



GOSPEL TRIPLETS

Anchor Church Sydney

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This guide is based heavily on Soma Tacoma's *DNA Guide* used to equip their *DNA Groups*. Anchor Church Sydney recognised that our church family would greatly benefit from adopting similar groups which we have called *Gospel Triplets*. Anchor Church has put together this new guide in order to help equip our Gospel Triplets to be effective in shepherding and caring for one another. Anchor Church would like to thank Abe Meysenburg and the team at Soma Communities, Tacoma for their generosity in allowing us to use the content and material from their *DNA Guide* in this new resource.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Through this guide each person committed to a Gospel Triplet will learn the basics of Gospel Shepherding. It explains how to apply the gospel to the whole person, moving from the head to heart to hands, as we disciple and care for one another. It includes a bunch of practical shepherding tools and resources that can be used in any shepherding context (Gospel Triplets, Gospel Communities, marriage counseling, etc.).

Ideally, each Gospel Triplet member will become familiar with the content of this guide. Our Triplet 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. This could be done individually or each group might want to walk through the guide together then refer to it repeatedly as they continue to learn how to shepherd and care for one another, moving from head to heart to hands. Each member is encouraged to bring a copy to their weekly meeting.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO GOSPEL TRIPLETS

A WORD ABOUT ANCHOR CHURCH AND GOSPEL COMMUNITIES

In Community, on Mission, for Jesus

The vision of Anchor Church Sydney is to see a church that transforms our city by making disciples of Jesus for the glory of God. To this end, we seek to gather people in rapidly multiplying gospel communities, equipping them to be sent on mission in their city to make disciples of Jesus by proclaiming the gospel.

For groups to be truly gospel communities, and truly on mission, there needs to be saturation in the gospel. This needs to include a context where the gospel can be carefully and individually applied to and spoken into people's minds, hearts and actions on an ongoing basis. A place of nurture and repentance, where sin is addressed, idols are turned from, and there is renewed trust and hope in Christ. This depth of nurture and care isn't possible in the weekly Gospel Community meeting which has a strong outward missional focus, nor in the Sunday Gathering. Gospel Triplets provide a third, more intimate context where we can nurture and care deeply for one another, speaking the gospel into one another's lives as we seek to live in community, on mission, for Jesus.

OVERVIEW OF GOSPEL TRIPLETS

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." – Romans 12:2

What is a Gospel Triplet?

As the name suggests, a Gospel Triplet is a group that ideally consists of three people – men with men, women with women – who meet together weekly for an intentional time to care deeply for one another and foster growth as disciples of Jesus.

As disciples, we should experience transformation at every level, affecting our whole person: the head, heart and hands. Gospel Triplets provide a context where the gospel can be carefully and individually applied to the head, heart and hands of each Triplet member. In order to do this, Triplets follow the three-step process of Discover (head), Nurture (heart) and Act (hands). The name *Gospel Triplets* also reflects this key three-step process of applying the gospel to the head, heart and hands that Triplets will walk through each time they meet.

What is the goal of a Gospel Triplet?

The overall goal of a Gospel Triplet 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 Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The specific discipleship goals for a Gospel Triplet meeting can be understood under the headings of head, heart and hands:

Head – **how we Discover**: led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **study** the Bible together (one way to do this is to **ask** the *4 Questions*). The goal is to teach the **head**.

Heart – **how we Nurture**: led by the Holy Spirit, the group will **repent** and **believe** the gospel. The goal is to shepherd the **heart**.

Hands – **how we 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**.

Why should I be in a Gospel Triplet?

As disciples who've been saved and made righteous, Paul exhorts us to "be transformed by the renewal of [our] 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 Gospel Triplet 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 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 Triplet partners when we are tempted to hide our sin or to blame others. Regular encouragement from our Triplet partners can be a significant help in our battle against sin and against the lies of the enemy.

What can I expect from a Gospel Triplet?

The members of a Gospel Triplet should be committed to meeting together regularly, ideally every week and usually for about 90 minutes. These meetings are intentional times and 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, listening to the Holy Spirit and submitting to one another. Like our Gospel Communities, Gospel Triplets are more than just a weekly meeting. The groups should seek to build trusting relationships by sharing everyday life together.

GOSPEL TRIPLET GROUP STRUCTURE

Group size – why triplets?

From experience, three is the ideal size for this type of small, gospel shepherding group. It is not too big and not too small.

Many of us may be most familiar with a one-on-one discipleship approach. While there is nothing wrong with this, there are many benefits to adding a third person:

- With three people 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 is 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.

There are also many good reasons for limiting the number to only three:

- Each person can contribute significantly to the group.
- No one can ‘hide’ and remain silent for very long.
- Each person has ample opportunity to share at each group meeting.
- Scheduled group meetings don’t last for hours.

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

Who should the Gospel Triplet consist of?

It is helpful for a Gospel Triplet to consist of people from the same Gospel Community. This will help ensure another regular touch point with some of the people in your GC outside of the weekly GC

gathering. It will also allow you to share your heart and your life with a few people with whom you are on mission. When Gospel Triplets are made up on people from the same GC it greatly strengthens the GC and helps the mission of making disciples who make disciples.

There will be times when a Gospel Triplet will not be made up of men or women in the same Gospel Community. A GC may have recently multiplied, and perhaps the Gospel Triplet wants to wait before transitioning. Sometimes people have longstanding relationships they really value, or they want to continue pouring into 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 Gospel Triplet meet? And where?

First of all, since the Gospel Triplet is a subset of a Gospel Community, Triplets should connect on more than just a formal basis. Triplets should be engaged in as much of everyday life as possible. Ideally, gospel friendships will form, and people will enjoy hanging together in all kinds of ways. It's wonderful when Triplets stay in contact all through the week, even texting one another words of encouragement and prayer points. Indeed, *all* our gatherings as a church (Sunday Gatherings, GC's, Equip training and so on) are not obligatory meetings to simply attend, but rich opportunities to share life together as we grow as disciples of Christ.

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

Experience teaches that consistency in meeting is key. Try to find a common time each week when the group can meet and stick to it as much as possible. This way the members of the Triplet will know that this is their meeting time, and they will work to protect it and keep it free for the Triplet meeting each week. If a member is sick, or pulls out at the last minute, the group may choose to rearrange their meeting time that week. If no other suitable time can be found when all three members can meet, it is recommended that the group still goes ahead, even if it is only two out of three people meeting. Meeting as a pair is better than cancelling the whole group that week, but this should not become the norm.

Meetings can happen in cafes, restaurants, pubs, parks or homes. Focus is a key factor to consider. Meet in a place where everyone is comfortable and that is reasonably free of distractions. Meeting in a home is often the best option.

Gospel Triplet group leadership

The nature of group dynamics reveals that every group has a leader. Acknowledging this reality will help Gospel Triplets function in a healthier manner.

Each Gospel Triplets make-up will be unique. The nature of the group will determine the type of leadership that is 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 Gospel Triplet should get to 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 centred on Jesus. A Gospel Triplet provides a great training ground for disciples to learn the basics of leading in a group setting.

As we grow in our ability to effectively shepherd and nurture one another, we hope that in time each Gospel Community will have a shepherding leader who will provide counsel and consultation for the

Gospel Triplets in their care. This Gospel Community shepherd could be the Gospel Community leader of another person in the Gospel Community.

A note to Gospel Community Leaders: Every encounter we have (including Sunday Gatherings, Gospel Communities, and all of life) is an opportunity for discipleship. While everything we do is about making disciples, Gospel Triplets will be the most intense discipleship investment you make. Be prayerful and very intentional with whom you invite to your Gospel Triplet and how you use your time together.

Gospel Triplet group growth, multiplication, and transition

As mentioned earlier, Gospel Triplets should be more than a once a week meeting. Ideally 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 Gospel Triplet partners should experience intimacy with each other, and some may even find friendships that continue long after they have transitioned into another Gospel Triplet.

Occasionally, a Triplet 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, Gospel Community 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 Gospel Triplet. 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 Gospel Triplet should enter the relationship expecting long-term commitment to one another, even if the exact nature of the relationship changes over time.

Chapter 2: HEAD – HOW WE DISCOVER

‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...’ Romans 12:2

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, each time a Triplet meets.

As disciples we want to experience transformation at every level, beginning with our minds - 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.” In order to foster transformation of the mind, Gospel Triplets will Discover God’s word together. Discover is about uncovering the vital truth about who God is, what he’s done, who we are, and how we should live.

There are 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 1 Peter 2:25, Peter describes Jesus as “the Shepherd and Overseer of [our] souls”. Jesus is our true shepherd and we go to him to shepherd our souls. We aren’t dependent on our GC leaders, or preaching pastor to give us our spiritual sustenance. Each and every one of us has direct access to Jesus through the gospel.

As we seek to Discover God’s word in Gospel Triplets we are practicing going directly to Jesus ourselves for spiritual sustenance. We are doing the (often hard) work of understanding God’s word through His Spirit, rather than relying upon someone else to do this for us.

HOW DO GOSPEL TRIPLETS DISCOVER?

In light of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:17, studying the Bible should be the primary way Gospel Triplets Discover God’s word together. As a group, choose a book of the Bible, or passage of scripture to work through together. One option is for Triplets to study in conjunction with Sunday sermon series. If a group is unsure where to begin, *Ephesians* and *1 Peter* are great letters for Gospel Triplets to start studying.

Some groups might choose to work through the same passage of scripture individually each week and then in their Triplet meeting. Alternatively, groups might decide to pursue their own individual study throughout the week (such as following Anchor’s *Abide* quiet time material) and then study a different book together in their Triplets. Either way, group members should come to the weekly meeting ready to share any insights the Spirit might have brought to mind through their own individual study (or through the Sunday sermon and weekly Gospel Community Bible study). Each person can utilise the 4 Questions (see pages 11 - 14) as they study on their own. Consider using a journal to capture key thoughts and insights that the Spirit brings to mind. Group members then 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 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 insights from the week (if you have studied the passage individually through the week), and write down new things the Spirit illuminates.

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. It will also help to increase the group's gospel fluency.

At different times, a Gospel Triplet 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-centred. 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 his provision through the cross, and encourage us to apply the gospel to our lives in practical ways. Gospel Triplets can use the *4 Questions even* when studying something other than the Bible.

The *4 Questions* is one method for studying the Bible together. Another method Triplets may like to use is the *REAP* method (see page 15). For more on how to use the each of these methods as a Bible study tool, see the remainder of the chapter.

THE 4 QUESTIONS

1. WHO IS GOD? (The true character and nature of 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? (Specifically in and through the work and person of Jesus Christ)

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-centred answer to this question.

3. WHO ARE WE IN LIGHT OF THAT? (Our new identity)

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? (The fruit of our lives)

In light of all of this, how does 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-centred 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.

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!
- Encourage each group member to bring a journal and pen to each Triplet meeting to record key insights into the text during the study, questions, prayer points, and any action steps the Spirit may lead the group to do following the meeting.
- A whiteboard or butchers paper and a bunch of different coloured whiteboard markers are great tools for Triplets to have as they study together (This obviously depends on the space the Triplet chooses to meet – i.e. in a home, not a café or pub).

Some steps to follow...

1. Read the passage aloud once or twice (if you choose to read passage aloud twice it can be helpful to have two different people read it to allow the group to hear it through two different voices. This keeps it fresh and allows you to potentially 'hear' more things in the text).
2. Give Triplet members 10-15mins to read through the passage individually and take notes under the *4 Questions* in their journals/on loose paper. This gives members thinking time, which is great especially for introverts. (Alternatively work through the *4 Questions* in verbal discussion straight away. Or mix it up and do it differently each week.)
3. After a sufficient amount of time working individually, invite Triplet members to share their insights from the text. At this point it can be helpful to record the key ideas on a whiteboard/large piece of butchers paper. You may like to draw up a table similar to the one page 13. If they haven't already, encourage Triplet members to write down the points in journals as you go.
4. Re-read the passage/individual verses at any point during the study.
5. After the study go around the group and ask each Triplet member if there was one or two truths that really stood out to them. Another good question to ask is, "Did any of this sound/feel like particularly good news today?"

Note: Depending on time and the length of a passage/chapter, about 15 verses or ½ a chapter is a good length of text to work through with the *4 Questions*. You may choose to do more or less.

SAMPLE: 4 Q's on Ephesians 1: 1-10

<i>Ephesians 1:1-10</i>			
1. Who is God? (His true character and nature)	2. What has He done? (Specifically in and through the person and work of Jesus)	3. Who are we in light of that? (What is our new gospel identity?)	4. How do we live? (In light of this, how do we now <i>get</i> to live? What fruit should we bear?)
<i>God is the giver of grace and peace</i>	<i>God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places!</i>	<i>Because of Christ, we are abundantly blessed. We have <u>every</u> spiritual blessing! We lack nothing. There is nothing more to gain on earth or in heaven. It has all been given to us.</i>	<i>We can live in freedom, peace & joy – not enslaved to the temptations of this world, or striving to gain anything for we know that we have all we need in Christ. We can enjoy abundant, full lives in Christ.</i>
<i>God has a purpose</i>	<i>He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless.</i>	<i>We are chosen. We are part of God's plan. We are being made holy & blameless through Christ.</i>	<i>Without guilt and shame - we are holy and blameless because of Christ!</i>
<i>God is Glorious!</i>			
<i>God is a loving Father</i>	<i>Through Christ, God has adopted us as sons and daughters.</i>	<i>We are children of God – His sons and daughters! Because God is our Father, we have a new family – we are brothers and sisters in Christ.</i>	<i>We can live knowing God loves us. We live in obedience to our loving father. We love one another as family.</i>
<i>God is lavishly generous!</i>	<i>He has blessed us with his grace! He has <u>lavished</u> his grace on us!</i>	<i>Receivers of grace.</i>	<i>No fear. We can be open and honest with God and one another because we know that grace will be shown to us. We can extend grace to one another because it has been extended to us. We can be <u>lavishly generous</u> to others!</i>
<i>God is wise.</i>			
<i>God is a redeemer.</i>	<i>Through Jesus' blood – his death on the cross, God has redeemed us! He has paid for us, purchased us. Christ's blood is the payment.</i>	<i>We are redeemed.</i>	<i>We don't have to pay for our sin because the payment has been made through Jesus. We don't have to punish ourselves. We don't have to make anyone else pay for their sin!</i>
<i>God is forgiving.</i>	<i>Through Jesus' blood, God has forgiven us.</i>	<i>We are forgiven!</i>	<i>Our sins do not hang over us. We live with great gratitude and thankfulness to God for what he has done in forgiving us. We love and worship</i>
	<i>God has made known to us the mystery of his will – his eternal purpose</i>		

	<i>that through Christ He would unite all things, things in heaven and on earth.</i>		<i>Christ because of what he has done. We can forgive others.</i>
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REAP METHOD

These bible-reading notes use the R.E.A.P method. They can be used as part of a personal daily reading plan, and to help you Discover God's word together in your Triplet meeting. Simply follow the same method each day and in your Triplet meeting. R.E.A.P is an acronym for Read, Explore, Application, Prayer.

READ

Turn to your chosen passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to transform you. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

EXPLORE

What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal the meaning to you. In your journal, write this scripture down in your own words. Including any thoughts and observations. Share this with your Triplet.

APPLY

Personalise what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write it in your journal and discuss with your Triplet partners. Questions to ask: How do I need to repent? What truths do I need to believe? What false beliefs must I turn from? What can I do today – empowered by the Holy Spirit – to apply this passage? These questions will lead you into the Act step in the Discover, Nurture and Act process.

PRAY

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember prayer is a two-way conversation; so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now write it out.

SAMPLE: Romans 1:16

READ

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (*Romans 1:16, ESV*)

EXPLORE

The apostle Paul is not embarrassed by the good news of Jesus for good reason.

This message alone can rescue/save from hell anyone who trusts in the message of Jesus death and resurrection.

No one is excluded except those who exclude themselves. It's received by trusting not doing...

It's a message for all nations.

APPLY

If the gospel is the power to save anyone I should not withhold this message from any body even those who I think will reject it. There have been occasions when I have felt ashamed or embarrassed by sharing Jesus.

I must remember what is at stake.

Since I believe this message about Jesus I can be certain that I will be saved.

I must write an email to a missionary to encourage them as they share Jesus to the nations.

PRAY

Dear Father please forgive me for being ashamed of being a follower of Jesus. Please forgive me for being silent about Jesus when I am with non-Christians. I'm often scared. I want to be more bold so please help me to have the courage to be like Paul and not be ashamed of this message which will not only save me but all who trust your Son. Please give me the boldness and opportunity to talk about my faith in Jesus with Tom, Mick and Nick in the next month. In Jesus name, Amen

Chapter 3: HEART – HOW WE 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 Gospel Triplet meets.

As disciples, we want to experience transformation not only of our minds, but also of our hearts. The word 'heart' is used over 850 times in the Bible, and is used to describe the very centre 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. Or we may know that God is our good Father, who perfectly loves us and works for our good, yet deep down we doubt his love for us. We begin to believe he is against us, or holding out on us, that he is a trickster and a killjoy, and we are led to all manner of sin and rebellion.

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 created things 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.

Through our Gospel Triplets we want to help identify these areas of sin and idolatry in our lives. Nurturing the heart 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.

In Gospel Triplets, members will be equipped with the basic skills to shepherd and care for each other. They will learn 3 steps of basic gospel shepherding: **1. Listen for the Heart, 2. Ask Good Questions, and 3. Speak the Truth in Love.** So, the Nurture step is really an introduction to the practice of Gospel Shepherding for Gospel Triplets.

Step 1: LISTEN FOR THE HEART

At each Gospel Triplet 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, or 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 Gospel Triplet 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 **Chapter 8. Gospel Shepherding: Listen for the Heart, Part 2** (page 34), for a list of nine types of words or statements to listen for in a person’s story.

Step 2: 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! It's even possible to jump too quickly to applying the gospel to a person's problem! 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 [Chapter 8. Gospel Shepherding: Ask Good Questions](#) (page 32) for more. Also, check out, [X-Ray Questions, by David Powlison](#) (page 33), for a list of 34 really good questions.

Step 3: 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 centred on our identity much more than on our actions. Avoid simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful. If a Triplet 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.

See [Fruit to Root](#) on the next page for more on how to use the 4 Questions to Listen for the Heart, Ask Good Questions, and Speak the Truth in Love.

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."

It's important to be patient with people. Genuine repentance and change doesn't always happen overnight. For example, if someone is struggling with bitterness and un-forgiveness towards someone who's significantly hurt them, true heart forgiveness may take a long time depending on the depth of the hurt. Be prepared to patiently and gently revisit the issue over a number of meetings.

See an example of how to go from Fruit to Root on the following page.

FRUIT TO ROOT EXAMPLE

<p>4. How do I live? (Rotten fruit. What is hanging on the fruit of my life?)</p> <p>A good question to ask yourself or another Triplet member is:</p> <p><i>Are you experiencing anything that is not of the Spirit in your life right now?</i></p> <p><i>What are you struggling with?</i></p> <p><i>How are you feeling?</i></p>	<p>3. Who am I? (What does this say about what I believe about my identity?)</p>	<p>2. What has He done (in and through Jesus)? (What does my belief about my identity say about the work of God, specifically in the through Jesus?)</p>	<p>1. Who is God? (What does my belief about the work of God say about His character and nature?)</p>
<p><i>I fear disapproval from others and I really want their approval. This is what is leading me to feel stressed, anxious and worried.</i></p>	<p><i>I am not good enough.</i></p> <p><i>I have to perform well in order to be accepted.</i></p> <p><i>It's all on my shoulders. It's up to me.</i></p>	<p><i>The cross was not enough for me. I still have to work and strive to be accepted and approved of.</i></p> <p><i>God has not accepted me.</i></p> <p><i>Grace has not been given to me.</i></p>	<p><i>God is distant. God doesn't really care.</i></p> <p><i>He isn't a good dad or Father.</i></p> <p><i>His opinion is not as important as these other people's in my life. Therefore he is not as important as them.</i></p> <p><i>He is not great. He is not powerful. He is not glorious.</i></p> <p><i>God has high standards. I need to perform well and live up to them if I am going to be accepted by him.</i></p>
<p>1. Who is God? (His true character and nature)</p>	<p>2. What has He done? (Specifically in and through the person and work of Jesus)</p>	<p>3. Who am I? (In light of who God is and what he has done, what is our new gospel identity?)</p>	<p>4. How do I live? (In light of this, how do we now get to live? What fruit should we bear?)</p>
<p><i>God is a good Father. He loves unconditionally, cares, provides and gives his time and presence.</i></p>	<p><i>God has demonstrated His perfect love for me by sending Jesus to die in my place.</i></p> <p><i>In Christ, God has provided the once-for-all sacrifice for sins.</i></p>	<p><i>I am loved and deeply cared for by God.</i></p> <p><i>I am a child of God. I am fully loved and accepted by my heavenly Father, not based on what I do, but on what Jesus has</i></p>	<p><i>I don't have to strive or perform to earn acceptance from anyone, because I am already <u>fully</u> loved and accepted by God.</i></p> <p><i>I don't have to live up to</i></p>

	<p><i>God provided Jesus to do all the work and striving for me. God put it all on Jesus' shoulders.</i></p>	<p><i>done for me.</i></p> <p><i>I am good enough because of Christ.</i></p>	<p><i>any standards, because God set the standards and allowed me to meet them in Christ.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, I no longer have to live in fear, stress and anxiety. I can cast my burdens onto God in prayer because he cares for me.</i></p> <p><i>I can experience the fruit of the Spirit – peace, joy and freedom.</i></p>
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Chapter 4: HANDS – HOW WE 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.

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 baptising people, preparing them for the arrival of the Messiah, he exhorted them to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8) 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 behaviour 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:

1. 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 renewal of [our] mind" (Romans 12:2). Repentance will lead to change, and when we ask, the Spirit will call us to do something.

2. 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 unbelievers. 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 co-worker or a neighbour.

We often wonder how to share the gospel with our unbelieving 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 neighbour 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.

As we study the scriptures, pray and listen to the Spirit for how we are to act, sometimes the scriptures will call us to continue to do something that we are already doing well: either to continue in it or to do it all the more. The Spirit may give us an encouragement or a reminder of some sort. Gospel Triplets are also a place where we can examine, affirm and celebrate the good fruit in our lives and spur one another on in them.

As we ask the Spirit, “What do you want me to do?” and “Who do you want me to tell?” consider these questions in light of our identity and core values of Gospel Communities:

IN COMMUNITY

Who should I love? And how? Who do I need to forgive? Who do I need to seek forgiveness from?

ON MISSION

Who should I spend time with, and how can I be intentional with that time? Who can I tell about Jesus’ work in me?

GOSPEL COMMUNITY CORE VALUES

GOSPEL

Who might the Spirit be calling me to share the gospel with (this may be reminding a believer, or teaching a new believer or unbeliever)? What aspect of the gospel, or specific gospel truth might the Spirit want me to emphasise in this conversation? What scriptures might the Spirit want me to share? When/where might this be able to happen (in face-to-face conversation, a phone call, sending an encouraging text message or letter)?

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?

LISTEN

How can I ensure I am listening to God through his word and Spirit as a daily (hourly!) rhythm? What scriptures can I meditate on?

Who can I take more time to listen to? Who can I ask to share their story with me? What kinds of questions could I ask in order to understand someone and their story more deeply? How could I use this as an opportunity to share my own gospel story (Gospel)?

EAT

Who can I share a meal with/make a meal for? Who can I offer hospitality to? Who can I assist as they offer hospitality to someone else (by helping with the cooking, cleaning or cost)?

SERVE

How can I serve my Gospel Triplet, Gospel Community and wider Anchor Church family? How can I serve the city in practical, tangible ways? What should I give (time, money, prayer), and to whom

should I give it?

PARTICIPATE

How can I participate in the life of the local community around me? Can I attend an event, participate in an activity or join a sports team/class of some sort?

How can I use this as an opportunity to build relationships and be on mission? Who can I ask (believer or unbeliever) to do this with me?

PRAY

Am I prayerfully dependent on God in every area of my life?

What can I thank and praise God for in my life right now? What needs do I need to bring before him?

Who or what can I pray for? Who can I pray with?

How can I ensure I pray regularly? Are there structures I can put in place to help my prayer life (e.g. prayer cards, journaling, meeting with other believers, having a set time to pray each day).

CHAPTER 5: GOSPEL TRIPLETS IN PRACTICE

1. GOSPEL TRIPLET FORMATION

The formation stage of a Gospel Triplet is very important. The first few meetings will set the stage for how the group will interact in the future.

- If the members of your Triplet don't know each other all that well when you form a Triplet, you might like 'kick off' your Gospel Triplet by finding something fun and social to do in order to get to know one another better. This could be sharing a meal together at a member's home or out somewhere, or it could be going out to an event/doing an activity of some sort.
- Read and discuss *Telling Our Story with Jesus as the Hero* which looks at the four movements of God's story – the gospel: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration (Chapter 6, p. 27).
- Have each person share a 10-15 minute version of his or her own personal story. Use *Telling Our Story with Jesus as the Hero* and *Putting Together Your Gospel Story* (p. 29) as tools to help you prepare your story in a way that highlights the work of Jesus throughout your life.
- As each member in the group shares their story, the other Triplet members 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 Gospel Triplet will regularly listen for the heart. *Gospel Shepherding: Listen for the Heart, Part 1: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration* (Chapter 7, p.32) will also help to equip group members to listen for the heart as stories are being shared.
- **Note:** It may take 2 - 4 meetings for Gospel Triplets to familiarise themselves with the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration movements of God's story, and to allow time for each person to share their story – 2 meetings if group time is spent solely on Triplet members sharing stories and Listening for the Heart; 4 meetings if groups choose to spend a portion of their meeting time studying God's word together and hearing one gospel story per meeting. Take 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.

2. THE HEAD, HEART, HANDS PROCESS

Head - Discover

- Choose a book of the Bible, relevant passage/s, or other gospel-centred resource and begin to Discover God's word together by asking the *4 Questions*. *Ephesians* and *1 Peter* are great letters to start with (Chapter 2, pages 6-10).
- Groups might decide to study their chosen passage independently through the week. Each person can utilise 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 then come to the weekly meeting ready to answer these three questions:
 - 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 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 insights from the week (if you have studied the passage individually through the week), and write down new things the Spirit illuminates. (If your meeting environment allows it, a portable whiteboard is a great tool for a Gospel Triplet to have! It will allow you to visually

capture key ideas and truths the Spirit teaches you during your study. Use a range of different coloured whiteboard markers.)

Heart - Nurture

- Listen for the heart as each person shares during the Discover step.
- Ask good questions, utilising the *4 Questions* to help you go from Fruit to Root. Again, if possible, use a whiteboard to visually track the process of going from fruit to root.
- Speak the truth in love as the Spirit leads you, calling each person to repent of sin and believe the gospel.

Hands - 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.
- Consider writing any act steps down in your journal to refer back to.

Chapter 6: 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 unbelieving not-yet-believing friends about Jesus. And in post-modern Australia where truth is relative and elusive, telling our stories is a brilliant method for sharing the gospel. While someone can argue with your apologetic gospel presentation, they can’t tell you that your story is wrong!

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, God and creation. 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 tell our stories as if they 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 unbelievers. 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!

Chapter 7. GOSPEL SHEPHERDING - LISTEN FOR THE HEART, Part 1: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

“Each tree is recognised 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 non-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 recognised 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.

In the Chapter 6, we looked at the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration pattern found in God’s Story. We also saw how this pattern can be used to make sense of our own stories, and of the broken world around us. The following content will discuss how to listen to people’s stories – whether the story of their day, or the story of their life – through the lens of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Before considering what to listen for in a person’s story, briefly review the four movements of God’s Story along with the key themes that emerge in each one. (Refer back to Chapter 6, particularly *Putting Together Your Gospel Story* on pages 25 – 27).

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Utilise the four movements as a tool for sorting the information in a person’s story. Here are 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

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 value and me worth?

FALL

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

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

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?

Chapter 8. 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 Mum. (“I’ve never met my dad.” “My mum 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 mum.”)

Whether in a Gospel Community or Gospel Triplet setting or in an intentional shepherding situation, always provide encouragement to a person who has just shared their story. In a GC/Triplet 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?

Chapter 9: 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?
- 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 wellbeing 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?

Chapter 10: 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?

In summary:

- 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.
- Avoiding simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful.
- Not judging the person’s heart.
- Asking permission before making a pronouncement: “Can I tell you what I’m seeing?”
- Utilising very direct communication as the Spirit leads.
- Calling people to repentance: “Is there anything that would prevent you from repenting right now?” or “Would you like to talk to the Father about this right now?”

Note: this chapter is still to be completed.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change, Paul David Tripp (2002)

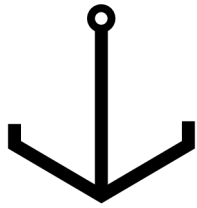
How People Change, Timothy S. Lane & Paul David Tripp (2008)

You Can Change: God's transforming power for our sinful behavior and negative emotions, Tim Chester (2008)

Recovering Redemption: A Gospel-Saturated Perspective on How to Change, Matt Chandler and Michael Snetzer (2014)

Saturate: Being Disciples of Jesus in the Everyday Stuff of Life, Jeff Vanderstelt (2015)

Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love, Edward T. Welch (2015)



A N C H O R

C H U R C H

S Y D N E Y