



## An R-Group Assessment

# THREE DYNAMICS REQUIRED FOR GROWTH

The material in this document can be used during an R-group meeting for you as a group to assess how your group is going and the extent to which the group is on track with the goals and principles of the Cross Ministry Group. It could also be used over the course of three meetings, where the group deals with one of the dynamics at each meeting.

We believe the three dynamics discussed below are important as we continue on the path of personal and corporate transformation. This material will be most beneficial if you provide it to the other group members ahead of time and if everyone reads it ahead of time. There is too much material here to use as a teaching piece during the group, though you could read or highlight smaller sections. Begin the discussion time by getting the group members general reactions to the material in this document that they read prior to the meeting. Then move into the specific questions for whichever principle(s) you are covering. You could also develop physical and experiential processes around these dynamics. Remember, this is a tool for assessing how your group is functioning, so keep the discussion on track with that intent.

## **DYNAMIC #1 - SURRENDER/SUBMISSION**

Surrender (or submission) is required in order to enter into any type of growth experience. In the context of the work we do, surrender often expresses itself through an act of risk, where we choose to fully engage the process, the group, and God. We see this on the MATC and WATC weekends. We also see it in counseling relationships, in marriages, and in friendships. This is a voluntary surrender that is critical to the positive outcome of any growth opportunity.

Western culture does not value submission or surrender. We live in an independence-oriented society, where the goal is often to be autonomous, not interdependent, and not yielding to others. It is the overly confident self – which is false – which believes that it can manage everything in life on it's own. “I've got this” is the illusion that pervades this self. Oftentimes, God uses crisis

or struggles to reveal to us that we are simply human - that we are dependent on Him and in need of others.

When we surrender or submit, we acknowledge that we are not in control. Whether in a marriage, a small group, an intensive weekend encounter, or any kind of relationship committed to growth, surrender is required in order to engage the “process” (whatever opportunity for growth is presented).

When we create processes for our R-groups, one purpose is to help us deal more intentionally with that part of us that still insists on being in control – that part which believes that there is no need to submit or surrender because “I’ve got this” and “I will handle it the way I always have.” Thus, in order for a process to be effective, it should include a risk that the group members must take - a choice they must make to voluntarily engage the process, the group, and God.

We can also think of the act of surrender in relationship to the flow of a typical R-group meeting. During the **outside check-in** and the **sacred space time**, we are inviting and offering men and women the opportunity to surrender to what God has for the group that night, to submit to the process of growth that may take us to places we resist going. Through the outside check-in and the sacred space times, we invite the group members to step over the threshold into a sacred space where God is at work and where we are not in control.

**Quote to Reflect On:** “The person who must always be in control and autonomous will not be able to access healing and transformative process. If you cannot submit, you cannot die, and if you cannot die, you cannot get reborn.” Robert Moore, *The Archetype of Initiation* (p. 47)

### **Scriptures for Reflection:**

James 4:10: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

### **Discussion Questions:**

What comes up for you around this principle?

How have we been doing as a group at creating opportunities for risk and for voluntary submission to a process with the group and with God?

How could we as a group improve at applying this principle?

How are you resisting surrender in your life currently?

## DYNAMIC #2 - SACRED SPACE/GOD'S PRESENCE (CONTAINMENT)

Being “contained” or “held” in sacred space – the place where we yield to God’s presence – creates the necessary dynamic for us to confront our insistence on being in control and our brokenness. This container – this sacred space – enables us to experience “what is.” This reality, covered over by our false selves and muddled by our broken humanity, is what we must connect to and expose to God’s presence and to the presence of trusted others. This is oftentimes the place of our suffering. It is our own Gethsemane experience where we are confronted with surrender and letting God meet us in our fears, our shame, our sadness, our need – our place of suffering. For so many of us, we have been avoiding this place. It is oftentimes a fearful place and painful to experience.

The reality of “what is” in us is a terrifying place for a human attempting to be God. When, as an R-group, we enter into a sacred space together - the place where God contains or holds space for us - and allow “what is” to surface in a man or woman in the group, there is an invitation for us to let go and to actually be human and to face everything about our humanity. There is an opportunity for us to face our history, our experiences, our wounds, our personality, our convincing illusions, and our deepest longings. This requires courage. We discover this courage as we are held in the container by God and others. In this container we discover God’s love and action within us. The fear and pain give way to the fruit of God’s Spirit. We transform.

Part of our reality as humans is that, when we choose to not face our reality – and all that it entails – we develop all manner of coping mechanisms, many of which are revealed as false selves. Our core humanity requires us to meet our needs for safety and security. If we will not yield to the One who is our Safety and Security, then we will try to create a semblance of these on our own in false ways!

When we choose, however, to step into sacred space (the container) we can feel supported and consequently inspired to courageously remain in this space long enough for us to meet God. In that space, we are free to experience, bit-by-bit, what is real – our story, our pain, our longings, our sadness, our shame, and our deepest needs. The container provides what we cannot do on our own because we were not meant to be alone in our humanity. God is our Source. He is our Container. The group represents that for us physically and tangibly. Ideally, this dynamic will play out during the **inside check-in**, the **work round**, or the **group process** during the typical r-group meeting.

A safe container resembles a mother’s womb (Moore, 65). God is not only our Father, but He is our Mother as well. In the safe place of the mother’s womb, all of the nourishment and

protection is lovingly present for a new birth. Much of what is offered in some Christian circles is the kind of “mothering” which actually inhibits a child from growing in a healthy way. In fact, there are very dedicated systems of Christian thought which would attempt to, unwittingly, to prevent God’s people from suffering. We see this in our very sincere prayers and comforting of one another as we call out to God to deliver us from any bad feeling or difficult experience. A wise mother will allow her child to be confronted with the difficulties and struggles in order to learn how to confront them throughout life. Those mothers who would spare their child the very human experience of difficulty and disappointment or suffering rob the child of the necessary “initiation” into the reality of life. The true calling of the Church is to be a safe, sacred container which is at the same time a welcoming place and a challenging place for its people to encounter God’s grace in ways that liberate us to be mature in Christ.

Most of us have not been taught how to be present to reality. We have not been shown the way to stay in sacred space – the container which is God’s presence – long enough to know Him in the midst of our broken humanity. And so, here we are as adults, Christians for many decades, just now learning how to bring our humanity into the presence of God that we might experience His love and action within. A significant part of the effectiveness of Men and Women at the Cross has been the container we create on our weekends and in R-Groups which provide for us the needed “container” for us to confront our reality – to feel it, to experience it – terror and all – and surrender to God’s love. This is the heart of transformation.

Understanding the importance of “the container” will help us to more fully commit to keeping the container strong. Note that the container must lead us to that “holy ground” which is so unfamiliar that it might terrify us (which is what many people experience on the weekends). To do this, the container must remain “hot” or “at the edge” in order for people to be drawn into a place where they can finally surrender and face what is within with all of the terror that might bring. In a safe container people will be inspired to take risks and stay in the container long enough to “let go” and discover other possibilities for life.

A container that is too “loose” or detached from clear and consistent intentionality does not provide the needed environment for people to take risks and move toward transformation. Whenever we lose the “edge” or become lukewarm as a container – whether on a weekend, in an R Group or in relationships – it is less likely that we will be inspired to take risks and stay in the container long enough to “let go” and discover other possibilities for life.

### **Scriptures for Reflection:**

John 12:24: “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

### **Discussion Questions:**

How is our group doing at providing a safe, sacred container for personal growth?

How do our meetings provide an environment that takes the group members to the edge? Are the meetings “hot” or “lukewarm”?

How is our group creating opportunities for the members to bring their core broken humanity into the light and risk connecting to God’s presence?

How are you choosing to embrace your own “Gethsemane” moments? What is one Gethsemane situation in your life currently?

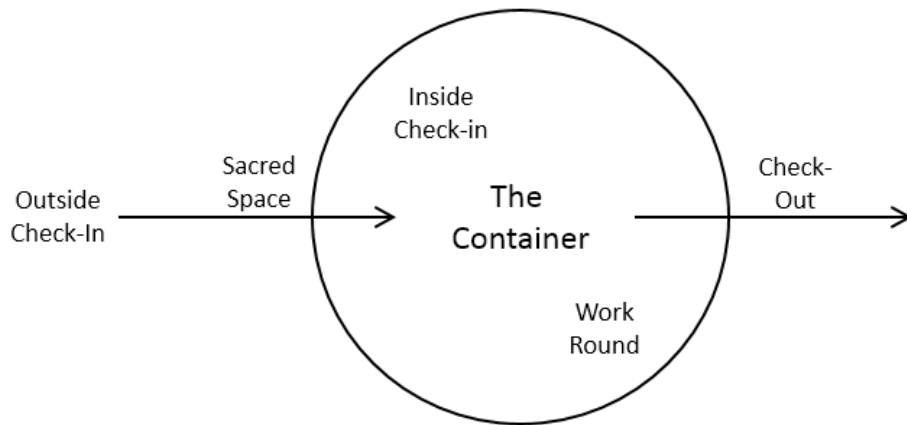
### **DYNAMIC #3 - PUTTING INTO PRACTICE (ENACTMENT)**

Through increased awareness we are confronted with areas of our life where we need to surrender. To aid us in this journey we find places – sacred spaces – where we confront what is within us in the presence of God and others. We choose to stay in this place by receiving the courage and love that is present within the container of God’s presence. This presence is oftentimes mediated by intentional and wise community. As we surrender, yielding to God’s love and action in our reality, we are now called to take action. This action is an enacting of our new way of being as a result of having been met by love and power.

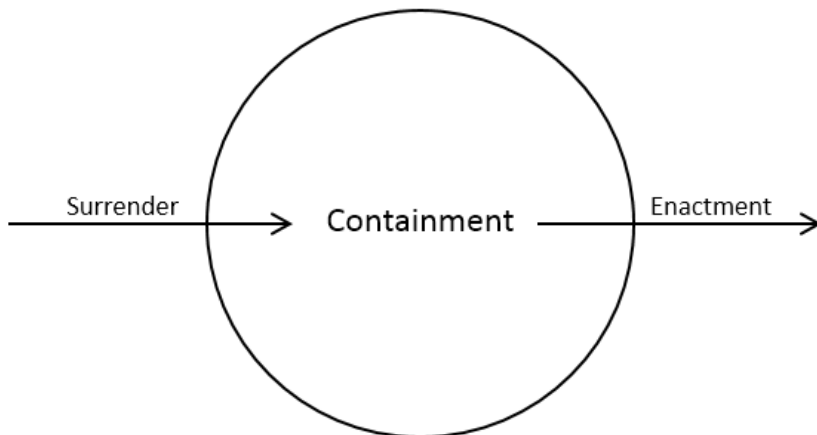
On our weekend events, we provide opportunities for people to begin to show up in a new way, “to practice” a new way of being. The container is safe enough to experiment embracing a new truth, a more mature action. The weekend experience is one where people, staff and attendees, are taken out of their comfort zone enough to where they are willing to risk “letting go,” even if just a small amount, and to connect to some new belief or action.

The small group experiences, the Rock Work, the processes and rituals all provide an opportunity for people to “enact” or to practice a new way of being – someone who is open, authentic and more closely aligned with the truth. The weekend is just the beginning. This is why R-Groups are so critical. The intention of R Groups should be to “hold space” for surrender, to embrace the container, the sacred space where we meet God and to then “enact” or practice a new way of being. A life giving R-Group will create these dynamics consistently so that what came to life on a weekend can now grow into maturity.

In being a part of an R Group (or a weekend) we are submitting – surrendering to the process. The R-Group embodies the Container who is God – who is safe and gives us courage to surrender to reality and risk exposing all that is within us to God and others. The Container is the place we are transformed. We risk living out our transformation in the safety of the container where we practice being human, trusting, being strong, being broken, risking, and most of all, being the beloved. This practice in the context of the container impacts our life outside of the container, in all of our relationships, where we are called to “enact” a new way of being – the life of the new creation – which we are in Christ. In the context of an r-group, the **outside check-in** leads us and sends us out of the container and back into our daily lives where we enact what we have practiced in the container. Thus, we have the following structure for a typical R-group meeting:



This structure follows the progression of the three dynamics required for growth.



**Discussion Questions:**

In what ways is our group providing opportunities for men or women to practice a new way of being in the world?

A note from Bob Hudson: The three dynamics explained in this document are inspired by Robert Moore's insights from "The Archetype of Initiation." Although Moore does not explain these thoughts from an obviously Christian perspective, his words resonate with biblical truths. As I read Moore's book, I saw how clearly these principles have been at work in MATC and WATC from the beginning (See pages 61-69).