WHAT IS KEEPING ME STUCK?

A guided reflection on the patterns that can keep us from moving forward

You meant to respond differently. Then came a difficult conversation, an unexpected disappointment, or an ordinary stressful day. Before you knew it, you were doing what you had promised yourself you would not do again.

Sometimes a recurring pattern is more than a habit. It may be connected to a fear, an old conclusion, or a way of protecting ourselves that once seemed necessary. Looking beneath the surface can help us see a different way forward.

Begin gently. This is not a test, a diagnosis, or a measure of your faith. There is no score and no right answer. You may leave anything unanswered, and you do not need to share these pages with anyone.

01

Where in my life do I feel most stuck right now?

Choose one specific area: a relationship, decision, habit, response, or pattern that keeps returning.

02

What happened recently that brought this pattern into view?

Recall one ordinary moment rather than trying to explain your whole life.

WHEN THE SAME THING KEEPS HAPPENING

Notice what happens before, during, and after your familiar response

A pattern becomes easier to understand when we slow down one moment. Try describing what happened without labeling yourself as weak, selfish, or a failure.

Common protective responses include withdrawing, pleasing, controlling, getting defensive, staying busy, avoiding conflict, or trying harder to prove yourself. These are examples, not categories you have to fit into.

03

What tends to happen just before I react?

What was said or done? What did I notice in my body, thoughts, or emotions?

04

What do I usually do next?

Describe what another person could see or hear, as well as what goes on inside you.

05

What does this response accomplish in the moment - and what does it cost later?

It may bring temporary relief while creating distance, regret, exhaustion, or another difficulty.

LOOK BENEATH THE PATTERN

Follow one moment from the surface to what may be happening within

For example, after a tense conversation I might go quiet. Underneath that silence could be the thought, "If I speak honestly, I will be rejected." The silence may feel safer for a moment, but it also keeps me from being known.

Use your own recent example from the previous page. You may not know every answer yet. A question mark is an honest answer.

01 / MOMENT

What happened? What stirred the response?

02 / MESSAGE

What did I tell myself in that instant?

03 / BELIEF

What deeper conclusion might that message reflect?

04 / PROTECTION

What was my response trying to prevent or secure?

05 / COST

What is this pattern taking from me or from others?

WHAT AM I TRYING TO SECURE?

The question beneath some of our familiar reactions

We often protect something that matters to us: approval, belonging, safety, respect, certainty, control, or the hope of not being hurt again. There is no shame in recognizing a longing. The question is whether the way we seek to secure it is still helping us.

06

When I feel stuck, what seems most at risk?

Is it being accepted, respected, loved, safe, competent, in control, or something else?

07

What am I afraid might happen if I responded differently?

What would be difficult about telling the truth, resting, trusting, asking for help, or setting a boundary?

08

Is there an older conclusion I may still be living from?

A message learned in the past may feel convincing today. Does it tell the whole truth about the present?

Remember: Not every obstacle comes from an inner wound. Fatigue, illness, grief, real limitations, other people's choices, and unjust circumstances can also keep us from moving forward. This reflection makes room for those realities.

BRING THIS INTO THE FATHER'S LIGHT

You can be honest about what you find without hiding from Him

"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."
Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)

Sometimes what keeps us stuck is not only what we believe about ourselves, but what we expect from God when He sees our fear or failure. You do not have to manufacture a reassuring feeling. Begin with honest attention.

09 **What do I imagine the Father thinks when He sees this part of my life?**
Do I expect patience and care, or disappointment, distance, or condemnation?

10 **What does Jesus reveal about how God meets people who are afraid or ashamed?**
You might reflect on Luke 15:20, John 14:18, or a Gospel encounter that speaks to you.

11 **What might be true even if my old belief still feels powerful?**
Write one truth, promise, or reminder you would like to make room for.

ONE SMALL WILLING STEP

Insight matters, but the next step is often simple and ordinary

You do not have to untangle everything today. A pattern developed over time may take time to change. Rather than demand a dramatic breakthrough, consider one small response you can practice with honesty and grace.

CLARITY

One pattern I can now name:

ALIGNMENT

One truth or value I want to live from:

DIRECTION

One different response I would like to practice:

ACTION

One small step I will take in the coming week:

When will I try it? _____ **Who could support me?** _____

A simple prayer
Father, You already know this part of my heart. Help me see what is true, recognize what I have been protecting, and receive Your love where I am afraid. Show me one faithful step I can take, and give me grace to take it. Amen.

A gentle distinction. HeartChecks are tools for personal reflection, not a diagnosis or substitute for counseling, medical care, or other support. If distress, trauma, or safety concerns are prominent, consider working with a qualified professional.