

Week Eight
Morph Me

CASE STUDIES



OUTSIDER VIEW

Consider for a moment the perspective of an outsider. This is the counselor or consultant whose vantage point is different because he or she is not in the middle of things. When done well, this outsider brings a degree of objectivity not available to the insider. The perspective is not perfect, of course, but it is both unique and important. Wise is the person who seeks objective counsel.

Throughout this *Morph* module you have engaged a variety of thoughts. Much more could be said, but at this point, greater gain is experienced by taking what you've learned and applying it to life. In hopes of catalyzing application, the exercise that follows is unique. In previous *Morph Me* exercises, you've taken the perspective of an insider. You've looked at your own life and considered how best to grow. In this next exercise, you'll consider three brief case studies. In so doing, you will take the perspective of an outsider. You will lean into lessons from this module (and beyond) to "counsel" the subjects in the studies.

Then there's the fourth case study.

The fourth case study comes back to you. In a format reflective of the case studies you will have just completed, you will be asked to briefly write a case study on yourself. You'll then be asked to do what may feel unnatural but offers much wisdom. You'll be asked to view your own case study as if you are the outsider. What counsel would you give yourself?

The purpose of this exercise is twofold. First, to offer objective counsel, you'll need to pull together insights from throughout this *Morph* module. Because the imperatives work together, considering how you'd pull them together is an important exercise. And second, as you consider your own case study and how the collective imperatives apply to you, a natural outcome will be the identification of next steps to apply to your life moving forward. These next steps are essential for this module to have lasting value in your life. If, after turning the final page of this notebook, you are unclear of how life will be different from when you opened the first page of this notebook, then much time has been wasted. But if you leave this notebook with increased clarity on how you can become more of who God created you to be, then this experience will have been well worth the effort.

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THE IMPERATIVES

Throughout this *Morph* experience, seven imperatives for transformation have been identified. The following is a list of the imperatives with a brief definition. These seven imperatives are not attempting to be comprehensive. For that reason, an eighth “other” has been listed to encourage thinking beyond the list for other ways God will inspire and equip the building of character.

I must recognize the real me.

God does not ask us to change our old selves because our old selves won't change. Rather, God asks that we recognize our new selves. The old self dies with Christ on the cross. The new self is raised to life and beats with a new heart so that “*we too may live a new life*” (Romans 6:4).

I must fight for my life.

The enemy is displeased with the new creation and works tirelessly to keep us in our old frame of mind rather than our new frame of mind. The enemy's primary weapon of choice is the lie. To confront these lies, we must “*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

I must trust.

To follow Christ is not complex but simple: “*The work of God is this: to trust in the one he has sent*” (John 6:29). This simple trust mobilizes a complexity of things we know and don't know. We understand some of the complexities, but our job is not to get to the complexities but to engage the power of God, and all that he does, by entrusting our lives to him.

I must walk by God's Spirit.

God is not distant but with us and in us. As we experience the carnival of life, we train our ears to listen through the noise for the increasingly familiar presence of God's Spirit. This Spirit both guides and empowers our lives. Our job is not to be god of this life, but to “*keep in step with the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:25) and follow his ways.

I must worship.

Transformation happens not by being mesmerized with life's struggles and problems but as we “*see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2). Worship is not just the weekly singing of songs (which may or may not be worship) but a heart and mind that celebrates God in all that we do.

I must train.

The *new me* must have spiritual nutrition and spiritual training to grow from infancy to maturity. Yes, this includes engaging God through Scripture and prayer, but it also includes giving careful consideration to the “*food*” that feeds our lives. Every day we are feeding the *new me* or feeding the *old me*. Those who “*train to be godly*” (1 Timothy 4:7) will carefully consider the influences on their lives.

I must persevere.

God made us for a purpose. Our purpose is not fulfilled in this earthly tent but in the heavenly tent for which we were created. In this life, we may be “*perplexed*” but we need not “*despair*” (2 Corinthians 4:8). These perplexities and challenges call for perseverance. As we persevere, we are ever-increasingly transformed into the people God calls us to be.

Other

This list of imperatives is intentionally incomplete. Community, for example, is not listed because it is so implicit in this *Morph* experience. Confession, as well, could be a category of its own and is woven through many of the exercises we've done. Consider Scripture and consider your own experience for other ways God builds character in your life.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1

Tyler

Tyler works hard and he plays hard. He's single, in his late twenties, plays on a coed softball team, and is in the midst of starting a company with two friends from college. Three years ago, one of the women on his softball team invited him to church. He didn't want to go, but he was intrigued by her, so he went along and pretended to be interested. The relationship didn't work out, but nobody was more surprised than he was when he found himself returning to church without her. Something about it compelled him. In time, to his friends' great amusement, he committed his life to Christ. He didn't mind the mocking of his friends. He could take that and took it well. What he did find extraordinarily difficult was abstaining from sex. At first the idea was ridiculous to him, and it was a major inhibitor to giving his life to Christ. In time, though, he saw things differently. Cheap sex lost its appeal. A friend from church told him that sex was a lot like fire. "When fire is in the fireplace," the friend told him, "it brings warmth to the home. But when fire burns outside the fireplace, it can burn the house down." This made sense to Tyler, and he hoped one day to experience the real thing. In the meantime, though, his genuine desire to follow God didn't do much to quench his seemingly ever-present sex drive. At first, he'd simply give in. He'd call old flings and one thing would lead to another. This left him feeling not only dirty from the sex, but hypocritical as well. In time, he no longer made those calls, but he consistently found himself on explicit websites. It wasn't daily, and there were seasons where he'd not give in for many weeks and sometimes even months. But then he'd have a stressful day, or a stressful week, and although he knew better, it felt a little justified. Once he had stumbled, he seemed to stay there for a few days or a few weeks, and then he'd finally turn it all off and hope for the best again. Through it all, he felt frustrated and stuck, and he didn't know what to do.

Counsel

Put yourself across the table from Tyler. He has come to you for counsel. You may view yourself as an odd choice for counsel, but ignore this. You've been listening to him tell his story for a good thirty minutes, and he is now at a place where he really wants to know your thoughts. "I welcome encouragement," he tells you, "but I really want solid advice. What should I do? How can I break these old patterns and live differently?"

On the page that follows, with the imperatives in mind, offer your counsel.

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Case Study #2

Anna

Anna committed her life to Christ as a teenager. She's now in her mid-thirties and has had enough ups and downs in life that she considers her faith weathered. With that said, she goes through periodic seasons of wandering from God. It's not that she goes wild, but she loses connection and distances herself from God and other important relationships in her life. In a recent conversation with a friend she poured out her woes, and through conversation made a significant discovery. She didn't like to admit something that sounded so petty, but much of her current stress revolved around one thing: her boss. This would be easy enough to fix had her friend not asked a piercing question. He asked about her previous boss and the boss before that. In fairly short order, she realized that of the five jobs she'd had since college, she left three of them due to her boss. Only one job transition was due to a better opportunity, but even in that one she didn't like her boss. Now in her fifth job, she was contemplating a change, and it was all about her boss. The pattern was consistent. Initially, she'd take a job, see great promise in the job, and for the first few months rave about her new boss. In time, though, she'd develop intense anxiety over the relationship. Typically, the anxiety wasn't over meeting the company's expectations; she always seemed to do that, but there was something about these relationships that brought out the worst in her. Some of the bosses were men and some of them were women, so she couldn't point to gender. There was just something about the power they held over her life that initially attracted her but ultimately repelled her. Most discouraging to her was the part she didn't tell her friend. In each situation, as anxiety increased, it enflamed a lifelong struggle she'd had with binge and purge eating. After difficult days she'd consistently find herself eating far more than she knew was healthy, and then throwing it all up in hopes of protecting her softening figure. If this was just about work, maybe she'd just endure it. But she knew more was at stake, and she didn't know what to do about it.

Counsel

You meet Anna for coffee and clearly she's agitated. After asking a few questions, the dam breaks and she tells you her struggles. You may view yourself as an odd choice for counsel, but ignore this. You listen for a long while, and she feels understood. Now she wants advice. She asks you point blank: *What should I do?* Clearly, she's grateful for the empathetic ear, but she wants next steps. What do you tell her?

On the page that follows, with the imperatives in mind, offer your counsel.

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Case Study #3

Dan and Heather

Dan and Heather were in love, and now they're not. After eleven years of marriage, the relationship is in a very difficult place. Neither has been unfaithful, and both claim to follow Christ, but something is terribly wrong, and it has been for years.

Ask Heather, and it's not that Dan does any one thing horribly wrong, but it's a collection of little things that have eroded her love over the years. He's short with her and short with the kids. He says things that aren't blatantly mean, but they're just strong enough that she has a growing insecurity. He sleeps in when she needs help, and he doesn't seem to notice all the things she does for their family. To her, he takes her for granted.

Dan understands Heather's frustrations, and he doesn't disagree wholeheartedly, but he also doesn't think he's the sole source of their problems. Yes, Heather works hard for their family, but she also works their family hard. He feels more like a handyman and a butler than he does a husband. He wishes Heather could turn it off every now and then, simply enjoy the people around her and enjoy the good gifts they have. She doesn't, though. Instead, she's constantly discontent. It seems to him that until her task list is done she'll refuse to have any sense of peace or joy. To Dan, therein lies much of the problem, because her task list never is and never will be completely accomplished.

Counsel

Through an odd set of circumstances, you find yourself in conversation with Heather and Dan. They didn't seek you out for counsel, and you may or may not feel an ideal candidate to give them advice, but they open up and tell you their story. You listen and ask a few probing questions along the way. In time, Dan turns the conversation over to you. "Tell us what you think," he says. Heather agrees. They genuinely want to know how they could both be better people for a better marriage.

On the page that follows, with the imperatives in mind, offer your counsel.



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SUMMARY

You're at the final page of this module. Before closing this notebook, pause to reflect. What are significant insights you have gained along the way? What are next steps you will integrate into your life? Consider your affirmations, declarations, and your own counsel to yourself. Don't feel obligated to summarize this entire *Morph* experience, but what stands out? If helpful, flip through the notebook to refresh your memory.



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