**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

**Topic: How to Clarify & Share Your Salvation Story**

**Speaker: Cass Tompich**

**PART 1 – Communicating Your Faith**

**Large Group Exercise #1**

Q: Which concern about sharing your faith with others is the most applicable to you?

(a) I feel that I don’t know how to answer people’s difficult questions?

(b) I feel that I have to become ‘someone else’ or ‘get my act together’ before I can communicate my faith with others?

(c) I am overwhelmed at the enormity of the task of leading someone to Christ

**Activity #1: Food for Thought**

Read the following quotes and then briefly discuss in pairs:

* What got your attention and why it impacted you...
* Have one person write down your observations in dot points and decide which of you will share what most impacted you both with the larger group...

Cliff Knechtle, Give Me an Answer

*“A person’s coming to Christ is like a chain with many links. There is the first link, middle links, and a last link. There are many influences and conversations that precede a person’s decision to follow Jesus. I know the joy of being the first link at times, a middle like usually, and occasionally the last link. God has not called me only to be the last link. He has called me to be faithful and to love all people.”*

[Bill Hybels](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/24922.Bill_Hybels), [Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/43724)

*“A church which bottlenecks its specialists to do its witnessing is living in violation of both [Jesus Christ] and the consistent pattern of the early Christians. Evangelism was the task of the whole church, not just the ‘name characters’ ”*

*“The longer a person attends church, the fewer evangelistic discussions they engage in with family members and friends. Fewer presentations of the life-changing plan of salvation are given, and fewer invitations to events that attractively present the message of Christ are offered, mostly because Christ-followers have fewer friends outside the faith to whom to offer them.”*

*“As Christ’s followers, we’re accountable for regularly moving in circles with people far from God, uncovering their stories with compassion and grace, and then naturally and consistently making ourselves available when God opens a door of opportunity.”*

*“Most people who wind up in the kingdom of God can trace their salvation back to a single, life-changing conversation with a Christ-follower.”*

*“I realize some of you believe that unless the plan of salvation gets explained, it’s been an unsuccessful conversation, spiritually speaking. And some of you probably put yourselves through an exhaustive self-deprecation routine unless you extend an invitation to your church each time God opens an evangelistic door. Still others might say that everything is A-OK on your evangelistic value meter as long as you give your personal testimony – all four volumes of it – at every opportunity. And I feel your pain! I can run myself through all these wringers with the best of them. But here’s the reality: the Holy Spirit will bust your nice neat evangelism formulas every time.****”***

“Take big steps. Take small steps. Take whatever steps you can…step out in faith, start a conversation, ask a question, explore whether there is an open door. And leave the rest up to God”

*“The single highest value in our evangelistic endeavours is to be attuned to and cooperative with the promptings of the Holy Spirit.”*

**Large Group Exercise #2**

Each spokesperson share with the whole group what impacted your discussion pair the most...

**Individual Reading Exercise: 3D Living**

Read through pages 3-6 on your own, noting what is new learning for you:

Effective relationally based evangelism can only happen when Christ followers are truly engaged in the lives of those around them. This means that they choose to:

1. Develop friendships
2. Discover life stories
3. Discern appropriate next steps based on the Holy Spirit’s promptings.
4. **Develop Friendships**
5. **Venture Out / Walk Across the Room**
* The reality is for most Christians the longer they have been a Christian the less interaction they have with non Christians.
* It’s easier to remain in our comfortable Christian circles then venture out and many people justify this by believing that evangelism is only for pastors, missionaries or really outgoing people who are natural ‘evangelists’. ^Ephesians 4:11-12
1. **Evangelism is for Every-ONE who follows Jesus**
* Evangelism is not for ‘superstars’ – it’s everyone’s job. ^ 2 Timothy 4:5; Matthew 28:18-20
* Because we sometimes feel nervous or fearful about people’s reaction when we communicate our faith and the Good News about Jesus – which of course involves being ‘out of our comfort zone’ - we often try to barter with God: “*I’ll do the service work – attend meetings, serve in the kitchen team, help with ushering on Sundays... but just don’t make me evangelise.”*
* So we fill our lives with ONLY Christian stuff, which is protected and predictable – safe – with no ‘interference’ from non-Christians.
1. **Developing friendships = RADICAL INCLUSIVENESS**
* God treasures people FIRST.
* Opening yourself to God’s Spirit allows you to love who God loves.
* The Biblical pattern^ is that the longer one walks with Christ, the more people one loves, the more outsiders one embraces.^1 Corinthians 9:19-23
* The challenge is to know the person next door, to hear the story of the lady at the chemist, and to reach out to that person at the office desk next to yours.
1. **Discover Stories**
2. **Create Proximity Points**
* People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. ^Romans 12:10 (Msg)
* In order to show people we care we have to create proximity points – places where we can come into contact with non-Christians on a regular basis.
* For most of us this is relatively easy when we think about the people we come across in the office, at university, at the gym, local shops, hairdresser, school communities...
1. **Be Intentional / Ask, Listen & Notice**
* As you are developing friendships with people it’s important that you take time to intentionally discover their stories. What has life been like for them? Be genuinely interested in finding out more about other’s dreams, fears, worries, struggles, joys and hopes.

*“Jesus truly believed in the power of God to transform human lives, a belief that motivated his insatiable pursuit of all sorts of people at all points on the spiritual spectrum.” –* Bill Hybels

1. **Remain Who You Are**
* In doing this it is important for you to remain who you are – God has hard-wired you to be who you are for a reason. People have different styles of sharing their lives. (I.e. Confrontational, intellectual, interpersonal, invitational, serving or testimonial). ^See Handout: Evangelism Styles Questionnaire. This is for you to complete as an individual take home activity if you would like to.
* You do not have to be more aggressive, more dynamic, or more anything other than who God made you to be.
1. **Find Common Ground**

**1 Cor 9:22 (NIV)***To the weak I have become weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*

* Here, Paul is talking about finding points of commonality with those people already around you. Find connection points and build bridges around shared interests, similar life stories or life stages:
I.e. *“I remember when my child was three years old!”. “I love travelling – what has been your favourite place to visit?” “I found first year uni. really stressful at times. How did you cope with it?”*
* In these conversations it is important to be sensitive and keep doors open
* Constantly try to hear more about their story rather than just sharing your own
* Be radically inclusive and accept people just as they are without being judgemental.
1. **We CAN discover stories**
* You can discover people’s stories: anyone – anywhere.
* The reality is life is messy – the stories people share are often uncomfortable or difficult.
* We called to take the risk of side-lining our own agenda to be part of what God is doing in their lives.

“As Christ followers, we’re accountable for regularly moving in circles with people far from God, uncovering their stories with compassion and grace, and then naturally and consistently making ourselves available when God opens a door of oppourtunity.” – Bill Hybels

1. **Discern Next Steps**
2. **Wait for God**
* Wait for God to open a door, don’t force it!
* Be wise in the way you act towards those who don’t know Jesus personally ^ – make the most of every opportunity but rely on the Holy Spirit to provide those opportunities. ^Colossians 4:5-6
* In every case these friendships and conversations will reach a point of decision – will you step out in partnership with the Holy Spirit, invite your friend to consider their next step as Jesus has prompted you to suggest, or, let those opportunities go?
1. **Watch for Clear Signals**
* Watch for the crystal clear signals people send – often unintentionality - that inform you about their needs.
* From this you can discern the next steps...
* It could be a timely word, a well asked question, lending a book, a helping hand or an invitation to an event or church. You’ll never know what the impact could be until you offer them something they need.
1. **Allow God to Interrupt You**
* Our agenda’s take a back seat as we allow God to interrupt our lives, really notice and meet the genuine needs that people we come across every day are facing
* This happens more and more as we view ourselves *as ‘resource providers’*, living by the question, “how can I best assist this person?”
* Our focus is what they need, not on ourselves.
1. **Be Patient**
* We can patiently wait until they are ready to ask for or be open to receive help!
* We never know where these interactions will lead – to long-term investments where we get to be friends & companions on a journey – or simply, once- off seed planting.
* It’s the ‘*be with’* factor that makes the difference long term! Be committed to sharing journeys with people and doing life with them.
* This will result in you being available when God’s work in them starts to be made evident.

Living in 3D = **D**evelop Friendships, **D**iscover Stories, **D**iscern Next Step

**Small Group Time #1: Living in 3D**

In groups of 4 or 5 discuss the following:

1. How does what you just read on pages 3-6 make you feel about communicating your faith and why?
2. *I think I am ready to do this and I feel excited about it!*
3. *It’s been a while since I’ve done this and I’m a little nervous...*
4. *Eeek! I’m really nervous but would love to have God use me.*
5. Which **D** do you need to outwork most? (***D****evelop Friendships,*

***D****iscover Stories or* ***D****iscern Next Steps*) **and** based on the tips

you read about on pages 3-6 what is one practical way you can

outwork it this week?

1. Most of us have friends and family, neighbours and work colleagues who don’t yet have a personal relationship with Jesus. Take one minute to think about people in your life that could use some help in taking a step towards Jesus. Write the names you come up with in the space below:

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1. Pray as a group for...
* Boldness and the love of Christ moving through us to develop these friendships
* Open door opportunities to discover or go deeper in engaging with our friends/families’ stories / spiritual conversations
* The Holy Spirit to help us discern next steps in pointing our friends/family members to Jesus
* Each person we have named to move towards Jesus, encounter Him for themselves and come to know Him personally

**For Personal Use: 3D Living Prayer Guide**

**Friends & Family**

***Father, help my friends & family to...***

* See how empty life is without You
* Understand why they need forgiveness
* Break through any confusion they have about Jesus
* Recognise how a relationship with Christ could change their life
* Open their hearts to Your love and their minds to Your truth

**Me**

***Father, help me to...***

* Live the kind of life that will make my friends & family members interested in Christ
* Be honest and real in how I deal with the good things and the hard things in my life
* Be a caring friend
* Know what to say to my friends and when and how to say it
* Be prepared to listen to my friends’ questions about the Christian life and help them find answers
* Be bold in telling them about You
* Be willing to be used by You to lead them into a relationship with Christ
* Recognise & obey the leadings and promptings of Your Holy Spirit

**My relationship with my friend or family member...**

***Father, help me to...***

* Build & develop friendships based on trust and understanding
* Be open to talking about spiritual things
* Be ready to share my story
* Be ready to share the Good News of who You are & what You’ve done for all of us
* Be ready to invite them to environments where they could encounter Jesus (I.e. church/events, purposeful social settings)
* Discern next steps to help my friend move toward you
* Be committed to ongoing relationship if we don’t agree about the Christian faith

**PART 2 – Sharing Your Story**

All Christ followers can be prepared^ to engage people in spiritual conversations and be available to point people towards faith in God. ^Colossians 4:6

When conversations take a spiritual turn it is critical to know how to convey two stories with humility, clarity and brevity: God’s Good News story^ 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and your own faith story.

The single greatest gift Christ-followers can give to the people around them is to introduce them to the God who created them, who loves them and who has a purpose for their lives.

This is done in the context of relationship. So we ask God to fill our hearts with his love and to lead us and we go out to...

* Develop Friendships
* Discover Stories
* Discern Next Steps

Then one day when someone asks you an open-ended spiritual question: what now??

**Activity #1: A Minute to Share It**

Turn to the person next to you and tell them about your happiest or most exciting days ever. You have 1 minute each and will be cued when to swap.

**How to Tell a Bad Story ☺**

* Make it TOO LONG
* Make it HARD TO FOLLOW
* Make it IRRELEVANT (WEIRD)
* Make it AIMLESS
* Make it INAUTHENTIC

The reverse is true for how to tell a good story:

* Make it SHORT
* Make it CLEAR
* Make it RELEVANT
* Make it PURPOSEFUL
* Make it GENUINE

**Why is your story important?**

* Your friends are interested in it (because they are interested in you).
* Your friends can relate to it (because they know you).
* It is indefensible (because it’s your story).

In order to tell a compelling story and provide the best opportunities for ongoing conversation remember the following guidelines:

1. **Be brief** (Be able to tell your story in 45-60 seconds)
2. **Be clear** (Stick to one key plot line / big idea)
3. **Keep it simple** (Avoid church-y language that not everyone may understand.)
4. **Be humble** (When you tell your story, does it convey a prideful or ‘superior’ attitude?)

When a person is open to hearing your faith story, all they really want to know is what you were like before you met Christ (OR would have been like if you came to Christ at a young age), how you came to know Him, and what you’ve been like since submitting your life to Him.^ 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Our goal should be to answer the question:

What difference does Jesus make for me?

The Gospels are full of the BEFORE and AFTER stories of men and women who encountered Jesus.

**Activity #2: Match The Story**

The following stories are all jumbled up. See if you can match the story to the person (draw a line to the correct one):

Before After

Man who was born with a disability “I use to walk in shame

 ^John 9 but now I walk in grace!”

Zaccaeus, wealthy tax collector “I was blind but now I see”

^ Luke 19:1-10

Apostle Paul “I used to be gripped by

^Acts 26:9-23 greed; now I am gripped

 by the needs of the poor

Women caught in adultery “I was devoted to killing

 ^ John 8:1-11 Christ followers now I

 am a devoted follower of

 Jesus!”

**Activity #3: Write Your Own Story**

1. What type of person you were before you came to know Christ? *In the lines below write adjectives that come to mind. If you came to faith while at a young age consider how you would describe what you were like prior to developing a thriving, more mature relationship with Christ. Or, what your life would look like without Christ (based on what the lives of some of your friends who have not continued on with Jesus, look like now)::*
2. Based on the adjectives noted in question (A), what is one word that BEST describes your before ‘state’?
3. Describe the circumstances that caused you to submit your life to Christ... *What life stage were you in? What input did you receive that finally triggered your desire to ask Christ into your life? Where were (location) when you when you invited Christ into your life? How did you actually invite Him in and what did you say / think? What was the most significant thing about making this decision?*

1. Now, completing the sentence below, note the primary difference that Christ has made to your life:

*Since inviting Christ into my life I’ve become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

\*\*One thing to keep in mind: in addition to conveying the basic before-and-after story be sure to mention that you need Jesus’ ongoing help. This side of heaven, nobody has ‘arrived’ – it’s important to acknowledge this reality.

**Activity #4: Putting It All Together**

**Cass’ Story in 143 words...**

*I grew up in a Christian family but never knew Jesus was actually real. I was insecure, full of self-hatred and thought a boyfriend could fill the lonely ache inside. A uni. friend invited me to a church Easter service. As the speaker talked, for the first time I could sense Jesus so close and just knew He was real: so I asked Him to come into my life and lead me. Even though things have not always been easy I know that nothing can take away Jesus’ unconditional love for me. I am not constantly insecure and lonely like I used to be. I have this joy and confidence - even when I fail, even when I go through hard times, even when I don’t understand why something is happening: Jesus is real, He really loves me and He’s really with me.*

What is the one big idea?
Jesus is real.

**Your Story in 150 words or less...**

*I grew up...*

*I was...*

*Describe meeting Jesus...*

*What difference has Jesus made for you?*

*Your one big idea?*

**Activity #5: Practice in Pairs** (45-60 sec. Max)

Story Feedback Checklist – Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Short
* Clear
* Relevant
* Purposeful
* Genuine
* What was the big idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What worked well?

1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Areas to practice?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Story Feedback Checklist – Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Short
* Clear
* Relevant
* Purposeful
* Genuine
* What was the big idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What worked well?

1.

2.

* Areas to practice?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*“The astounding truth... is that as we work to develop friendships with anyone and everyone we meet, we might just be the one the Holy Spirit uses...” –* Bill Hybels