

Commonly asked questions about TRIOS:

What is a TRIO?

A TRIO is simply three people brought together by God who desire to grow in all areas of their life.

Why do I need a TRIO?

You must have relationship to grow. Relationship is the most important aspect of your spiritual life.

"Biblical growth is designed to include other people as God's instruments. To be truly biblical as well as truly effective, the growth process must include the Body of Christ. Without the Body, the process is neither totally biblical nor orthodox."

(How People Grow by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.)

You must have relationship to heal. God uses people to help us grow and to help us heal from the wounding and pain life promises us. It's not "if" these things will happen, it is "when" and you will need *someone* at *some time* in your life. Growing and healing is a process and you cannot do the process alone.

You must have relationship to stand firm. By being in a TRIO you are proactively and intentionally taking responsibility for your own spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health. By volitionally submitting to one another through accountability we drastically reduce Satan's ability to get a foothold in our lives.

You must have relationship to overcome. We are designed by God to be inner-connected and interconnected. Without a support group we will seldom see those things that we are blind to or recover from addictive behaviors. The point is we don't know what we don't know and we are easily deceived.

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Galatians 6:3

You must have relationship to thrive. Our first response to sinful behavior is to isolate. As we cut ourselves off from others our souls become starved for connectedness, we become hardened and shrivel up.

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."

Ephesians 4:19

In grace-filled, safe TRIOS, our hearts are nourished, cared for and loved. In this environment our hearts will thrive and grow. As we live our lives in biblical community we receive the grace we need to experience God's love and validate our existence.

"It is not good for man to be alone." Genesis 2:18

God was not just talking about marriage, he was declaring the importance of relationships.

Why three?

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9,12

So why three? In Jesus' greatest time of need he invited three of his closest friends to be with him and pray for him. This was Jesus, Son of the Living God asking for help from his friends. If God couldn't do it alone, why would we think we can. He modeled our need for others. There is no "perfect" number, but we have found that smaller is better. In groups of three vulnerability is a greater likelihood and where there is more honesty, more healing and growth can take place.

When there are just two of you the accountability is lessened by your opinion verses mine, a third person adds the tie breaking **perspective** that one-on-one does not offer.

The values are designed and have their deepest impact when practiced with three people. For example; the P.L.A.N. value has three basic components, MENTOR, MENTEE and MEDIATOR. The dynamics and benefit of having that third person in the group gives objectivity, accountability, feedback, as well as having someone responsible for keeping within the time limitations.

Three lends to having that additional reason for getting together. When one member of the TRIO has to miss in a given week, that still leaves two people to meet. Continuing to meet regularly is a critical aspect of TRIOs for consistency and accountability in our lives. It's motivating as well, when a person misses a week they are eager to come back because they don't want to miss out or get too behind on each other's lives.

How do I get in a TRIO?

Finding those "right" others can feel as important and as scary as choosing someone to marry. You will be committing to a relationship that could last for years. Prayerfully considering who God would have you invest and reveal your life to can be intimidating. Walking up to someone and asking them to share life together might just be one of the hardest and riskiest parts of coming into biblical accountability.

First; It is important to know what a safe and unsafe TRIO looks like.

{UNSAFE TRIO}

People will only grow in an environment of grace and safety. We grow by confessing our faults and weaknesses to one another. Studies show that children will learn best in environments where they feel safe.

Taken from Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend's book Safe People;

Abandoners	Critics	Irresponsibles
Start a relationship but can't finish it. They abandon the relationship when you need it the most.	Critics take on a parental role instead of relating as equals. They are judgmental, speak the truth without love and have no room for grace and forgiveness.	People who don't take care of themselves or others. They have problems with delaying gratification, they don't consider the consequences of their actions.
Abandoners destroy trust.	Critics are more concerned with confronting errors than they are with making connections. They jump on ethical bandwagons.	Irresponsibles don't follow through on their commitments. They are like grown-up children.
Abandoners abandon themselves. They are afraid of true closeness, they prefer shallow acquaintances.	Critics tend to point the finger outside rather than at themselves. They are easily deceived into thinking they know best and have it all together.	You find yourself picking up after them, apologizing to others for them, making excuses for them, giving them chance after chance.
Some are looking for perfect friends and they will leave when the cracks start showing.	Critics often deeply love truth and righteousness. They are clear thinkers, they are good with information but don't look to them for relationship. They have a hard time admitting their weaknesses.	Irresponsibles are likeable people, there isn't a place in their heads for tomorrow, they are empathic and understanding but it is hard to trust them.
	You will find yourself guilt-ridden, compliant and unable to make mistakes without tremendous anxiety.	Undependable.

UNSAFE	SAFE
Have it all together	Are empathic and act on their empathy
Religious instead of spiritual	Encourage, value and nurture your opinion
Defensive not open to feedback	Respect your "no"
Self-righteous instead of humble	Willing to speak truth, righteousness and honesty
Apologize instead of changing their behavior	Forgiving
Avoid working on their problems	Treat you as an equal
Demand trust instead of earning it	Guard your trust
Won't admit to their faults	Positive influence on you
Blame instead of taking responsibility	Humble - are not afraid to ask for help
Lie instead of telling the truth	Mutuality - giver and taker
Stay stagnant instead of growing	Draw you closer to God and others
Avoid closeness instead of connecting	Accepts you as you are but helps you change
Only concerned about "I" instead of "we"	Loves you through the change
Are easily offended	Are not in denial about their own realities and embrace change in their own lives.
Flatter us instead of confront us	Don't try to "fix" you
Gossip	They understand the gift of presence
Self-sufficient	Instruments in bringing God's healing

{SAFE People for my TRIO}

A sad but truthful reality these days is that when people are hurting they don't run to the Body of Christ for answers, comfort or grace. They fear judgment and canned answers, and don't expect real or solid solutions to their problems. Isolation can leave us running on empty. So we need safe people. The quality of our important friendships can tell us a great deal about how much safety we are receiving. A few qualities to look for:

- Acceptance and grace.
- Mutual struggles, not necessarily the "same" ones.
- Lovingly confronts.
- Has other healthy support systems. (Friends, Bible study/prayer Group, Counselor, Small Group)
- Committed to the TRIO process, understands and embraces the values.
- Mutual interests, a genuine liking.
- Serious interest in pursuing their relationship with God.
- Desiring to grow in all areas of their life.

Second; Pray about it. Start out by praying and "asking" God for discernment, wisdom and direction. Sometimes God will just bring those people to you and you will know it when they present themselves because you have been asking. Stay vigilant in the wait, God is at work for you. Ask God who He has picked out for you. The Spirit will confirm to you whether this is a "right" feel or He may confirm to you that you just need to take an obedience/faith step and go with a certain person.

Third; After praying and hearing God's confirmation, make the "ask". "Ask" and various other forms of "ask" appear almost 800 times in the Bible. You would be surprised at how many people are ready and waiting for someone to just ask them.

Asking the "ask". Sometimes it's difficult to think about walking right up to someone and asking them "want to be my friend?". We as the Body of Christ want to create the culture where making the ask is natural and comfortable. As we function in this healthy way others will see it as a normal part of what it means to be Christian as well. Here are a few suggestions for making the "ask":

- I'm pursuing a deeper relationship with God and I know that means I need other people to help, would you be interested in joining me on this journey?
- I've been praying and giving this some thought and was wondering if you would like to spend some time together in a TRIO deepening our walks with God?
- You are important to me, and I can't think of a better person I would want to join me in a TRIO developing and growing together.
- If you're interested I would like to deepen our relationship in a TRIO. I think it would be fun to spend time with you.
- Our church is doing this thing called TRIOs, when I heard about what they are, it sounded like something I want to pursue, want to look into it and be a part of it with me?

Fourth; Get your feet wet.

- Attend a training or just get the material and study it together. (It's all downloadable off the church website.)
- Understand what you're signing up for. It is imperative that all three participants understand the purpose and expectations of the group to create a safe environment where healing and transformation can take place. Once a threat is perceived, honest communication ceases to take place.
- Commit to each other to keep your conversations confidential.
- Set a time weekly that works for all three of you.
- Make consistently attending your TRIO a priority.

Creating a safe environment is important when people are dealing with their deep emotions. The environment must be safe or the healing process is impeded and people will not be able to see or understand what changes need to take place. Just like no one is able to determine a begin and end date to the grieving process, no two people heal, grow and develop in the same way or at the same time.

Affirmation, validation and encouragement are vital components to a safe, growing environment. We cannot stress this aspect strongly enough. It takes great courage to be vulnerable and transparent, affirming ones feelings and worth, not trying to "fix" the person can be as easy as saying nothing, or thank you for sharing

that. Nothing more needs to be said. Be aware of your "fixing" patterns and wanting to help by simply stating; "I have confidence, you'll figure it out."

"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Don't give unsolicited advice. We have learned that advice not asked for is advice wasted. When we are ready to hear something we will ask, and sometimes it takes God awhile to get us to that point.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is imperative not only in the context of a TRIO but in life. God lumps gossip in with murder, strife, deceit and every kind of wickedness in Romans 1:29, he takes it pretty seriously and so do we. That is why we encourage each TRIO to have a good healthy conversation about confidentiality before entering into this trusted relationship, in doing so you help to guard your hearts. What someone would consider an innocent filling in of details to a friend could be breaking and betraying confidences where the consequences are devastating. Sharing with a spouse because you "share everything" with them can blow up a TRIO. Get permission, ask if it's okay, protect and look out for your TRIO.

"A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret." Proverbs 11:13

"A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends." Proverbs 16:28

I've been hurt by people before, how do I know I'm not setting myself up for more disappointment?

If left for a period of time an ember from a fire will burn out. It is the same with our emotional lives. You may have been hurt and have disconnected from relationships trying to guard your heart from being hurt again. You may have burned out long ago and it just "feels" safer to be disconnected. You know you need people but you just can't make yourself "want" to be around them, let alone get connected again.

God knows how painful it has been and is waiting for you to express that to him. Be honest, identify the reasons of why you don't feel you can do this. The more specific you are the more you can face those reasons head on. Some may be very legitimate and valid, they have allowed you to hide behind them for a long time. As with anything that keeps you from doing something you know to be healthy, it controls you and keeps you powerless. By bringing those fears into the light and bringing them in to relationship you can find healing and power.

Involvement with people is one of the greatest risks a man or woman can take, love requires us to be willing to occasionally feel hurt and rejection again. In a TRIO you will experience grace-filled truth where you can be honest about those hurts, fears and experience forgiveness and eventually power to rise above the hurt and walk in a newness of life.

Why all the structure, it feels so ridged.

A lack of understanding the goals of the structure can prevent us from experiencing the life change that God promises us. Each of us is on a spiritual journey of some kind, and many of us would consider ourselves Christian's to some extent, perhaps not at the same levels of spiritual maturity, but a Christian just the same. But for some, it is a never-ending circle that never seems to graduate into maturation, growth or a changed life. This can be extremely frustrating when you think you are doing everything "right" and obeying all the "suggested forms" of spiritual growth. Studies done by the Barna Research group reveal

"While more than two-thirds of Americans say they are either "religious" or "spiritual," they admit to not being deeply committed to faith matters. Fewer than one in five (18%) claims to be "totally committed" to engaging in personal spiritual development. Further evidence shows that among adults who claim to be Christian, just one out of every seven (14%) say that their faith in and relationship with God is the highest priority in their life. It's natural, although irritating, for people to take a step or two forward only to then lose ground. Depending upon their commitment, they may regain that ground or lose it permanently."

Dr.'s John Townsend and Henry Cloud go on to say:

"By and large people do not change without new structure, the change process must not be left up to the persons controls, the process must include a structured path set in stone, times and practices that don't depend on the persons own whims. but regular meetings with a coach, mentor, support group, trainer or seminar. We must watch and measure. Compliance with a change process is increased with monitoring."

Growth of any kind is more successful when it is intentional and monitored. Life moves very quickly these days, the days slip into weeks, and run into months, that avalanche into years. Intentional living slows that down and makes the minutes count. It allows you to look back and see progress, growth and celebrate your successes. The values or "structure" of TRIOs assists you in daily living and is biblically designed to help inspire, remind, answer life's questions and put purpose into your steps.

Time flies, if you don't capture it you will be caught in a circular cycle of life that will leave you feeling unfulfilled and stuck. Embracing the values of Prayer, God's Word, Accountability and having a P.L.A.N. help you to live life on purpose.

Do we have to do all four values every time we meet?

No, but we highly recommend it. Each value is important to your spiritual growth. There may be weeks when you find that you as a group need to park on a certain value longer than another one. Come together and decide as a group if a particular week you need to give more time to a value, then the following week return to all four values. If we highlight one value as more important than another we end up in our Christian walks with a limp, unbalanced. All four values work together to ensure that you are guarding your heart in a well rounded way so that the evil one cannot attack from a vulnerable, unprotected place in your life.

What do I do if my TRIO starts to become just a social time?

This can happen quite easily and be very frustrating. Knowing the purpose of your journey and being intentional about why you are coming together as a TRIO is critical. Wholeness, transformation and healing are less likely to take place if you are not devoted to its pursuit. In our American culture and Christian circles our goals for happiness, comfort, being accepted, and just having a good time can override our initial goal of completely cooperating with God in experiencing transformation and biblical community.

If you see your TRIO gravitating towards simply a social time together, help to redirect by asking to return to the basics. The values of TRIO are there to help each of us see our needs in life. Restate *your* desire to want to grow and change. They may agree and see how the group has gotten off point. There is always the risk they will take offense and feel judged. You entered into this TRIO to grow because you take your spiritual growth seriously. Some have not counted the cost, others don't always have the same intensity or hit life at the same speed. Give others in the group the option and freedom to express where they are at and don't be afraid to disband your TRIO and try others. Just like changing to a new church, God can release us from current commitments to move us on to the next best thing he has for us. (See: How Do I End A TRIO?)

What am I committing to and for how long?

TRIOs are open ended. They only work because you want them to, they are self-monitoring. This can be uncomfortable for some because you might feel you are stuck in a TRIO for the rest of your life. This couldn't be further from the truth. If something is not being effective in your life, it's time to change; the truth is, if something isn't being 10-20% effective in your life you should change. Life is short - "It's your life - but only if you make it so." ~ Eleanor Roosevelt. How are you going to use your quantity of tomorrows? Being responsible for your spiritual journey is yours to own.

A TRIO is three people brought together by God that desire to grow in all areas of their life. The people in your group decide the when's, the where's, and the how's of your time together. The "what" is established in the material provided either at the resource table of your church or online.

The basic aspects of a TRIO consist of the following:

- Three people in a group of the same gender.
- Peer to peer mentoring, all members of the group are equal and no leader is needed.
- An environment of grace, acceptance, support, discipline, modeling, loving accountability, honesty, integrity, mutual respect, commitment and care is encouraged.
- Meets once a week for 1 1/2 - 2 hours.

The four values of a TRIO consist of the following:

- The Lord's Prayer
- Bible Study Accountability
- Personal accountability questions
- P.L.A.N. or the G.R.O.W. model.

What if a member of my TRIO is inconsistent?

"It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it." Ecclesiastes 5:5

So you have someone that is inconsistent and doesn't seem to take your time together as seriously as you do. Everyone's time is precious, and if left unsaid you can start to resent that person for wasting your time, after all you're a busy person. Look for the following signs as an indicator so that you don't become offended;

- Look for the degree in which you are having to push or drive the process.
- Are all the other members contributing to the group? (ie: Are they doing their "homework?")
- Are they actively trying to grow? Pursuing God's word, listening to podcasts, asking for advice, reading books, hungering and thirsting for God in their lives?
- Are they enthusiastic about coming together or looking for reasons "not" to get together?
- Are you enjoying one another's company?
- Has their life become too busy? Is TRIO becoming less and less of a priority to them?
- Do you have some similar life connectedness or circumstances?
- Do you feel you are nagging them and if you stopped the group would stop as well?

Look for learning growing enthusiasm in a TRIO or you're wasting your time. Have the conversation, be honest and upfront, it could be the "elephant in the room" that everyone is not addressing. Often times we can let something go very bad because we are not willing to talk about the obvious. Be courageous and put it out in the open. Everything has a life-cycle, things come to an end. Don't continue doing what isn't working. Typically the indicators above are simply where people's hearts have been on the inside long before. Generally what has happened is that we see ourselves as the "bad guy" for bringing it up. What can end up happening is that you get resentful trying to be the "nice guy".

People will hang on much longer than they should, inconsistency is often times an outward sign of where their heart really is. It could be time to end it. (See How Do I End A TRIO?)

How do I deal with a domineering person in my TRIO?

Domineering people generally come from a perspective of insecurity. Whether purposefully or subconsciously they are trying to secure and stabilize their environment and surroundings. It did not happen overnight and the reasons can stem from being a victim of abuse to unchecked abusive controlling bullying. They live in a state of uncertainty.

When a person appears to have it all together it will leave you:

- Feeling disconnected. Intimacy is built on sharing weaknesses.
- Feeling "one down". There is an implied superiority in the one that has no need for the other.
- Feeling weaker than one actually is. There is no balance, the weaker one is not allowed to be strong.
- Feeling dependent on the strong one. The weaker one thinks she needs the stronger one to survive.
- Feeling anger and hostility at the "together one".
- Feeling the need to compete to reverse the role. The weaker person feels stuck and fights to change it.

(Taken from Safe People by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend).

Domineering people can back you into a corner feeling like a small child and set triggers off in your own life. This can be an issue in your life as well as the person who is domineering. So first accept and change your perspective and thinking. Domineering people will engage in aggressive and controlling behavior as long as they can get their way or get away with it. A few things to remember;

- Don't take it personally - remove yourself as the victim. Don't take their behavior as a reflection of your self-worth.
- Examine your perspective. A domineering person may be trying to control the situation, be sure that you are not just trying to get your way also.
- Don't participate in their behavior. Don't get sucked in to their past, be objective about their history and frame of reference. Domineering people can be toxic, so be careful not to get swept up in their whirlwind.
- Domineering people may have had to gain control in a world that was chaotic or out of control. They may have had to become this person to survive, a coping skill that was necessary as a child, but no longer services them well.
- Domineering people can see themselves as being loving or helpful, they don't see the extent of their overbearing behaviors. They will continue to do this as long as it is tolerated.
- Confront the person one on one. In a TRIO setting the domineering person might feel attacked if you confront them two on one. If they refuse to see the truth in what you are saying, go to your other TRIO member and prayerfully seek the Lord's will about confronting together. Remember you are not trying to gang up and "set the person straight", you are trying to lovingly help that person see what they do not. The beauty of TRIOs is that it is not just your word against theirs.
- Pray about how to address them. If they are functioning in a mutually healthy way, once you earn their trust they may be open to feedback. Chances are you are not the first to address this behavior in their lives, but as they find you to be safe people, they may be more willing to talk about it and address it.

- If they are open and willing to look at their behavior and be accountable, (one of the values of TRIOS) help to encourage them by doing a book study together. Let them know that together you will support them and help to walk along side as they figure it out.

How do I confront another person if they are in sin without coming across as judgmental and remain a safe person?

Jesus tells us to confront one another's sin:

"Brothers if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." Galatians 6:1.

When we judge we are doing God's job. Remember to;

1. Examine your own heart and motives.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?' First take the plank out of your eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Luke 6:37, 42

2. Identify and empathize with the person, don't place yourself "above" them, but humbly put yourself in the position as a fellow sinner and struggler. Be vulnerable.

3. Don't condemn or shame them. Let the Holy Spirit do the convicting, ask questions that will help bring that individual to their own realization. Grace should precede truth. We can point out other's faults but if they are not convicted by God that what they have done is sin, you will only come across as judgmental and slow the process.

4. Repentance; there is measurable evidence and fruit when someone is repentant.

- a) They can acknowledge what it is they have done and the damage it has caused.
- b) They take responsibility for their actions by confessing it.
- c) They take significant steps to change their behavior.
- d) They take action steps to ask for forgiveness and make amends.

5. Remember the goal is to restore the individual.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

How do I maximize my TRIO experience and serve them better?

The following is adapted from Alan Loy McGinnis' book *12 Rules for Bringing Out the Best in People*:

1. Expect the best from the people in your TRIO.
2. Study and know the other person's needs.
3. Establish high standards for excellence.
4. Create an environment where failure is not fatal.
5. Recognize and applaud achievement.
6. Employ a mixture of positive reinforcement and truthful confrontation.
7. Build into the group an allowance for storms.
8. Take steps to keep your own motivation high.
9. Be consistent in your daily time with God through prayer and God's word.
10. Carry through on your commitments, work your P.L.A.N.

11. Give others dignity by being fully transparent and vulnerable.
12. Keep confidences.
13. See endings as a normal part of TRIO.

How do I end a TRIO?

First of all, you have permission. Sometimes that's all it takes, endings are normal, in order for the "next" thing or the "next new" thing to happen we have to end the present thing.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18, 19

We avoid endings because we are afraid of hurting someone, or because we don't want to confront them. It can be scary having to say something as honest as "I think we have come to the end of this relationship", because we don't know the right words or because we have never done it before in a healthy way. We simply let something go and walk away, leaving people wondering what or if they did something wrong. If something unhealthy goes on for too long, it can fester and get ugly and then we don't want to deal with it. But if we see endings as a necessary part of life and understand that growth demands moving on, then we can do it in a much healthier way. Without moving on people stay stuck.

Sometimes life requires "forced" endings, a loss of a job, a move to another town, over-commitments, a trial run that didn't work, those are the easier ones. But often times we sense God releasing us from good things as well. There is no shame, it's not failure, it just needs to end.

If you are growing and developing then you are creating an "abundance" in your life. A healthy example of this would be when God requires that we give 10%, if we hold on to everything we will get clogged up and stagnant. There needs to be a taking in more and giving away cycle or we get fat. Accepting limits and setting healthy boundaries requires that we replace the good with "other".

We tried and it just wasn't a good match. Some endings are fabulous and in order for the next great thing to take place we have to end this one. It could be an ending that is not even for you, it has to end for the sake of someone else in the group, making it painful for you. Be honest early on about what is working and what is not. Doing this can save a TRIO by bringing health and addressing dysfunction.

A few thoughts to remember about ending a TRIO:

- Everything is a process, things don't happen suddenly, it takes time for people to get to their choices, but someone has to pull the plug or it becomes unhealthy.
- If a person refuses to change, will not accept biblical feedback, isn't being honest, it's time to end the TRIO or ask that person to step out.
- Look for defensiveness, blaming and won't become part of the solution, rationalization, excuses, over-internalizing, misguided anger, or victimization, these are all unhealthy behaviors and it would be wise to direct the person towards a counselor.
- Don't misunderstand boundaries and consequences as unloving behavior. At times the most loving thing we can do for a person is to put up healthy limits so that the person gets help.

- Sadness and tears are normal, there has been much time and energy invested in the relationship so the sense of loss is to be expected.
- Just because a TRIO ends doesn't mean that TRIOs don't work. Depending on your circumstances, it is not good to be alone, start looking for another TRIO when the time is right. The evil one loves for us to be isolated.
- Where do you see yourself in a year, three years, five years? Evaluate as a TRIO each of your vital signs. TRIOs are a support group that will encourage you to get there, or help you reestablish your goals. If they are not the ones that can help you get there, find people that can. We need to measure the things that are important and how we plan to get there.
- As people watch you be intentional about your spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional life it will either spur them on in their own lives or raise fears. Lovingly expect some resistance.
- Validate the others in your TRIO.
- Be sure to learn from the experience. Evaluate what worked and what didn't and use it the next phase of your life.

What is the difference between complaining verses pouring out my heart?

In her book *What Does It Feel Like to Be My Husband*, Linda Dillow recounts this story:

"My wife is always depressed and negative and her complaining gets to me. One day I found myself following a lovely, laughing woman around WalMart - I was embarrassed but it just felt good to be around a happy positive woman."

"Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you." Philipians 2:14-15

So which is it? My TRIO is my sounding board, my confidants, my trusted advisors. You might say, I don't know how I feel or if my feelings can even be trusted until I spill it out with my TRIO and they help me sort it, isn't that the point? The question we need to ask ourselves is: what is my part in the solution? There are definitely times when we need to pour out our disappointments and frustrations to trusted friends. (See Confidentiality and Safe People For My TRIO.) But when it turns into a gripe session or a time to complain about our spouses or other relationships it does not benefit ourselves or help to resolve the situation.

Asking ourselves some of the following questions might help sort through and get to the root of this question:

- Have I poured my heart out to God first?
- How am I taking positive steps to change my situation?
- Do I have a root of anger or bitterness that needs to be addressed?
- What is God's perspective of my circumstances?
- Am I being respectful to the person in the way that I am communicating my problem?
- Have I taken time to journal my feelings and hurt?
- Have I fixed my thoughts on what is true and noble and respectful?
- Is there un-confessed sin in my life?
- Am I being truthful and honest in my communication of the information?
- Am I willing to do what it takes to help solve the problem and willing to listen to the advice I receive from those in my TRIO?

- Am I willing to forgive?

Part of the TRIO process is speaking the truth in love to one another. Not holding others accountable to what is right or allowing the conversation to turn towards a complaint session takes the effort of all three people. Be on your guard to help edify the body of Christ, spur each other on to love and good deeds.