

TRANSFORMATION

As we talk about bringing renewal to our communities, it's helpful to consider some tools we can use to move and grow together. The transformational triangle helps to give us clarity on the important aspects that bring about change in our lives, and how important it is for us to stay connected to the whole story of God's Mission.

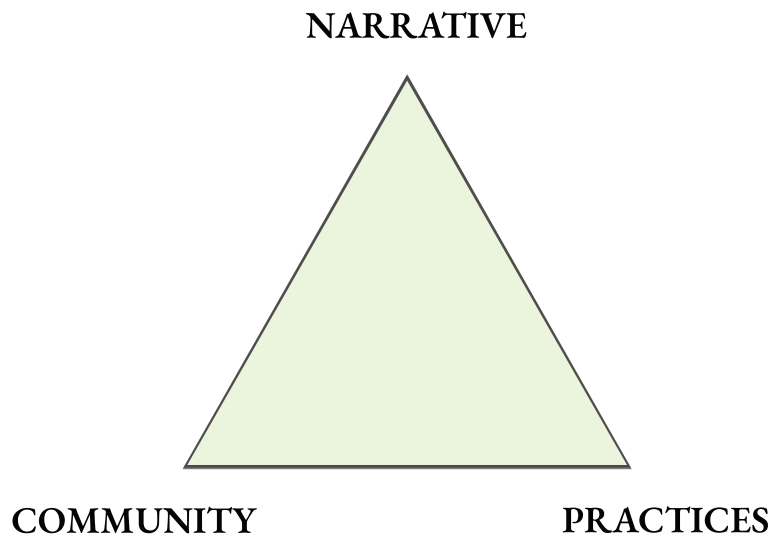


Transformation requires three things:

Narrative - The story we tell ourselves determines where we go and what we do

Community - We need people around us to make effective and lasting change

Practices - The actions we take structure and form our lives



This triangle is used successfully by many organisations. Weight Watchers is a great example to explore so that we can see how it works.

Narrative - Each individual attending is invited into a powerful success story of a new life and opportunities.

Community - Weekly weigh-ins allow people to build relationships with the organiser and people attending, celebrating and encouraging one another on the journey.

Practices - Weight Watchers guides people to take actions to achieve their desired goal. An app informs you of what you can and should eat. Each person is taught about food and nutrition and given the opportunity to expand their knowledge of cooking. The person's life becomes centred on these practices as a new way of living and eating.

Together these three elements lead to success and powerful stories of transformation, so much so that Weight Watchers is worth around £1.2billion.

So how does the Transformational Triangle relate to the Church?

The Missio Dei is the belief that there is a bigger story to tell: a fuller narrative of the arc of scripture that gives us a full understanding of our lives here on earth and how to partner with God. But we often only tell half the story. It's vital for us to direct our lives under the full narrative of God's Mission because otherwise the Church does not thrive to her full potential.

When we tell the narrative of God's activity as FALL and REDEMPTION then the community and practices we develop look like this:

Narrative: We live in a fallen and broken world. We are separated from God by sin and everyone needs the Saviour, Jesus to rescue them and save them. We have been saved by grace, through faith in Jesus and this leads to us having eternal life in Him.

Community: We love each other and seek to help each other stay on track and to love God and each other. We are waiting for God to come and to take us home. Community is functional and based on our desire to be somewhere else - Heaven. The community may hold views on the rules and what is right and wrong - for example, regarding the consumption of alcohol.

Practices: Our discipleship is based on avoiding sin and doing the right things. We practise spiritual disciplines as a way to secure our beliefs and avoid problems. Discipleship, however, is shallow as it's about avoidance of problems rather than celebration of who we are in Christ.

This all outworks from the narrative we hold on to. This is why it is so important that we get hold of the whole story. Our communities and practices will be changed by what we believe and the story we place ourselves within.



If we take the fuller view of the biblical story and start in Genesis 1 and end in Revelation 21 then we get this picture:

Creation | Fall | Redemption | Renewal

Narrative: We are broken and fallen and we need Christ. Christ is redeeming us and bringing us back to our original intention - the cultivation of life on earth for the glory of God. We get to join God in the renewal of all things and this permeates through literally everything. It shapes the way we live, work, relate, rest, give and receive.

Community: We love each other and cheer each other on in purpose, gifts, talents and expressions of God's goodness that each of us bring. We all have a contribution to make to the renewal of all things. Discovering this and encouraging one another is a big part of our community. We gather and celebrate God and His work in and through our lives. The community is the equipping space for learning to live and love well.

Practices: Our practices are based around our belief that we are called with purpose to be loved by God, to love Him in return and to love the world around us through meaningful participation. Knowing ourselves and our purpose informs our spiritual practices as it leads us to the Father in delight and intention. Our practices are formed around the belief that God is good and He has good things for us as His children. We get to partner with God in the renewal of all things, this happens when we know Him and allow Him to love us.

If we develop a clear view of the narrative and story we are in, then the communities we develop and the practices we engage in will change. Transformation of towns, cities and nations is possible as each person lives out of this narrative and together as communities we live deeply and intentionally for God.