and with it, seeks to facilitate this God-centred transformation of the whole person within their local community and church through the whole gospel (*echoing the mission statement within the Lausanne Covenant, for the whole church to be taking the whole gospel to the whole world – John Stott, Chris Wright and others*). The community is a place of support, service and linking/networking together.

In the field of counselling, it is vital that inner change precedes outer change. In this world generally the story is that hurt people hurt people, on personal, community, society and international scales. The Living Wholeness Community seeks to swim against the tide and find the space where instead, transformed people transform people, on an increasingly positive scale.

Living Wholeness has an awesome team of people who volunteer with passion and dedication far beyond expectation. These people who are being transformed, facilitated by *the Christian Wholeness Framework* make up the alive and dynamic organism of the Living Wholeness Community.

There is much room for you – to benefit, to be transformed, to offer your capacity and gifting to assist others. You can have a place in this story – as you have a place in His story, as you learn, live, use and give the Christian Wholeness Framework.

## The Christian Wholeness Framework

*The Christian Wholeness Framework* is the ‘operating system’ of Living Wholeness. As its name implies, it is unashamedly attesting to be Christ-centred, taking a whole view, and using a clear frame or structure. It is based on the Bible, centred on God, and promoting the Christian church’s central calling towards transformation of individuals and communities across the world. Living Wholeness is a broad-based, multicultural, interdenominational Christian community and embraces people from a range of streams of Christian faith including contemplative, holiness, evangelical, charismatic, social justice and sacramental.

*The Christian Wholeness Framework* offers a Biblical anthropology of humanity, and a dynamic robust theology, psychology, biology

and sociology of change. *Wholeness* highlights the whole person growing in the context of the whole gospel. *Wholeness* facilitates an integrated and comprehensive approach to broad and deep change.

*The Christian Wholeness Framework* provides a universally transferable picture language relevant and applicable across cultures, ages and gender. The CWF facilitates a comprehensive understanding of personal God-centred transformation. It identifies five Steps in the process of healthy human relating, undergirding the five **Shapes** which represent humanity, our relationship with God, others, and himself. It offers:

- a structure in which other models of people and change can be integrated
- a map assisting individuals to accurately locate their present position relative to life goals, thereby elucidating a realistic way ahead
- and an integrated therapeutic tool bag which combine to form the Living Wholeness Approach.

This Living Wholeness Approach is a therapeutic process developed for and used by counsellors and coaches, based on the ‘operating system’ of the Christian Wholeness Framework. It has been tested in the fires of thousands of counselling clients, over many years, settings, cultures, and issues. It is simple and yet sophisticated, well presented, and easily understood. It encourages, inspires and challenges the finding of wholistic transformation for all clients. This approach has successfully empowered many people in their life roles at home, with friends and at work or place of education from Australia to Asia and beyond.

*The Christian Wholeness Framework* is also helpful within Church contexts: small groups, pastoral care, ministry, and mission. It appears to be effective in lay and professional counselling, coaching, mentoring, discipleship, and spiritual direction/accompaniment.

*The Christian Wholeness Framework* is now over 30 years old. It offers probably one of the most comprehensive and integrated approaches to working wholistically with people. Interest and uptake is rising rapidly, especially in Asia.

Because it is Biblically robust, theologically and psychologically integrated, and because it is systematic, teachable, and culturally sensitive, as well as having broad application and availability, it has the capacity to become a force for God-centred personal and social transformation across the majority and the developed world.

### **Living Wholeness Institute**

Living Wholeness Institute oversees the development, accreditation, and co-ordination of Living Wholeness services, training, resources and research, undergirded by efficient infrastructure and persistent prayer.

**Resources:** Living Wholeness Institute offers various products, training programs and resources to individuals, students, small groups, churches, lay counsellors, professional counsellors/coaches, trainers. Living Wholeness has a large range of resources – most are available from the website. Many are in multiple languages.

**Training:** Living Wholeness offers a wide range of courses across the breadth of personal growth, with introductory level, small groups, lay pastoral and professional counsellor courses, and up to a four-year program for future Educators. Online training is becoming increasingly used to deliver training.

**Research:** Living Wholeness Institute seeks to be a research-based organization. It draws on quality research findings and is dedicated to developing further research on CWF.

**Prayer:** Living Wholeness personnel seek to abide in Jesus and prayerfully undergird all intrapersonal and interpersonal development.

**Impact:** The impact of Living Wholeness is strategic, deep, broad, long term, and growing. Impact continually expands. Living Wholeness Institute currently offers training in around 14 Asian developing nations as well as in Australia.

**Funding:** An Australian not for profit company, Living Wholeness Ltd. receives funding from donations, training fees, and sales of resources. This covers costs of administration, project work primarily within the developing Asian world, resource development, and research costs. Except for a paid administrator, all personnel are volunteers.

If you feel prompted to donate to Living Wholeness work, you can donate online via the website, or alternatively contact the CEO for bank transfer and mail-a-cheque options.

Explore our **website** which explains more about Living Wholeness work: [www.livingwholeness.org](http://www.livingwholeness.org).

**Contact for any enquiries:**

Dr David Nikles, LW CEO  
[david.n@livingwholeness.org](mailto:david.n@livingwholeness.org)



# Summary of The Christian Wholeness Framework

## The CWF is Christian

- Christian in terms of mainline Christian doctrines
- Biblically based and illustrating the Scriptures
- God-centred, especially as illustrated by the God-centred Shapes

## The CWF promotes Wholeness

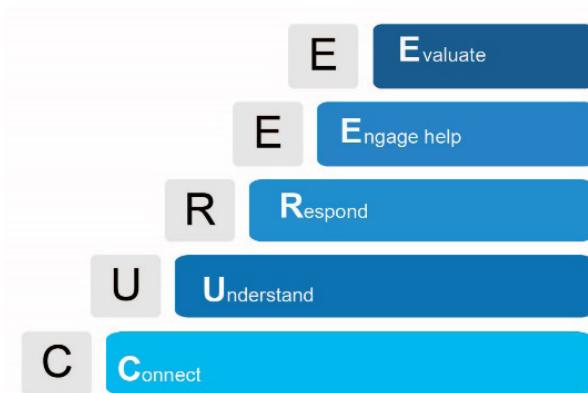
- Wholeness refers to the whole church of which the **Living Wholeness Community** is a very small part, focusing on facilitating God-centred transformation of the whole person, within their local community and church, being more able to receive the whole gospel.
- Encompasses a comprehensive and cohesive, uniting, balanced and broad integrating biblical anthropology of the whole person as demonstrated by the five Circles (see below). It is best summed up in the Hebrew word, “Shalom”.

## The CWF is a Framework

- A structure which accommodates all aspects of personhood, and most therapeutic approaches
- An operating system like the operating system of a smart phone on which can be installed various apps. Likewise, you can install your applications of the CWF onto the Framework

- A picture language of simply five Steps and five Shapes, which like any language, is developmental, from basic to complex. It is universal and yet unique in that it can be applied to a person of any demographic – of age, gender or culture, or whether someone is struggling or succeeding. Because it is so transferable it can become a common and uniting God-centred language as we speak the truth in love to each other
- An easy way to bring together the essentials of wholistic God-centred transformation

### Five Steps and Five Shapes



### Five Steps

These are sequential Steps of the process within any relationship, placed one on top of another, upon which you can walk up, as you Connect and Understand before you Respond and then Engage Help from others. You can also walk back down to reinforce the underlying Steps as needed, Evaluating as you go how that relationship is going. Each step has a predominant Shape (or Shapes) connected with it.

### Connect: to love

- A Step for our Intimacy with God, the God of love and connection. This step illustrates the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31, to love God and to others as ourselves).

- Connecting **Processes** of engaging the **Triangle** as we connect with God, with ourselves and with others. Connection is defined by and constructed in **SAFETY** (Small, Attitudes, Facing, Empathy, Time, You).

### **Understand: to know**

- A Step for our Imitation of Christ. As we know Him we become like Him. This Step illustrates the New Commandment (John 13:34, to love others as Jesus loves us).
- Listen, with Understanding **Questions** “Where are you at?” and, “How are you? – What’s that like for you? – Have you had any similar experiences elsewhere?”.

### **Respond: to grow**

- A Step for our being Influencers for the gospel with Christ. This Step illustrates the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20, to go into all the world, preaching the gospel and making disciples of Jesus).
- Response **Questions** – undergirded by the underlying Connection and Understanding Steps, asking, “Where could you be?” “How could you be different from now?” “What difference is God making in your life?”

### **Engage Help: to show servant-leadership**

- A Step for our **Engaging Help** of the Indwelling Holy Spirit, with the purpose of our becoming servant leaders, like Jesus. This Step illustrates what commenced in the book of Acts in relation to the Holy Spirit’s coming to the Church.
- Engage Help **Question** – “Who else do you need in your life at this time?” “... to support you/serve/ link in with?”

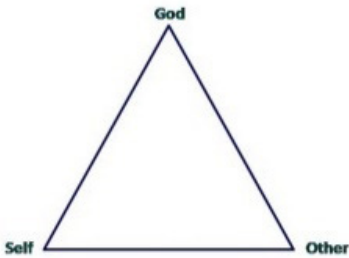
### **evaluate: how did I/we/you go?**

- The **evaluation** Step allows us to recalibrate as individuals or as a group in our journey towards wholistic God-centred transformation

- evaluate **Questions**: How are we, how are they, and how is God within this process of evaluating? How are we going, with our wholistic God centred transformation, within ourselves and out through to others as we learn, live, and give the **Steps** and **Shapes**?

## Five Shapes

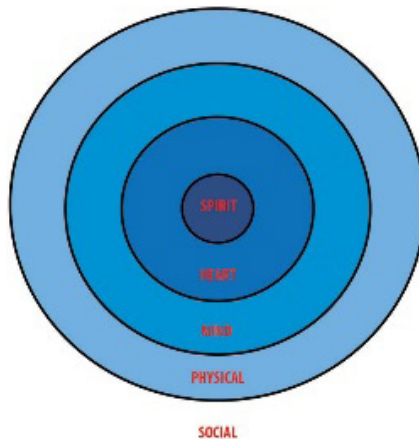
### *The Triangle*



The relational Triangle corresponds with the first Step, **Connect**. The **Triangle** can invite us to consider “Why am I?”. It reminds us that we are here primarily for our relationship in three directions with God, with others, and with ourselves. The **Triangle** also represents the healing

process of Trialogue, through meaningfully being together with God, with others and with our self. It illustrates the Great Commandment, to Love God and Love others as oneself and yes, in a wholistic way. There is the intentional and proactive direction of flow, from God through us to other/s

### **The Circles**

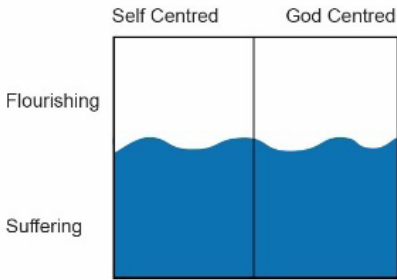


The **Circles** correspond with the **Understand** Step, and also with the **Response** Step. The Circles can invite us to consider, “Who am I?”. The five **Circles** (social, physical, mind, heart and spirit) present a biblical anthropology of individuals and humanity. The **Circles** illustrate our need for the rebirth of our spirit, for our heart to be refreshed, our mind to be renewed, our bodies to be restored and our relationships to be reconciled. The **Circles** are the core CWF Shape, involving all the other Shapes, with the **Triangle** and **Pyramid** in the social **Circle**, and the **Shape of the Cross** in the spirit **Circle**. Any of the **Circles** or their sectors can be placed on any of the quadrants of the **Square**. The **Circles** also highlight the goal and process of internal God-centred Transformation from the inside out, growing in our Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (TASK). The **Circles** encapsulate and further elaborate on the CWF, being truly:

- **Christian**, as noted above
- **Wholistic**: as noted above
- **Framework**: providing a structure to be able to access and locate ourselves or another person regarding the essentials of wholistic God-centred living. The structure is like a:
  - depth gauge, of the level of conversation with another or even with ourselves, and whether we are out of our depth;
  - jigsaw puzzle, highlighting missing areas of information about ourselves or others, to help the puzzle develop into a full picture;
  - directional map, in our journeying with another one towards or away from God-centred flourishing;
  - tree, of our personal/systemic growth in the context of our family/other system tree;
  - tower of our life where each level is one year of our life, having the same room/floor plan of the circles and their sectors;
  - tool bag which helps us to see what skills we may/may not have to assist **Responses**.

Below is the full diagram of the **Circles** with their component sectors, representing what makes up each respective **Circle**

## The Square



The **Square** corresponds to the **Understanding** Step as well as to the **Response** Step. The **Square** can invite us to consider “Where am I?” in relation to the practice of our lives (an **Understanding** Step question), and moving up to the **Response** Step

of “Where could I be?”, “Where am I going?” and “What difference is God making in my life?” (allowing **Response** Step questions, for example of “Where could I be?”). It particularly highlights the ultimate goal of God-centred flourishing (which will only be fully achieved in the New Heaven), and the two dimensions of change: healing, growth and flourishing (from the bottom to the top) and more importantly the process of sanctification in our journey of discipleship (moving from left to right). The **Square** indicates at any given time where any part of us or of another may be, in any of the four quadrants: self-centred success or suffering, or God-centred flourishing or suffering.

## The Shape of the Cross

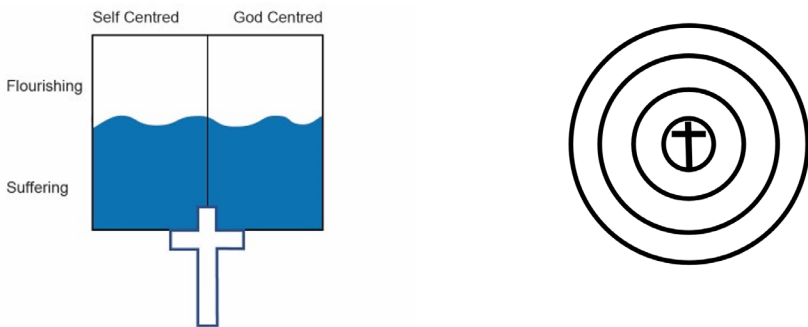


The **Shape of the Cross** corresponds with the **Response** Step. This Shape invites us to answer the questions of, “Where am I with God?” or “Have I been born again and entered a new home/family/kingdom?”. The Shape reminds us of what Jesus did in His death and resurrection. The two sides of the vertical shaft below the cross bar refer to our spiritual position, of leaving our place of being dead in sin to being dead to sin and coming “home”, of being “with God”. When we become Christians we are born into a new home or family, and a new place or kingdom. This needs to be applied daily, accessing the five characteristics and aspects (the 5 “P’s”) of God:

- **His Person** (The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit);
- **His Presence** (He abides, communes and dwells within our spirit by His Spirit, as we are in His family and His kingdom);

- **His Placement of Us** in Him and He in us (with our being forgiven of all sin, born again into God’s family as God’s child, united in Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, being set apart for Him);
- **His Purposes for Us** (He calls us to Intimacy with Himself, i.e. loving others as ourselves [The Great Commandment: Mark 12:30, 31], to Imitation of Christ [the New Commandment: John 12:34] and to be Influencers for the Gospel [the Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20], being Indwelt with the Holy Spirit [Acts and following]);
- **His Provisions for Us** (five “Fs”: His unFailing love, Forgiveness, Freedom, Fullness, so that we can Fight the good fight).

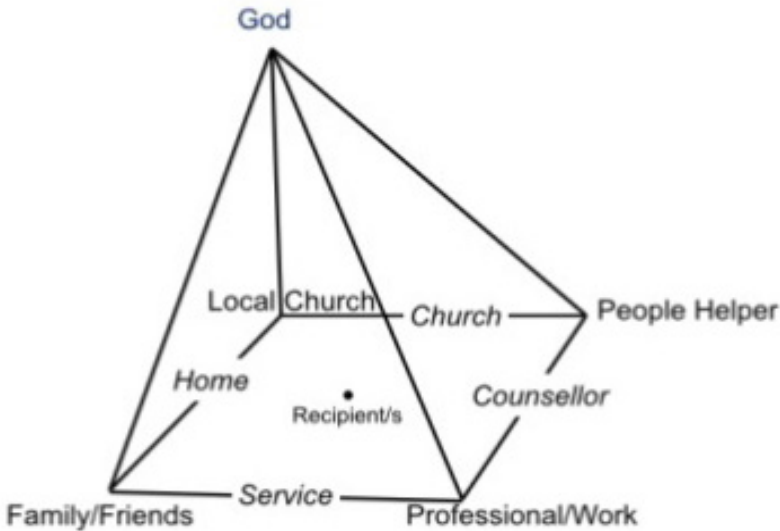
The combinations of the **Shape of the Cross** with the **Square** and the **Circles** are used to illustrate the process of God-centred transformation, showing how that we can return and repent, and how we can abide in Christ, allowing His Holy Spirit to flow out through all of our circles and sectors to others as we go on our journey of discipleship and grow in our process of sanctification.



The 2 shape of the Cross combinations

### The Pyramid

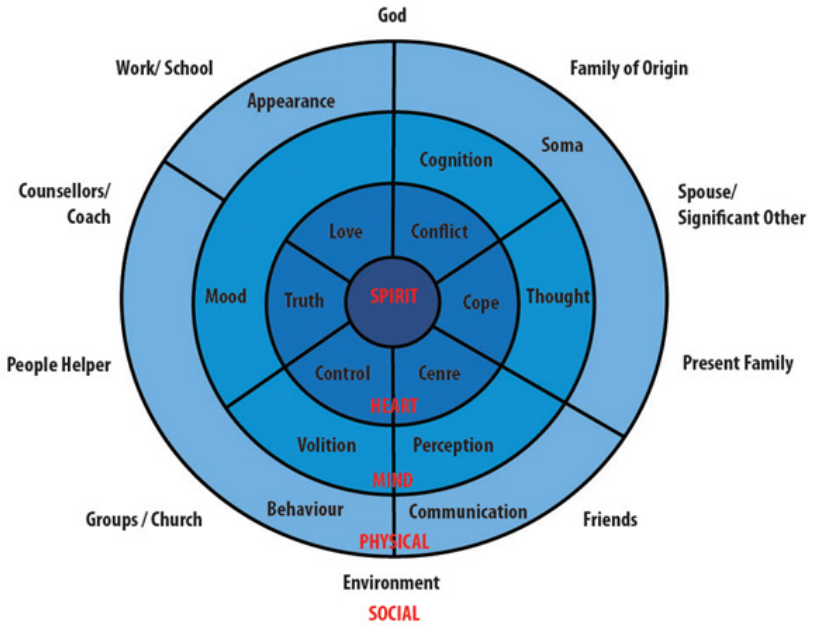
The **Pyramid** corresponds to a number of points of the supportive aspect of our social **Circle**. It also corresponds to the **Engage Help** Step: being and accessing the body of Christ for one another. In addition, the base and the sides of the **Pyramid** are where the five Steps occur, so



that people around the **Pyramid** periphery may **Connect** with, **Understand**, **Respond** to, and **Engage Help** with each other so that together we can link and servant-lead as we walk the steps with the recipient(s). The **Pyramid** is a symbolic reminder of the body of Christ, its inter-**Connectedness**, the equality of all members, the existence of both carer and recipient, and the overarching person of the Trinity, sustaining and being with His body. The **Pyramid** is also a way to locate your own place(s) within the body of Christ. There are thus three functions of the one **Pyramid**, so that we are/can:

- **Support**: because when we are in the centre of the Pyramid, when we have a number of people with differing gifts around us, we flourish.
- **Serve**: because we are called to serve and to lead others, with others, to fulfil the Great and New Commandments and the Great Commission.
- **Link**: because we offer best care when we as a community care together for the recipient/s.

## The Circles in detail





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