



2 August 2020 Reflections: The Triangle

by The Revd Philip Cochrane

³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” ³¹ The second is this, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

Mark 12:30-31

I wonder if you ever use a rhyme or an image to remember something? I confess I have to set my cell phone number to a little rhyme...and I have one for which direction the clocks change (forward / back)and how many days are in a month! To remember, I need an aid which is memorable and repeatable...and of course, helps.

I have also seen this principle used with shapes (triangles, circles, etc) to make a teaching point in churches – I don’t always agree with the messages attached to them but I have found the idea that using a basic shape to teach something can make it much more memorable, repeatable and therefore able to effect change.

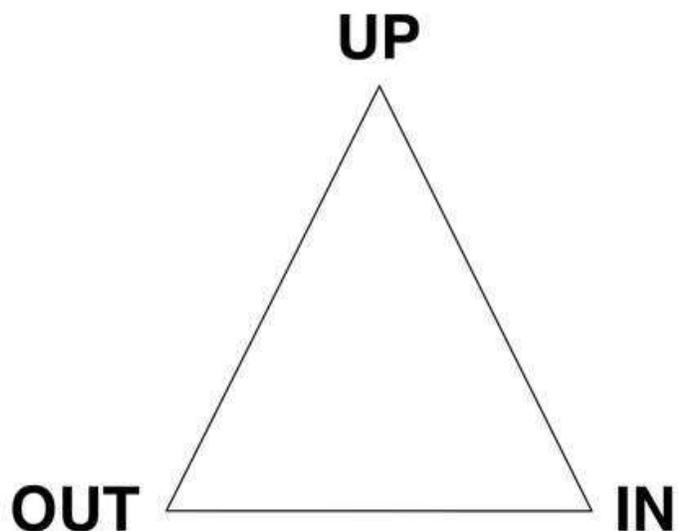
So, I want to introduce ‘The Triangle’ as a tool that may be useful for us as individuals and also as a church when considering how we fulfill the great commandments, listed in the excerpt from Mark, above.

[Now, you might well find this shape to be strangely addictive as there are many applications – it can be a creative adventure!]

I was first taught the Triangle with UP – IN – OUT. The UP is towards God (*Love God*) and is the top to emphasise the priority of God on our lives.

Then, equally spaced apart is OUT (*Love our Neighbour*) and IN (*as ourselves*). Now the IN and the OUT depend on whether this is addressing ourselves as an individual or an organisation, like our church.

So, as an individual, we might look at IN as our interior lives and what makes us flourish and thrive. The sorts of practices here will vary but it might be taking time to journal, or craft, listen or play music, or go for a walk....whatever is life-giving. It can also be attending to those



special, nurturing, relationships. Similarly, even if we are not extraverts, there is also an OUTward dimension – working out who our neighbour is (as we know this is beyond our circle of friends) and practicing service and making a difference with the resources entrusted to us (not just money!). If our world shrinks to just ourselves we become smaller people, being more self-centred and less aware.

It is worth noting that the Triangle shows equal distances between each point.....it may be that we are strong on one or two points but there is room for development on the third. That is what the Triangle may help you see more clearly.

²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Now from a church or organisational perspective, UP is about how we help people encounter God and to grow in that knowledge and experience of the Trinity (note another three!). This might be through our worship, the informal gatherings that are taking place in the week, courses and the various ministries that normally take place before COVID-19 and so on. There is something about meeting together, even if it is by telephone or online.

IN is about how we develop healthy community – a relational one that cares and shares the load between us (this means allowing others to care for us and share our load too, which often is more difficult), praying for one another, helping with practical needs. It is a place where we are known and accepted and so our task is to work on those things which get in the way of that. The OUT for us is how are we ‘loving our neighbour’ being outward looking, a prophetic witness to our neighbourhood, but also around the world.

So, the practical application is that you can reflect on where you are on each point of the Triangle. For UP, how’s your relationship with God? Is there a sense that you seek to commit the day to God and check in regularly through the day? It may be that this area needs some attention. How would that be best done for you?

For the IN, you might check in with yourself and see how you are doing. Are you burnt out, or in danger of becoming so? COVID-19 aside, is all well with you emotionally, mentally and spiritually? If not, it may be this is an area for attention – a time to return to paths that help you. Self care is a Godly practice!

On the OUT, especially with COVID-19 we may have withdrawn from social interaction and even picking up the phone. Is your life focussed around your wants and needs, or is there space for the other? What would loving your neighbour look like where you are?

So, I leave you with a simple shape, the Triangle, and the invitation to use it as a way of considering your own health and well being...and also that of St Paul's now and as we look to the future. Take some time to pray and ask God for direction as to your next steps.

With love,

Philip