



# Divine Transformation

**Concluding Remarks**

Rebecca DeYoung

May 2025

# The “How” of Human Transformation

Drawn into the life of the **Trinity**—shared divine nature, differentiated persons

- Interpersonal **communion** or union (“indwelling Spirit” “in Christ”)
- Cooperative **co-agency** of distinct persons
- For **true flourishing** (“life together”)



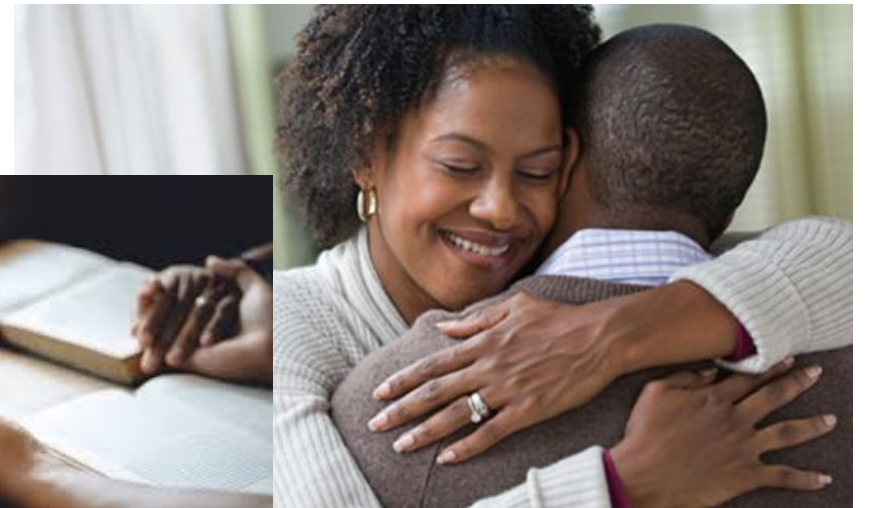
Some Current Cultural Alternatives & Their Missing Pieces

1. Self-help, neo-Stoicism—self-powered self-mastery
2. Algorithms & advertising—manipulated by marketing
3. Therapy—searching for healing, fulfillment = ?
4. Cinematic shaping stories—a danger: passive spectators, captivating fantasies





# Transformation: *in person, as persons*



# Paper Themes: the role of \_\_\_\_ in transformation

Places

Practices

Postures

People

Problems

...Possibilities

# Places: “Sanctuary” and “Crucible”

Places that make **connection** possible:

- Quiet, undistracted spaces
- Natural settings
- Mature, authentic, safe relationships



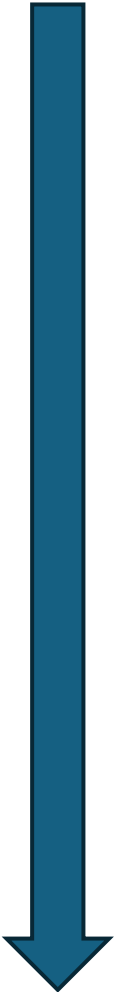
Places that make **reorientation/integration** work possible:

- In times of discomfort/crisis/cognitive dissonance, we need a “container”, something stable to hold us during change



# Our Virtue **Practices**: initiated, directed, & empowered by God

- God's self-revelation of wisdom & self-giving love      The **FONT**  
**grace-elevated** capacity to know, will      source
- Everyday ways of life: sanctified, reshaped practices      **Formation**  
**Spirit-empowered, Spirit-enlivened**      process
- Coming to sharing Christ's character      **Fruition**  
*for the sake of* life together in community      end  
**supernatural, shared end**



# Reimagining virtues as social practices

- Practical wisdom: seeing *with*
- Justice: seeking the shalom of the world *with*
- Courage: solidarity in suffering *with*
- Temperance: regulating sensory desire *with*

**Cooperative:** Spirit-shaped, communally carried out

“In Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:5)

# Transformative **Postures** reflecting 3 facets of the human **position**

- Humility-submission *silence, stillness, surrender*
- Fear of the Lord *open to transcendence*  
*as creatures in the Creator's hand taking instruction, correction*
- Longing-desiring-seeking *practicing the presence*
- Acquaintance-knowing/being with *listening, delighting in*  
*as beloved lovers attending/attuning*
- Acceptance *resting in mature fellowship*
- Attachment *images of God: foster trust*  
*as children of God*



# People: learning from being with Jesus how to be with each other

- Loving presence  
We learn to see & love ourselves and others **by *being seen & loved***
- Secure attachment—comfort, challenge, coherence, closeness
- Deep growth—**tolerance of suffering**, tolerance of uncomfortable or unanswered questions, tolerance of difference, tolerance of mystery

“Spiritual surrender is only possible (or wise)  
**to someone who feels trustworthy enough.**”

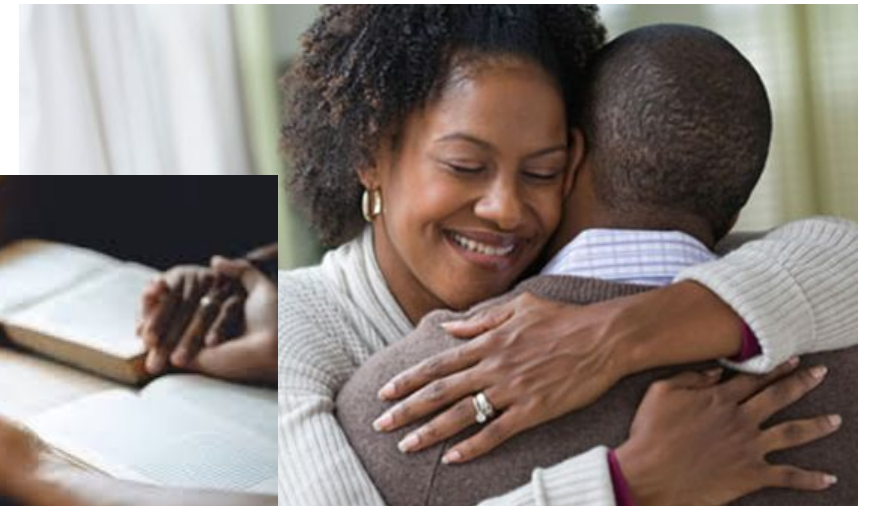
-Elizabeth Oldfield, *Fully Alive*

# A Reminder: we are Embodied People

## How do **bodies** matter in spiritual transformation?

- limits of bodily capacities, vulnerability, sleep, suffering, aging, death
- faces and screens: what catches our attention, eye contact
- physical touch and taste—Jesus ate with people, touched to heal them
- physical movement singing/ embracing/ dancing/ reciting
- physical spaces and colors (light/dark, spacious/intimate, beautiful)
- music, memory, viscerally experienced emotions (the Psalms)
- attention-span: stories, images and objects
- pace, developmental capacities

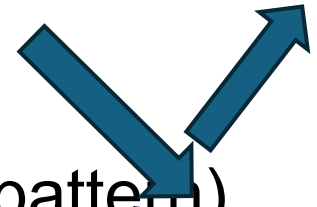
# Transformation—in the flesh





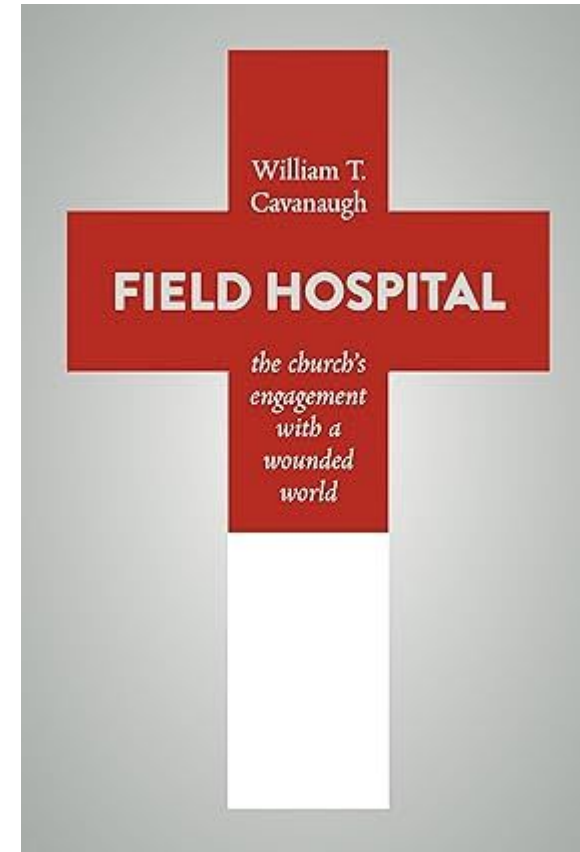
# The Transformative Role of Problems

- Trials and suffering: crisis & conflict create cognitive dissonance (waiting on the Lord—not yet answered prayer)
- Rebuke and correction, repentance
- Humiliation and dying to self (participation in the Phil. 2 pattern)
  - Problems can function as opportunities to...
    - integrate** reflective articulation (head) with inhabited experience (heart)
    - expand our narratives** about God, self, world
    - empower us to suffer with** others who need consolation





# “A field hospital for healing the wounded”

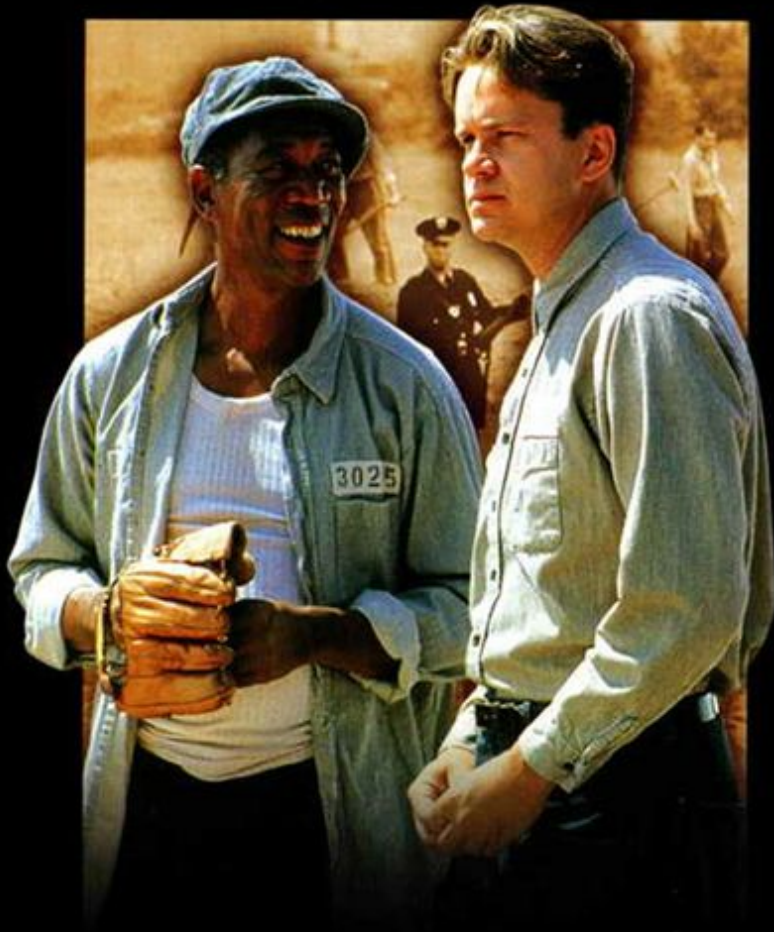


# Possibilities...ways to grow, things to learn

- Christian community as a rich resource
  - Offer **Christ-centered** connection—not mere conformity, closed in-groups, culture-wars
  - **New forms** of community—singles, mentorships, partnerships in public spaces
  - **A different cultural role**—solidarity with the weak/vulnerable (e.g. early church)
- Learning **healthier relational patterns** (e.g. RSM)
  - Christian churches need **basic training** + **more articulacy** for mature function
  - Become secure places to keep growing: smaller groups, deeper work, humble authenticity
- Intentionally shaped sites, spaces, **social structures** to facilitate spiritual transformation
  - “Choice architecture”: what are we implicitly encouraging?
  - Crafting spaces and social systems **bent toward connection** (Thaler and Sunstein, *Nudge*)

FEAR CAN HOLD YOU PRISONER... HOPE CAN SET YOU FREE

# THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION



TIM ROBBINS MORGAN FREEMAN

## The transforming power of friendship

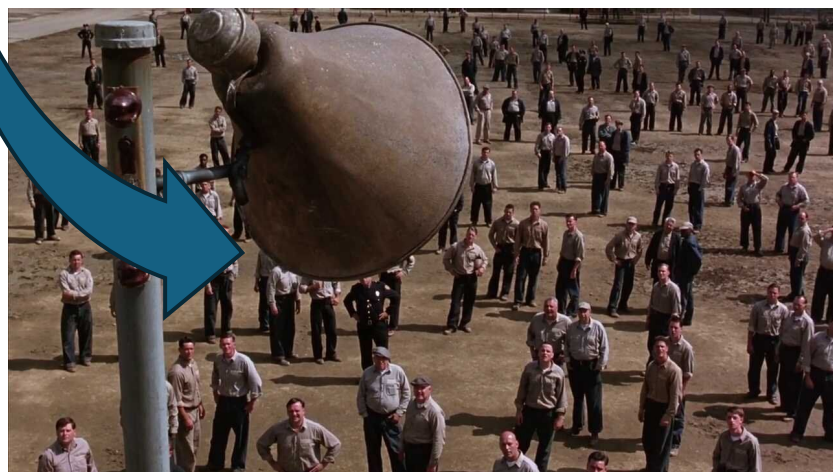
("Practicing Hope")

---





FRIENDSHIP  
Identity  
found  
through  
fellowship



**Who is transformed in this story? How is he transformed?**



Wisdom, loving presence, correction, &  
shared practices: growth toward full  
humanity



Fulfillment = communion, life  
together with the loved friend



# How does friendship with Andy transform Red?

- Suffering together: builds solidarity + strips away false happiness
- Presence of a genuine friend: attentiveness, listening, being with (connection, attachment)
- Seeing one's full humanity and teaching others to see it also
- Envisioning transcendent, self-enlarging goods beyond what can be seen (the world outside, the sea) (reorientation, imagination)
- Establishing supporting structures that facilitate growth, daily practices pointing to world outside (library, music)
- Going on ahead, giving instructions & naming landmarks, describing a shared destination (role modeling, instruction, signs/names—articulacy)
- Providing emotional and physical resources that empower for the journey (personal letter, money for a bus ticket: 'works of mercy')
- Practices of remembering—recalling and recounting their shared history
- Willingness to be dependent, take someone's word, accept assistance offered (vulnerability, risk, humility, faith, trust/reliance)
- Willingness to follow in footsteps, driven by an already-kindled desire for communion (love)

# Transformation together, for life together

- Abide in me... bear good fruit.




- “I no longer call you servants but friends.”

- Transformed people nourish others' transformation.
- Make manifest to others the transforming love of God and the life we have with God
- Welcome others into communion
- Stay rooted in prayerful reliance:  
“Apart from me you can do nothing.”

A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

# Philippians 1:9-11

“And this is my prayer,  
that your love may abound more and more  
in knowledge and depth of insight,  
that you might discern what is best,  
and may be pure and blameless for the  
day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness that  
comes through Jesus Christ,  
to the glory and praise of God.”

A series of blue dashed lines are located in the bottom right corner of the slide, forming a curved, upward-pointing shape.