

DNA GUIDE



DISCOVER. NURTURE. ACT.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide was developed to help equip our DNA groups to be more effective in shepherding and caring for one another. After almost a decade of weekly meetings in pubs, parks, and living rooms, we realized our DNA groups needed a little more guidance and help. They desired to care for each other, but often lacked the skills necessary to lead one another to Jesus on a consistent basis. While some DNA groups experienced significant times of repentance and renewed faith in Jesus, many had trouble getting past the question, “How was your week?”

This guide is designed to help equip every person who is committed to a DNA group in the basics of gospel shepherding. It explains the three steps each DNA group should walk through each time they meet – Discover, Nurture, Act.

The appendix section contains a bunch of practical shepherding tools and resources that can be used in any shepherding context (DNA, MC, marriage counseling, Redemption Groups, etc). Reference these appendices over and over again as shepherding needs arise!

Ideally, each DNA partner would become familiar with the content of this guide. Our DNA relationships are a very important aspect of our growth as disciples, and the time it takes to read this guide is a small investment compared with the potential payoff in the lives of each person in the group. The group might want to walk through the guide together, then refer to the guide repeatedly as they learn how to Discover, Nurture, and Act. The leader may want to bring a copy to the weekly meetings. However it is used, the goal is for everyone to grow in their ability to shepherd others.

For those who need a short summary, there’s a one-page, quick reference guide to the overall DNA process. Each DNA partner could print a copy and put it in the Bible or journal they bring to the weekly DNA meeting.

May the Holy Spirit use this resource to glorify Jesus in our hearts by leading us to repentance and renewed faith in Him!

DNA SUMMARY

“DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.” - ROMANS 12:2

WHAT IS A DNA GROUP?

The term “DNA group” refers to a group that ideally consist of three people—men with men, women with women— who meet together weekly. They seek to be known and to bring the gospel to bear on each other’s lives so that they grow to become more like Jesus.

DNA is an acronym that reminds us of three key components of discipleship: Discover, Nurture, and Act.

DNA GROUP FORMATION

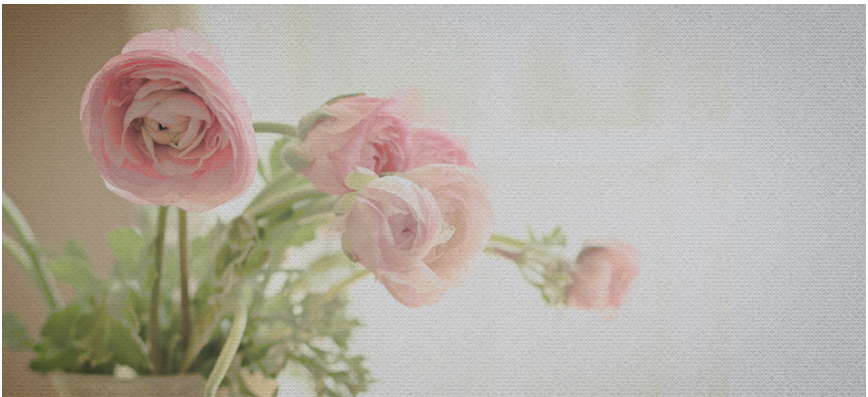
*Read and discuss The Story of God Summary ([Appendix 1](#))

*Have each person share a 10-15 minute version of their own personal story. Use Telling Your Story with Jesus as the Hero ([Appendix 2](#)) as a tool to help you prepare.

*Gospel Shepherding: Listen for the Heart, Part 1 ([Appendix 3](#)) will help equip group members to listen for the heart as stories are being shared.

THE DISCOVER, NURTURE, ACT PROCESS

At each meeting, a DNA group should walk through these three steps. We can only Discover, Nurture, and Act with the help of the Holy Spirit, so pray throughout the process.





DISCOVER

*Both before and during the meeting, study a passage together, and ask the 4 Questions ([Appendix 4](#)).

*Come ready to discuss...

- What did you discover this week? What did you learn?
- What were you reminded of?
- Where did the Spirit lead you to repentance and faith this week?
- How have you struggled with sin/unbelief in your life this week?

NURTURE

*Listen for the heart as each person shares during the Discover step.

*Ask good questions, utilizing the 4 Questions to help you go from Fruit to Root ([Appendix 9](#)).

*Speak the truth in love as the Spirit leads you, calling each person to repent of sin and believe in the gospel.

ACT

*Listen to the Spirit together and obey as he calls you to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

*Pay attention to what he might call you to do, and who he might call you to tell.

INTRODUCTION TO DNA GROUPS

A WORD ABOUT SOMA AND MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

We believe that missional communities (MCs) are the primary organizing structure for the church. Disciples are made most effectively on mission, in community, and through life-on-life interactions. Therefore, as a church family we focus primarily on the health and growth of our MCs.

Jesus calls all of his followers to be radically committed to Him (Matthew 16:24-26). We believe that commitment to Jesus includes commitment to his bride, the church. As a church family, Soma Tacoma expresses our commitment to Jesus and His bride through involvement in Sunday gatherings (**gather**), a MC (**go**), and in a DNA group (**grow**), all of which provide ample opportunities to steward the gifts and talents God has given us (**give**).

DNA GROUP FAQs

WHAT IS A DNA GROUP?

The term “DNA group” refers to a group that ideally consists of three people - men with men, women with women - who meet together weekly. DNA Groups provide a structure for us to care deeply for one another and to foster growth as disciples of Jesus.

DNA is an acronym that reminds of us three key components of discipleship: **Discover, Nurture, and Act**. The goal is to help one another to discover Jesus in the Scriptures, nurture the truths of the gospel in our hearts, and faithfully act on what the Spirit calls us to do.

Our DNA group should be a major factor in our growth as a disciple (someone who is learning to apply the gospel to absolutely every part of life).

WHY SHOULD I BE IN A DNA GROUP?

As disciples who’ve been saved and made righteous, Paul exhorts us to “be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2). Discipleship requires life-on-life interaction, and can only happen in community. We grow primarily through the experience of life in gospel community. A DNA group can be a key catalyst for growth and transformation in our lives.

One of the main ways this happens is by giving each other regular reminders of the truth of the gospel. Hebrews 3:12 warns, “Take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.” We are often tempted to forget who God is, what He’s done for us in Christ Jesus, who we are as a result, and how we live out of our new identity. Hebrews 3:13 says one of the major ways to prevent this “falling away from the living God” is to “encourage one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Every single day we need to be encouraged with the truth that we are deeply loved and accepted by the Father *purely* on the basis of what Jesus has done! Our new identity as sons and daughters of God shapes everything about our life as disciples of Jesus. Understanding this new identity also gives us the boldness and humility to be honest with our DNA partners when we are tempted to hide our sin or to blame others. Regular encouragement from our DNA partners can be a significant help in our battle against sin and against the lies of the enemy.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A DNA GROUP?

The overall goal of a DNA group is to foster discipleship relationships that help each person grow to become more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. The goal is not merely to hang out and have fun, or even to build friendships, though hopefully all of that will happen! The goal is to challenge one another to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

As disciples, we should experience transformation at every level, affecting our whole person: head, heart, hands. The specific discipleship goals for a DNA group meeting can be understood by unpacking the acronym:

Discover: Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **study** the Bible and **ask** the 4 Questions. The goal is to teach the head.

Nurture: Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **repent** and **believe** in the gospel. The goal is to shepherd the heart.

Act: Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **listen** and **obey** as he calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The goal is to empower the hands.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A DNA GROUP?

The members of a DNA group should be committed to meeting together regularly, usually for about 90 minutes. These meetings consist of sharing personal stories and struggles, asking questions, listening to each other, reading scripture, praying, speaking the truth in love, repenting and confessing sin, and listening to the Holy Spirit, and submitting to one another. Beyond the weekly meeting, however, DNA groups should seek to build trusting relationships by sharing everyday life together.

DNA GROUP STRUCTURE

HOW MANY SHOULD BE IN A DNA GROUP?

Discipleship methods have often employed a one-on-one approach. While this is certainly in line with many apprenticeship models, from which we can glean a lot about how to train someone along the way, it does not appear to be the method Jesus utilized. We rarely, if ever, find Him with only one of his disciples. In our experience as a church family, we have found that three is the ideal size for a DNA group.

If you are accustomed to one-on-one meetings, there's a number of reasons to add a third person:

- A more dynamic group exchange occurs.
- It is much more difficult for one person to dominate the conversation.
- There are two sets of ears filtering everything that is said, providing two unique perspectives in response.
- There's a much greater potential for learning and development. Each person is unique and brings so much to the table.
- There are two people loving and supporting each person in the group. No one is bearing another's burdens alone.

On the other hand, if you are accustomed to small groups of 4-8, there's a number of reasons to limit it to three:

- Each person can contribute significantly to the group.
- No one can "hide", remaining silent for very long before someone asks, "What do you think?"
- Each person has an ample opportunity to share at each group meeting.
- Scheduled group meetings don't last multiple hours.

Though three is the ideal size, circumstances will sometimes dictate that a group be larger than three. Schedule conflicts and a lack of qualified leaders can lead to groups of 4, 5, and even 6 meeting together for a time. While not ideal, these options are better than only two people meeting on a consistent basis.

WHO SHOULD THE DNA GROUP CONSIST OF?

An MC is often defined as “a family of missionary servants, sent to make disciples.” While MCs seek to live as family, the reality is that the level of intimacy with the people in our MCs will vary. As a result, it is helpful for our DNA group to consist of people from our MC. This will help ensure another regular touch point with some of the people in your MC outside of the weekly MC gathering. It will also allow you to share your heart and your life with a few of the people with whom you are on mission. When DNA groups are made up of people from the same MC, it greatly strengthens the MC, and helps advance the mission of making disciples who make disciples.

There will be times when a DNA group will not be made up of men or women in the same MC. An MC may have recently multiplied, and perhaps the DNA group wants to wait before transitioning. Sometimes people have longstanding relationships they really value, or they want to continue pouring into a particular discipleship relationships before entrusting them to someone else. The keys are to follow the Spirit’s leading and to keep in mind the goal of growing as disciples. If people are not being challenged and transformed, it is almost certainly time for a change.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD A DNA GROUP MEET? AND WHERE?

First of all, since the DNA group is a subset of a MC, DNA groups should connect on more than just a formal basis. DNA groups should be engaged in as much everyday life as possible. Ideally, gospel friendships will form, and people will enjoy hanging together in all kinds of ways.

As far as a more structured meeting, DNA groups should plan to meet on a weekly basis for about 90 minutes (though often they go longer!). If a group only plans to connect every other week, the busyness and unpredictability of life (travel, sickness, holidays, schedule conflicts) will often mean long stretches between solid meetings.

Meetings usually happen in coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, or homes. Focus is a key factor to consider: it's hard for three moms to have a DNA group meeting while their kids play at the park or for three commuters to talk on a crowded bus. Meet in a place where everyone is comfortable and that is reasonably free of distractions.

DNA GROUP LEADERSHIP

The nature of group dynamics reveals that every group has a leader. Acknowledging this reality will help DNA groups function in a more healthy manner.

Each DNA group's make-up will be unique. The nature of the group will determine the type of leadership that's needed. For some groups, where all participants have similar experience and maturity, the leader will simply be the person who makes sure the group meets. For others, the leader will clearly drive the discussion. Sometimes, the leader will essentially form the group by inviting them together, and other times the group will need to work together to clearly identify the leader.

Regardless of who initially plays the role of leader, each member of a DNA group should get experience leading within the group. Ideally, over the course of a year or so, each person will spend a few months leading the group. As disciples, each person should be equipped to guide a group of at least three people through a discussion that is centered around Jesus. A DNA group provides a great training ground for disciples to learn the basics of leading in a group setting.

Each MC will have a shepherding leader who will provide counsel and consultation for the DNA's under their care. This MC shepherd could be the MC leader or another person the MC.

A note for MC Leaders: the investment you make in your DNA group is the most strategic discipleship investment you will make. Be prayerful and very intentional with who you invite into your DNA group and in how you use your time together.

DNA GROUP GROWTH, MULTIPLICATION, AND TRANSITION

A DNA group should be more than a once a week meeting. The members of the group should share everyday life together. Hopefully, relationships will form that “stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). All DNA partners should experience intimacy with each other, and some may even find friendships that continue long after they have transitioned into another DNA.

Occasionally, DNA groups may stay together for a few years. Others may sense that, after a significant time of growth, God is leading them to make strategic discipleship investments in other people, that they need to “multiply” their efforts as a group. Still others will be forced to navigate the inevitable changes that life throws their way - people losing interest, people moving away, MC multiplication - with grace and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The bottom line is that there is no formula for growth and multiplication of a DNA group. Relationships are beautifully complex, and must be handled with care and sensitivity. Every situation is different, and the group members must be willing to submit to the Spirit’s leading. The members of a DNA group should enter the relationship expecting long-term commitment to one another, even if the exact nature of the relationship changes over time.

DNA GROUP FORMATION

The formative stage of a DNA group is very important. The first few meetings will set the stage for how the group will interact in the future. Whether or not the group members are familiar with The Story of God, reviewing The Story of God Summary is a great way to begin (see [Appendix 1, The Story of God Summary](#)). God’s Story reminds us that everything is about Him; that our stories are actually His story; that our understanding of who we are - our identity - should flow from this story. Reviewing the Story as a group will establish a solid foundation on which the group can build together.

After reading and discussing The Story of God Summary together, each member of the group should share a 10-15 minute version of their own personal story. [Appendix 2, Telling Your Story with Jesus as the Hero](#), is a great tool to help each person prepare to share their story in a way that highlights the work of Jesus throughout their life.

As each member of the group shares their story, the other DNA partners will listen. But they won't just listen for the sake of showing empathy and compassion, though that is vitally important. Each person will listen closely to what is said because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). The members of a DNA group will regularly listen for the heart.

Listening to a person's story is kind of like examining a fruit tree. Jesus said you will know a tree by its fruit. Typically, a person's story will clearly reveal some of the fruit that is hanging on their tree (financial difficulty, sexual sin, marital conflict, anger, etc). But the real action is under the surface, in the root structure of the tree. According to Jesus, actions and words reveal the heart. And the heart is of primary importance because the heart is the seat of faith. "With the heart a person believes" (Romans 10:10).

A person's story has the potential to reveal where they have exercised faith in Jesus (gospel alignment), as well as where they have replaced Jesus as the only right object of faith (gospel distortion). Jesus is the only one who can save, and we regularly look to created things instead. These false saviors will often be revealed in our stories.

Learning to listen for the heart will be a major focus of the Nurture step in the DNA process. Praying and asking the Spirit to give the group ears to hear is essential. Additionally, use [Appendix 3, Gospel Shepherding: Listen for the Heart, Part 1](#) as a tool to help equip each DNA partner to listen for the heart in this formative stage, when personal stories are being shared.

It may take 2-3 meetings to work through The Story of God Summary and to allow time for each person to share their story. Take the time to lay a solid foundation. Gain a clear understanding of how Jesus is the hero of each person's story, and of the areas where they are still struggling to believe the gospel. These struggles will undoubtedly resurface over and over again as the group moves forward together.

THE DISCOVER, NURTURE, ACT PROCESS

At each meeting, a DNA group should walk through the three steps process of Discover, Nurture, and Act. Each of these can only be done with the help of the Holy Spirit, so praying throughout the process is imperative.

Discover: Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **study** the Bible and **ask** the 4 Questions. The goal is to teach the head so that each person either learns or is reminded of the truth about who God is, what He's done, who we are, and how we live, every time the DNA group meets.

Discover primarily involves discipling the head. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Discover is about uncovering the vital truth about who God is, what he's done, who we are, and how we should live.

There's a number of Jesus' statements from John's gospel that highlight the importance of **His word** and **His Spirit** in helping a disciple discover truth:

Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14).

Jesus' death on the cross makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to live in us! And His Spirit is our teacher, the one who makes Jesus even more real to us as we grow in our faith. Our motivation to Discover comes from the great gift Jesus has given us and from our desire to know Him more. Discover is not about information, but about relationship and transformation.

In light of Jesus' prayer in John 17:17, studying the Bible should be the primary way DNA groups Discover together. As a group, choose a passage of scripture, and read it throughout the week. Each person should utilize the 4 Questions as they study on their own. Consider using a journal to capture key thoughts and insights that the Spirit brings to mind. Group members should come to the weekly meeting ready to answer these three questions:

1. What did you discover this week? What did you learn? What were you reminded of?
2. Where did the Spirit lead you to repentance and faith this week?
3. How have you struggled with sin/unbelief in your life this week?

When the group meets, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through his word! Read through the whole passage once or twice together before working through the 4 Questions. Share any insights from the week, and write down new things the Spirit illuminates.

For more on how to use the 4 Questions as a Bible study tool, see [Appendix 4, Discover – Study and Ask](#).

By studying and asking the 4 Questions independently and as a group, the Discover step in the process has the potential to significantly increase the group's biblical literacy. Starting with God's Story is a must, as it gives us the whole picture and helps us understand each individual part. But moving on to an intimate knowledge of God's whole story is vital. Jesus shows up on every page (Luke 24:27), either in shadow or in fullness (Colossians 2:17), and our love for him grows as our understanding of his story grows.

At different times, a DNA group may decide to study something other than the Bible as a way to help them Discover. These additional resources might include books or curriculum that are clearly gospel centered. These resources should include large amounts of scripture, essentially answer the 4 Questions over and over, point us directly to our need for Jesus and to His provision through the cross, and encourage us to apply the gospel to our lives in practical ways. DNA groups should use the 4 Questions even when studying something other than the Bible.

Nurture: Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **repent** and **believe** in the gospel. The goal is to shepherd the heart so that each person is brought to repentance and renewed faith every time a DNA group meets.

Nurture primarily involves discipling the heart. The word heart is used over 850 times in the Bible, and is used to describe the very center of our being. It includes our mind, our emotions, and our will. And in Romans 10:10, Paul says it's the part of us that exercises faith, or belief. "For with the heart a person believes..."

In Luke 6, Jesus says the fruit of a person's life - their words and their actions - are an indicator of what is present in their heart. "Each tree is known by its own fruit...out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:44-45) So regardless of what we **know** in our heads, the fruit of our lives is determined by what we **believe** in our hearts. We may know God is great and in control, we may affirm his sovereignty and power, and yet, we worry. What we **know** does not align with what we **believe** in that moment.

When we worry, we're placing our hope in something other than God. We're believing that something other than Him is in control and can give us security. Paul's assessment of this misplaced belief is that we've "...exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). By placing our faith in something other than God to give us what only He can give, we are actually engaging in false worship, in idolatry.

DNA groups are designed to help identify these areas of sin and idolatry in our lives. Nurture is about ensuring what we **know** aligns with what we **believe**.

It is possible to be over zealous in our desire to root sin out of one another's lives. Nurture is not a witch-hunt or a game of "whack-a-mole", where we wait anxiously with a big mallet, smacking down every little indicator of sin and unbelief as it pops up in people's lives. In reality, we should be even more quick to point out evidences of grace than we are to call out sin or to start poking around, looking for evidence of unbelief.

However, the fundamental assumption is that within a week's time every believer is going to sin, and therefore need to...

- Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Repent before God (Revelation 3:19)
- Turn back towards Jesus in faith (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Experience the ongoing forgiveness and cleansing of Jesus (1 John 1:9)
- Observe the fruit of the Spirit being produced in our lives as a result (Galatians 5:16-25)

NURTURE AND GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

Even in our most broken circumstances, the gospel addresses every challenge we are facing. Jesus has designed His church in such a way that we can offer comfort and help to one another in the midst of our pain and struggle. While Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and the Holy Spirit has appointed elders to shepherd the flock, **every believer can be equipped to shepherd and care for others.**

Ephesians 4:11-12 says, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

Gifted shepherds have not been given to the church primarily to shepherd people, but to equip the saints for shepherding work! The Holy Spirit lives in each disciple of Jesus, empowering them to love one another, pray for one another, serve one another, bear one another’s burdens, and speak the truth in love to one another. And 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, **so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction**, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” We shepherd because He first shepherded us.

Soma Tacoma has developed and implemented a shepherding structure that helps provide care at multiple levels, depending on the need. Every shepherding need is addressed primarily in the context of a MC and a DNA group, and these people are never left behind if the process involves more experienced shepherds.

We call this approach Gospel Shepherding. Shepherds at every level (DNA/MC leaders, Volunteer Gospel Shepherds, Redemption Group leaders, etc.) are trained to **Listen for the Heart, Ask Good Questions, and Speak the Truth in Love**. So the Nurture step in the DNA process is really an introduction to the practice of Gospel Shepherding.

LISTEN FOR THE HEART

“DNA Group Formation” introduced us to the importance of listening for the heart as a person shares the story of their day or the story of their life. The fruit of our lives is evident, and reveals a great deal about our hearts.

At each DNA meeting, as a part of the Discover step in the process, group members will share some of what’s going on in their lives. They may have experienced victory over temptation, the Spirit may have convicted them and led them to repentance and faith, they may have struggled with sin/unbelief in the past week.

As the members of the group are talking, everyone should listen for the heart. This begins with praying and asking the Spirit to give the group ears to hear what is really happening under the surface.

More importantly, ask Him to help the group show empathy and compassion by simply paying close attention. Nothing effects nurturing more than showing genuine care and concern for others, especially when they are hurting. Trust is built when DNA members demonstrate mutual love for one another. Without love, compassion, empathy, and care, groups cannot nurture.

Listening for the heart also means focusing on the person and not the problem. Regarding the importance of listening as an act of love, Paul Tripp says, “We can focus on the **problem** and miss the **person** in the middle of it. Biblical personal ministry (i.e., shepherding) certainly includes problem solving, but it must be person-focused. God’s work of change certainly involves changes in situation and relationship, but it has radical personal transformation as its core goal.” (*Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, p. 126). He goes on to say that rather than listening for the facts about a person’s circumstances or situation, we should listen for how they are responding to their circumstances.

See [Appendix 5, Gospel Shepherding: Listen for the Heart, Part 2](#), for a list of nine types of words or statements to listen for in a person’s story.

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

How did God respond to Adam and Eve immediately after they sinned and hid? How did He respond to Cain after He was angry at Able because his sacrifice had been rejected? How does Jesus often engage both the Pharisees and his disciples?

With questions!

When people share their struggles with us, the temptation is to offer simplistic advice or quote scripture in a moralistic manner. We want to help fix people's problems! Responding with questions is another way to reinforce the value of the person over the problem: "I care about **you**, not just about fixing your problem."

We've all experienced well-intentioned advice givers offering simplistic answers and quick fixes. Usually, these words bounce right off our hearts! Questions are so valuable because they lead to self-discovery and implication. In order for real change to occur, the Holy Spirit must bring conviction of sin (John 16:8). Responding to a person's story with immediate and direct proclamations often fails to produce the fruit of repentance. Depend on the Holy Spirit, and listen as He provides good questions that can help nurture the heart of another person.

See [Appendix 6, Gospel Shepherding: Ask Good Questions](#), for more.

Also, check out [Appendix 7, X-Ray Questions](#), by David Powlison, for a list of 34 really good questions.

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

As we shepherd and nurture each other, we will need to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25). This truth should be centered on our identity much more than on our actions. Avoid simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful. If a DNA partner confesses worry, it probably won't help to remind them that Jesus said, "Do not worry" three times in Matthew 6. Rather, focus on their identity as a beloved child of the Father (who Jesus mentions 10 times in Matthew 6) who can rest because of his perfect love, care, and provision for them.

Again, the leadership of the Holy Spirit is essential. Pray and ask the Spirit to speak through the group. Ask Him to produce the fruit of love in each

person so that truthful words are presented with care and grace. 1 Corinthians 4:5 warns, “do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes (“motives”-NASB) of the heart.” If we have preconceived judgments about a person’s heart (“I know for sure why they did that!”), they will come through in our communication, and our speech will not be filled with grace. We need the Holy Spirit to purify our motives before we speak.

It’s important to ask a lot of good questions before speaking the truth in love. A rule of thumb we often employ is to ask 10 questions for every pronouncement. And often it’s helpful to ask permission before making a pronouncement: “Can I tell you what I’m seeing?” This ensures that the person is open and ready to receive a direct word. However, the Spirit will sometimes prompt very direct communication even in the context of shepherding. As long as the Spirit is prompting it, and it is spoken in love, we need to be obedient to say what the Spirit is leading us to say.

Finally, one way we often speak the truth in love as shepherds is by calling people to repentance. Often, we have to ask, “Is there anything that would prevent you from repenting right now?” or “Would you like to talk to the Father about this right now?” This simple but direct question can help people cross the threshold of repentance and renewed faith in the gospel.

All of this content can also be found in [Appendix 8, Gospel Shepherding: Speak the Truth in Love](#).

Also, see [Appendix 9, Fruit to Root](#), for more on how to use the 4 Questions to Listen for the Heart, Ask Good Questions, and Speak the Truth in Love.

Act: led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **listen** and **obey** as he calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The goal is to empower the hands so that, in light of their repentance, each person knows what to do and who to tell every time the group meets.

Act primarily involves discipling the hands. Once we’ve discovered the truth about who God is and what He’s done, and once we’ve repented of our sin/unbelief and renewed our faith in Jesus, we need to ask the Spirit to guide us in changing the way we live. Our repentance must have some practical impact on our lives.

When John the Baptist was baptizing people, preparing them for the arrival of the Messiah, he exhorted them to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance,” meaning, “demonstrate through your life that your repentance is legitimate.”

This was a part of Paul’s message, as well. As he was telling the story of his conversion to King Agrippa, Paul said, I “...declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance” (Acts 26:20)

Legalism has left a bad taste in the mouths of so many followers of Jesus that talk of works and actions can sometimes be dismissed. While the “you-are-what-you-do” mindset has certainly caused a great deal of damage in the church, the New Testament clearly calls us to change our behavior in light of the gospel.

The book of Titus is one clear example. Titus 2:11-12 says, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...” Experiencing God’s grace motivates us to say “no” to sinful actions and “yes” to godly actions! If the Spirit leads someone to repentance, either outside of the group or during the weekly meeting, spend 5-10 minutes praying and listening together. Ask the Spirit to speak. Be quiet and listen, waiting for Him to answer two specific questions:

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

As followers of Jesus, we have already been transformed. We are a new creation! (2 Corinthians 5:17) But we are also called to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2) Repentance will lead to change, and when we ask, the Spirit will call us to do something.

WHO DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL?

Jesus gave his followers his Spirit so they could be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). He wants us to bear witness to the reality of His work in our lives. When we ask the Spirit, “who do you want me to tell?”, He may lead us to talk to both believers and not-yet-believers. He may want us to tell our spouse, our kids, our friends, or another member of the church family. He may also want us to tell a coworker or a neighbor.

We often wonder how to share the gospel with our not-yet-believing friends. And yet, every time we experience the conviction of the Spirit and the forgiveness of Jesus, we have an amazing story to tell about how Jesus is saving us today.

When a neighbor asks, “How are you?”, we can take the safe route, or we can be vulnerable and share a recent struggle with anger or worry or pride, pointing to Jesus yet again as our only hope.

After a few minutes of praying and listening, the group will discuss what they heard. Because of our lingering struggle against sin, we often need the input of our brothers and sisters to help determine exactly how to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Praying, listening, and discussing this together is a prime opportunity to practice mutual submission. In light of the repentance the Spirit granted, and in light of what he said to the group, clear action steps should be determined together.

For more question to consider in prayer, see [Appendix 10, Act: Listen and Obey](#).



CONCLUSION

In Revelation 2, Jesus is addressing the church at Ephesus. After giving them a good deal of specific encouragement, he says, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” (Revelation 2:4)

When we worship and serve created things instead of the creator, when we place our faith and our trust in anything other than God to save us, when the affections of our hearts are set on earthly things, we have, at **least for a moment**, left our first love. We lose sight of the cross, God’s clearest demonstration of love for us, and our hearts quickly wander away. As the old hymn says, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”

Jesus’ stinging diagnosis is followed immediately by His prescribed cure: “**Remember** therefore from where you have fallen; **repent**, and **do** the works you did at first.” (Revelation 2:5, italics added) The DNA process seems to align with Jesus’ prescription.

In the Discover step, the goal is for each person to learn or be reminded of the truth about who God is, what he’s done, who we are, and how we live. Being reminded of the truth of the gospel on a regular basis is key to maintaining our love for Jesus. “We love, because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

In the Nurture step, the goal is for each person to be brought to repentance and renewed faith in Jesus. Over and over again in the book of Revelation, Jesus calls believers to repent. Martin Luther famously said, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Mathew 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

In the Act step, the goal is for each person to listen to the Spirit and obey as he prompts them to do and to tell in light of their repentance. Jesus is calling his church to return to works of faith that flow from a heart that’s filled with love for him. After all, Jesus “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)

May the Holy Spirit lead every DNA group to Discover, Nurture, and Act in light of all that Jesus has accomplished, to the glory of God the Father.



THE STORY OF GOD SUMMARY

This is a story found in the Bible, about God, a being who has always existed and is the creator of **everything**. God is the only one in this story who always does what is good, right and perfect—the Bible calls him Holy. While God created the foundations of the earth, angels (his first creation) were there, watching. They sang together and worshiped God; but some of these angels rebelled against God and his ways. The Bible teaches that all rebellion against God is called sin. And because of God’s holiness he will not allow sin to remain unaddressed in his presence, so he sent the rebellious angels, now known as demons, down into darkness on the earth.

Then God decided to create another being, called a human, in his own image. God said, “**Let us make man in our image to be like us.**” He then prepared the earth as a place for the humans to live—filling the earth with plants, birds, fish and animals of all kinds. God created the first humans, Adam and Eve, and placed them in a beautiful garden and trusted them to care for and rule over all of his creation on earth.

God lived closely with these first humans, spending time with them daily, showing them how to live life in the best possible way. They lived their life close to God and under his protection—a life that was full and complete and eternal.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God and his authority, choosing to live in their own ways instead of his. Since God will not allow evil and rebellion to remain unaddressed in his presence, Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, away from God. Separated from God and no longer following his ways, Adam and Eve were now subject to sickness, pain, and death. God told them, “**The way you have chosen to live will bring you great struggles and pain, and then you will return to the ground from which you came.**” Not only were these humans now separated from God because of their sin, but they would also suffer death as they were separated from the giver of life.

After leaving the garden the number of humans on earth grew rapidly. Not only did sin spread from Adam and Eve to their sons—it spread from generation to generation.

Even though humans were created in God's image, everyone chose to disobey God. They all constantly acted out in violence against each other. This went on for thousands of years.

Then God established a special relationship and a covenant promise—representing the deepest of all agreements—with a man named Abraham. God told Abraham, “I’ll make you the father of a great nation and famous throughout history. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. The entire earth will be blessed through your descendants. I will always be your God and you will always be my people.”

Abraham’s family, called the Israelites, were to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to once again live in God’s ways. God gave them a vast amount of land where they enjoyed his blessings as they grew into a large nation. He was a loving Father to them.

But as time went by the Israelites began doing what was right in their own eyes and rebelled against God and his laws. They stopped trusting in God and worshiped idols—people, things, wealth and power—over God. In their rebellion, the Israelites faced great struggles and ended up a defeated nation of slaves. But God continued to love his people and promised that one day a descendant of theirs would come to rescue and restore humanity, and all of creation, back to the way God originally created it.

Then there were 400 years of silence between God and his people. The Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundred of years. They were now ruled by Rome, the most powerful empire that the world had ever known.

Finally, God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. The angel appeared to her and said, “You will become pregnant and have a son and you are to name him Jesus. He will become a king whose kingdom will never end! This will happen supernaturally by God’s Spirit, so this baby will be called God’s Son.”

God revealed to Mary and her soon-to-be-husband Joseph that this boy was the long awaited Messiah king, the one who God promised he’d send to rescue his people! Sure enough the next year, Mary gave birth to a son

whom she named Jesus, which means “the God who saves”. Jesus grew up in both height and wisdom, and was loved by God, his Father, and by everyone who knew him. He lived a remarkable life, always choosing to live in God’s ways and do what was good, right and perfect.

As a man, Jesus called people to follow him, inviting them to be a part of what he called the Kingdom of God. He called people to once again live under God’s rule and reign. He said, “God blesses those who realize their need for him; the humble and poor, the gentle and merciful—the Kingdom of God belongs to them. God blesses the pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst to be with Him.” He taught people that the Kingdom of God is within our hearts.

He said, “God showed his great love for people by sending me—his only son—to this world. Anyone who believes in me will find life that is complete and eternal! He sent me here to save people—not to judge them. Those who want to live in sin and darkness will reject me and bring God’s judgment on themselves. But those who want to live in God’s ways will trust me and live forever!”

As God had promised, he sent Jesus to rescue humanity from sin and the penalty of death. God accepted Jesus’ perfect life in place of our own. Jesus was brutally beaten and died painfully on a wooden cross, taking the punishment that all of rebellious humanity deserved! Three days later Jesus conquered death when God raised him back to life, and he was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. Through his death and resurrection, forgiveness of sin and adoption into God’s family are possible for all people. He is now a loving Father to all who believe in Jesus.

Soon afterward, Jesus went to be with his Father in heaven, rising up into the clouds right before his followers’ eyes! He promised that he would send his own Holy Spirit to come and dwell within them. The Spirit would remind them of all Jesus taught, transform their hearts to be like Jesus and give them power to walk in the ways of God like Jesus did. Jesus also sent his followers to go out and tell others about him—his life and his sacrifice for their sins—and lead them to trust him and walk in his ways.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, through faith in Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—living in the ways of God.

We can join this amazing story... the story continues with us!

The Bible also tells us the end of this story... Jesus promised to come back one day to destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. Then there will be no more sickness, pain, or death. God's Kingdom will come in fullness, and everyone and everything will live under his rule. Until then, by the Spirit's power we get to live in God's ways, giving people a foretaste of what life is like in Jesus' Kingdom.

WHO IS GOD?

What do we learn about his character and nature through this story?

WHAT HAS HE DONE?

What stands out to you about the work of God through Jesus?

WHO ARE WE?

What is our identity as a result of God's work?

HOW DO WE LIVE?

Practically, how do we get to live in light of our new identity?

TELLING OUR STORY WITH JESUS AS THE HERO

“We are creatures of story, created by a storytelling God, who created the very fabric of our reality in terms of His story. Rather than seeing our existence as a series of unconnected random events without purpose, storytelling brings meaning to our lives through the analogy of carefully crafted plot that reflects the loving sovereignty of the God of the Bible.”

Brian Godawa, award-winning filmmaker

THE GOSPEL: GOD’S STORY

Every follower of Jesus has a story to tell, and it’s a story about God and his grace. However, many of us have not been equipped to tell our story in such a way that it points to Jesus as the hero. As those who want to show and share Jesus every day, it’s imperative that we learn to talk about him through the medium of our stories. Often, telling our story will be the most natural way to talk to our not-yet-believing friends about Jesus.

Every great story contains four movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. God’s Story follows the same pattern. God’s Story is the Great Story, the story that helps us make sense of all other stories. God’s Story is the ultimate Good News, the gospel that we find on the pages of the Bible. Understanding the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration pattern in God’s Story will help us make sense of our stories, and of the broken world in which we find ourselves. Below is a quick summary of these four movements along with the themes that emerge in each one.

CREATION

God’s Story begins with him miraculously creating everything out of nothing. The pinnacle of his creation is humans, man and woman made in his image. Like a mirror, Adam and Eve reflect what he looks like on the inside. They are totally unique amongst all of God’s creation. This defines them and gives them worth. As image bearers, the humans enjoy a unique relationship with God. They are made to worship him, to obey him, and to love him.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are Origin and Identity.

FALL

Though Adam and Eve enjoy a close relationship with God, they eventually choose to disobey him. They rebel against God, and choose to believe lies about their identity. This rebellion, called sin, brings about relational brokenness between Adam, Eve, and God. Ashamed, they hide from him and place blame on each other and on the serpent who deceived them (he was later revealed to be Satan). As a result of their sin, they would face death someday. God curses the serpent, and foretells of a coming day when he would be destroyed.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are Brokenness and Blame.

REDEMPTION

Many generations after Adam and Eve, God chooses to enter a special covenant relationship with Abraham, and with his descendants. These people will become a nation called Israel, and God's plan is to bless the whole world through them. He is like a father to them, and loves them deeply. After being miraculously freed from slavery in Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, God leads his people to the land he'd promised years before to provide for them. God also establishes a sacrificial system that allows his people to substitute the life of an animal in place of their own life. This makes it possible for God to forgive his people's sin, and for them to remain in relationship with him.

In the Promised Land, the Israelites rebel against God's authority and experience oppression from neighboring nations, but over and over again God rescues them when they cry out to him. Israel eventually becomes a well-established nation led by a succession of kings, but their pattern of rebellion and repentance continues. Finally, God removes them from the land because they persistently worship false gods despite the warning of God's prophets. However, God promises to one day send a perfect king who will redeem and rescue his people completely.

After 400 years of silence from God, his people finally hear him speak. Jesus, the Son of God, is miraculously born to a young virgin woman, a clear sign that he is the promised rescuer the prophets foretold. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus lives a sinless life, always obeying God, his Father. He begins to establish his kingdom by healing the sick, showing compassion to the poor and needy, freeing the spiritually oppressed, and telling people that he can forgive their sins if they

put their trust in him. He is fully God and fully man. His message of forgiveness through faith deeply offends the religious leaders of his day, and they orchestrate his execution.

However, three days later Jesus rises from the dead! His followers see him, and he sends them out to tell everyone that forgiveness of sins is possible through faith in him. His death pays the penalty for all of the sins of humanity, making the rescue and redemption of everyone possible! Through him, people can now be made right with God, and know him as their Father.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are Rescue and Deliverance.

RESTORATION

A few weeks after the resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven and sends his Holy Spirit to live inside of his followers, giving them new desires and the new power they need to walk in his ways. His followers are called a “new creation”, and through the Spirit’s power, are gradually changed to become more like Jesus.

Though Jesus began ruling as the King of his people while he was on earth, he will return to earth someday to judge all people, to establish his full rule and reign, and to usher in a new heavens and a new earth. Here, God’s people will worship him perfectly-Father, Son, and Spirit-just as they were originally created to do. Jesus’ followers anxiously await this amazing day!

The key themes in this movement of the Story are Hope and Transformation.

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR GOSPEL STORY

Understanding God's Story is essential for properly interpreting the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration elements in our own story. Though we regularly believe that our stories are about us, our stories are really about God. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Your story is ultimately God's Story. It's by him and about him. Your story is good news, a story about God's redemption of a broken person. He is the main character and the hero, not you. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever." (Romans 11:36).

Think through the four elements of your story, and consider how each one is an opportunity to point to your need for God and his work. Our stories consist of a countless string of smaller scenes, so begin by praying and asking the Holy Spirit to show you which parts you should include in your gospel story.

CREATION

We all have a fundamental belief about our origin – who or what gave us our existence, made us who we are, and shaped us into the person we are today. God's Story begins with him bringing everything into existence. He is the author and main character of the Story, and all things find their worth and value in him.

And yet, all of us have looked to someone or something other than God to define us, to give us a sense of worth and value. As you begin your gospel story, talk about your background, some early shaping influences, and what gave you your sense of worth and value.

Key Themes: Origin, Identity

Key Gospel Question: Who or what most shaped your understanding of yourself? What were the sources of your sense of personal value and identity?

Other questions to consider:

- Where were you born and what was going on in your family at the time?
- Talk about your relationships with your family members (parents, siblings, or other important people)
- Early on, who and what were some of the main influences in your life?
- What did you believe about God?

FALL

The world we live in is not as it should be. We are not as we should be. Brokenness is all around us. We have deeply held convictions about why things are broken. We often tend to place the blame at the feet of others: parents, siblings, friends, teachers, leaders, and even the government.

God's Story shows us that our own sin is the primary thing that wreaks havoc on our lives. As you tell your gospel story, talk about specific ways that your sin brought about pain and destruction in your life. Include failed attempts at fixing the brokenness in your life.

Key Themes: Brokenness, Blame

Key Gospel Question: How was your relationship with God and others not the way God created it to be? Why?

Other questions to consider:

- What were some of your most painful experiences?
- How did you respond to the pain?
- What was broken in your life? Relationships? Behavior? Attitudes? Health?
- Who was to blame for this brokenness?
- How did you try to fix the brokenness? Were those efforts effective?

REDEMPTION

All of us look to created things to save us, to rescue us, to give us significance, and to make us right. Money, possessions, acceptance, approval, relationships, and achievements all seem to offer some hope for repairing the brokenness in our lives. Education, government, recreation, and self-fulfillment can grab our attention as potential saviors, too. But the gospel tells a different story! The Redemption movement of your story has the potential to be very powerful because you get to declare your faith in Jesus as the One who has saved and rescued you. Talk specifically about how you placed your trust in Jesus to save and rescue you from your sin and from the brokenness in your life. Describe how Jesus' life, death and resurrection have brought redemption to specific broken parts of your story.

Key Themes: Rescue, Deliverance

Key Gospel Question: How has Jesus redeemed and rescued you through his death on the cross? How did you come to put your faith and trust in Him to save you and restore your life to the way God intended it to be?

Other questions to consider:

- What people or things failed to rescue you?
- How did the Spirit lead you to put your faith in Jesus? Did he use people, the Bible, a supernatural experience, difficult circumstances, a powerful message?
- What were some of the effects of your belief in Jesus? How did you begin to experience God restoring you back to the way you were originally created?

RESTORATION

There's a deep longing within each of us for change, for things to be different tomorrow than they are today. For some, this means finding a job or a spouse. Others hope for world peace and a fair distribution of resources, a Utopian society. The desire to "have it all" is a longing that many share. What we're all craving is a mending of the brokenness that surrounds us. We want restoration, but we want it to look a certain way.

Because of what Jesus has done, restoration has begun. We are a new creation, and we've been made right with the Father! In God's Story, restoration means that his image bearers begin to live in the way they were originally created to live. His Spirit lives in and through us, making us more like Jesus, even though we are still living in a fallen, broken world. Conclude your gospel story by talking about what the Spirit is doing in your life now. Share some evidences of his grace, indicators that you've been made new, that his restorative work has already begun in you.

Key Themes: Hope, Transformation

Key Gospel Question: What has changed and is changing in your life now? Who and what is the focus of your life today?

Other questions to consider:

- What are you hoping will change next week, month, year, 10 years?
- Who is the focus of your preferred version of the future?
- What are some specific ways you've seen the Spirit make you more like Jesus (consider the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23)? Examine restoration in your attitude, your behavior, and your relationships, and be as specific as you can.
- What aspect of the new heavens and new earth are you most excited about?

A FEW STORY TIPS

- Make your story about 10 minutes long.
- It's not essential, but you may want to consider writing out your story. This will help you stay on track, and will ensure you include the most important aspects.
- Use normal, every day language to tell your story.
- The Father already knows your story and accepts you fully because of Jesus, so you can be totally honest with others. Don't fear what people might think.
- Practice telling your story with close friends and family so you will be prepared when needed.
- Be prepared to share your gospel story in the midst of spiritual conversations with not-yet-believers. Anytime the conversation turns to God, Jesus, Church, or the Bible, it might be a great opportunity to share how Jesus is the hero of your story.
- Pray and ask the Spirit to speak through you as you tell your story.

REMEMBER, IT'S ACTUALLY HIS STORY!



GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

LISTEN FOR THE HEART, PART 1

“Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.” Luke 6:43’

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORY

Every person has a story to tell. Whether the story of their day or the story of their life, the words they say are full of meaning and importance. If we want to grow in our ability to speak effectively about Jesus, to proclaim the gospel (to believers and not-yet-believers!) then learning how to listen to a person’s story is crucial.

In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus helps us understand the connection between words, actions, and the heart. “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Listening to a person’s story is kind of like examining a fruit tree. Sometimes the fruit is obvious: financial difficulty, sexual sin, marital conflict, anger, mixed with love, joy, peace, etc. But the real action is under the surface, in the root structure of the tree. According to Jesus, actions and words reveal the heart. And the heart is of primary importance because the heart is the seat of faith. “With the heart a person believes” (Romans 10:10).

A person’s story has the potential to reveal where they have replaced Jesus as the only right object of faith. Jesus is the only one who can save, and we regularly look to created things instead. These false saviors will often be revealed in our stories.

Every great story contains four movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. God’s Story follows the same pattern. God’s Story is the Great Story, the story that helps us make sense of all other stories. God’s Story is the ultimate Good News, the gospel that we find on the pages of the Bible. Understanding the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration pattern in God’s Story will help us make sense of our stories, and of the stories we hear from people everyday.

Briefly consider the four movements of God's Story along with the themes that emerge in each one. For a longer review, see The Story of God Summary.

CREATION

God creates everything out of nothing, including Adam and Eve, who are made in his image.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are **origin** and **identity**. It shows us where we've come from and what defines us.

FALL

Sin enters the world when Adam and Eve disobey God. Relational brokenness, hiding, shame, blame, separation from God, sickness, and death are all now a part of our world. However, future deliverance is immediately foretold.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are **brokenness** and **blame**. It reveals the source of all brokenness in the world and who is ultimately to blame for it.

REDEMPTION

God enters a covenant relationship with Abraham, and his descendants, Israel. Throughout their history, he rescues and redeems them in countless ways. He is their loving Father. Finally, God becomes a man in the person of Jesus Christ, and through his life, death, and resurrection, redemption from sin and reconciliation with the Father are made possible for all people.

The key themes in this movement of the Story are **rescue** and **deliverance**. It displays God as the only one who can rescue us and put the broken pieces of our world back together.

RESTORATION

After the resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven and sends his Spirit to dwell in his followers and to restore them as image bearers. At his first coming, Jesus began his rule and reign in his people. He will someday return to judge the world and to restore all things by ushering in the new heavens and new earth. His kingdom will come in fullness!

The key themes in this movement of the Story are **hope** and **transformation**. It shows us what our hope should be for the future, and who will be the focus of that future reality.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Utilize the four movements as a tool for sorting the information in a person's story. Here's some guidelines and some key things to listen for along the way. In settings where taking notes is appropriate, use the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration tool as a guide. It is vitally important to pray and ask the Spirit to give us ears to hear, and to help us ask good questions if needed. And always thank the person for sharing their story!

CREATION

We all have a fundamental belief about our origin – who or what gave us our existence, made us who we are, and shaped us into the person we are today.

God's Story begins with him bringing everything into existence. He is the author and main character of the Story, and all things find their worth and value in him. And yet, all of us have looked to someone or something other than God to define us, to give us a sense of worth and value.

As a person begins their story, pay close attention to...

- Early shaping influences
- Family dynamics
- Important life events
- Any God talk

Keep in mind the key themes of **origin** and **identity**, and listen for pride, accomplishments, insecurity, failures, approval, rejection, and statements of worth.

The Key Heart Question is: What is my identity? Who or what defines me or gives me worth and value?

FALL

The world we live in is not as it should be. Brokenness is all around us. Everyone has a fundamental belief about why things are broken. We all tend to place the blame at the feet of others: parents, siblings, friends, teachers, leaders, the government.

However, God's Story shows us that our own sin is the primary thing that wreaks havoc on our lives.

As the person's story continues, listen for...

- Painful experiences and how the person responded to the pain
- Broken relationships, behavior, attitudes, health, etc.
- Patterns of addiction or abuse
- Any God talk

Keep in mind the themes of **brokenness** and **blame**, and listen for fear, shame, hiding, blame, guilt, and a victim mentality.

The Key Heart Question is: What is my problem? Why are people (including me) and things not the way they are supposed to be?

REDEMPTION

All of us look to created things to save us, to rescue us, to give us significance, and to make us right with God. Money, possessions, acceptance, approval, relationships, and achievements all seem to offer some hope for repairing the brokenness in our lives. Education, government, recreation, and self-fulfillment can grab our attention as potential saviors, too.

But the gospel tells a different story! God is the only one who can put the broken pieces of our lives back together. Jesus is our only hope for rescue, salvation, and redemption. His life and death alone can make a person right with the Father.

Statements about Redemption may be scattered throughout the person's story, so listen closely for...

- Placing hope in people or things to provide salvation, security, and significance
- Justification of the person's actions, or attempts to fix brokenness on their own
- Judging others or failing to extend forgiveness
- Any God talk

Keep in mind the themes of **rescue** and **deliverance**, and listen for revenge, power, control, anger, proving one's self, comfort, and self-medication.

Key Heart Question: What is my solution? Who or what will rescue me and fix what is broken?

RESTORATION

There's a deep longing within each of us for change, for things to be different tomorrow than they are today. For some, this means finding a job or a spouse. Others hope for world peace and a fair distribution of resources, a Utopian society. The desire to "have it all" is a longing that many share. What we're all craving is a mending of the brokenness that surrounds us. We want restoration, but we want it to look a certain way.

Because of what Jesus has done, restoration has begun. In every circumstance, he is present, and he offers peace and joy. As Jesus' followers, we are indwelt with his Spirit. He is restoring us as image bearers who can begin to live in the way we were originally created to live. Someday, Jesus will return to judge the world and to usher in the new heavens and new earth. The Father, Son, and Spirit will be the focus of our existence for eternity!

The last half of a person's story might include...

- A preferred version of the future
- The statement "everything would be okay if my circumstances just changed."
- The desire for other people to change
- God talk

Keep in mind the themes of **hope** and **transformation** and listen for entitlement, self-focus, comfort, avoidance, and apathy/a loss of hope.

Key Heart Question: What is my hope? What will the world or my world look like when all is as it should be?



APPENDIX 4

DISCOVER: STUDY AND ASK

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:26

HOW DO I STUDY THE BIBLE AND ASK THE 4 QUESTIONS?

A few things to keep in mind...

- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through his word. It’s his job to guide us into all truth and to glorify Jesus (John 16:13-14).
- Depending on the passage, a study Bible may be helpful in providing some important background information. Commentaries can be helpful as well, but most will provide too much information and could be distracting. Keep it simple!

THE 4 QUESTIONS

1. WHO IS GOD?

What does the text say about the character and nature of God? The Bible is God’s story – Father, Son, Spirit- so we begin by asking about how his character and nature are revealed in what we’re reading. The story is about Him! Look for specific references to his attributes: holy, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever present, unchanging, compassionate, gracious, patient, loving, kind, good, gentle, etc. In narrative portions, look for implied references to his attributes. What does the story reveal about his character and nature as Father, Son, and Spirit?

2. WHAT HAS HE DONE?

What does the text say about the work of God? God’s work throughout all of human history is diverse and magnificent. All of it is worth proclaiming! However, the person and work of Jesus is revealed on every page of the Bible (Luke 24:27). He is the hero and the main character. The Spirit does not want us to miss Jesus!

Look for references to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, either through foreshadowing (saving Noah in the flood, redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt, King David as a man after God’s own heart), through prophecy (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53), or through the New Testament story of Jesus’ earthly life and the establishment of his church. This ensures a uniquely Christian, gospel-centered answer to this question.

3. WHO ARE WE IN LIGHT OF THAT?

What does the text say about our identity? God has always been working to save “a people for his own possession.” (1 Peter 2:9) Throughout the Bible, note the things that are true of God’s people. This adds depth and richness to our understanding of who we are as New Covenant believers. For example, the Levitical priests were anointed and set apart for special service to God. Now, we are all anointed with God’s Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22), and, because of Jesus, are all a part of God’s “royal priesthood,” set apart for special service to God.

4. HOW DO WE LIVE?

In light of all of this, how do it change the way we live? When reading the Bible, we almost always start with the question, “How does this apply to my life?” But rightly motivated, gospel-centered action flows out of an understanding of who God is, what he’s done, and who we are in light of God’s character and work. Rather than starting with this question, end with it.

And then, take action! Jesus warns against being merely a hearer of his word but not a doer (Mt. 7:24-27). The gospel motivates and empowers us to live in an entirely new way.



GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

LISTEN FOR THE HEART, PART 2

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Matthew 12:34

HOW DO I LISTEN FOR THE HEART AS A GOSPEL SHEPHERD?

- We need to begin by asking the Spirit to give us ears to hear and a willingness to speak the truth in love.
- When meeting for the purpose of intentional shepherding, ask the person to come prepared to share their story.
- In an intentional shepherding setting, consider taking notes while listening.
- Whether hearing the story of a person’s life or the story of a person’s day, always listen for the heart.

HERE’S SOME THINGS TO LISTEN FOR IN A PERSON’S STORY:

1. Emotional words. (“I’m angry.” “I’m afraid.” “I was really hurt.”)
2. Interpretive words. (“This shouldn’t happen.” “I guess I’m getting what I deserve.” “I wonder if it’s even worth getting up in the morning.”)
3. Self talk. (“I am such a failure.” “I am not smart enough, pretty enough, etc.” “I have accomplished this and this and this.” “I always got good grades and performed well in various activities.” Listen closely for pride and insecurity.)
4. God talk. (“I tried hard to obey God.” “How could God let this happen to me?” “God’s never done anything for me.” “God is punishing me.” Listen closely for denial, blame, and an unwillingness to take responsibility.)
5. Stated motives. (“I wanted to get even. I wanted revenge.” “I was so ashamed, I decided to never tell my parents.” “I need people to like me. I need their approval.” “I feel so guilty, I could never forgive myself”.)
6. Patterns of behavior, positive or negative. Listen closely for power and control.

7. Destructive or repeated sin. (“I started using drugs when I was 12.” “I smoked pot every day for 5 or 6 years.” “I slept with more women than I can count.” Listen closely for sources of comfort and self-medicating.)

8. Abuse or neglect. (“My dad would scream at me if I came home with C’s.” “I was raped by my step-brother when I was 12.” “I used to play alone in my room most of the time.” “The kids at school used to call me fat.” Listen closely for a victim mentality.)

9. Dad and Mom. (“I’ve never met my dad.” “My mom gave me everything I wanted.” “My dad said he wished I was never born.” “I don’t remember my dad hugging me.” “Nothing was ever good enough for my mom.”)

Whether in a MC/DNA setting or in an intentional shepherding situation, always provide encouragement to a person who has just shared their story. In a MC/DNA setting, consider asking a few initial follow up questions right away.

ENCOURAGEMENT AFTER THEIR STORY

- Thank you for sharing your story. It is an honor to hear it!
- Your story is an amazing story about God and his work (most people will not see this, but you should say it anyway). God is in this!
- It is very easy to focus on your circumstances at a time like this. I completely understand. But God is primarily concerned with your heart in this situation. He wants to keep pulling your focus up out of the mire of your circumstances on onto him. Keep watching for your heart responses in the midst of this trial.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER CLARITY (IF NEEDED)

- Tell me about your relationship with your dad
- How did you feel when that significant event happened?
- Did that hurtful situation ever get resolved?
- How old were you when that happened?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Where are you still struggling to believe the gospel?
- How has this situation helped you see your sin more clearly?
- Where do you see God at work in this situation?

APPENDIX 6

GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a person of understanding will draw it out. Proverbs 20:5

HOW DO I ASK GOOD QUESTIONS AS A GOSPEL SHEPHERD?

- We must be led by the Holy Spirit! It's his job to bring conviction, and he is the primary shepherd. He alone knows the depths of a person's heart, and he will guide us as we lovingly pursue people with good question. Pray before, during, and after any shepherding conversation, asking the Spirit to speak.
- Often the Spirit will provide great questions immediately after a conversation. Write these down for future reference.
- Ask lots of questions throughout the conversation, especially in the beginning. We like to say, "Ask 10 questions for every pronouncement."
- Ask open ended questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no", as these questions do not provide much information, and can leave room for us to make a lot of assumptions about the answer.
- Sometimes the best question is not a question. "Tell me more..." is a great way to invite a person to tell more about what's going on in a their heart.

SOME GOOD QUESTIONS TO USE

The following is adapted from Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, p. 170-178

- **What?** Ask people to define their terms. "What did you mean when you said...?"
- **How?** Ask people to clarify what they mean with concrete, real life examples. "How did that situation unfold? Give us some more detail."
- **Where?** and **When?** Ask people to provide more information about the details and the order of events. "Where were you when this happened? When did this happen?"

- **How Often?** Ask people to describe the frequency of their struggles. Ask them about themes and patterns. “How often do you do this?”
- **Why?** Ask people to explain why they responded as they did in a given situation. Ask the person to share their reasons, values, purposes, and desires. “Why were you feeling frustrated?”

A WORD ABOUT “WHY?”

“Why?” is a great question because it helps uncover the motives of the heart. We sometimes refer to “Why?” as the Why Shovel, because it helps us dig around to get to the root of a problem. However, a few cautions should be noted.

“Why?” can sound condescending, judgmental, and even rhetorical (a question that’s asked where the answer is so obvious that the question itself helps prove a point). “Why on earth did you do that!?” clearly implies that the person asking the question thinks a poor decision was made. The question does not invite an honest, vulnerable response.

Also, “Why?” is sometimes used as a one-word question, which can sound accusatory, and does not invite an open dialogue. If a wife says to her husband, “I’m feeling sad and frustrated,” and he responds by simply asking, “Why?”, she is likely to perceive that he is upset because she is feeling sad, and wants to hear her reason so he can refute it.

“Why?” can be a powerful tool that must be wielded with wisdom and the sensitivity of the Spirit.



X-RAY QUESTIONS

BY DAVID POWLISON

(AS USED BY PERMISSION IN THE BOOK HOW PEOPLE CHANGE BY PAUL DAVID TRIPP AND TIMOTHY LANE)

- 1) What do you love? Is there something you love more than God or your neighbor?
- 2) What do you want? What do you desire? What do you crave, long for, wish? Whose desires do you obey?
- 3) What do you seek? What are your personal expectations and goals? What are your intentions? What are you working for?
- 4) Where do you bank your hopes? What hope are you working toward or building your life around?
- 5) What do you fear? Fear is the flip side of desire. For example, if I desire your acceptance, then I fear your rejection.
- 6) What do you feel like doing? This is a synonym for desire. Sometimes we feel like eating a gallon of ice cream, or staying in bed, or refusing to talk, etc.
- 7) What do you think you need? In most cases a person's felt needs picture his or her idol cravings. Often what we have called necessities are actually deceptive masters that rule our hearts. They control us because they seem plausible. They don't seem so bad on the surface and it isn't sin to want them. However, I must not be ruled by the "need" to feel good about myself, to feel loved and accepted, to feel some sense of accomplishment, to have financial security, to experience good health, to live a life that is organized, pain-free, and happy.
- 8) What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish? What are you really going after in the situations and relationships of life? What are you really working to get?
- 9) What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? Where do you find your garden of delight? What lights up your world? What food sustains your life? What really matters to you? What are you living for?

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- 10) Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, and escape? When you are fearful, discouraged, and upset, where do you run? Do you run to God for comfort and safety or to something else? (To food, to others, to work, to solitude?)
- 11) What do you trust? Do you functionally rest in the Lord? Do you find your sense of well-being in His presence and promises? Or do you rest in something or someone else?
- 12) Whose performance matters to you? This question digs out self-reliance or self-righteousness. It digs out living through another. Do you get depressed when you are wrong or when you fail? Have you pinned your hopes on another person? Are you too dependent on the performance of your husband, wife, children or friends?
- 13) Whom must you please? Whose opinion counts? From whom do you desire approval or fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living?
- 14) Who are your role models? Who are the people you respect? Who do you want to be like? Who is your “idol”? (In our culture, this word is used for role model.)
- 15) What do you desperately hope will last in your life? What do you feel must always be there? What can't you live without?
- 16) How do you define success or failure in any particular situation? Are your standards God's standards? Do you define success as the ability to reach your goals? The respect and approval of others? Is it defined by a certain position or the ability to maintain a certain lifestyle? By affluence? By appearance? By acceptance? By location? By accomplishment?
- 17) What makes you feel rich, secure, and prosperous? The possession, experience, and enjoyment of what would make you happy? The Bible uses the metaphor of treasure here.
- 18) What would bring you the greatest pleasure? The greatest misery?
- 19) Whose political power would make everything better for you? Don't just think in a national sense. Think about the workplace and the church. Whose agenda would you like to see succeed and why?

20) Whose victory and success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?

21) What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to? What do you feel is your right to expect, seek, require, or demand?

22) In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? When do you feel confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What do you fear? What do you seek to escape from? What do you escape to?

23) What do you really want out of life? What payoff are you seeking from the things you do? What is the return you are working for?

24) What do you pray for? The fact that we pray does not necessarily mean we are where we should be spiritually. On the contrary, prayer can be a key revealer of the idols of our hearts. Prayer can reveal patterns of self-centeredness, self-righteousness, materialism, fear of man, etc.

25) What do you think about most often? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively? When you are doing a menial task or driving alone in your car, what captures your mind? What is your mindset?

26) What do you talk about? What occupies your conversations with others? What subjects do you tend to discuss over and over with your friends? The Bible says it is out of the heart that our mouths speak.

27) How do you spend your time? What are your daily priorities? What things do you invest time in every day?

28) What are your fantasies? What are your dreams at night? What do you daydream about?

29) What is your belief system? What beliefs do you hold about life, God, yourself, others? What is your worldview? What is the personal “mythology” that structures the way you interpret things? What are your specific beliefs about your present situation? What do you value?

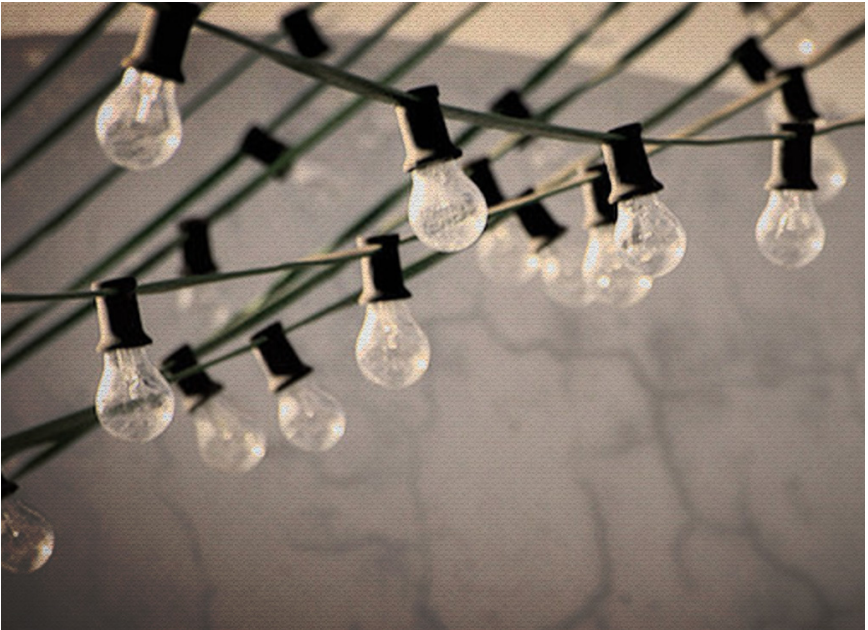
30) What are your idols or false gods? In what do you place your trust or set your hopes? What do you consistently turn to or regularly seek? Where do you take refuge? Who is the savior, judge, controller of your world? Whom do you serve? What voice controls you?

31) In what ways do you live for yourself?

32) In what ways do you live as a slave to the Devil? Where are you susceptible to his lies? Where do you give in to deceit?

33) When do you say, "If only..."? Our "if onlys" actually define our vision of paradise. They picture our biggest fears and greatest disappointments. They can reveal where we tend to envy others. They picture where we wish we could rewrite our life story. They picture where we are dissatisfied and what we crave.

34) What instinctively feels right to you? What are your opinions -- those things that you feel are true?



APPENDIX 8

GOSPEL SHEPHERDING SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

“...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...” Ephesians 4:15

HOW DO I SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE AS A GOSPEL SHEPHERD?

- We must be led by the Holy Spirit! Pray and ask him what to say. We should only speak if the Spirit leads us to speak; but if the Spirit leads us to speak, we must speak!
- Ask lots of questions throughout the conversation, and especially in the beginning. We like to say, “Ask 10 questions for every pronouncement.”
- Consider our own motivation. Pray through it. Is it our desire to honor God and point the person to him? Are we fearful of the person, or are we resting in our identity as a child of God?
- Proclaim Jesus as much as possible. He is the hero of every person’s story, and the real savior we all need in every situation.
- Keep the goal in mind: repentance and faith. Proclamations should help lead a person to Jesus.

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE BY...

- **Making proclamations concerning identity much more than actions.** We always live out of who we believe we are, but we often forget the truth. Remind people of their true identity, not merely what they should do.
- **Avoiding simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful.** If someone confesses worry, it probably won’t help to remind the person that Jesus said, “Do not worry” three times in Matthew 6. Rather, focus on their identity as a beloved child of God, and remind them of the Father’s great care for them (which Jesus highlights in Matthew 6!), a truth which can free them from worry and fear.

• **Not judging the person's heart.** 1 Corinthians 4:5 warns, “do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes (“motives”-NASB) of the heart.” If we have preconceived judgments about a person's heart (“I know for sure why they did that!”), they will come through in our communication, and our speech will not be filled with grace. We need the Holy Spirit to purify our motives before we speak.

• **Asking permission before making a pronouncement:** “Can I tell you what I'm seeing?” This ensures that the person is open and ready to receive a direct word.

• **Utilizing very direct communication as the Spirit leads.** As long as the Spirit is prompting it, and it is spoken in love, we need to be obedient to say what the Spirit is leading us to say. Sometimes he will lead us to say something very directly, without asking for permission!

• **Calling people to repentance.** Often, we have to ask, “Is there anything that would prevent you from repenting right now?” or “Would you like to talk to the Father about this right now?” This simple but direct question can help people cross the threshold of repentance and renewed faith in the gospel.



FRUIT TO ROOT

The 4 Questions provide a helpful framework for uncovering what's going on in our hearts, how our beliefs are shaping our thoughts, words, and actions. By beginning with the obvious fruit in our lives and working down to our heart motives (which are “hidden in darkness” according to 1 Corinthians 4:5), we go from “fruit to root.”

Essentially, the idea is that our actions reveal what we are believing about our identity; what we are believing about our identity reveals our perspective on what God has done in and through Jesus; and our perspective on the work of God reveals what we're affirming about the character and nature of God.

Here's a brief example. When we are filled with worry and fear, we could be believing that we are alone, unprotected, and unloved. If we're believing that we are alone and unloved, our perspective on what God has done might be that he is against us, that he doesn't have our best interests in mind, and that he is not in control. If we believe these things about the work of God, then we might be accusing him of being small, powerless, and unloving.

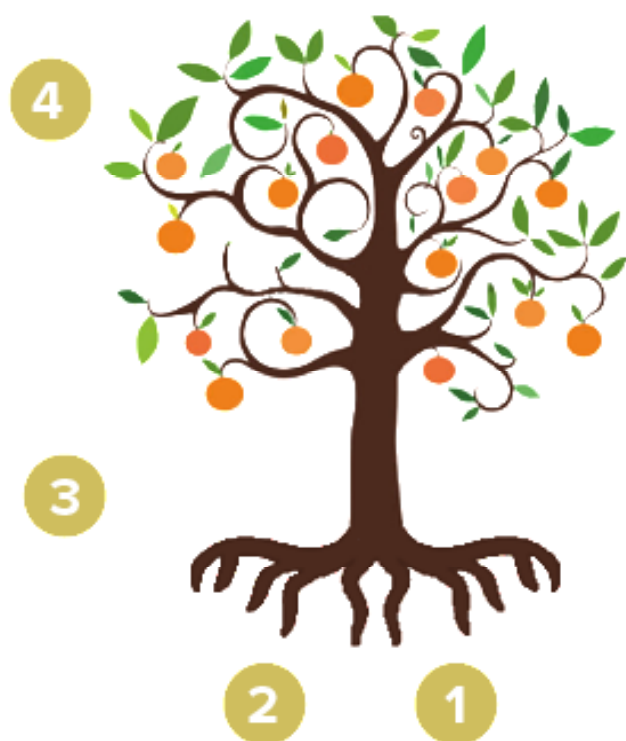
The goal of going from fruit to root is for the Spirit to bring us to repentance and renewed faith in Jesus.

Repentance means to change our mind about who or what is God. Our sinful thoughts, words, and actions spring from unbelief in our hearts, which is false worship, or idolatry. Therefore, our repentance must address the root and not merely the fruit. “I repent of my belief that you are small, powerless, and unloving! More control will not save me. I am not god!”

Faith is when we reaffirm our faith that Jesus is the One True God. We exercise true faith when we look at Jesus and say, “You are powerful and in control! You loved me so much that you died for me. I am protected by You. You are my rock and my refuge.”

FRUIT TO ROOT

THE FRUIT OF YOUR LIFE IS WHAT IS SEEN AT THE SURFACE.



FROM FRUIT TO ROOT

4. How should I live?

What is hanging on the fruit of my life?

3. Who am I?

What do my actions reveal that I'm believing about my identity?

2. What has He done (in and through Jesus)?

What does my belief about my identity say about the work of God?

1. Who is God?

What does my belief about the work of God say about His character and nature?

ACT: LISTEN AND OBEY

Everyone “should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”

Acts 26:20

HOW DO I BEAR FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE?

The Spirit will always call us to live out our gospel identity. Pray and listen to the Spirit, asking him, “What do you want me to do?” and “Who do you want me to tell?” Consider these questions connected to each of our identities.

FAMILY

Who should I love? And how?

Who do I need to forgive?

Who do I need to seek forgiveness from?

MISSIONARY

Who should I spend time with, and how can I be intentional with that time?

Who can I tell about Jesus’ work in me?

SERVANT

How can I help in tangible ways?

What should I give (time, money, prayer), and to whom should I give it?

DISCIPLE

What do I need to avoid that provokes or strengthens sinful desires? How can I flee from and resist temptation?

What do I need to practice that feeds or increases Spiritual desires? How can I pursue holiness and godliness?







