

*loving Jesus and loving my friends...*  
**THE ESSENTIALS**

# Story

*we have a great story to tell*

*Who does Jesus want us to reach out to?*

*What do we say?*

*How do we tell the Jesus-Story? Our own story?*

# Story

## Scripture Verses

*Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life,  
marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*  
**Matthew 28:18 (MSG)**

*The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone,  
“Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?”  
So, the people came streaming from the village to see him.*  
**John 4:28-30 (NLT)**

*Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.  
And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.*  
**1 Peter 3:15 (NLT)**

*The man who Jesus had freed from the demons begged to go with him.  
But Jesus sent him home, saying, “No, go back to your family, and tell them everything  
God has done for you.” So, he went all through the town proclaiming the great things Jesus had done.*  
**Luke 8:38-39 (NLT)**

## Short Thoughts

We all live inside of three stories: 1) Jesus' Big Story, 2) our own individual story, and 3) the stories of our friends and family members. Jesus understood this. When He left us to go to heaven, He told us to make disciples...to tell His Big Story to others. (Matthew 28 above)

BUT...Jesus also understood that not everyone was ready to hear His Big Story. John 4 tells the story of Jesus listening to the story of a complete stranger. In their conversation, Jesus ended up telling her His Big Story.

Jesus was a good listener. He listened to this woman first, then she listened to Him...and her life was forever changed. The verses above (John 8:28-30) show how completely changed she was. She got so excited that she went out begging people to come listen to Jesus.

Peter told early Christians (and us too) to be ready to answer people when they ask us why we follow Jesus...or go to church, etc. Sermons don't work very well here. But our own story of why we follow Jesus can really make a difference. If told with respect for others, our own personal story cannot be ignored.

Jesus not only helped people who were in trouble, He also sent them out to talk about what had happened to them because of their time with Jesus. The verses from Luke 8 (above) tell the end of the story of Jesus healing the violent, demonized person on the shores of Galilee. After this man was healed, he begged to come with Jesus. But instead of allowing him to come along, Jesus sent him back home to tell his own story to his family and friends. Which he did. Weeks later, when Jesus came to this man's "homeland" everyone was anxious to hear Jesus teach.

Why? Because of this man's changed life...and his story of meeting Jesus.

People will listen to and remember the stories they hear far longer than any sermons.

# Story

**Solo Exercise...** *these two solo exercises are an opportunity for you to work alone through some questions about Your own story and who Jesus wants you to reach out to.*

**FIRST - Who is Jesus calling me to pray for and to reach out to? Ask Him!**

Ask Jesus to give you the names of 5 of your friends who are far from Jesus.  
Write their names down here:



**Assign each one of your fingers one of these names.** Now you have a list of friends to pray for that will always be with you.

Take a moment and pray for each of these 5 friends by name. **Ask Jesus** to give you a chance to spend some time with one of them this week...so you can hear more of their story.

**SECOND - What do I say? My 15-second Testimony...** *first we start with our own story.*

**How can I tell my own story clearly and simply?**

Ask Jesus to give you **two words or short phrases** that would describe your life **before you decided** to become a committed follower of Jesus. Fill in the blanks.

\_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

Ask Jesus to give you **two words or short phrases** that would describe **how or why you decided** to become a committed follower of Jesus. Fill in the blanks below.

\_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

Ask Jesus to give you **two words or short phrases** that would describe your life **since you decided** to become a follower of Jesus. Fill in the blanks below.

\_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

**Here's an example...** *the six word/phrases are in bold...it is less than 15-seconds long.*

"Before I met Jesus, even though I was **very religious**, I was also **very fearful** of being abandoned by others and of failure. But Jesus **pursued** me and I **chose to commit** my life to Him. Since then, I have grown to be **less fearful** and **more hopeful** in my life."

## Solo Challenge

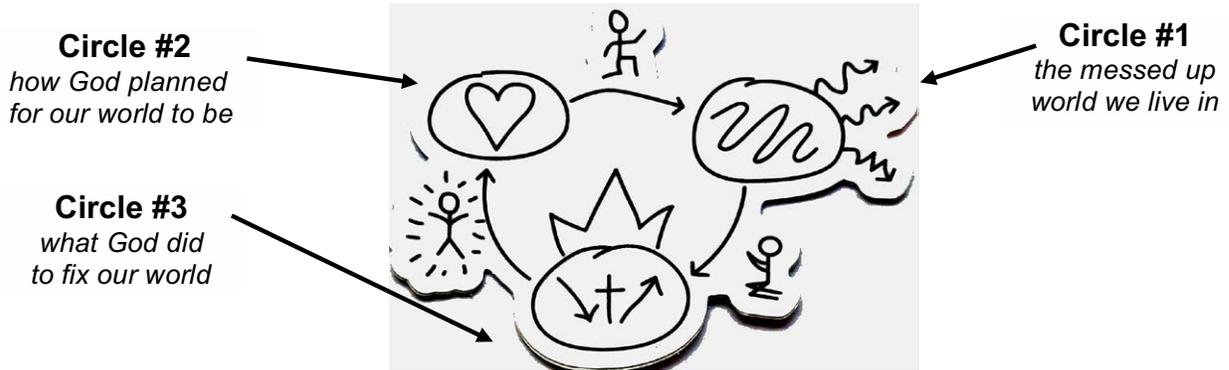
Practice telling your own story with a Christian friend. Listen to their story. Help each other out so you can be ready to tell your story when one of your friends. THEN...ask Jesus to give you one opportunity this coming week to be with a friend who is far from Jesus...LISTEN to their story...if they ask you, be ready to tell more of your story.

# Story

**Team Exercises...**...these three team exercises are an opportunity for you and your community or campus team: 1) to begin to learn how to tell Jesus' Big Story in a simple way, 2) to learn to LISTEN by hearing each other's stories, 3) to begin to pray for each other and for all of our friends who are far from Jesus...as a team.

**FIRST EXERCISE – How do I tell Jesus' Big Story?** Practice using the "3-Circles" to tell Jesus' Big Story!

Check out this "3-Circle" drawing of Jesus' Big Story below...



How does this work?

**A real life story:** One student had this 3-Circle sticker on his water bottle at track practice. One of his teammates saw it and asked what it was. He told him. Others saw them talking and came over. He explained the 3 circles again. Their coach saw them talking and asked what was going on. The student explained it one more time. In a few minutes, almost the whole team heard Jesus' Big Story.

**This is what he said:**

**Circle #1** is our messed up world. A lot of things are really wrong, am I right? While there are some great people, there are a lot of really bad things going on.

**The squiggly lines** are ways we try to fix things. Some of us try relationships. Others abuse substances so they can feel better for awhile. We all try to help each other, but the world is still pretty messed up.

**Circle #2 with the heart** is how God created the world to be. This is how He wanted it to be. It was a world filled with love with one another and with God.

**But we didn't want God's plan** so we ran away...we rebelled like the little stick figure guy running at the top. This is how we ended up with the way things are today.

**Circle #3** is what God did to fix things. The really good news is that God is NOT OKAY with things staying messed up like they are. SO...God sent Jesus down and He lived a perfect life. The authorities executed Jesus by crucifixion on a cross. Jesus did not stay dead. He came back to life three days later.

**If we choose** to make Jesus the Lord (boss) of our life, He will make us into a new person on the inside...so we can live in Circle #2 even though the world around us is still pretty broken up.

This is how I can live in Circle #2 now. **Which circle do you see yourself living in?**

FOR YOU & YOUR TEAM...we have stickers like this available for you to use. Just email us at:

# Story

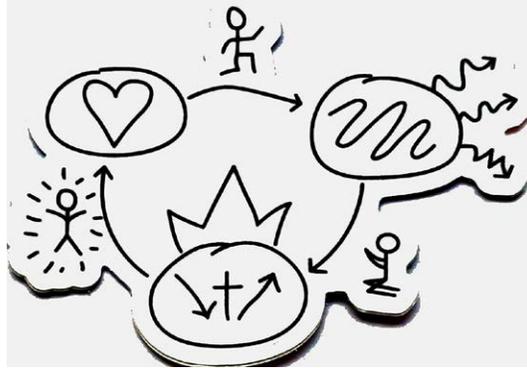
## Team Exercises (continued)

**NOW...Break up into small groups of 2 or 3.**

In your small group...

Ask Jesus to help you tell His Big Story well...just like our friend from the track team.

The oldest person goes first...again. Take turns telling **Jesus' Big Story** to your teammates by using the 3-Circle Diagram. **Help each other out!**



**Another way to do this...**you will NOT always have a sticker. Practice telling Jesus' Big Story to each other by just telling the big story and drawing the 3 circles. In the same order as on the previous page.

**Two tips...** 1) **you don't need to call the circles by their number.** Just point to them as you talk. 2) **unless you are an artist,** you can leave the "little stick guys" out.

You can draw the 3-Circle diagram in the space below.

**Remember...**to ask that last question on page 31, "Which circle do you see yourself living in right now?"

# Story

**SECOND EXERCISE – How do I become a better listener? Practice listening to one another!**

Break up into small groups of 3 or 4.

In your small group...

Ask Jesus to help you listen to each story you hear.

The oldest person goes first. Take turns telling **your 15-second testimony** to your teammates.

When each story is done, your teammates will ask questions. Please respond to help your teammates better understand your story.

Then take any one of the **six words** from your 15-second testimony (on page 30) and explain that word a bit to your small group. Again, allow time for questions to be asked.

**Repeat**...until each person has had a chance to tell their story and be heard.

**Remember**...the best way to tell any story is to have a conversation.

**THIRD EXERCISE – How can I be encouraged? Pray for one another and for our far-from-Jesus-friends!**

Break up into small groups of 3 or 4.

In your small group...

**SHARE**...take turns in sharing one of your friend's first name with the group. Tell them one reason why you think your friend needs Jesus...not just because they need to go to Heaven.

**PRAY**...after each name is shared, take turns in asking Jesus to give them a chance to grow closer to Jesus in the next week. Also, ask Jesus for a chance to hear more of their story and to be able to share some of your story sometime in the next week.

**DISCOVER**...as you are praying for one another and your friends, listen for any thoughts that might pop into your brain about a **Holy Experiment** you might try for your friend. Information on "Holy Experiments" can be found on pages. 33-38.

## Team Challenge

Keep praying for each other and your far-from-Jesus-friends. You might even want to start a **CORE Group** to help everyone stay focused in following Jesus together.

**Core Groups** are explained on page 38. Go to: **SoCalcoregroups.com**