

DECLARATIONS



OLD ME / NEW ME

Life is filled with choices. Here's one:

Will I live according to the *old me* or according to the *new me*?

By now, this question carries weight. Early on we discovered that central to the gospel, the *euangelos*, is the giving of a new heart. By grace, we become new people. The purpose of this *Morph* experience is to inspire and strengthen *new me* living. If living from the *new me* was entirely inevitable, this *Morph* experience would not be necessary. But it's not inevitable. We make choices every day.

Interestingly, not only do we choose to live from the *old me* or to live from the *new me*, but we also make choices of whether we will train the *old me* or train the *new me*. These decisions may or may not be a factor of right versus wrong. The decisions may be acceptable but unhelpful. Four hours of television, for example, may or may not involve sin, but either way, it may not be helpful. What follows is an exercise that will feel risky. It will feel risky because you will be asked to be honest with *old me* patterns in your life. Yes, this means sin. And yes, this means more than sin. It will be tempting to give partial answers to the questions. You may find yourself willing to write some *old me* patterns but hesitant to write others. As you go through the questions, consider the current opportunity. *Old me* patterns are destructive. *New me* patterns keep step with the Spirit and produce fruit of the Spirit in your life. We want peace, joy, and self-control, but often, we engage life in a way that decreases rather than increases fruit of the Spirit. By engaging this exercise honestly, you may very well establish *new me* patterns that will strengthen real living rather than erode it.

After identifying both *old me* and *new me* patterns and influences, you will be asked to create brief *Declarations*. These *Declarations* will feel a bit like *Affirmations* but not exactly. Essentially, they are decisions you will make about the way you genuinely want to live. So as you go through this exercise, listen for the voice of God. How is he speaking to you? What convictions are gaining strength? How might you live differently after this exercise from the way you were living before?

Be bold.

Be thoughtful

Be prayerful.

And as always, feel free to color outside the lines, but if you do, may it be to track down *old me* patterns rather than to avoid them.

**FIRST STAGE
ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT ACTIONS
OLD ME**

In the past ninety days, what *old me* actions have you taken? Or put another way, what incidents of sin or patterns of sin have you engaged that are unreflective of the new you? Consider also thoughts, desires, and dispositions. Be thorough.

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ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT ACTIONS

NEW ME

In the past ninety days, what *new me* actions have you taken? Or put another way, how do you see the new you emerging in your life? As with the *old me* assessment, consider also thoughts, desires, and dispositions. And again, be thorough.

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SECOND STAGE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT INFLUENCES

Now we look at influences. What are you doing that strengthens the old you? What are you doing to train the new you? The questions come in pairs. First, you'll specify influences. Second, you'll reflect on those influences to consider if they strengthen or weaken the new you.

YOUR DAY

How do you spend the greatest part of your day (work, family, friends, etc.)?

Does this typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

ENTERTAINMENT

What forms of entertainment do you regularly engage in?

Does this entertainment typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

STRESS

What do you do for stress relief?

Does this typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

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PLEASURE

What do you do for fun? What hobbies do you have? What do you enjoy? How often do you do these things?

Do these activities typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

PEOPLE

Which individuals or groups most influence you? Consider both people you personally interact with and people who may influence you from a distance.

Do these individuals or groups typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

IDLE TIME

When your mind goes on autopilot, what do you typically think about? When you're in a more reflective mood, what do you dream about?

Do these idle moments or thoughts of the future typically strengthen the old you or the new you? How and why?

OTHER

What else do you do with your life, not covered in the above categories, that strengthens the old you? What else strengthens the new you? How and why?

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THIRD STAGE ANALYSIS

Having looked at outward actions reflective of the *old me* and the *new me*, and having now considered influences that either strengthen or weaken the new me, in this third stage we pull it all together.

ANALYSIS

What *old me* outward actions listed on page 182 can be tied to influences you identified on pages 184-185?

Are these influences that need to change entirely, or are they influences that need to be done differently? (For example: a job might be kept but done differently, or escapist behaviors for stress relief might need to change entirely.)

What *new me* outward actions listed on page 183 can be tied to influences you identified on pages 184-185?

On the page that follows, summarize influences you could change in your life that would disengage the *old you* and strengthen the *new you*. Consider what you've uncovered in this exercise, imperatives from this *Morph* experience, and other influences you know from life experiences.

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FOURTH STAGE DECLARATIONS

Now it's time to commit. It's time to move from acknowledging what *needs* to change to declaring what *will* change. It's one thing to uncover the problems; it's quite another to *implement* a new training plan.

In this final stage, write a list of declarations in which you express what you will do differently from this point forward. Be both thoughtful and prayerful. How is God speaking to you? What convictions is he developing in you and asking you to live by? Resist the temptation to fill this page with a hollow list of "shoulds." Rather, be bold in areas you truly sense God's voice. If there are ten changes, then write ten. If there is one, write one.

After writing the declarations here, write an abbreviated version (without the "why?") on the cards provided within the Scripture cards notebook.

Sample declarations are given on the following page.

I declare that _____.

Why?

I declare that _____.

Why?

I declare that _____.

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I declare that _____.

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Why?

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Why?

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SAMPLE DECLARATIONS

I declare that I will no longer watch television with provocative content. Instead, I will read books, talk with God, or create intentional family time where we have fun together.

Why? I recognize that the type of shows I watch and the excessiveness of my TV-watching are feeding the old me. I see this as one major cause for lack of peace, self-control, and rest in my life. I also recognize that by replacing TV watching with both God-time and family-time, I will start to feed the new me, and in the long-run will feel more rested, and thus more peaceful. I can also see that this will help the fruit of self-control to grow in my life since I will be filling my mind with soul-enriching thoughts and memories instead of fueling my temptations.

I declare that I will no longer overeat to pacify stress but bring my stress to God.

Why? I see that the way that I use food to relieve stress is becoming a problem in my life. I no longer eat in moderation, and I recognize the unhealthy, addictive pattern that it has in my life. I justify it because it's just food, but it's robbing me of true peace, not to mention causing problems for my health. I know that this declaration will be hard to carry out, but on this day, I am committing to trust God and lean into his power to exercise self-control, and I'm asking my friends to pray for me toward this end.

I declare that I will be more intentional about friendships in my small group by attending group regularly and initiating lunch or coffee with other participants at least one time each week.

Why? I really need good spiritual influences in my life. Most of my close friends and co-workers are not following God, and it's hard to grow spiritually when no one around me really gets it. It's hard to fight sexual temptation, for example, when everyone around me thinks indulging in pornography and sex outside of marriage is the normal, healthy way to live.

I declare that I will memorize Philippians 4:8 and remind myself of this verse when my mind wanders to thoughts of discontentment with my material possessions and current financial status.

Why? I'm starting to recognize that my constant hunger for a bigger paycheck, bigger house, and more, more, more only leads to less satisfaction in my life and not more. The problem is not my paycheck or my possessions, but my HUNGER for these things. In my idle time when my mind starts to wander to this place, I will bring to mind Philippians 4:8, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." I will also thank God for the things that I DO have and pray (instead of complain) about any areas of true need.

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I declare that I will write a brief one-page prayer to God each morning.

Why? My prayers have been lifeless, and consequently, I've been carrying my stress rather than entrusting it to God. I've tried to pray in the car, but something always distracts me or my mind wanders to other things. By writing a brief prayer, at least one page in a journal, I will unload my concerns for the day as best as I can, and then seek to be fully present in my other commitments. These prayers will be from the heart and not a checklist of obligatory prayers.

I declare that I will read through the New Testament by my next birthday.

Why? I read Scripture but have done so haphazardly. By setting this goal, I will have to make better daily choices with my time. On most days, I will read in the evenings before going to bed. To do this, I will have to spend less time on the Internet, but I'm convinced it will be well worth the effort.

I declare that I will reinvigorate my musical passions by writing songs about my journey with God.

Why? My passion for God has grown flat, and I see a connection to how I've let the musical gifts he gave me go unused. I've meant well in that time has been taken by serving my kids and family, but I'm no good for anyone if my love for God grows cold. My journey with God has had many ups, downs, twists, and turns, and I look forward to working this out through song. Doing this will not be easy. I will need to remind myself that it really is best for everyone if I pull back from time to time and not allow myself to get swept away by the busy pace of this season of life.

I declare that I will limit my obsession with watching sports to one game per week and spend the time gained by getting in shape spiritually, physically, and relationally.

Why? I've become a sports junkie, and as fun as this can be, it's taking its toll on areas of life that are truly important. I'm not growing spiritually as I could, physically I'm out of shape, and my relationships with people I care about are weakening. I can still enjoy sports while not watching every moment of every game. I'll catch the scores and watch one game a week.

I declare that I'm done with pornography.

Why? I've said this before, but I've not had the support system I have in place today. I will address the issue with my running partners and small group. I will read the affirmations that address the anxieties that drive my desires to escape. I will memorize Scripture to fill my mind with good thoughts. I will push through the "detox" that will be a reality for the next few months as I develop new patterns. This will be a challenge, but I'm doing this in God's power, not my own, and it's time I live as the "new me."

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Week 7, Morph Me, p. 192