



Acknowledgments

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OUR STORYTELLING GOD

The Bible, while containing many different types of literature and while written over thousands of year, by many different authors, is inspired by God and is telling one cohesive story displaying God's heart and will for humanity. This story reveals God's ultimate desire to rescue and redeem the world and his inevitable plan to pull it off. Whether we know it or not, it is the true story in which our existence takes place. It is the story that reveals where we come from, where we are, and where we're going. It is the true story in which all our stories make sense.

THE GOSPEL AS STORY



Creation

God created this world as perfect. It was everything we yearn for. The world was good. We had peace with God, with each other, with the animals, and with nature. We had everything we needed to live life to the full! We had all this by faith (trust) in our good Father and Creator. It was heaven on earth and we were meant to enjoy it forever!



Fall

The Enemy convinced humanity that they didn't need God and that they could run their lives better. The Humans chose to believe the lie and rebelled. All rebellion against God is called sin. Because of that rebellion, the world isn't how it should be. There are natural disasters, wars, famine, hatred, suffering, disease, and death. Yet God couldn't bear for this to go on forever.



Promise

God made a promise to our first parents that He would rescue them through one of their descendants. Through this man God promised to crush the Enemy, undo his work, and bless the world. The story of the Old Testament is the story of God's pursuit of rebellious humanity, his call for them to return to him and life, and his progressive revealing of what the Promised Rescuer would look like and what he would accomplish.



Redemption

He sent his one and only son, Jesus, into the war zone of this world to offer a truce. He lived the life we were always meant to live and died the death we deserved. He paid the price of our rebellion on the cross so that we could be pardoned and forgiven. He has made it possible for a relationship with God again – to be Children of God once more!



Church

All who are baptized and believe are becoming a new type of people, led by the Spirit, and are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus. These people, called the Church, are sent out, by the power of the Spirit, as a Family of Missionary Servants. We show the world what God is like by the words that we speak and the lives that we live together. We live to bring glory to His name and the message of our Father's love



Restoration

Yet God didn't leave it there. One day, He will come back and restore all of the creation to what it was originally meant to be. There will be no more wars, sorrow, weeping or pain. There will be no more death! Everything will be made right. It will be heaven on earth once more! We will enjoy life to the full forever in the presence of God!

INTERPRETING OUR STORIES THROUGH THE STORY

We can use a simplified version of The Story as a grid work through which to understand our stories, the stories of the people around us, and the dominate stories of the culture around us.



Creation
(Identity & Origin)



Fall
(Problem)



Redemption
(Rescue)



Restoration
(Hope)

Let's take a closer look at how this grid work can help us understand our stories and how The Story informs them.



Creation

Every comic book hero or villain has an origin story – the story that explains who they are and how they came to be. We too have an origin story. We have a story, or series of stories, that tells us where we come from, gives us a sense of identity, that lets us know who are today.

KEY THEME: Identity & Origin

KEY QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE OUR CREATION STORY:

- Who or what was most influential in shaping you into who you are?
- How do you view yourself?
- What gives you the greatest sense of Identity?
- Where did you grow up?
- What was life & relationship with your family like?

GOSPEL QUESTIONS TO BRING YOUR CREATION STORY IN LINE WITH THE STORY:

- How does The Gospel Story better interpret those events?
- How does the Gospel give me a better sense of origin, identity, and worth?



Fall

While our world was created good, life is not what it should be. Regardless of our religion, worldview, or philosophy we all have a sense that the world is not as it should be. We all have a deep sense that there is something wrong with our lives. Many of us have a fundamental understanding of what is broken and who or what is at fault. We like to blame our parents, family, friends, boss, the government, etc. for what is wrong in our lives. We all have a “fall guy,” someone or thing to blame, and we all have a deep desire for justice.

KEY THEME: Problem

KEY QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR FALL STORY:

- Why are things and people not the way they are supposed to be and who is to blame for it?
- What were the most painful things that have happened in your life? Who was to blame?
- What is broken in your life? Relationship? Attitudes? Finances? Career? Health? Who is to blame?

GOSPEL QUESTIONS TO BRING YOUR FALL STORY IN LINE WITH THE STORY:

- How does our brokenness flow from The Fall of humanity into sin?
- How is our problem in The Fall more serious, threatening, and life-ending?



Redemption

Everyone has a solution they believe in, a remedy they look to, or a savior they believe in to redeem the brokenness in their life and world. Many are looking to a philosophy. Others look to a plan for self-improvement or personal growth. Many believe some kind of reform in education or politics will change things. Many of us place our hopes in another person to rescue us. Everyone is looking towards someone or something to make things right.

KEY THEME: Rescue

KEY QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR REDEMPTION STORY:

- Who have you depended on to rescue and redeem you?
- What accomplishments, acquisitions, or situations have you hoped in?

GOSPEL QUESTIONS TO BRING YOUR REDEMPTION STORY IN LINE WITH THE STORY:

- How have the people and things, you've trusted to save, end up failing you?
- How has Jesus rescued and redeemed you on the Cross? How did you come to trust in his work for you?
- How is the salvation that Jesus offers better than that which you trusted in before?
- How does his salvation from your greatest problem (Sin & Death) help you even in the face of the other defining problems of your life?



Restoration

Every person has a picture of the future when everything is as it should be. Some see a utopia with humans all living at peace with one another. Others believe Mother Earth and humanity will be one. Still others see another world they will go to where they will be at the center. Some people's future hope is to be married... have children... get a job... be rich... get in shape... etc.... Everyone wants something better... restoration of what they believe their world should be like.

KEY THEME: Hope

KEY QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR RESTORATION STORY:

- What will the world look like when all is as it should be?
- Who or what will be the focus of the world this world?

GOSPEL QUESTIONS TO BRING YOUR RESTORATION STORY IN LINE WITH THE STORY:

- What has been/is changing for the better because of Jesus?
- How is the future Jesus offers better than the one you once hoped in?
- How are you becoming a more hopeful person because of the certain future Jesus is giving us?

TELLING YOUR STORY WITH JESUS AS THE HERO

- 1) **DISCOVER YOUR OLD STORY.** On page 4, you are going to write out the story of your life through the Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration grid. **Stop and pray** that The Spirit removes your pride and reveals the answers to the above **Key Questions** about each part of your story. Use those questions to identify the lesser story you've been believing and living under. This is important work because it helps you be honest with the lies you've been believing as much of the source of your brokenness and gives you a chance to repent and profess how Jesus is better.
- 2) **DISCOVER AND WRITE YOUR STORY WITH JESUS AS THE HERO.** On Page 5, write out how Jesus is giving you a better story as you use the above **Gospel Questions** to bring each part of your story in line with The Story. Write out how Jesus has given you a better identity, how your problems are all the result of your greatest problem of Sin, how Jesus saved you from the big problems of your life (including your greatest problem), and how Jesus shapes your hopes both in this life and for the life to come. Be ready to share your story with you DNA group or MC and invite them to help you further see how Jesus is the Hero of your Story.

MY OLD STORY

CREATION: *Identity & Origin*

FALL: *Problem*

REDEMPTION: *Rescue*

RESTORATION: *Hope*

MY STORY WITH JESUS AS THE HERO

Share your story with Jesus as the Hero. Invite others in your DNA group or MC to ask questions and give input. Give them permission to address your story and life with the Gospel. Let them help you see how they see your story falling in line with The Story.

CREATION: *Problem*

FALL: *Problem*

REDEMPTION: *Rescue*

RESTORATION: *Hope*

ENGAGING A STORY

Understanding our own stories, the stories of the people around us, and the dominate stories of the culture around us will help us become better missionaries. If we understand how Jesus makes our own stories better, we will be eager to share that story with others. We will also serve as missionary servants out of freedom and joy rather than a sense of obligation and burden. As we understand the stories of the people around us, we'll start to discover which parts of The Story will be perceived and received as *Good News* by them. We'll know where to serve as we listen for their fall stories, their needs for rescue and their hopes. We can do this at a macro level in our MCs, Church Plants, and congregation. We can look at the larger culture, or some segment of the culture that is within our mission field as an MC, and discover what will be seen, heard, and received as good news so that we are geared to reach the most people who are living under that larger story of the culture.

Once we start to understand some person or culture's story, we want to begin to engage them in their story with the hope that can: 1) Find common ground to build from, 2) Look for the inconsistencies or brokenness in their story, and 3) Complete their stories with The Story.

1. Common Ground with THE STORY

As you listen carefully, pay close attention to where the story you're hearing lines up with some or part of the Gospel story. They could have a whole section of the story they agree with (i.e. Environmentalism agrees with the Fall—it's Humanity's fault... but the rebellion is against Mother Earth, not God.), or there may be parts of a section that agree but still miss the Gospel (i.e. Jesus did come to redeem us, but it all depends on how well we behave or perform for him.). Finding the common ground creates a point of agreement and potential Gospel-foundation from which you can work outward both to lay more foundation and/or show the weakness of their prior foundational storyline.

Consider how Paul did this in Acts 14:8-18 and Acts 17:22-34:

What common ground did Paul start with?

How did he move from the common ground to what they didn't yet know or believe?

2. Look for the inconsistencies or brokenness

At some point through dialog, it is imperative to identify where the story they believe in does not hold up under close scrutiny. Generally, one or more fundamental parts of their story do not line up with the rest of their story, OR the life they're living does not line up with the story to which they hold.

If you are listening closely to a Christian's story, your goal is to help them see where their life or doctrine does not line up with the truth of the Gospel (The lie that they're living by). If the person is an unbeliever, your desire is to encourage them to work out the fullness of their story's implications to see where they do not, or will not, live fully in line with their story OR that their story will not accomplish what they hope it will. The best way to work toward this is through ongoing series of questions.

What might some of those questions be?

3. Complete their story with the story

Finally, once we become clear on where their story is incomplete, broken, or based not on the truth, we look for opportunities to show how only the Gospel story corrects and completes their story. If we listen closely, we should be able to share with them the story so it speaks good news to their story. We should tell the story in such a way they want it to be true since it answers the deep questions and longings they are looking to another story to fulfill.

STORY LISTENING FORM

Previously we asked you to write out your old story and then write out your story conformed to THE STORY with Jesus as the Hero. This is similar process to the missionary work that you can go through every time you hear a story of another. In your DNA groups and MCs, you will spend some time early on listening to each other's stories. You will also spend some time discerning and then understanding the mission field to which you're called as an MC. As you listen to one another's stories or as you examine the dominate story of your mission field, it may be helpful to have with you the story listening form from page 8. Use this page as a template for understanding the Stories of others and the culture.

ALWAYS BE LISTENING

A final note. Outside of your structured discipleship environments (DNA groups, MCs, Church Plant Core teams, Church strategy meetings) you'll have many opportunities to engage in conversations and hear the stories of other people. Think like a missionary. Always keep an open ear to what people's everyday conversation reveals about their perceived Origin & identity (creation), their problems (fall), the rescue that there are looking for (redemption), and the hope that they are yearning for (restoration). Intentionally ask God to give you wisdom and guide you by the Spirit to perceive the lies that they are living under and how Jesus can make their stories whole. He can redeem and restore every story, no matter how broken. In his story, all our stories find their place.

"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

STORY LISTENING FORM

	<p style="color: red; text-align: center;">In this column make notes on their stories.</p>	<p style="color: red; text-align: center;"><i>In this column ask:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is the Common Ground with THE STORY?</i> • <i>Where are the inconsistencies and brokenness in the story?</i> • <i>How can The Story complete and redeem their story?</i> • <i>How does Jesus offer something better than what they're hoping for?</i>
<p style="color: red;">CREATION <i>Identity & Origin</i></p>		
<p style="color: red;">FALL <i>Problem</i></p>		
<p style="color: red;">REDEMPTION <i>Rescue</i></p>		
<p style="color: red;">RESTORATION <i>Hope</i></p>		