



stepFOUR



VINEYARD
COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Learning How To Share
My Story!



GO TIME!

You made it! Welcome to stepFOUR! Step Four is the final class within the Growth Track that will give you the tools you need to share your story.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

“ . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” **ACTS 1:8**

The last words Jesus shared with his disciples after 3 years of mentoring and equipping them was to “GO and make disciples of all the earth”.

Jesus’ friends were about to change the world through their personal story of who Jesus is and what he had done for them, and so are you!

WHY SHOULD I SHARE MY STORY?

Your story is powerful, and sharing it is easier than you think! By the end of stepFOUR it is our confidence you will see just how true it is!

HERE'S WHY

1. My story changes the world.

For two thousand years, the transformative good news of Jesus has reached billions and billions of people simply through one person sharing with one person. Through this, the world has been changed for the better by Christ. ([Acts 17:6](#))

2. My story increases my faith.

The more we talk about what God has done for us the more we are encouraged and reminded of his love for us. ([Proverbs 11:25](#))

3. Jesus commands me to.

Jesus knows what is best for us and our world and has commanded us to be vocal about what he has done in our lives. ([Matthew 28:19](#))

We often find it easier to say “*I’ll keep my faith to myself, and avoid conflict by not talking about it.*” However, when we avoid this commandment from Jesus, we are missing out on the excitement and joy of loving people and leading them to a new and powerful relationship with Jesus.

We also miss out on the growth and relationship that can only develop by partnering with Jesus to accomplish His heart’s desire; **to bring those who are far from God close to Him.**

Jesus knew we would be **uncomfortable**, this is why He has not sent us out alone in this mission of sharing his story. He has sent us His Holy Spirit, and **called the Holy Spirit “The Comforter”** for this very reason. ([John 14:16](#))

The Holy Spirit lives in every follower of Christ, empowering us, leading us and encouraging us, bringing into our memory the words of Christ.

ACTS 1:8, JOHN 14:26, GALATIANS 5:18, ROMANS 8:14

HOW TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Don't be afraid! We often over complicate the simple truth of God in our life. Take a deep breath as we dive into these four foundational practices for owning your story.

1. OWN YOUR STORY

Stick with “do know, have seen”. Jesus and the disciples shared first hand stories all the time.

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen. . . **JOHN 3:11A**

We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.
ACTS 4:20

The purest root form of our story is God's love for us shown in Christ.

And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. **REVELATION 12:11A**

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **ROMANS 5:8**

- ▶ We overcome by our personal experience of what Jesus has done for us.
- ▶ The greatest thing Jesus has done for any of us is dying on the cross for our sin and raising from the dead to defeat death and its power in our lives.
- ▶ If we are asked and only have a few moments to declare what we believe it should be built on this foundation:

“I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins, and rose from the dead to give me eternal life.”

As we build on this foundation of what God has done for us, we should identify what He has done, and how things have changed. The more we own the reality of His hand in our life, the more we will be able to share it with others with confidence and faith.

Let's answer some of these questions right now to help identify our story.

► **God found me when** _____

_____.

► **God brought me to** _____

_____.

► **God has given me** _____

_____.

► **Now I am** _____

_____.

These questions are simple prompts to help you identify the key elements of your story. It is best to prayerfully write down your story, or even use a voice recorder to talk out loud so you can hear yourself vocalize what God has done for you. Make records of how faithful God has been in your life! Write down each testimony!

**Own your story. When you have doubts simply say:
“That’s my story and I’m sticking to it!”**

Remember, people might be able to argue about many things, but they can't argue with what God has personally DONE for you! It's okay to respond to questions by saying *“I don't know, but I do know what Jesus did for me!”*

2. OWN HIS MISSION

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.
We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

- ▶ Jesus has specifically included YOU in the story of God's love and redemption for our world! Becoming a friend and follower of Christ is not a self-centered lifestyle. In the same way that we were built for community, we were built to bring others into the family of God.
- ▶ The world is hurting, sick, and in need of Jesus. It is our privilege and honor to join with Him in reaching others through love and grace. Being a closet christian will never bring the change the world needs, nor the joy and excitement we were born for.
- ▶ Jesus said the disciples would be His witnesses in their home town, far away towns and the ends of the earth. In the same way, we are to be Jesus' representatives to those we live with, those we encounter outside of our families, and wherever else we may go.

Right now in your life there are multiple people starving for more of God's goodness. We can't let fear or shyness keep us from giving them what their hearts are hungry for.

The Good News of Jesus is for **EVERYONE**.

Let's use this time to write out a list of five people that you feel God is highlighting in your daily life to reach:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. OWN THE TIMING

As you own your story and Christ's mission, you become a powerful representative of God's love in the world, and reaching the world is all about context. As you own your story, picture yourself sharing it in an elevator with someone you just met, in the span of thirty seconds, while also being able to share it at a coffee house with a friend over the course of a few hours.

TIMING IS:

1. Timing is love.

The heart of sharing our story should be love and care for the person you're sharing with. As you consider the other person's time, ask yourself: how can I love this person by respecting their time while sharing my story? *(Phillippians 2:3-4)*

2. Timing is strategy.

The timing of when we share our story of God's love and transformation in our life can be very important! You may know someone who needs hope in their life. Inviting them to coffee or dinner to listen to them and see what you could share to invite them into God's healing and hope is sometimes much better than trying to cram what little you can in brief conversations. *(John 7:8)*

3. Timing is investment.

We show our love by how we spend our time. We cannot love others without spending our time with them. Ask God for wisdom on who to spend time with and how to spend your time, as you reach out a hand of hope to neighbors, coworkers, family members, friends or even people you see at places you frequently visit! *(John 15:13)*

Sometimes less is more. You wouldn't want to take a new plant seed and drench it with three gallons of water. In the same way, you want to be mindful of when and how much to share with that person you're reaching.

4. WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW?

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS “ASK & LISTEN!”

Listening is a super power. Wherever, whenever, whoever you find yourself sharing with, bare in mind there is as much power in lovingly listening, as there is in talking! You will cultivate a value for others as you cultivate a listening ear.

As you listen, you will give God space to speak to your heart with wisdom and clarity on what to share with the person in front of you.

- ▶ **WHO:** Everyone (God is redeeming the world). Jesus draws all people not based on where they are at, but where He is at; not based on what they are doing but what He is doing.
- ▶ **WHAT:** When sharing your faith and reaching the world for Jesus, **Listen** to their story. Relay your story short and simply. **Less is more.** Create curiosity and don't overload. If you get the chance, **share the Gospel Basics:**
 - Jesus died for the sins of the world.
 - Jesus died for every death penalty ever earned.
 - Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death.
 - Jesus will return to completely heal the world one day.
- ▶ **WHEN:** The appropriate time to love people from Christ's heart is always! But sharing your faith means taking it a step further. When you **listen**, and **pray to see** what is going on in others' lives, you get the chance to partner with God and see His kingdom break through!

However, we do need to make sure that whenever we are sharing the Good News, we are doing it with honor. Unless your employer has given you the privilege to talk about Jesus while on the clock, then you should respect your employer. Don't take hours from your employer to talk to others at length, be short and sweet.

You should respect and deliver what God is telling you, while respecting other people's time as well.

- **WHERE:** Everywhere! When you're praying for opportunities to be used by God. He is everywhere, so there's no place He is not willing and excited to meet people at.

Consider lines you might stand in at grocery stores or the post office. What about work lunches or your kids' sporting events?

These are all excellent places to **ASK QUESTIONS** and **LISTEN**.

- **HOW:** If you're new to the idea of sharing your faith the best place to start is by **owning your story** and then asking Jesus to open up opportunities for His Spirit in you to lead others to His goodness. Sometimes starting with a kind word can open the door to a life long friendship or a powerful moment with God.

If you want to get out and get experience with meeting new people where you can serve them, pray for them and show them God's love, then get involved in Vineyard Outreach.

One of the most powerful, nonstop ways to share your faith is a Lifestyle of Christianity, one of sober minded, truthful, loving, and kind relationships—with no gossip, slander, complaining or cheating in your workplace or life. Living this lifestyle opens up more doors for them to walk through and encounter God's love.

Here are a couple of ways you can exercise the "How" of sharing your story:

- **Invite Them Into A Community.**

You can invite anyone to church—but it's better if you are in their life first! Jesus did with the disciples before they believed in Him. He spent time with them, getting to know them, learning more about them, before they decided to put their faith in Him. He included them in His own life before they knew He was the Messiah. It may take some time, but having a relationship with someone always helps to share the Good News.

- **Invite Them To Be A Follower Of Jesus.**

There's a story in scripture where Paul and Silas were arrested and imprisoned—but they ended up sharing the Good News with their guard and he accepted Christ as King! No matter the circumstance, always be looking for the right moment to invite someone to say "Yes" to Jesus.

The Whole G.O.A.L.

Sharing our story is not about making converts, convincing people to believe like us or get people into our church. It is simply to:

- ▶ **Give Honor To Jesus.** Jesus has saved our souls and saved our future from sin and death. **He is worthy of being celebrated.**

Jesus doesn't demand praise, but in the same way we would want to brag on the accomplishments of our spouse, children, or friends, or celebrate loved ones' achievements, we should be excited to talk about the goodness of Jesus.

"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased." **REVELATION 4:11**

- ▶ **Overwhelm With Kindness.** Ambassadors represent their country to other people and nations in the world. In the same way, because **we are citizens of God's Kingdom, we need to "RE-PRESENT" the goodness of God to everyone!** When we are sharing the Good News with people, we have an opportunity to give them an encounter with God—an encounter that shows them that Jesus and His goodness are **REAL!**

The modern western society has seen a lot of tradition and spiritual disciplines, but what they really need to see now more than ever is what a real relationship between God and His children looks like. We owe the world an encounter with God.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
1 JOHN 4:11

- **Allow God To Move.** It's said that experience is the best teacher. Because God knows more than we do, it's always best to follow His lead. The people we are sharing our story with may not need to hear everything. **They have things that are happening in their lives that we may not know, but that God wants to address and heal. We can only do that if we are listening for what He has to say.** Jesus was quoted as "doing only what he saw the Father doing." Now, if the Bible tells us that Jesus let the Father lead the way, then we should do the same.

Sometimes people say yes to Jesus in three minutes. Other times, it can be three years. Or longer. Our job when sharing is to let God move and speak through our words and actions. We're most like Jesus when we are following His leading.

Do not quench the Spirit. **1 THESSALONIANS 5:19**

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." **JOHN 5:19**

- **Love Unconditionally.** In our culture, we are saturated with the word "love." It's in pop songs, *Lifetime* movies, reality TV shows, bumper stickers, etc. But what is love? Scripture tells us that God is love, and that we only love because He first loved us.

From the beginning of creation, God has loved us. **Even when Adam and Eve had sinned and hid themselves from God, God still showed up** to walk with them in the Garden. Let that sink in. He's God, so He knew that they sinned. But He still showed up to offer open arms of grace and His presence of peace. He was still full of love.

It doesn't matter what the person has done or what they're going to do—Jesus died for them. It doesn't matter if they are rude, offensive, or downright hateful; **our priority is to love people—no matter what.**

My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

1 JOHN 3:18

MYTH BUSTING

MINDSET MYTHBUSTERS:

Sharing your story is about loving others by inviting them into the same love you've experienced with Jesus. The culture around us and our own fears can cause so many myths to build up in our minds and rob us of the joy of Jesus in sharing our story.

Our minds are where we can these lies and fears we face. Even in the ancient world, the apostle Paul knew that the war for people's hearts begins in the mind. He said to not be conformed to the way the world thinks and acts, but to become new people, living out a lifestyle of godliness by constantly focusing on Jesus.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

ROMANS 12:2

When we have this new outlook on reality, we can begin to walk hand in hand with Jesus and begin to impact the world around us with the love of God.

1. Myths About God

“God thinks we are worthless.”

► **Myth!** The truth is, God already spent everything He ever could in bringing us close to Himself in His son Jesus, and His love for us will never change.

God literally thinks “We’re to die for!”

But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8

“God is angry at the world.”

► **Myth!** He loves the human race deeply and is desiring to save each and every human from the weight of evil and sin, and has given us a place of refuge and safety through His son Jesus.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. **2**

PETER 3:9

“God is holding sin against the world.”

- ▶ **Myth! God has always wanted to save us and always will.** God is a loving father looking for His lost children, and looking to save the world through His found children.

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **2**

CORINTHIANS 5:19

2. Myths About Myself

“Being an ambassador for Christ is for someone else, but not me.”

- ▶ **Myth!** No matter how good we believe God is, we often believe that being the role of his ambassador is for someone else. **God has called everyone that believes on Jesus his son and daughter.** As His children, He has made us each His ambassadors and witnesses.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, 20**

“I am not qualified.”

- ▶ **Myth!** A simple yet true statement is: “God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called”. We must put what Jesus has said about us as more true than what we say about ourselves. When we realize He has said we are worth dying for, called us His children, given us His Spirit, and equipped us to reach the world around us, it won’t matter how unqualified we feel! **God thinks more highly of us than we do!**

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **JOHN 1:12**

“I have to be a pastor or need a biblical degree . . .”

- ▶ **Myth! Sharing our faith is not a religious duty—it’s an overflow of our relationship.** Talking about our relationship with Jesus should be as natural or effortless as talking about our relationship with our spouse, best friend or sibling! When we shift the focus from “performance” to simply talking about what we have experienced with God, then the pressure is off to be a scholar and to simply be real.

*More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. **ROMANS 5:11***

3. Myths About Everyone Else

“God doesn’t love those kinds of people . . .”

- ▶ **Myth!** There are many lifestyles people indulge in in our society and there are many different sins people are committing—but the truth is Jesus died for exactly those people! **We can’t afford to exclude others because of how it looks at the moment; instead, we should look for opportunities to tell people about the goodness of God.**

Jesus loved each and every one of us when we were far from Him, and in the same way, He is calling and empowering us to love the world around us even if they are far from Him. If God thought others were not worth His time because of how they were currently acting, He would have never saved any of us! People are always.

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave[a] his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

JOHN 3:16

“I will offend people/people will reject me . . .”

- ▶ **Myth!** While it’s true that some people will not want to hear about what God has done for you in your life, or they might have hurt from the past, when we are gentle, understanding and sincere, we can do nothing better than to share what God has done with us and to direct people to Him as well.

God thought knowing us was worth the blood of Jesus, so knowing him is worth a few slightly disgruntled responses from others.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

ROMANS 1:16

“People aren’t worth my time.”

- **Myth!** People can often be mean, hurtful, or cruel. But when we remember that God loved us enough to send His son to die for us when we were still sinners, we lose our excuse that people aren’t worth God’s time.

There are many lifestyles people indulge in in our society, and there are many different sins people are committing—but the truth is Jesus died for exactly those people! **We can’t afford to exclude others because of how it looks at the moment; instead, we should look for opportunities to tell people about the goodness of God.**

If God thought others were not worth His time because of how they were currently acting, He would have never saved any of us! People are always worth God’s time to Him and they should be worth our time to us too.

When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” **MARK 2:17**

“People have heard it all before . . .”

- **Myth!** While it’s true a lot of people have heard of Jesus and heard of the gospel, they have never heard your story! And they may have never encountered the presence of the Holy Spirit.

A woman in Jesus’ time had been in the middle of religious conflicts for years, but when Jesus spoke to her with a divine insight, what we experience as a gift of the Holy Spirit, she changed her outlook and believed on him and in turn led her whole city to Him.

Never underestimate what YOUR role is in the act of leading others to Christ!

Many [people] from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” **JOHN 4:39**

THIS IS IT!

After Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples. It wasn't long after that the world would never be the same. You have now completed stepFOUR, but this is only the beginning. As you own your story, own His mission, own the timing, and keep your ears and heart open as you look for the who, what, when, where, and how you can expect the boldness of the Holy Spirit to empower every loving conversation you begin with others.

Our prayer for you:

That Christ's love would overwhelm you.

That the Holy Spirit would overflow from you.

That compassion for others would never leave you.

That the Father's voice would guide you.

That God's grace would be felt from you.

That Christ's power would dwell in you.

That God's love would define you.

That God's goodness would motivate you.

That you would be protected from the evil one.

That you would be sanctified by truth.

That you would be unified with all believers, the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit.

**In Jesus name,
Amen.**

Vineyard Growth Track

*step***ONE: BECOME A MEMBER**

Know Jesus by completely trusting in Him & loving His church.

*step***TWO: GROW YOUR FAITH**

Grow spiritually through reflective bible reading, prayer, generosity, and community.

*step***THREE: DEVELOP YOUR CALLING**

Develop my spiritual gifts and give my time and abilities to God's cause.

*step***FOUR: SHARE YOUR STORY**

Reproduce myself by investing in others and sharing my faith.

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*step***FOUR COMMITMENT**

- ☐ I commit to sharing my story with those around me.
- ☐ I commit to serve Jesus mission with all my heart.
- ☐ I commit to share the Good News with ——— person/people each month.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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stepFOUR

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Name (first, middle initial, last) _____

Spouses Name _____

Phone _____ ☐ Home ☐ Cell ☐ Work

Email Address _____

stepFOUR FEEDBACK

What was one thing about Step Four that stirred something in you?

What was one thing about Step Four that you would like to know more about?

What questions do you still have about sharing your story or serving Jesus' mission?

Would you like to receive contact from someone to get involved in Vineyard Outreach?

Have any other feedback? Please write it on the lines below.

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