

Common Ground Christian Church
“Telling the Story” Training Retreat
19-22 Feb 2003
Schedule

Wed Eve

7:30-8 Intro
8-8:45 Hermeneutics - Chris Croyts
8:45-9 Q/A

Thursday (The Scriptural Story)

7-8 B'fast
8-9:30 OT – Chris Croyts
9:30-10 Q/A
10-11 Small group discussions of OT and Hermeneutics
11-12:30 Lunch /relax
12:30-3 Jeff on Jesus - Jeff Krajewski
3-3:30 Q/A
3:30-5 NT - Tim Lancaster
5-5:30 Q/A
5:30-7:30 Dinner/Relax
7:30- Small Group Discussions of the day's material

Friday (The Church's Story)

7-8:30 B'fast
8:30-10:30 Church History - Chris Smith
10:30-11 Q/A
11-12 Common Ground History / Identity - Jeff Krajewski
11:30-12 Q/A
12-2 Lunch/Relax
2-3:30 Unity of the Body - Tim Lancaster
3:30-4 Q/A
4-5:30 Mission of the Body - Don Ross
5:30-6 Q/A
6-7:30 Dinner
7:30- Small Groups

Saturday (My place in the story)

7-8 B'fast
8-9 Repentance (Iconoclasm) - Chris Smith
9-9:30 Q/A
9:30-10:30 Prayer - Laurie Ross
10:30-11 Q/A
11-1 Lunch-Relax
1-2 Meditation/Scripture - Chris Croyts
2-2:30 Q/A
2:30-3:30 Other Disciplines (Simplicity, Fasting, Hospitality) - Laurie Ross
3:30-4 Q/A
4-5:30 Small Groups
5:30-6:30 Dinner
6:30-8 – Closing: Prayer/Sharing/Sending Off/Feedback

Telling the Story

Special thanks to Phil Kenneson and Kevin Rains for their review of this curriculum

Wednesday:

Hermeneutics: How to Listen to the Scriptural Story (45 min):

- **What are the Scriptures?** Inspired and protected through the ages by the Holy Spirit. God's story.
- **Twofold hermeneutic:**
 - 1) **Jesus:** Jesus is our picture of God (Heb 1:3) and in knowing Jesus, we know "the Author"
Just as God is 3-in-1, so the Scriptures are many books in ONE and must be taken as a whole.
We cannot rip books, verses (or parts of verses) out of the context of the greater story of God's work.
 - 2) **Covenant with a chosen people:** (The role of community in understanding the Scriptures)
God reveals himself to his people. God's story is foolishness to those outside the Church (I Cor 1)

Thursday: The Scriptural Story (through the lens of Jesus), a.k.a. "The Big Picture"

A.M.

Old Testament: The story of God's People Israel (1 Hour):

- **Creation** (Jesus as Creator, Jn 1) / **Fall** (Separation from God)
- **Abraham, Father of Israel, and the Establishment of the People of God** (Covenant)
- **Adventures of the People of God** (Slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, Captivity)
- **Israel, although chosen, is prone to wander** (choosing to have a human king vs. God's rule alone, etc.)
- **Role of the Prophets** (Speaking God's message to the people and guiding them, calling them to turn their focus back to the story that God wants to work out in them)
- **Israel as preparation for Jesus/Church**
 - Israel was a *model* for the Church, a familial community, set-apart for worship of God
 - The Temple as where God dwells vs. NT: God's presence in the gathering of believers [e.g., I Cor 3:16].
 - The centrality of the Jubilee: The people feast together (Lord's supper), Equality, Forgiveness of debts, practice of Rest/Sabbath, trust in God's Provision. (Note the parallels in the Lord's Prayer).
 - Jesus as the perfect lamb sacrificed for the sins of all humanity.

Thursday P.M.

The Story of Jesus (2-1/2 hours):

- Fully God and Fully Man. Sinless (perfectly submissive to God's story), but "tempted in every way"
- Proclaimed and modeled a coming Kingdom
- Called disciples to follow him, then ultimately sent them out [Luke 10].
- Fellowshipped with all sorts of people
- His most adamant criticisms were of the religious people (Pharisees, etc.)
- Was crucified *as a political threat to the Jewish and Roman "establishments"* (!!!)
- Rose on the 3rd day, rendering death (and the threat/fear of death) powerless
- **What Jesus taught:** (Focus on the sermon on the Mount)
 - The Beatitudes – Our value system. The destination that God is taking us toward.
 - Our ethics (Sermon on the Mt.) What are we to do to express our values?
 - >> Live simply and trust without anxiety in God's provision.
 - >> Love our enemies and seek opportunities to **make** peace, returning good for evil.
 - >> Pray without ceasing.
 - >> Be committed to truth-telling (let our yes be yes and our no, no)
 - Jesus lived what he taught and vice versa (Examples? Simplicity, Missional, Nonviolent, etc)
 - Jesus taught that the Kingdom was coming. Reconciliation with God and man was at hand.
 - God wants to heal us and to restore us to himself, and to free us from our enslavement to the Powers.

The Story of who the Church is – New Testament (1-1/2 Hour):

- Behold! The New Creation (the Kingdom). Emerges from the old Creation.
(Parable: Kingdom as yeast Matt 13:33...)
- The church, like Israel, is a holy (set-apart) nation, a "peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9)
- The Church bears witness to Jesus's Kingdom.
- The cross/resurrection as a symbol of our dying to self and being resurrected in Christ.
- Church emerged from the nation of Israel and spread after Pentecost to the Gentiles.
- Our Antagonists: Satan (the Tempter) and the Powers – anything that would enslave us or keep/distract us from obedience: Money, Sex, Social Status, Government, Corporations, Drugs, etc. (see Eph 6)
The powers rule the world and dictate "the ways of the world."
- The End: Because of the Resurrection (God's conquering of the world's greatest power), we have assurance that the story will end as God Promised. The Powers of Death have no sway over us!!!
Paul: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" !!! Because we know how the story ends, we have no reason to fear.
There is NOTHING that the world can take from us!!! "None shall make them afraid" (Ezek 34:28, Zeph 3:13, etc.)
In knowing the Truth (Jesus), we have been set free!
- All creation **will** be reconciled to God. We are the ambassadors of that reconciliation (2 Cor 5:16ff)
And we proclaim that reconciliation by the way we live as the people of God (not just words)
- We, like the disciples, are a people sent out, or in other words, a missional people.

Friday A.M.: The story of the Historical Church

In all of the following historical vignettes, emphasize the aspects of Jesus's life/teaching:

Jesus's work carried on by his followers: 1st Century (45 Min):

- **The Disciples' stories** (missionaries/ most became martyrs)
- **God's endless power:** flows through those who submit to Him (healing, miracles, etc).
- **From enslavement to the Powers to enslavement to Christ**, the only loving Master.
- **But we are not just slaves, we are also sons and friends of Christ.** (Jn 15:13-15)
- **The emergence of the Holy Spirit** and the early church after Pentecost (Acts 2-4)
- **Worship and the life of the body is guided by the gifts that God has given us** (I Cor 14:26)
- **Lord's Supper:** Central to who we are (Sharing food/life together, Celebrating God together...)
- **"and none of them had any need"** (Acts 4:34) God provides for our needs through the community.
- **Missional emphasis:** the story of God's good news spreads, following the lead of the Spirit
- **Christianity was illegal**, as it went contrary to the emperor worship of the Roman empire.
- **The Martyrs (Witnesses):** loving Jesus more than life itself
"The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church" – Tertullian

Jesus's work carried on by his followers: Post-First-Century (45 min):

God directs the story of people toward the end He has written, bringing them back when they wander away. The last 2000 years illustrates this:

- **Constantine** and the domestication of the Church (a wrong turn...)
(Human cultures need kings, and we are to love and respect those kings, but the Church has a higher king in God, and – like Israel – we do not need a human king to protect/guide us.)
- **The Monastics** (esp. Franciscans/Benedictines) as communities of radical commitment to Jesus and as a reaction against the domestication of the Church.
- Specifically, the **Celtic monastic communities** as examples of missional Christian communities
- The early **Anabaptists** as a return to the post-Pentecost church life/ Anabaptist Martyrs
(Christianity, for the Anabaptists, was again an illegal religion)
- **Wesley's cells** as a model for housechurches.
- Stories from the beginning of **the Restoration movement** (????)
- Contrary to popular opinion, the Church in the US has been more or less a desert (no revival in the US has ever lasted more than 1 generation.) America is not a "Christian Nation"! Church again has become domesticated.
- **Housechurch explosion** around the globe today (Stories from: China, Indonesia, Africa, etc.)
- Time is ripe for renewal of God's people in the U.S.

Where does CG fit into the story? (1 hour)

- **Why housechurches?**
 - Expression of our nature in Christ as the *family* of God. Communion as a symbol of our sharing life together is most meaningful within a family (dinner table) environment.
 - Desire for simplifying Church life. Simplicity benefits mission. (Much easier to plant housechurches).
 - Desire to involve everyone (and their gifts) in the life and ministry of the Church
 - It is at this basic level where making deep commitments (covenants) with each other is most meaningful.
- **Importance of *family*** -- not just a group of friends, but those that God gives us.
Age/maturity diversity as a given in family. The accountability/discipline of a family.
- As Abraham was the father of Israel, so God is our Father and we, like Israel, are a holy/peculiar people.
We are citizens of a new and emerging culture/kingdom and God is our King.
- **Baptism:** Outward expression of immersion into Jesus's culture.
Our recognition that "There is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) See Rom 6:4
- **We're on a journey and we haven't "arrived."** Our journey is one thread in God's larger story
- God is moving CG away from homogeneity (all young folk) toward a diverse family dynamic
- **Missional homechurch-planting vision** for Indianapolis and beyond.
- **Attempting to model the shared life** of the early Church...

Friday P.M.: The ongoing story of the Family of God

Our life lived together bears witness to the story of God's continuing work

What is our role in the story? (Or, Who *are* we and what do we *do* as a community of believers?)

United as the Family of God (90 Min)

- **Unity/Being at Peace with each other!!!** (not uniformity...)
The most frequent instruction to the Church in the Epistles.
 - We, the many, are one as God, the many, is one.
 - Unity is a matter of fact (we are one in the Holy Spirit) not something we create.
Our job is to bear witness to the unity...
 - Radical Equality: No Jew/Gentile, Male/Female, Young/Old, etc (Gal 3:28)
 - But Radical Diversity of Gifts: Identifying and Cultivating gifts (We are all "ministers")
Gifts serve to build (edify) Christ's body, cf. I Cor 14:1-5.
 - Use the musical illustration of Harmony (united but not uniform (monotone))...
- **Koinonia:** Sharing – centered in the Lord's Supper. Spiritual/Emotional/Physical
- **Community as support in battling antagonists:** Confession, Encouragement, Guidance, Restoration
- **Compassion** (lit. "suffering with") :
Suffering together with our neighbors (in and outside the Church) that suffer
- **Discipling and being disciplined** (we mature as sons and daughters)
- **Extending grace and patience to one another** – just as God does for us.

Being a Missional People (90 Min)

- **Mission:** Jesus sends us as He sent his disciples.
Parallels from Luke 10:
 - Finding where God wants to go; looking for the "person of peace" (v 5-7)
 - Not keeping the church to ourselves but taking it to others' homes (v 7)
 - Simplicity (v. 4)
 - The Powers want to divert/destroy our mission (v. 3 "sheep among wolves")
 - When we submit to God's story, we have all the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 17-20)
- **Obedience (listening and following)** as the highest expression of worship (I Jn 5:3-4)
- Being formed and prepared for service by **the Scriptures** (Heb 11: stories encourage and energize us!)
- **Truth-telling.** Speaking the Truth of Christ to ourselves, to each other and to our culture.
 - Exposing the injustices of the Powers. Shedding the light of Truth (Christ) on them.
 - Proclaiming the ultimate demise of the Powers and our Freedom in Christ from them.
 - Our most powerful witness to the Truth is the way in which we live together as the family of God.

Saturday: My role in the story

Just as Jesus called his disciples, so also he calls us and has a special place for us in his story
How and Where do I fit into the story God is writing in our community?

Notice that the individual comes last in our presentation... God's story first and then our own story as part of that larger story. The world asks "What's in it for me?" We ask: "What does God want?"
'Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness...' God created us uniquely as individuals for playing a special role in the kingdom-building work.

A.M.

Repentance/ Iconoclasm (the crushing of our idols / Letting go of the World's culture) (1 hour)

- Jesus calls us to repent (change our ways) and follow Him
- God demands our exclusive submission (no selfish idols) What are my idols? (Rich young ruler, etc.)
- Reading and understanding the story of our culture (discernment) in order that we might not become enslaved by it.
- The Powers want to control us, and in many ways they do...
- The process of being transformed from the World's culture of death to God's culture of life.
- Freedom in Christ... the only true freedom. American freedom (liberty) is shabby facsimile.

Prayer (1 hour)

- Prayer (Submission to the will of God) as the center of our lives "Pray without ceasing"
- Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane "Not my will, but yours be done"
- The Lord's prayer as a model for what prayer is. (Note parallels between the above 2 prayers...)
- God wants us to be characters in his story, but we can only do so by self-denial and submission to God
- Prayer characterized by: (Mark 8:34-38)
 - Denying our selfish desires
 - Taking up our cross (i.e., being ready to suffer with Christ, suffering brings transformation: James)
 - Following Christ's example.
- By the power of the Holy Spirit (and only by it!) living out Christ's values (the Beatitudes).
- The Holy Spirit enables us to do all things to which we are called. Don't limit God's power!
- Intercession as one form of prayer. Lifting others up to God's healing power. (a form of evangelism?)
- Must understand ourselves as characters: Our end is *not* self-actualization, but faithfulness to the roles God has written for us in His Script. The personal disciplines are not just for individuals, but for the Body and thus for the kingdom-building work that God is doing.

P.M.

Meditation / Scripture (1 hour)

- Meditation – listening for God's will. We can't obey if we don't know what we're supposed to do
- We seek to discern our next steps in the journey God has for us (How *specifically* are we to love our neighbors as ourselves?) We look for those next steps through the lens of Scripture.
- What meditation is not: not mere self-emptying, or a means to self-actualization.
- The counter-cultural practice of being still!!! The importance of Sabbath!
- Scripture: Training ourselves to know what God's will looks like

More disciplines that flow out of a prayerful life. Overcoming our evil habits with good ones. (1 hour)

- **Simplicity:** intentionally combating one of the greatest Powers: Mammon
Simplicity as a facet of our missional nature. The more "stuff" we have, the harder it is to be mobilized.
- **Fasting:** Learning to rely on God and to distinguish his desires from our own
Jesus (Jn 4:33): "My food is to do the work of the one who sent me."
- **Generosity/Hospitality:** Imitating Jesus: We have received much; we are called to give much

List of Resources for Telling the Story

Wednesday:

Hermeneutics: How to Listen to the Scriptural Story :

- "Covenant as a Subversive Paradigm" by Walter Brueggemann
http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/researchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=1727
- Stanley Hauerwas: "The Morality of Remembering: Scripture as Narrative"
in A COMMUNITY OF CHARACTER

Thursday: The Scriptural Story (through the lens of Jesus), a.k.a. "The Big Picture"

Old Testament: The story of God's People Israel:

- Old Testament
- Gerhard Lohfink, JESUS AND COMMUNITY
- Walter Brueggemann, THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION
- John Howard Yoder "The Implications of the Jubilee" Ch 3 of THE POLITICS OF JESUS

The Story of Jesus:

- The Gospels
- John Howard Yoder, THE POLITICS OF JESUS
- Stanley Hauerwas, "Jesus: The Story of the Kingdom" in A COMMUNITY OF CHARACTER
- Jeff Krajewski's sermons 2001-2002
- John Stott, CHRISTIAN COUNTER-CULTURE (Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount)
- Hauerwas, THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM

The Story of the Church (New Testament):

- Jesus's parables describing the Kingdom
- Eph 6 – Our battle against the Powers
- 2 Cor 5 – Ambassadors of Reconciliation
- Hauerwas and Willimon, "Your Kingdom Come"
<http://www.sojo.net/magazine/index.cfm/action/sojourners/issue/soj9605/article/960522.html>
- Gerhard Lohfink, JESUS AND COMMUNITY
- Lesslie Newbigin, FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS
- Walter Wink, THE POWERS THAT BE
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP
- Donald Kraybill, THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM
- Stanley Hauerwas, "A Story-formed Community" in A COMMUNITY OF CHARACTER
- On the importance of knowing the end of the story, see
John Howard Yoder "Peace without Eschatology?" in THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD
- Jim Amstutz, THREATENED WITH RESURRECTION

Friday: Deeper look at the stories of Jesus and the Historical Church

Jesus's work carried on by his followers: 1st Century :

- Acts 2-4, I Corinthians
- Tertullian's APOLOGY <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-03/anf03-05.htm>
- THE DIDACHE <http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/St.Pachomius/Liturgical/didache.html>
- Foxe's Book of Martyrs http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe_j/martyrs/home.html
- Robert Banks, PAUL'S IDEA OF COMMUNITY (The Early House Churches in their cultural setting)
- Leo Tolstoy's short story "Walk in the Light"
- Pliny's letter to Trajan on the Christians (and Trajan's response):
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/texts/pliny.html>

Jesus's work carried on by his followers: Post-First-Century:

- Chapter 2, Hauerwas/Willimon RESIDENT ALIENS
- Robert Webber "Ethics and Evangelism: Learning from the Third-Century Church"
http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/researchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=312
- THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT <http://www.ccel.org/b/benedict/rule2/rule.html>
- G.K. Chesterton, ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI
- George Hunter, THE CELTIC WAY OF EVANGELISM
(the "Cliff Notes" version: <http://www.thunderstruck.org/archivevault/Hunter-Int.htm>)
- THE SCHLEITHEIM CONFESSION (Early Anabaptist creed) <http://members.iquest.net/~jswartz/schleitheim/>
- THE MARTYRS MIRROR (The stories of Anabaptist martyrs) <http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/>
- "The Anabaptist Vision" by Harold Bender <http://www.goshen.edu/mhl/Refocusing/d-av.htm>
- Marsden, Hatch, Noll: THE SEARCH FOR CHRISTIAN AMERICA
- Wolfgang Simson, HOUSES THAT CHANGE THE WORLD
<http://www.dawnministries.org/documents/northamerica/documents/Simson.PDF>
- Wolfgang Simson, Weekly "Friday Fax" on International Housechurch movements.
(<http://www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/>)

Where does CG fit into the story?

- Wolfgang Simson, HOUSES THAT CHANGE THE WORLD
<http://www.dawnministries.org/documents/northamerica/documents/Simson.PDF>
- John Howard Yoder, BODY POLITICS (particularly the chapter on Baptism)
- Rodney Clapp, A PECULIAR PEOPLE
- Robert Banks, THE CHURCH COMES HOME
- Del Birkey, THE HOUSE CHURCH

What is our role in the story? (Or, What do we *do* as a community of believers?)

Unity

- Koinonia: Acts 2-4, I John
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, LIFE TOGETHER
- Eberhard Arnold, WHY WE LIVE IN COMMUNITY
<http://www.eberhardarnold.com/WhyWeLiveInCommunity.pdf>
- Christian Smith GOING TO THE ROOT
- John Howard Yoder's BODY POLITICS (esp. chapter on the Lord's Supper)
- Henri Nouwen, et al COMPASSION
- Phillip Kenneson,
LIFE ON THE VINE: CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

Mission

- Obedience (I Jn 5:3-4)
- Heb 11: stories encourage and energize us!
- Luke 10, Jesus sends out his disciples
- Wolfgang Simson, HOUSES THAT CHANGE THE WORLD
- John Howard Yoder's BODY POLITICS (esp. chapter on Gifts)
- Robert Webber, Rodney Clapp, PEOPLE OF THE TRUTH.

Saturday: My role in the story

Just as Jesus called his disciples, so also he calls us and has a special place for us in his story
How and Where do I fit into the story God is writing in our community?

Repentance/ Iconoclasm (the crushing of our idols) :

- The Ten Commandments
- Story of the Rich Young Ruler.
- Rodney Clapp, THE CONSUMING PASSION: CHRISTIANITY AND CONSUMER CULTURE
- Ronald Sider, RICH CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF HUNGER
- Fr. Timothy V. Vaverek , “Christian Asceticism: Breaking Consumerism's Destructive Hold”
<http://www.cjd.org/paper/consum.html>

Prayer:

- Richard Foster PRAYER and the chapter on Prayer in CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE
- Frank Laubach, PRAYER
- E.M. Bounds's books on PRAYER
- Jeff Krajewski's recent sermons on Prayer.

Meditation / Scripture:

- Richard Foster chapters on Meditation and Study in CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE
- Brother Lawrence, PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD
<http://www.ccel.org/l/lawrence/practice/htm/TOC.htm>
- Parker J. Palmer: LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK.

More disciplines that flow out of a prayerful life. Overcoming our evil habits with good ones.

- Simplicity: Richard Foster THE FREEDOM OF SIMPLICITY and chapter in CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE
- Vernard Eller, THE SIMPLE LIFE <http://www.hccentral.com/eller3/index.html>
- Fasting: Richard Foster chapter in CELEBRATION
- Generosity/Hospitality:
Christine Pohl, MAKING ROOM: RECOVERING HOSPITALITY AS A CHRISTIAN TRADITION
Video: ENTERTAINING ANGELS: THE DOROTHY DAY STORY