

Our Story & God's Story

Watch intro by Rick Dietzman at <https://vimeo.com/scc98382/sharingstories>

Q: How is my faith expressed beyond the walls of SCC?

A: Jesus sends me into the world to express his love by telling others what he has done for me.

I've been given a unique story and life changing experiences. When shared from a motive of love, they invite questions, encourage dialogue, and direct people to Jesus.

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

I. Starting with revering (setting apart) Jesus as Lord - He directs and leads us

II. Giving them reasons to ask

Building trust

In the book "I once was lost" by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp. A study of Postmodern skeptics who had come to faith in Jesus revealed that the first big hurdle they needed to get through was gaining trust in a Christian friend. Being seen as trustworthy is more difficult than ever.

This begins with prayer. When we feel the temptation to defend, we can instead choose to stop and pray. As we catch ourselves getting defensive, we can silently ask God to soften our heart. We can admit that we are hurt or irritated by the other's distrust.

To help you think through how much trust you currently have with a friend or family member, ask yourself some simple questions about that relationship:

- Have they ever called me when they had a problem?
- Have I ever called them for help in anything?
- Have they ever been real with me when they were angry or sad?
- Do I hide my honest emotions or moods from them?
- Have they ever asked me for advice?
- Do we ever just have fun together?
- When do I feel most connected with them?

Learning to Notice

Matthew 9:36 gives us a snapshot of keen spiritual vision. "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." We'll never see the world with the same degree of spiritual vision that Jesus did.

Start every morning with this simple prayer: "Lord Jesus, as I interact with others today, help me to see them as you do." An outwardly focused mindset causes us to start listening with our eyes, seeing with our ears, and responding with our hearts. And it sends others a powerful message: "I notice you! You matter to me! You matter to God!"

Go and notice others; then come back and reflect on what you saw that maybe you hadn't noticed before. Not only does noticing cause us to care for others, but it builds natural bridges to spiritual conversations.

The Apostle Paul modeled this for us when he said, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship..." (Acts 17:22b-23a). Paul essentially noticed his way into a spiritual conversation. The simple act of noticing enables us to connect with others in authentic ways that pave the way for spiritual conversations to happen naturally. Instead of walking around with our periscopes down, the eyes of our hearts are turned outward to fully observe the world around us.

(Adapted from God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally by Doug Pollock.)

Being Curious

God has created each one of us to naturally wonder about things we can't fathom without asking, seeking, and (eventually) knocking on God's door for help. This built-in inquisitiveness is just waiting to be ignited.

Wondering requires us to give up the illusion that we can manipulate or argue people into the kingdom. If we try to force our agendas instead of zeroing in on topics people want to explore (and, incidentally, where the Holy Spirit is already at work in their lives), it just doesn't work. Manipulative approaches communicate disrespect and stifle the supernatural allure of the kingdom. Wondering unlocks the stories that God is developing in them and us. If everybody wonders, the next question we all have to wrestle with is "Am I safe enough to wonder with?"

GOOD WAYS TO START WONDERING

That's an interesting perspective; I'm wondering how you arrived at that conclusion.

If I could arrange for you to speak at my church about your impression of Christians, I'm wondering what you would say.

I'm wondering what role religion has played in shaping your life.

I'm wondering why the topic of God seems to stir up such strong emotions in you.

I've thought long and hard about our last conversation; here's what I'm still wondering about.

I'm wondering what you think you'd have to give up or lose to become a Christian.

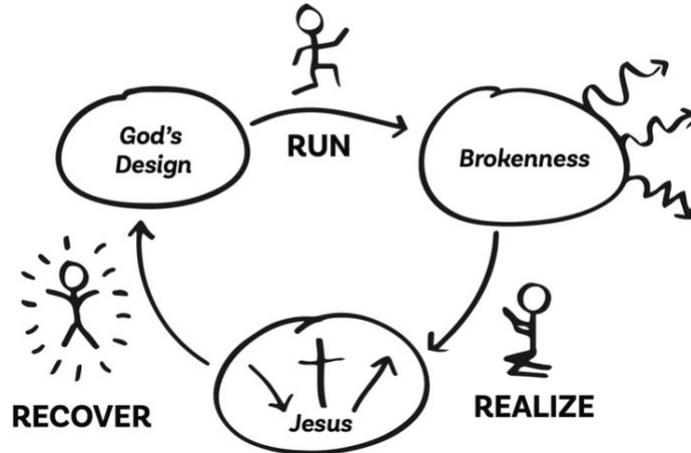
(Adapted from God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally by Doug Pollock.)

III. Having something helpful to say

Our stories – what changed, what attracted me to Jesus, what's different

God's story – have an illustration about what God has done through Jesus

THE THREE CIRCLES TOOL



1. When you turn on the television or look at your Facebook feed, it's very clear that we live in a broken world. There's a lot of death, a lot of disease and suffering. (*Romans 1:18-32, Romans 8:18-21*) **(Draw circle and Brokenness)**
2. But we also see traces of beauty, like the beauty of a sunset or the laugh of a child, and that's because God's design was perfect when he made it. There was no death or disease or suffering. (*Genesis 1:24-31*) **(Draw Circle and God's design)**
3. But starting with the very first people, we as humans chose to go our own way and run from God's perfect design, (and that's called "sin" which means missing the mark – an archery term. *Genesis 3, Romans 3:9-12*) Sin is what led to brokenness in our world. **(Draw arrow, man running, and the word RUN - or SIN)**
4. Well, we don't like to be in brokenness, the state we were born in. So we try to get out. (*Romans 5:12*) **(Draw arrows coming out from Brokenness circle)**
 - So, for some, they try to get out on their own by climbing the ladder of success at work or at school thinking that will get them out. (*Philippians 3:4-9*)
 - Others try to get out themselves by doing good things, by being religious, or going to church and helping people. While those are great things, they don't get us out of brokenness. (*Isaiah 64:6, Titus 3:5*)
 - Some try to drown out the brokenness with drugs or alcohol, or attempts at suicide, or maybe even relationships. And these attempts to get out of brokenness ourselves end up snapping us back in like a bungee cord. (*Romans 1:28-32*)
5. But God loved us so much he didn't want us to stay in brokenness. So he did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. (*John 3:16, Romans 5:8*) **(Draw Circle with Jesus Cross, and little arrows)**

He provided the only way out and that is through his son Jesus. (*Romans 6:23*)

You see, Jesus came down into our world and allowed himself to be killed on a cross, taking on our sin. (*Matthew 27:35-54, Hebrews 10:19-22, 1 Peter 2:24*)

And three days later he rose from the dead. (*Matthew 28:1-10*)

6. At some point in our lives we may realize what Jesus did, and our hearts begin to change. **(Draw arrow, picture of person praying and the word REALIZE)**
7. He declared that if anyone would turn from their way and turn to him to him and believe that Jesus came, died on the cross, and rose from the dead and would be willing to make him their king or their Lord that they would be forgiven and made new. They would then be able to recover and experience God's perfect design for their life. *(Luke 24:44-49, Romans 6:22-23, Ephesians 2:1-10, Romans 1:9-13)* **(Draw arrow, picture of person gleaming, and the word RECOVER)**

Question to ask: Now of these three stick figures, which one do you relate to most?

- (Run) Running into brokenness? What does the brokenness look like?
- (Realize) Do you realize and believe Jesus did this? Where do you want to be?
- (Recover) What do you think that looks like?

“Is there anything that keeps you from turning from your own way and believing in the good news of Jesus and making him your Lord and your king?” *(Mark 1:15)*

“When I chose to make this decision I prayed a simple prayer, very similar to this picture, I just told God I was sorry for my sin, that I left his design, and for the ways I tried to get out of brokenness on my own. I told him I was ready to turn from my way and return to him and I believe this is true and I want to make him my Lord so I can become new and experience his design for my life.”

“Is that something you would like to do?”
(Matthew 11:28-30, John 1:12, Acts 2:38, 4:12, 1 John 1:9)

“Let’s pray. God I know I’ve been running from you and missing your design, please forgive me and make me clean on the inside. I need you to heal the broken places in my life, I believe Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. I’m realizing and repenting of my sins right now and believing in Jesus. Help me recover and pursue your design for my life. Amen”

 The verses behind our choice of the R words...

- A. Run (Rebellion & Sin) *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans **run** after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*— Matthew 6:31-33
- B. Realize (Repent & Believe) *“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not **realize** that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”* — Revelation 3:17
- C. Recover (Restore & Reconcile)
*Jesus said: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and **recovery** of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”*— Luke 4:18