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The "Three Trees" Journal



1. **"Heat"**: What was a situation that upset me?



Why would a loving heavenly Father allow this situation to touch my life?

2. **"Thorns"**: How did I react? What did I think, feel, say, and do?



What further consequences (to myself, others, the situation) resulted from my initial words or actions?

3. **"Heart"**: What did I *want*—I might even have called it a *"need"*—that I wasn't getting? Phrase this in categories rather than in terms of the specifics of this event (for example, *"respect"*, rather than *"Billy to not talk back"*).



Whatever I want more than pleasing God is called an "_____". My idol here was _____.

4. **"Cross"**: What truths about God's character and His salvation/redemption relate to this incident?

Specifically:

- How do God's (1) **power**, (2) **wisdom**, (3) **love**, and (4) **grace** relate to this incident?
- When did Christ experience similar "heat"? How did he respond? Can he understand me?
- What resources has Christ given me to respond as he did?
- What "Gospel Truths for Heart Change" (see reverse) relate to this incident?



In light of Christ's suffering and forgiveness for me, I will now respond:

- by asking forgiveness of the person hurt by my thorns.
- by asking God's forgiveness for my idolatry.

5. **"Heart"**: What would a heart be attached to if it truly believed these gospel realities? What godly "wants" and "needs" will contrast with the "thorn-tree heart"?



"I agree that I want a Christ-centered heart." Y N

6. **"Fruit"**: What godly beliefs and behaviors—in contrast to the "thorns" above—would flow from this heart? What must I now "put on"?

(Ephesians 4:22-32; Colossians 3:12-17)



Gospel Truths for Heart Change

- I am married to Christ; all of His assets (resources) are available to help me. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- Because I'm married to Christ, the core of my life is spiritual purity. (Romans 3:22)
- God began a good work in me, and He will complete it. (Philippians 1:6)
- Soon I will be with Christ and my struggle to obey will be over. (1 John 3:1-2)
- I have the Holy Spirit in me to help me: I do not have to sin. (Romans 6)
- My life on earth is preparation for heaven. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)
- Jesus has justified me: in God's eyes I'm not guilty. (1 John 2:1)
- Jesus gives me wisdom in my foolishness and blindness. (1 Corinthians 2:15-16)
- I'm powerless and enslaved apart from Christ: He liberates and empowers me. (Philippians 4:13)
- I'm crucified with Christ; He lives through me. (Galatians 2:20)
- Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me. (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 5:2)
- My heart is new because Christ lives there. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
- My old heart of stone has been replaced by a moldable heart: I can change. (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- The cross bought me access to God: I can cry out to Him for help in my struggle. (Hebrews 4:16)
- Jesus faced every temptation and struggle I am facing: He understands. (Hebrews 2:18, 4:15)
- Jesus never sinned in His responses to temptation and struggle: I have a model. (1 Peter 2:21-25)
- Jesus fills me with His Spirit; I have power to respond as He did to challenges. (Galatians 5:16-25)
- Jesus forgives me when I fail to respond as He wants me to. (1 John 1:5-10)
- Someday I will be perfectly like Him. (Romans 8:30)
- Jesus asked for different circumstances, but affirmed God's will over His own—He did this for me, and calls me to do it for others. He died so that I would live for Him, not for myself. (Luke 22:42; John 13:13-17; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
- I've been forgiven freely, generously, lavishly—this is how I'm to forgive others. (Ephesians 1; 4:32)
- My life is not my own: He bought it and it belongs to Him. (Romans 14:8)
- My goal is to please Him, and I can learn how to do that. (2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10)