

# ENGAGE

## PHASE ONE: IGNITE

### IGNITING A PASSION FOR JESUS BY ENGAGING PERSONAL STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION AND GOD'S STORY OF TRANSFORMATION IN SCRIPTURE

#### PURPOSE:

This phase will enable growing disciples to connect with God's love and their own stories of transformation in Jesus Christ and God's story of redemption in Scripture, praying for the Holy Spirit to ignite a passion for Jesus in individuals and the community of disciples/congregation as contagious, visible models of God's love. Participants will explore reasons why faith sharing might be awkward for some in mainline churches/denominations.

#### PARTICIPANTS:

Initially the participants could be the session and staff of the church. Then other key leaders will go through the process. [For a smaller congregation, session *AND* other key leaders in the church might be the best way to start.] Finally, the leaders of the church will engage the entire congregation in this process, including youth and children, adapting materials/process as needed. Each participant is encouraged to have a "conversation partner" throughout the process. This person should not be a "best friend" or spouse, but someone in the church that is less well known to them. The point of the conversation partner is to become more comfortable talking about and sharing one's faith.

SUGGESTED READING: *And* by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay

| GATHERING  | THINK   | TALK  | TRY  | TAKE   |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ONE</u><br/><i>Engaging Your Story</i></p> <p>Luke 19: 1-9</p> | <p>Because of his personal relationship with Jesus, Zacchaeus' life is transformed.</p> <p>Three Main Phases of Transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The time before we encounter life's meaning</li> <li>• An experience of meeting the love of God in Jesus Christ</li> <li>• Life lived in response to God's love in Jesus Christ</li> </ul> | <p>In groups of three, share the name of a person through whom you have experienced a life-changing relationship with God.</p> <p>Take turns praying for these people by offering God thanks and praise.</p> <p>Share and pray about people in your lives who you can help see Jesus.</p> | <p>As a group, reflect on which church ministries are helping people draw closer to Jesus.</p> | <p>Spend an hour with your conversation partner sharing about the people who helped you see Jesus and how Jesus has made a difference in your life.</p> <p>Read Luke 19:1-9 together</p> |

| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>   | <u>TALK</u>  | <u>TRY</u>   | <u>TAKE</u>  |
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| <p data-bbox="210 284 493 381"><u>TWO</u><br/><i>Resting In and Trusting Jesus</i></p> <p data-bbox="189 422 336 454">John 15:1-8</p> <p data-bbox="189 495 493 665">In <i>Blue Like Jazz</i> p.223, Donald Miller shed light on what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. (see attached)</p> <p data-bbox="189 706 430 812">YouTube video: Brennan Manning "Live at Woodcrest"</p> <p data-bbox="189 852 493 990">This and other video clips are available on the Evangelism &amp; Church Growth's website</p> | <p data-bbox="535 284 850 414">Examine what it means to trust the love of God in Jesus and to live by this love.</p> <p data-bbox="535 462 829 592">Is our ministry driven by our own strength or by our relationship with Jesus Christ?</p> <p data-bbox="535 641 850 950">God wants an intimate relationship with us. We can know a lot about God and never truly know God. If we don't intentionally pursue a relationship with God, then we begin to live off our ideas about God.</p> <p data-bbox="535 998 850 1307">At times, it's our disappointment with God that causes us to believe that we must work harder or strive for a love that never seems to be ours. Our lives end up being more about doing than remaining in the Vine.</p> | <p data-bbox="877 284 1186 414">Share in groups of three your hopes and concerns about your relationship with God.</p> <p data-bbox="877 462 1186 633">Is it easy or hard for you to believe that God loves you as you are and desires to be intimately involved in your life?</p> | <p data-bbox="1220 284 1533 349">View Brennan Manning's video.</p> <p data-bbox="1220 389 1533 665">In groups of three, share about a time in which you felt the transforming power of love. Then share about a time in which a period of striving left you feeling less than satisfied.</p> <p data-bbox="1220 706 1533 812">In order to truly live into your call, what needs to be pruned from your life?</p> <p data-bbox="1220 852 1533 982">Pray with one another by giving thanks for these moments of love that lead us into new life.</p> | <p data-bbox="1562 284 1879 560">Before the next meeting, find a passage of scripture that fits your experience of being loved as you are. Some examples are: Romans 8:31-35 John 8:1-8 Colossians 1:15-18</p> <p data-bbox="1562 600 1879 844">Another way to look at this experience is to ask, "What's my experience of Jesus that my neighbor can't live without?" Share your findings with your conversation partner.</p> |

| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>  | <u>TALK</u>  | <u>TRY</u>  | <u>TAKE</u>  |
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| <p data-bbox="310 285 386 308"><u>THREE</u></p> <p data-bbox="189 318 491 415">Genesis 1:1-2:35<br/>Revelation 21:1-5, 22-27,<br/>22:1-5</p> | <p data-bbox="533 285 814 344">Spend time reading the scripture.</p> <p data-bbox="533 389 848 1377">We see that God creates a good and beautiful world, and in the end God completes this good and beautiful creation. The Christian story of creation is unique. It begins with goodness and our purpose is to love God and one another and to care for creation. We make a mistake when we begin with sin and brokenness. If we truly live into the good news that God not only created this good and beautiful world, but God is also restoring creation, we would treat one another with more grace and be better stewards of creation. Maybe, we would dispel the stereotype that Christians are known more for what we are against than what we are for.</p> | <p data-bbox="877 285 1163 451">In groups of two, share and pray about the goodness you see in the other and the goodness you see in creation.</p> | <p data-bbox="1222 285 1537 841">During your session meeting, notice how often your ministry is seen and talked about as being good instead of a ministry that needs to be fixed. Following the meeting, briefly share about how the knowledge that God has created a good creation and is restoring creation even now is making a difference in how you handle the negative ministry of the session.</p> | <p data-bbox="1566 285 1877 876">Take the time every day to write down the good things in your life, church community, and world, such as family, Bible study, serving a neighbor, mentoring, and walking in the woods. Then share with your conversation partner the goodness in your life. Talk about the difference it makes that creation started off as good and the God will restore not only the spiritual, but the physical realm as well.</p> |

| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>  | <u>TALK</u>  | <u>TRY</u>   | <u>TAKE</u>   |
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| <p data-bbox="310 284 386 310"><u>FOUR</u></p> <p data-bbox="233 316 464 349"><i>What went wrong?</i></p> <p data-bbox="191 391 365 417">Genesis 3:1-13</p> <p data-bbox="191 459 422 492">Nooma video <i>Lump</i></p> | <p data-bbox="533 284 789 310">View the <i>Lump</i> video.</p> <p data-bbox="533 352 842 807">Creation is broken by sin. How we address sin is critical to our understanding of the mission of the church. According to scripture, our sin was that we wanted to <u>be</u> God. We were not content with our purpose of loving God, loving others and caring for creation. We want to be in control!</p> <p data-bbox="533 849 842 1060">If we had not sinned, or missed the mark, then we would not live in a world marked by racism, poverty, violence, greed, and pollution.</p> <p data-bbox="533 1102 842 1313">Sin breaks our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation. Therefore, sin is both corporate and personal.</p> | <p data-bbox="875 284 1184 495">Understanding that sin is missing the mark, in groups of three, share with one another what it means to you to miss the mark.</p> <p data-bbox="875 537 1184 596">How have you missed the mark?</p> <p data-bbox="875 638 1115 703">How has the church missed the mark?</p> <p data-bbox="875 745 1184 885">Also, share ways in which you have experienced grace and how that grace has changed your life.</p> | <p data-bbox="1218 284 1526 417">As a large group, share about ways in which your church has missed the mark.</p> <p data-bbox="1218 459 1526 563">Have you become more inwardly than outwardly focused?</p> <p data-bbox="1218 605 1484 703">Is there tension in the body that needs to be dealt with?</p> <p data-bbox="1218 745 1526 849">Is there lingering resentment over a recent decision?</p> <p data-bbox="1218 891 1526 956">Identify, confess and pray together.</p> | <p data-bbox="1560 284 1806 349">Spend some time in prayer.</p> <p data-bbox="1560 391 1869 813">Following your prayer time, write out your understanding of forgiveness. How has forgiveness set you free? What are the consequences of sin? From what and for what are we saved? How does Jesus going to the cross provide the answer to the sin question?</p> <p data-bbox="1560 855 1869 1170">During a period of silent reflection and prayer, write down the things in your life that you want God to change. What do you need to give over to God so that you can experience strength and guidance?</p> <ul data-bbox="1610 1180 1869 1424" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your job?</li> <li>• A relationship?</li> <li>• Inner conflict?</li> <li>• Some area in your life in which you have missed the mark?</li> </ul> |

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|  |   |  |  | Share your list with your conversation partner.  |
| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>  | <u>TALK</u>  | <u>TRY</u>   | <u>TAKE</u>  |
| <p><u>FIVE</u><br/> <i>God's Rescue Plan – A Special People</i><br/>           Genesis 12:1-15</p> | <p>We believe that God created a good and beautiful world. However, this beautiful creation is broken because the first humans decided that they would be better off being God than serving God.</p> <p>God is not content to leave us in our sin and to abandon creation in its brokenness. In a broken world, God calls a broken, faithful man.</p> | <p>Read aloud Genesis 12:1-15.</p> <p>In groups of three, share how you (personally and corporately) have stepped out in faith in ways that caused you to know more clearly the purposes of God for you and your church.</p> | <p>As a group, list all the ways in which the church is currently blessing the community.</p> <p>Then list ways in which the church can be more of a blessing.</p> <p>What are major areas of brokenness in your community?</p> <p>How can the church participate in what God is doing to heal your community?</p> | <p>Find three people you can be a blessing to this month. One person can be someone who is hard for you to love.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rake leaves or sweep the driveway of a neighbor</li> <li>• Be intentional in conversation, inviting people to talk about their lives. (Listening is a great gift)</li> <li>• Pay for the person behind you in a drive-through.</li> <li>• Intentionally go to a place of business in a part of town that is struggling economically.</li> <li>• Let others go ahead of you in the checkout line.</li> </ul> |

| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>  | <u>TALK</u>   | <u>TRY</u>  | <u>TAKE</u>  |
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| <p data-bbox="327 284 369 310"><u>SIX</u></p> <p data-bbox="205 318 491 344"><i>Salvation Through Jesus</i></p> <p data-bbox="191 391 411 417">Colossians 1:18-20</p> <p data-bbox="191 461 310 487">Mark 1:15</p> | <p data-bbox="533 284 846 521">Jesus was the one who generations had been waiting for. Our story of faith is about a loving God who pursues us and finds us in the love and life of Jesus.</p> <p data-bbox="533 570 825 771">We often miss the price paid on the cross for our sin because we have missed the enormity of the power of sin in our lives.</p> <p data-bbox="533 820 825 1057">Our approach to evangelism has to be about life being real and good in Jesus. He preached and lived the good news of the Kingdom of God.</p> <p data-bbox="533 1105 835 1446">Salvation is about reconciliation, healing, and deliverance now and forever. It's not about being saved for heaven and continuing to live the old life of greed and resentment. By God's grace, we become like Jesus and become</p> | <p data-bbox="875 284 1161 342">We believe that Jesus is Savior and Lord.</p> <p data-bbox="875 391 1167 449">In groups of three, share why we need a savior.</p> | <p data-bbox="1218 284 1440 310">How is Jesus Lord?</p> <p data-bbox="1218 358 1535 628">If part of what it means that Jesus is Lord is that we follow Jesus into the mission of God, then list ways in which your church is engaging God's mission of reconciliation and redemption.</p> | <p data-bbox="1560 284 1875 488">Take some time to reflect upon and write about what it means to you that there's nothing you can do to earn the freedom in Jesus' saving power.</p> <p data-bbox="1560 537 1875 667">Our freedom and purpose come freely as a gift from God. This is the meaning and power of grace.</p> <p data-bbox="1560 716 1822 807">Share what you are learning with your conversation partner.</p> |

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|  | expressions of God's love in the world.   |   |  |  |
| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>  | <u>TALK</u>   | <u>TRY</u>   | <u>TAKE</u>  |
| <p><u>SEVEN</u><br/><i>Salvation Through the Church</i></p> <p>Mark 1:17-18</p> <p>Matthew 6:5-14</p> <p>Nooma video <i>Dust</i></p> <p><i>True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In</i><br/>By James Choung</p> | <p>The disciples dropped everything to follow Jesus.</p> <p>They signed on with Jesus to reach people. The mission has not changed. We are signing up with Jesus to reach people, too.</p> <p>The message the church has to offer the world is about God, who has come to offer life to the human spirit.</p> | <p>In groups of three, share what it means that you are a "sending" community?<br/>You are not in this community for yourselves, but you are here for others.</p> <p>In the church, disciples receive nurture and training to live with others and invite them into a way of life that will satisfy their deepest longings.</p> <p>We are missionaries to our culture.<br/>How are we living as missionaries?<br/>Do we know the language of our culture?</p> <p>How are we building trusting, authentic relationships with people outside the church?</p> <p>How are we relating the gospel to the needs of people in our culture?</p> | <p>Read Matthew 6:5-14.</p> <p>As you explore what it means to be missionaries in your community, share these questions:</p> <p>What are the values of this earthly realm?<br/>In what ways has the church bought into these earthly values?</p> <p>What are the values of God in heaven?</p> <p>In what ways are we tempted into sin?</p> <p>What is the evil we see in the world?</p> <p>How has this evil invaded the ministry of the church?</p> <p>How are we forgiving others and experiencing forgiveness?</p> <p>How is the mission of the church advancing the will of God on earth as it is in</p> | <p>Read <i>True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In</i></p> |



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| <u>GATHERING</u>   | <u>THINK</u>   | <u>TALK</u>   | <u>TRY</u>  | <u>TAKE</u>   |
| <p><u>EIGHT</u><br/><i>Putting Together the Stories</i></p> <p><i>The Big Story</i>, parts 1 and 2, available on YouTube and the PCUSA's evangelism website.</p> | <p><i>True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In</i> is a very compelling and effective way of sharing God's mission. It helps people identify where they are and want to be in the faith. The major parts of the story are:</p> <p><b>WE ARE DESIGNED FOR GOOD:</b> Choung describes God's good creation and emphasizes God's purpose for human beings as loving God, one another, and caring for creation.</p> <p><b>WE ARE DAMAGED BY EVIL:</b> Creation is broken because of our desire to be God instead of trusting God and living into our purpose. All of creation is broken -- relationships, our lives, communities.</p> <p><b>WE ARE RESTORED FOR BETTER:</b> The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ bring us forgiveness and hope and set us on a journey of healing the world.</p> <p><b>WE ARE SENT TO HEAL</b></p> | <p>In groups of three, share and pray about what seems helpful and what seems difficult about this way of describing the gospel.</p> <p>If necessary, show the video again.</p> | <p>Without a partner, practice sharing the story in your own words.</p> | <p>Share The Big Story with your conversation partner.</p> <p>Also, begin to write out your own story of faith.</p> <p>Some helpful questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The closest I have felt to God in my life was . . .</li> <li>• If I could thank God for one person or circumstance in my life, it would be . . .</li> <li>• If I could name a turning point in my relationship with God, it would be . . .</li> <li>• How have you responded to a nudge from God?</li> </ul> |

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|  | TOGETHER: This, and only this purpose, is the reason the church exists.  |  |  |   |
| <u>GATHERING</u>                               | <u>THINK</u>   | <u>TALK</u>  | <u>TRY</u>   | <u>TAKE</u>   |
| <u>NINE</u><br><i>Sharing Your Faith Story</i> | <p>Each of us has a story to tell. In this gathering we will work on and practice sharing our faith stories.</p> <p>The people around us not only need to be served by us, but they also need to hear why we are serving our communities and living a different lifestyle.</p> <p>One of the ways to write out our story is to use the following template:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My life before I committed my life to Jesus . . .</li> <li>• My life when Jesus became real to me . . .</li> <li>• My life following Jesus into meaning and purpose . . .</li> </ul> | <p>Continue to work on your faith story using the following questions to guide you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is my life different because I am a follower of Jesus Christ?</li> <li>• Who were and are the people who have helped and are helping me grow in my commitment to God's way of life in Jesus Christ?</li> <li>• How has God worked in my life to help me grow as a disciple of Christ?</li> <li>• What is God doing right now in my life that is good news?</li> </ul> | <p>In groups of three, take turns sharing your faith story.</p> <p>As a large group, pray around the table for your church and community – that the Holy Spirit will lead you into a disciple-making ministry that will lead to faith sharing and mission.</p> | <p>Share your faith story with your conversation partner.</p> |

In *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller sheds some light on what it means to have a relationship with Jesus:

A guy I know named Alan went around the country asking ministry leaders questions. He went to successful churches and asked the pastors about what they were doing, why what they were doing was working. It sounded very boring except for one visit he made to a man named Bill Bright, the president of a big ministry. Alan said he was a big man, full of life, who listened without shifting his eyes. Alan asked a few questions. I don't know what they were, but as a final question he asked Dr. Bright what Jesus meant to him. Alan said Dr. Bright could not answer the question. He said Dr. Bright just started to cry. He sat there in his big chair behind his big desk and wept. When Alan told that story I wondered what it was like to love Jesus that way (p. 233).