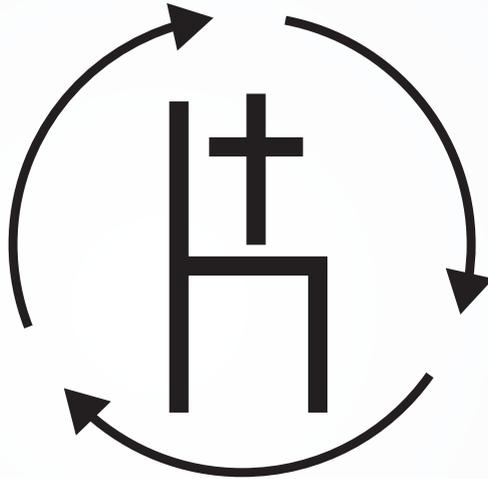


THE PROCESS OF HEART CHANGE



A DISCIPLESHIP TOOL

STORY OF HEART CHANGE

A classic example of heart change is this story about Michael. Michael first realised something was wrong when he caught himself regularly moving money from bank account to bank account to get himself the highest possible interest. He had become so obsessed with trying to get rich that he wouldn't even bypass a few dollars here and there.

As he paused and reflected on what he was doing, he realised that over time, he had become quite selfish and calculative about everything. He was seldom generous, and the Holy Spirit showed him how this unhealthy, distorted view of money was actually ruling his heart and motives. Money became a false god for him, and he forgot that his wealth was given to him by the one true God so that he could use it to bless other people.

As he took ownership, he realised that he needed to find out more about what God's Word said about money and how other Christians handled their finances. It wasn't an easy journey, but he knew he needed to grow in his character. He learnt to trust God with his finances over time, and set himself a goal to bless someone each month; even if it was as small as paying for someone else's meal or coffee.

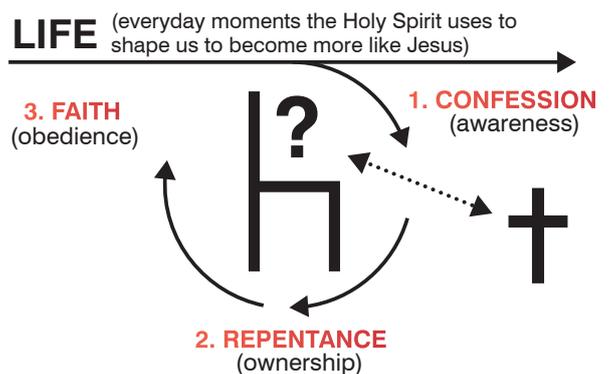
PROCESS OF HEART CHANGE

As Christians, we look for heart change because it is evidence that God's Spirit is working in our lives. As we place Jesus as King to rule over different aspects of our hearts and of our lives, God builds our character and helps us to become more like Jesus.

How we respond to our everyday moments, relationships and life circumstances will often show us whether Jesus is ruling as King over different aspects of our hearts, and these three simple steps of

confession, repentance and faith will help you to see transformation and heart change.

While tools can be helpful, true discipleship takes hard work. When used correctly, this process can be exciting and confronting, so take your time and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what is ruling your heart.



1. CONFESSION (Awareness: What is ruling you and why?)

There are two things we must acknowledge and confess in this first step. Firstly, what is ruling your heart and motive? When something other than Jesus is ruling us, it affects the way we react or make us behave in ways that don't align with God's design for us. The outcome of this is the brokenness we see and experience in our lives. For someone who is ruled by the approval of those around them, a resulting behaviour may be a tendency to boast or even a fear of failure.

Secondly, why is this thing ruling your heart instead of Jesus? When something other than Jesus is ruling our hearts, it reveals our distorted beliefs about God. This false belief we have about God,

is the reason why we allow something other than Jesus to rule our hearts. Other people's approval will rule us if we don't believe that God unconditionally loves us. We forget that He alone is worthy of being boasted, and in our arrogance, we are actually taking glory away from Him.

The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us become aware of the things ruling our hearts and the truths about God to us through His Word. So take the time to sit in His presence, read His Word, and prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer some of these questions:

- Have your attitudes, habits, reactions or behaviour been honouring to God?
- What do you think is ruling you instead of Jesus?
- What false belief might you have about God?
- What does the Bible say about this topic?

Sometimes it can take weeks or months to work out what the real issue is. So if you don't have a sense of freedom after naming what is ruling you and why, don't be afraid to spend more time allowing the Holy Spirit to search your heart before moving onto the next step.

2. REPENTANCE (Ownership: Willingness to change)

It's not enough to simply acknowledge what is ruling us and why. Knowing we have replaced Jesus with something else should cause us to be remorseful and want to change. This feeling or expression of remorse is what we call, 'repentance'.

The most important part of this step is taking ownership to apologise for the false belief you held about God and the thing that was ruling you instead of Jesus; what we established in step one. Repenting isn't just saying sorry for your external actions, because behaviour is simply a reflection of our much deeper beliefs.

Take the time to talk to God about this and express a willingness to change.

When we experience patterns, disproportionate reactions and emotions in response to people or situations we find ourselves in, it can often reveal that something other than Jesus is ruling our hearts because something we believe about God is, in fact, distorted (Rom 1:25).

While we often think of sin as 'breaking rules', sin is fundamentally more about our hearts and desires being misaligned with God's desires, or having a distorted view of who God is and how we relate to Him.

We worry when things don't go as planned because we think we're in control instead of God being in control (Ps 131). We become indignant when we think others have wronged us because we think of ourselves higher than we ought and forget that judgement and wrath belongs to God (Rom 12).

As we go through life as disciples of Jesus, we must learn to pause, reflect, and allow the Holy Spirit to help us see what is ruling our hearts (John 3) so that by His grace, we can be saved and be useful for His purposes (Eph 2).

When used in light of our church's Discipleship Values (Groups and gatherings, Reproducibility, Actively hearing and obeying God's Word, Connecting with God and those near and far from God, Everyday moments), this process of reflection should not only change our behaviour, but bring about heart change and true transformation.

BECOMING MISSIONAL

As we allow Jesus to rule our hearts as King, the implications of our faith in Him will often result in opportunities to bless others and lead them closer to Jesus. This is what we mean by becoming 'missional', because God's mission is to establish His Kingdom rule in this world and draw people into relationship with Himself.

3. FAITH (Obedience: Trusting Jesus to rule as King)

Now that you're aware and have taken ownership of what's ruling your heart, Jesus needs to be put back as the rightful King over this area of your life.

It's important to recognise that we can't make lasting, impactful changes in our own strength, but only by trusting and relying on God's work in our lives. This is what we call, 'faith'. So pray and ask Jesus to be the King so that He can rule and bring transformation in your heart and motives.

As we have a clearer view and trust in God, He changes us. As we allow Him to rule our lives, He uses us for His purposes:

- How might your response, attitude or approach be different in the future?
- Are there people you need to apologise to, reconcile with, or forgive?
- Is there anything you need to let go of, or take responsibility for?
- Who can come alongside you and keep you accountable?

EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP

Here at Clayton Church of Christ, we believe that life isn't just something that happens to us. Rather, as life and trials come our way, God uses these 'everyday moments' (as you're parenting, road raging, going through tough situations), to build our character and shape us to become more and more like Jesus. This process is what Christians call 'growing as a disciple of Jesus', or 'discipleship'.

Part of growing as a disciple is learning to place Jesus as King over every area of our lives where He can truly rule our hearts and motives.

To make the most of these opportunities, sometimes there are new skills we need to learn or existing skills we need to exercise so that others can see an external expression of God's rule in our hearts. It might be the skill of tactful communication, or how to manage your business as a Christian.

In Michael's story, he not only learnt what God's Word said about money, but he had to upskill by finding out how other Christians lived out this reality of Jesus ruling in the area of their wealth. Michael's new skill helped him express the change that happened in his heart into an action that brought goodness and wholeness into other people's lives.

Skills like this help us integrate our beliefs about God in everyday life so that it can point others to Jesus. However, discovering what skills you need to become missional and exercising them is not always easy to do. So take the time to ask the Holy Spirit to show you what skills you need and how to exercise them. Other Christians and those who know you well are also valuable in helping you see any blind spots you might have, so don't be afraid to ask and learn from others!

