



# TRIOS

Choosing to live life together

so

we learn to live life well.



# INTRODUCTION

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## WHY?

**⚠ Warning:** *If you're interested in a life that is rich and satisfying, and you want to live it well, it will involve people. Your chances of success without them, is zero.*

### **So what makes close relationships so vital to our health happiness and well-being?**

Deep down we know we need relationships. Yet, let's face it, everyone has been wounded, hurt or betrayed by a close friend at some point in our lives. It's these wounds that keep us from reaching out and forming new relationships that could potentially alter the trajectory of our lives in a very positive way. So why should we take such a risk?

1. We enter this world with a God-designed need for acceptance and belonging.
2. We are hardwired to connect with others.
3. We're created to love and to be loved.
4. God made it impossible for us to experience happiness apart from one another.

We were made in the image of God. Within His Triune nature He enjoys a perfect relationship and is self-reliant. Unlike God, humans are neither self-reliant, nor self-sustaining. We need each other to overcome life's difficulties and live abundantly. Ironically, the cause of our pain is the remedy for our cure: **relationships**.

Taken at face value, especially in our rugged, individualistic culture, this sounds “needy” (and being needy is equated with someone being weak).

But the truth is we’re at our strongest (and most like God) when we are interconnected with each and other inner-connected with God.

#### Need more?

Studies confirm meaningful relationships will:

- Validate our self-worth.
- Fill the need of being accepted.
- Lower our risk of mental illness.
- Extend our lives.
- Encourage healthier life choices.
- Help us recover faster, develop us, and give our lives meaning and fun.

### **So why do we naturally tend to resist and isolate?**

Pain, disappointment, and mistrust all lead to isolation, but studies show that shame tops the list. Shame is that terrible feeling of guilt and humiliation when we know our actions just don’t measure up. Shame caused Adam and Eve to isolate from the beginning and we’ve been hiding ever since. Shame demands us to tear ourselves away from those we love the most. We long to connect, but shame starves our souls. And when its work is done, our hearts become hardened, and the cycle is passed to the next generation.

#### Things to remember about shame:

1. We ALL have it.
2. We hate to talk about it.
3. The less we talk about it, the more control it has over us.



## How do TRIOS help me live a rich, satisfying life, and live it well?

# TRIOS

In TRIOS, we confront our innate fear of being KNOWN, and **choose** to live life together, as God intended. If our fears are met with empathy and understanding, then we feel ACCEPTED; which leads us to give and receive grace as God planned. As we grow in a healthy community where we are SUPPORTED, we embark on a new future where we no longer view our failures with contempt and shame. Then, we are finally free to DEVELOP in all areas, and our lives become rich and satisfying, just as Jesus promised.

*"Growth is not only about getting healthy, but about learning ways of living well."*

*Dr. Henry Cloud*



## How does being in a TRIO help me?

Knowing the purpose and goal of your TRIO is critical.

*"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give you a rich and satisfying life."*

*John 10:10*

So knowing that we have a real enemy that is looking to destroy us we need to:

*"I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus is calling us.... He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control." Philippians 3:14, 21*

When it comes to your goals, have you ever felt that you move two or three steps forward only to regress and take a couple of steps back? Are you tired of repeating the same old mistakes, feeling like you're all alone going in circles, constantly on the treadmill of life and getting nowhere? You are not alone! We need a new game plan. It's lunacy to keep doing the same things over and over and expect different results.

Now that we have identified who, (Satan) and know what we're up against, (Shame) we can plan a better offense. Studies have shown that people seldom change without some form of a structured plan, and the success rate increases dramatically when we include others in our process.

Like the athlete who leaves it all on the field, we have to implement a practice schedule and coaches who will help us go the distance. As you invite others to join you on your journey, they will celebrate the wins with you, and challenge and support you when you go through setbacks.

## Four Practices Of A TRIO

Prayer

Scripture

Accountability

P.L.A.N.

All four practices of a TRIO are grounded in Biblical principles and tested through years of real-life experience. Our culture would like us to believe that life can be successfully done alone. Yet, if we believe that doing life well is really about relationships with God and others, then we'll need to adopt these practices as our foundation. Jesus, speaking on this subject taught his followers they should be like a sprawling vineyard where it is impossible to tell where one branch begins and another branch ends and all receive their strength and life from the vine.

## Prayer

Have you ever wondered why Jesus prayed so often knowing that He is God? In fact, the disciples who were the closest to Him marveled at his self-discipline of rising daily to pray while it was still dark.

For Jesus, prayer was as natural as breathing, and a crucial practice to nurture His relationship with His Father. Or in other words, it wasn't self-discipline that drove Jesus to pray, it was because of his love for his Dad. In response, the twelve asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gave the disciples a framework of how to approach our Father on a daily basis. This model provides everything we need to talk with our Father about how to experience a healthy life and the life He desires with us. By using the plural pronoun "our," Jesus emphasized that the Lord's Prayer is meant to be prayed in community as well as individually. Pray this in your time alone with God, and then pray it together with your TRIO.

# The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

**Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.**

Recount God's greatness. Honor God for who He is... Sovereign, Eternal, All Knowing, Always Present, All Powerful, Never Changing, Infinite, Love, Righteous, Gracious, Merciful, Just...

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Recount how God has shown Himself to you this week.

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**May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven**

Respond to God's purpose by realizing that we are no longer citizens of this world, but citizens of His Kingdom. Think about your present circumstances and pray for His perspective rather than yours.

Respond to the purpose God has revealed to you.  
(Loving, serving, giving...)

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**Give us today the food we need.**

Humbly receive God's provision. Notice that the request is for our daily bread, implying that God expects us to come to Him continually for our needs.

What are some specific things you need to ask God for today? (Ex. Bills, healthcare, schooling, activities, vacations, gifts, appliances, transportation, income...)

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**and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**

Relate to God's forgiveness admitting your faults such as: lies, pride, harshness, bitterness, rage, anger, slander, and gossip. Ask God to replace these sins with peace, gentleness, patience, kindness, longsuffering, humility and self-control.

In what ways have you experienced God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others?

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Is God reminding you of a person(s) you need to forgive?

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## **And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.**

We conclude by requesting God's protection. Scripture frequently describes an unseen dimension to our lives, a constant spiritual battle being waged between God's forces and those of the enemy. Since we are always under attack we constantly need to request God's protection. Ask Him to show you where you are especially vulnerable this week.

These may include:

- Substance abuse, alcohol, drugs
- People pleasing co-dependency
- Sexual immorality/pornography
- Devoting too much time to your work
- Food
- Media - TV/Computer games/Social Media
- Vanity
- Materialism, greed, stealing
- Control, pride, jealousy
- Critical spirit, anger, abusive language, unforgiving attitude, bitterness
- Performance, guilt
- Falsehood, slander, gossip

## **Scripture**

Isn't it ironic that we live in the technological age where we have apps that provide instant access to every translation of the bible and search engines to find any verse on demand? Yet, recent studies reveal that bible intake among Christians is at an all-time low.

We deceive ourselves when we believe church services and a verse of the day scrolling across our laptops is enough “spiritual food” to get us through the week. Yet, the primary way that God speaks to us is through His word. That’s why Jesus said: “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matt. 4:4.

TRIOs provide a format that helps the bible come alive, by encouraging each member to develop a bible reading plan. Because of differing levels of maturity of the members in a TRIO, the reading plan may look a little different from one to another. Yet, the end result is always the same.

The goal of reading God's word is not about learning more about Him. Rather, it is the pursuit of truly hearing *from* God and *doing* what He calls us to do. Then, once a week, use the S.O.A.P. strategy (see below) to dig a little deeper. The S.O.A.P. tool is a way of cultivating this dialog with God and provides a format to share it with the others in your TRIO on a weekly basis.

**S** is for Scripture - Seek the Lord as you set up a plan for reading the Bible. Be careful to not allow yourself to be overwhelmed, but choose a plan that will fit into your daily routine without becoming cumbersome or rushed. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are finished, review what portion of scripture particularly spoke to you that day or during the week, and write the scripture down in a journal.

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**O** is for Observation - What do you think God is saying in this scripture? What is the context? Who is the audience? What truth, principle, practice, or priority is being presented? Write your observations in your journal.

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**A** is for Application - Why did this scripture stick out to you? How is God convicting you through it? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how He is asking you to trust and follow Him. Write down your application.

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**P** is for Prayer - Now put your observation and application in the form of a prayer. Ask God to give you the power to follow through on what He is asking you to do. It's about personal walk with Jesus that transforms us.

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# Accountability

Even though, we would all say we need accountability, if we were truly being honest with ourselves; deep down most of us want to live our lives answering to no one, happily being isolated and deciding what's best for ourselves. Accountability dredges up visions of judgment, obligation and nagging.

But God knows us better than that, and living healthy lives does not allow us to become an island unto ourselves.

Biblical accountability strikes the proper balance between grace and truth, acceptance and growth. Biblical community is loving relationships, where Christians can be truly known, accepted, supported, and developed. TRIOs provide a safe place where we invite healthy feedback, where we are willing to agree or accept something that will help us to grow and learn. Submitting to one another doesn't come naturally, but the more we practice it, the more familiar and comfortable we become with it.

The following questions are a slice of real life. Jesus constantly asked hard questions. They were not meant to stir up guilt or shame, but to help people to face the dysfunction and destructive patterns of their lives. In principle these accountability questions are drawn from the loving interaction Jesus had with people.

Go through each question one at a time, giving each TRIO member an opportunity to respond. It is okay if you don't get through every question each week, but make sure that you rotate all the questions, so that you are answering all of them within two or three weeks. The end result should be a greater understanding of your own condition, and God's grace, as opposed to a sense of condemnation. As our inadequacies surface, and we humble ourselves and confess our sins to one another we experience the healing He constantly offered.

*“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” James 5:16*

## Accountability Questions

1. How has someone hurt you? How have you allowed this to rob you of your joy? Are you still angry? Have you worked through the forgiveness process?
2. Have you lacked integrity in your financial dealings? Did you honor God in your giving and spending this week? Have you been jealous about something that is not yours?
3. What are you worried or over anxious about? Have you lost sleep about it this week?
4. How have you represented Jesus Christ to a nonbeliever, both verbally and in action?

5. How have you honored your family and friends?  
Have you spent quality time with them?
6. How have you given in to an addictive behavior,  
pattern or stubborn habit this week?
7. Have you had any flirtatious or lustful attitudes,  
tempting thoughts, or viewed any explicit  
materials, which would not glorify God?
8. Have you told any half-truths? Have you  
avoided disclosing or shared in a way that puts  
you in a better light? Have you spoken badly  
about someone this week?
9. Have you daily-spent time in Scripture and in  
prayer? Is there something God is asking you to  
do?
10. How have you experienced God in your life this  
week? How has your ministry or service been  
used by God to make a difference in your life, or  
the lives of others?

## P.L.A.N.

Peer mentoring calls us to intentional living.

*"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."  
Benjamin Franklin*

We make plans for things we really want to accomplish.  
We make excuses for things we know we need to do,  
but don't want to.

When you stop and observe people whose lives are making a difference, a common characteristic and personal discipline is their intentionality. They don't just wake up and respond to what life throws at them, there is a cause and effect. They ask themselves; what will I eventually be stuck with in the end. If I make this choice, or do that, behave this way, or value that, how will that affect me in the long run? No one decision or singular event will hurt me, but what will it do over time.

Peer mentoring gets us moving on those things we have been avoiding, that have been too challenging, uncomfortable or overwhelming on our own. As you receive input into the barriers and roadblocks of your life that have kept you from making progress, your TRIO can help you see creative and new ways for change, and help set you on a path for how you want your story to read in the end.

Here's how it works; you follow a P.L.A.N.:

- Pick a goal
- List your present reality
- Assess your options
- Now work the plan.

One person takes the role of the Mentor and another the Mentee. The third person observes and gives input where he sees value added.



**P** Pick a desired goal: The Mentor invites the Mentee to choose a desire, a need, or a problem and turn it into a goal by verbalizing and writing out the change they desire. Goals are measurable and attainable.

**L** List your present reality: The Mentor reviews with the Mentee what his/her present circumstances are that they feel are barriers to achieving their goal.

**A** Assess your options: The Mentor and Mentee each take 5-10 minutes to independently brainstorm creative solutions or avenues that would help them reach their goal. Then each one shares what they came up with.

**N** Now work the plan: The Mentee chooses from the two lists the options that make the most sense to them as their plan to follow to reach their goal.

At the end of the P.L.A.N. process, the Mentor asks how the process was helpful, and how they could improve in leading through the process. The following week the Mentee gives a brief update on his/her progress for both accountability and encouragement.

This concept of peer mentoring and mutual leadership is a powerful element in the group as members take turns leading, responding and challenging one another in Christ. In fact, we suggest a good practice is for the one mentoring to lead the group through all four practices that week. We recognize that TRIO members may not always be ready for a new goal every 3-4 weeks. Life is just not that simple. Each TRIO member should feel comfortable to repeat a goal when it is their turn to be the Mentee, using the time to update the TRIO on their progress and then work the P.L.A.N. model again if the plan has been challenging or discouraging.

## Characteristics of A Healthy Trio



### **How does a TRIO measure success?**

Remember that simply following the TRIO model does not automatically translate into spiritual growth or health. Nowhere does the Bible command Christians to form TRIOs or follow special formulas in order to grow closer to God. We do believe that the TRIO model adheres to Jesus' teachings regarding Christian community. We see Jesus utilizing a similar model with His own disciples, grouping together Peter, James, and John.

We believe that the following priorities are important when it comes to evaluating TRIO groups:

### **Commitment, Care and Community**

Healthy relationships consider the well-being of the other person. At its most basic level, commitment promises that the other person's feelings, desires, needs, wants, and thoughts will matter to us. Life change happens in relationship with others. We need one another to grow, they offer something to us that God has deposited and entrusted to them that we need. Grace runs to, and flows out of relationship.

### **Honesty, Integrity and Confidentiality**

Personal honesty (not lying to yourself) and interpersonal honesty (being truthful with others) are crucial for trust to flourish. All relationships thrive on authenticity, but not all relationships require full transparency. People deserve to see who you are. But, honesty isn't the same as blurting out everything we feel, at the moment of its greatest intensity, which can be very destructive. Healthy individuals know it's wise to contain their toxic emotions until they have some time to think through their feelings and pray about how to approach the problem constructively. There are times however, when in a moment of transparency, a statement is made or an opinion given, that just needs time to process and heal. Be wise in understanding that thoughts sometimes need words wrapped around them to begin the process, knowing that with time, God's perspective, and a little grace from your TRIO, God will perfect and complete you. In those times, be sure to keep the processing confidential.

*"A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence." Proverbs 11:13*

## **Mutual Respect and Accountability**

All people, whether we agree or disagree with their behaviors, contain within them the precious image of God. In relationships we must value an open exchange of ideas, feelings, and thoughts considering everyone's perspective important.

*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today", so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." Hebrews 3:12-13*



## **Where do I start?**

### **Attend a Training**

We suggest you attend a training.

- The value of a training is someone who has experienced a TRIO will teach you him or herself. They may have already bumped up against some of the questions that you may have.
- In a training, you will observe the how-to's, as well as be given a chance to actually experience it. You may have heard the saying; *"I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand."* Modeling a TRIO is good, but actually practicing the four principles can be an excellent teacher.

## ● **How do I find the other two for my TRIO?**

Finding those "right" others, can feel intimidating.

- Prayerfully consider who God would have you invest in and reveal your life to. Pray for discernment, wisdom and direction. It will feel a little uncomfortable and risky, but trust that God will lead you.
- It is important to know what safe and unsafe people look like. (See the Rock Point website for TRIOs questions and answers.) We grow by confessing our faults and weaknesses to one another. People are more likely to share their faults and weaknesses in an environment of grace and mercy.
- Seek out someone who:
  - Lives out acceptance and grace
  - Identifies with, or has mutual struggles
  - Lovingly confronts and speaks the truth in love
  - Has other healthy support systems, (Friends, Bible Study, Prayer group, Counselor, Small Group)
  - Is committed to the TRIO process
  - Has serious interest in pursuing their relationship with God
  - Desires to grow in all areas of their life
- As you pray for Trio partners, stay vigilant in the wait. Don't rush the process. The Spirit will confirm the right timing and fit for your TRIO.

- After praying and hearing God's leading, step out and extend the invitation. You would be surprised at how many people are ready and waiting for someone just to ask them. At Rock Point, we want to create the culture where extending the invitation is natural and comfortable. As we lead and function in this healthy way, others will see it as a normal part of what it means to live life together.

**A few suggestions for how to extend an invitation to join your TRIO:**

*"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 walk 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 together 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 it I thought of you. It sounded like something I wanted to pursue. Want to look into it and be a part of it with me?"*

- Get your feet wet. Jump in. Take the plunge.

### ● **Understand what you're signing up for.**

It is important that all three participants understand the purpose and expectations of the group to create a safe environment where healing and transformation 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 best 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 beginning and end date to the grieving process, no three people heal, grow and develop in the same way or at the same time.

- A journey into intimacy takes 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 move towards vulnerability and transparency. Affirming ones feelings and worth, and not trying to "fix" the person can be as easy as saying nothing, or saying "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."
- Be careful to not give unsolicited advice. Advice not asked for is advice wasted. Most of the time people are inviting you into their lives to see if you care, not to see if you can fix them. In reality we are looking for a safe place to share our pain.



# **Your First Time Together**

## **Telling Your Story**

One of the best ways to create an environment of safety and being known is to tell *your* story. Some TRIOs have felt awkward just jumping into the practices without really getting to know each other. In the first week or two take time in your meeting to share your stories with one another. To prepare for sharing, consider using a timeline. List significant events, being sure to include the positive experiences and accomplishments, as well as the painful details. We have found that for some, sharing their stories has been one of the most emotionally healing times for them. It's amazing when we stop long enough to care and hear someone else's story, how impactful that can be in someone's life.

## **Expectations**

Take some time to talk about your expectations: what you are hoping the outcome will be, what your goals and desires are, what some of your present realities and needs are that have brought you to this place. Share what you are expecting of each other, and what some of your disappointments have been in the past.

## **Time**

Take time to make time. The success of your TRIO depends on your expectations and time commitment. Be sure that you are all on the same page with this. The more you invest, the greater the yield. We have found that it takes about 1.5 to 2 hours, to get through all the practices. Be sure to honor each other by stopping at the agreed upon time. Meeting weekly helps with consistency and doing life together. Too much life can happen if you choose to meet less often, and then much of your time together is spent catching up.

## **Guidelines and Confidentiality Agreement**

At Rock Point, we believe that by choosing to live life together in a TRIO, we learn to live life well. In this intimate and safe environment we can be known, accepted, supported, and developed.

# TRIO Covenant

I covenant with the other members of my TRIO to hold and guard the confidences they have entrusted to me with honor, respect and trust. Realizing that my role is not to advise, fix, or rescue others, I will respect their boundaries, listen well, with empathy and compassion. I commit to be honest, vulnerable and transparent with them as well, knowing that trust goes both ways.

I commit to meeting regularly and honor each member's time. I will value the other's opinions and weigh them against the truth of God's word. I will speak the truth in love, and will not shy away from my responsibility as a TRIO member to do so. I will listen to what my TRIO members have to say with a humble heart, when they speak truth into mine. I covenant to myself and God to always inquire of Him before making any decisions.

I understand that the values outlined in the TRIO manual are important aspects of my spiritual journey towards transformation. I commit to the process to the best of my ability. I understand there will be times we cannot get to each practice, but I commit to the process and the goal of spiritual transformation.

If my goals become something different than what we have agreed to, I will discuss it with my TRIO and work together on an exit strategy.

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Day of the week we will meet: \_\_\_\_\_

Begin time: \_\_\_\_\_ End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Date (3 months after start date):

\_\_\_\_\_

We covenant and agree to these expectations.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Exit Strategy

### **How do I end a TRIO that isn't working?**

(In a grace-filled way.) First of all, you have permission. Sometimes that's all it takes, endings are normal.

We avoid endings because we are afraid of hurting someone, or because we don't want to confront them.

It can be hard having to say something as honest as; "I think we have come to the end of this Trio relationship" or "This Trio isn't working". It is important to be honest early on as to what's working and what's not. If a Trio is no longer fulfilling its purpose, it is time to re-evaluate the group's commitment. If we see endings as a necessary part of life and understand that growth demands moving on, then we can move on in a much healthier way.

Be honest early on about what is working and what is not. Doing this can save a TRIO by bringing in health and addressing dysfunction. If you are further down the road, consider a few of the following in deciding if you should consider ending your 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 or isn't being honest, it's time to end the TRIO or ask that person to step out.

- Look for defensiveness, blaming, rationalizing, excuses, over-internalizing, misguided anger, victimization and/or an unwillingness to become part of the solution, 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.