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Becoming Organic

COME TOGETHER Series : Book I

Developed by MetroSoul Urban Outreach Team

for www.TheTruthTree.com, a website dedicated to providing free, quality spiritual growth resources to seekers and believers.

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More information about COME TOGETHER and the organic spirituality / organic church concepts visit: <http://www.thetruthtree.com/together>

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good soil

Session Objectives:

- Take the *Exploring You Worldview Survey* to identify your dominant worldview type(s).
- View trends in culture, church, and spirituality using the worldview concept.
- Locate yourself and your worldview in culture, church, and spirituality.

Session I: Finding Yourself

Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart
 I want to see you
 I want to see you (2x)

To see you high and lifted up,
 Shining in the light of your glory,
 Pour out your power and love,
 As we cry Holy, Holy, Holy
 Holy, Holy, Holy,
 Holy, Holy, Holy,
 I want to see you.
 I want to see you.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
 Holy, Holy, Holy,
 I want to see you.
 I want to see you.

Sound Bite:



Sonic Flood
 "Open the Eyes of My Heart"
 from Sonic Flood
 Debut CD
 www.sonicflood.com

Scripture Reading:

He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs – for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need there is. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand which should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him – though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. As one of your own poets says, 'We are his offspring.' And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. God overlooked people's former ignorance about these things, but now he commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead. [Acts 17:24-31 NLT]

Take the Exploring You Worldview Survey

The *Exploring You Worldview Survey* is a simple set of 20 statements you will be asked to complete. Based on your answers, you will identify the type(s) of worldview you use the most. Please open your survey and begin by reading the introduction and instructions. If a survey has not been provided with this packet, you can download and print one at:

>> <http://www.thetruthree.com/exploring>

Discuss your results with those who have similar scores

Find other people with the same worldview type and take turns reading the "Understanding Your Score" section for your dominant worldview type. As a small group answer the following questions:

Do you think this is an accurate description of how you see the world?

How are you different from this description?



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Important Note:

The most common mistake people make when thinking about worldview types is to assume one worldview is superior to others. Every worldview has its own strengths and weaknesses and works well in its environment. Comparing worldviews is like comparing jockeys to basketball players: each is successful in their own sport.

Guidelines for discussing the worldviews

There are a few essential points that must be kept in mind in order to understand the Worldview Systems fully:

1. It is *absolutely essential* not to see other worldviews as inferior. They work in their appropriate environment -- in fact they work better in their environment than any other worldview type. This mistake has been made by countless missionaries of the past who attempted to "civilize" their target cultures before they evangelized them (making natives into Americans before making them into Christians). They attempted to move these cultures into a more complex worldview that didn't fit their situation. This often had disastrous results.
2. A worldview is something that someone "uses" and not "is". This is not like the zodiacs. You are not born with a certain worldview and do not maintain it for life like "Gemini" or "Scorpio". People and societies change their worldview all the time. Since the universe is too complex for any individual to comprehend at one time, we develop metaphors or models to simplify and symbolize the universe. A worldview is simply a metaphor and a model. When the model no longer works or the metaphor no longer makes sense, it will be replaced with a model and metaphor that is more complex. Also, each person and society keeps a "tool box" of behaviors and strategies from different worldviews that may be used to deal with problems. Although one worldview at a time is usually dominant, "tools" from other worldviews may be used at any time to work through situations that the dominant mindset cannot handle well. For example, government may rule using CITIZEN, but switch to HERO during time of war. Because there is such a variety of combinations, a person or group can be typed according to dominant behaviors but stereotyping should be avoided and room should be left for constant transition between worldviews.
3. Although this survey presents the worldviews as somewhat rigid "types," in the real world, the worldviews are more of a continuum. Societies and persons are more likely to be found somewhere between one dominant system and the next. Just like in colors, very few shades of green are made from 50% yellow 50% blue. Most greens either have more yellow or more blue. In the same way, although an individual or society exhibits a dominant system, they may be well on their way to making the transition to the next system as their situation gradually changes.

Group Discussion

One person for each worldview should volunteer to explain their worldview to the group using their own words. Then the whole group should be invited to answer the following questions:

Do these worldview types seem to explain anything you have observed in yourself or others? Give specific examples if you can.

Can you see these worldviews in your current situation at home, work, or elsewhere?

How might worldview types explain how people view the "facts," the values they express, and their emotional reactions?



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Worldview Mega-Shifts in World History

When a society or culture makes a massive change from one worldview to another, we call this a "Mega-shift." Below is a list of Mega-shifts in British-American society (beginning in Europe and spreading to the United States).

FAMILY = European tribalism & clans (Saxon clans)

MEGA-SHIFT >> Engle invasion of England

HERO = Feudalism (English Royal rule)

MEGA-SHIFT >> American Revolution

CITIZEN = American Democratic Republicanism, social contract (US Government)

MEGA-SHIFT >> WWII, Post WWII growth of US dominance

ACHIEVER = 1950's Material Culture, Self-Actualization Optimism (Baby Boomers)

MEGA-SHIFT >> Sexual Revolution, Vietnam War, Growth of University Culture

VILLAGE = Psychology Culture, Community Renewal Movement, Civil Rights (Hippies)

MEGA-SHIFT >> (in progress) Dot-Com Revolution, Virtual & Systems Culture

SYSTEM = Virtual Corporations, Systems Theory (Dot-com-ers, Bloggers)

Worldview Mega-Shifts in Religious History

The same kind of list could be composed for the major religious movements of European-American culture, once again starting in Europe and spreading to the United States:

FAMILY = European animism (Druidism, Greek & Roman Mythology)

MEGA-SHIFT >> Christianity becomes the "official" religion

HERO = Catholicism (Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church)

MEGA-SHIFT >> Protestant Reformation, Great Awakening (in America)

CITIZEN = American Fundamentalism (American Baptists, American Restoration)

MEGA-SHIFT >> Evangelical Revolution

ACHIEVER = The Church Growth Movement (Mega-church, Para-church Organizations)

MEGA-SHIFT >> (in progress) Small Group Movement, Ecumenical Movement

VILLAGE = Non-Sectarianism, Ecumenicalism (Jesus Movement, Open Church, World Council of Churches, Evangelical Ecumenicalism)

MEGA-SHIFT >> (in progress) Emergent Church Revolution

SYSTEM = Emerging Church (Open Source Theology, Simple/Organic Church)

Right Now: The Postmodern Mega-Shift

Currently, we're living in amazing times. Right now, culture and power structures all over the world are switching hands from modern worldviews to postmodern worldviews. This means that a major transition from CITIZEN-ACHIEVER to VILLAGE-SYSTEM is occurring.

What worldviews have you witnessed affecting religious groups you have been involved with or observed?

Have you witnessed changes in churches and religions that might be the result of the postmodern mega-shift?



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Application: Critical Thinking

Read this portion of the passage used in the beginning of this session:

He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs – for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need there is. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand which should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him – though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. As one of your own poets says, 'We are his offspring.' [Acts 17:24-28 NLT]

If this is a description of how God work's with humanity in general, how might God be working with people in the current mega-shift?

Take a Hint:

What does this mean for people today? Start with the stated purpose in the text. It is likely that his purpose is the same with people in the current Mega-shift.

How might God's current work in the mega-shift be affecting your life?



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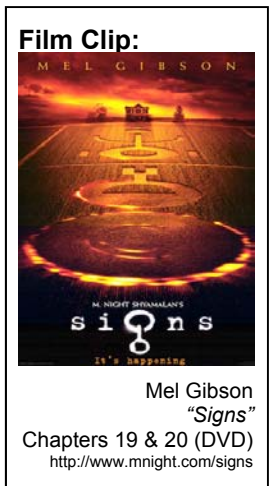
Session II: God and the Worldviews

Signs of Faith

Graham has lost his faith. Ever since his wife died in a freak accident, he's doubted God. Now, after huge crop circles are found in the fields of his family's farm, Graham must face off against the most horrifying challenge of his life: Aliens are invading the planet.

Late one night after the family has found out the truth about the aliens, Graham and Merrill are talking on the couch. Graham tells him:

People break down into two groups. When they experience something lucky, group number one sees it as more than luck -- more than coincidence. They see it as a sign; evidence that there is someone up there watching out for them. Group number two sees it as just pure luck, a happy turn of chance. Is it possible that there are no coincidences?



Session Objectives:

- Explore God's interaction with the worldviews in the Bible.
- Identify the process God uses to reach every worldview.
- Consider how God may be reaching out to the group and to you.

Spiritual Gravity

Are you aware of gravity? Most people never really give it a thought. They know it works, and they know it exists, but they don't see it on a day-to-day basis. But really, gravity is working all the time, all around them. In fact, its a force vital to almost every aspect of life. Think about it: gravity is what is holding you to the planet. It's what's keeping all the objects around you in their places. If gravity suddenly stopped, you would last about as long as a breath of air, since the atmosphere would float off into space.

What if God is like gravity? What if he's constantly working around us in almost every situation on a day-to-day basis? What if, just like gravity, we know that he works, and that he exists, but beyond that we take him for granted? Most people would really like to hear God speak, and they're troubled by why he doesn't, but in reality they may be ignoring how he is trying to communicate. What if what God has to say about himself is too complex for simple words? What if it would take four-thousand years to tell us what he wanted to say (the time covered by the Bible)? What if what he has to say to you right now is so deep and profound that you wouldn't understand it unless he showed it to you in the context of your relationships and circumstances? Shouldn't that make us assume the constant, active voice of God, trying to reveal himself?

Scripture Reading:

But if you can't understand this story, how will you understand all the others I am going to tell? The farmer I talked about is the one who brings God's message to others. The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the message, but then Satan comes at once and takes it away from them. The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word. The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for nice things, so no crop is produced. But the good soil represents those who hear and accept God's message and produce a huge harvest – thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted. [Mark 4:13-20 NLT]

“ **But if you can't understand this story ...**”

This parable is a key to all of Jesus' teaching. He tells his disciples that, if they don't get this one, they won't get any of them.



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Look at the descriptions of the different types of soil. What do you think the difference is between the good soil and the 3 types of bad soil?

Finding God begins with one thing: absolute openness. To become good soil, we must clean out the rocks and weeds: our assumptions, our agendas, our weaknesses, our fears. Intellect, education, social status, personal history, even religiosity have nothing to do with getting close to God. All that's required is openness. God will do the rest.

A Prayer for Openness

O God, I have tasted thy goodness,
and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more.
I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace.
I am ashamed of my lack of desire.

O God, the Triune God,
I want to want thee:
I long to be filled with longing;
I thirst to be made more thirsty still.
Show me thy glory, I pray thee,
that so I may know thee indeed.

Begin in mercy a new work of love within me.
Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."
Then give me grace to rise and follow thee up from this misty lowland,
Where I have wandered so long.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

-A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)



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Important Note:

The DIVINE worldview is not God's complete view of the world — God's knowledge of reality is reality itself and could never fit into a model. Instead, the DIVINE worldview is a model of reality given by God that enables humans to live in a holistic and healthy way.

A Note on Names:

Abram and Abraham are really the same person. God changed Abram's name to Abraham (which means 'father of many') when he promised to make him the father of nations.

Breaking Bread: The Bible and the Worldviews

I. Where it all started

In the very beginning of human history, who defined reality? (Genesis 1:27-31)

When did the “definer of reality” for humanity change and what caused this shift?

We refer to what Adam and Eve went through as a *dependence crisis*. They began with the DIVINE worldview, which included all the information they needed to know about reality in order to exist in the Garden. Satan introduced the first *existential problem* (or problem of existence) when he said, "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?" and "You won't die! God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."

Adam and Eve were now faced with a dilemma: continue to depend on God and ask him about Satan's charges, or seek their own strategy and eat the fruit to find out if the charges were true. When they chose the latter, they gave up the DIVINE worldview and the first human worldview was born.

Remember: a human worldview is a tool to grasp and deal with reality. It is based on limited human perception and is therefore incomplete and inherently flawed.

II. A Success Story

Read Genesis 11:27-12:7. What worldview do you think Abram is using?

In what way is God catering to Abram's worldview?

In what way is God challenging Abram's worldview?

Read Genesis 16:1-12. What was the result of Abraham taking things into his own hands?

What did God later do that would force a *dependence crisis* for Abraham?

God broke Abraham away from everything that he might depend on other than God. He asked him to leave his family, his homeland, and his native gods. He sent him out into the desert to wander, depending only on God. He had him place his son on the line to get through to him. Because Abram responded with simple dependence on God, which we call faith, he became “a friend of God.”

Important things to notice:

1. God didn't force Abraham to change worldviews; he simply caused him to modify his worldview to see God as the solution (this is called *DIVINE moderation*).
2. God communicated with Abram using metaphors and language consistent with his worldview. He also addressed the deep-seated desires of Abraham's worldview.
3. God was willing to force a *dependence crisis* for Abram's own good.



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III. Worldview Mega-shift: Not really a good thing...

Read Judges 2:1-23. What FAMILY worldview “calling cards” do you see in this passage?

What problems are occurring as a result of their worldview?

What is God doing to correct the situation?

Eventually, God raises up Samuel as the last judge of Israel. Read 1 Samuel 8:4-22. What worldview is described here?

Why has Israel switched from their first worldview to this new worldview?

What could they have done instead?

Is it surprising to you that God gives in to the people? Why or why not?

Israel has a real problem remembering that they are dependent on God. Instead, they seem interested only in solving their problems through the human means natural to their faulty worldview (animism, hero worship). God pushes them into one dependence crisis after another to try to get the people to *moderate* their worldview with his DIVINE guidance. Israel is a “stiff-necked people” because they continually chose to depend on themselves in their *dependence crises*, rather than God. This leads to their adopting a new worldview that’s not going to work much better.

Remember:

1. God is unrelenting and will go to almost any means to force a *dependence crisis*.
2. Since all worldviews are flawed and of equal value to God, he will work to cause *DIVINE moderation* in any worldview and is not really concerned about the worldview itself. Therefore, he may allow or force the mega-shift to a new worldview and attempt to cause *DIVINE moderation* when there is repeated failure in the previous worldview.

IV. Another good example

Read 1 Samuel 17:20-58. What worldview is David using?

How is his worldview moderated by the DIVINE worldview?

Did David ever exhibit any of the classic dysfunctions of his worldview (refer to the description in the “Understanding Your Score” section for HERO in *Exploring Your Worldview Survey*)?

What was the result of these dysfunctions and why did David still end up being “a man after God’s own heart”?



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David was God's way of dealing with the HERO worldview Israel had chosen. Even though David had a very obvious dominant worldview, his heart was uniquely dependent on God. This faith kept David from falling into the traps typical of his worldview. When he did make some major mistakes, it was because he lacked faith in God and placed it in his worldview. But a quick re-establishment of that dependence led to healing for both David and his people.

Essential Points:

1. God is willing to work with our brokenness, but he will only work by establishing dependence on himself.
2. Weakness and sin is different for each worldview, but is caused by the same thing: As Paul said, "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

V. What every worldview should know

The previous illustrations of how God works with the FAMILY and HERO worldviews in the Bible illustrate some basic principles for us. Based on these principles, we can further extend Biblical truth over the other worldviews. The chart below gives the main area of *dependence crisis* for each worldview and some scriptural hints about God's work in each situation. Take a moment to read the passages for your dominant worldview.

WvS	Problem	DIVINE Moderation
	<p>Legalism. Over-dependence on logic, science, reason. May manipulate or misuse scripture in an attempt to promote group's position. Truth based on group consensus leads to blindness and social control.</p>	<p>Is. 55:6-13 Mk. 2:1-27 John 3:1-21; 5:31-47 Romans 2-8; 14</p>
	<p>Materialism. Driven self-satisfaction at all costs, over-dependence on self. Quest to realize ambitions leads to shallowness, bitterness, and meaninglessness.</p>	<p>Eccl. 2:1-11, 11:1-12:14 Mt. 6:19-34 Mk. 10:17-30 James 4:1-10</p>
	<p>Relativism. Makes compromises for the unity of the group. May establish unity on means other than Jesus or truth. Effort to get everyone to agree leads to the exclusion of "difficult people" who won't compromise.</p>	<p>Ezek. 13:10-16 Mt. 10:16-42 John 6:25-71 Romans 14:1-23 1 Corinthians 10:14-33</p>
	<p>Elitism. Places too much emphasis on personal competence, becomes self-dependent. Seeks to dig up information, rather than wait for revelation. Ignores God's little beginnings and subtle spiritual methods.</p>	<p>Duet. 29:29 Mk. 4:26-29, 30-31 John 5:17-30 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 Hebrews 3:1-6</p>

Personal Application

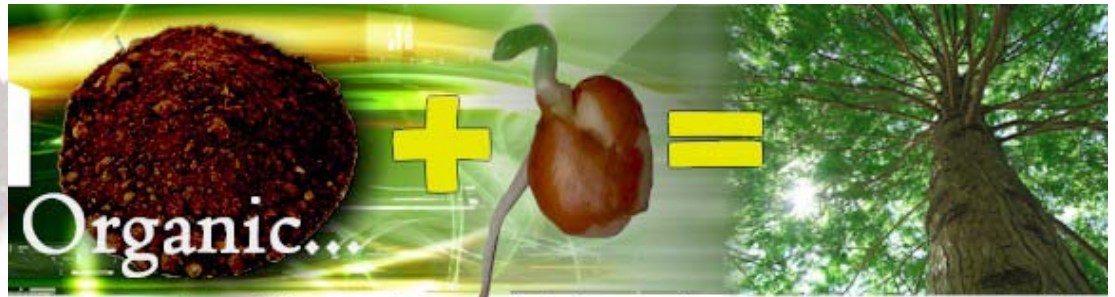
According to my dominant worldview, who or what do I tend to depend on rather than God?

What *dependence crisis* does God likely cause in my life so I will depend on him?

What evidence of this have I seen in my life?



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Organic...

good soil

+

right seed

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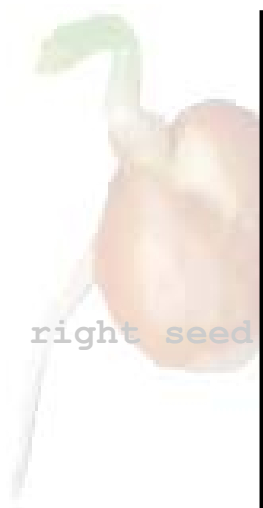
lasting growth

So What is “Organic”?

Organic Foods: “Organic” is the new buzzword among health-conscious food shoppers. These foods are grown without chemical fertilizers, genetic manipulation, or hormone treatments. Likewise, organic food processing adds no artificial flavors, colors, or preservatives. Proponents of organic foods claim that humanly manufactured, synthetic additives are obstacles preventing your body from using food in the most healthy way.

Organic Spirituality: Think about the Parable of the Sower, mentioned at the beginning of this session. Remember that the “good soil” are those who have no obstacles to God’s work in their life. The weaknesses of human worldviews (see last page) are synthetic additives to life that prevent spiritual health. Organic spirituality begins when we depend on God to remove all inorganic ingredients in our lives for lasting growth (DIVINE moderation).

Organic Church: What if we applied the same organic principle to church life? This would mean becoming a people of God committed to removing the human obstacles to the spiritual health and growth of the group. It would mean a community totally sold-out to allowing God to work in and with them. While the implications of Organic Church could be far-reaching and different for each situation, the result would be the same: communities of faith totally dependent on God.



Session Objectives:

- Define the “seed” that God wants to plant into the “good soil” of our hearts.
- Discover the Gospel that Jesus preached in his ministry.
- Explore the implications of the Kingdom Gospel idea.

Session III: The Right Seed

Who Do You Belong To?

Woody has been kidnapped by a crooked toy collector, and his friends — led by Buzz Lightyear — are risking it all to get him back. But while Woody is awaiting rescue, he begins to think the museum life is not so bad. First, he gets restored to like-new condition, including removing the magic-marker “Andy” from his foot. Then, he begins to think about what life would be like never to be out-grown by his owner and to be adored by children for generations to come.

When Woody’s friends arrive, they’re in for a big surprise: Woody has decided not to go back to Andy. Buzz reminds Woody that somewhere deep inside Woody is a toy who taught him, “that life is not worth living unless it’s spent being loved by a kid.”

Woody has some serious soul searching to do. Will he remember the name he wears and rediscover his purpose? Or will he chose the safe road and live out eternity on a museum shelf?

Soil and Seed

In the last two sessions, we established that “good soil” is a heart open to God. If this is true, what is the “seed” God plants into these hearts?

With what can I compare the Kingdom of God? Or what story can I use to illustrate it? It's like a seed from the mustard plant. At the time it is planted in the earth, it is the smallest of all seeds. But after it is planted it grows up and becomes the largest plant in the garden. It even has branches where birds can stay in the shade. [Mark 4:30-32]

What does this passage say is the “seed”?

The Gospel that Jesus Preached

Have you ever thought about the Gospel message Jesus preached? What did he say to the crowds gathered around him? What was the tone of his voice and the expression on his face? Let’s take a look at Mark chapter 1:14-45 for an answer:

Later, when John was arrested because of his preaching, Jesus came into the region of Galilee, preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. He said, “Now is the time, the Kingdom of God is very close! Change your mind and heart, and believe the good news.”

**Now is the time, the Kingdom of God is very close!
Change your mind and heart, and believe the good news.**

As he traveled by the sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a large net into the sea, since they were both commercial fishermen. Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you into fishermen for men.”

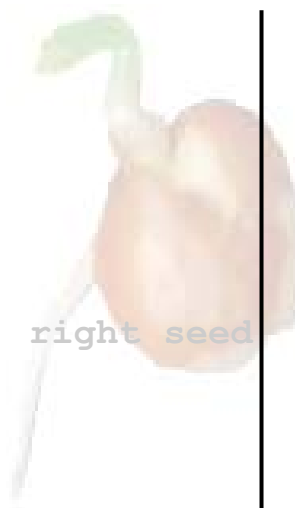
Immediately they dropped their nets, and followed him. After they had traveled a little farther, Jesus saw James and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee, as they were repairing their nets in their boat. As soon as he called them, James and John left their father in the boat with the hired workers and followed Jesus.

The group traveled on to Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, Jesus went

Film Clip:



Tom Hanks
“Toy Story 2”
Chapters 19-27 (DVD)
<http://www.pixar.com/featurefilms/ts2/>



straight to the synagogue and taught the people meeting there. They were amazed by his teaching, because he taught with real authority, not like the teachers of religious law.

There was a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit in the synagogue. He shouted, "Ahh! What do you want with us, Jesus from Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God!"

Jesus shouted, "Silence! Come out of him!"

The unclean spirit threw the man into a convulsion and shrieked as it came out of him. All the people were shocked. They asked each other, "What is going on? A new teaching? This man has power, even over unclean spirits, and they obey him!" Because of this, Jesus became famous all over Galilee and its surrounding area.

As soon as he left the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John to Simon and Andrew's home. Simon's mother-in-law was very sick with a high fever, and they told Jesus about her immediately. He went to her bed, took her hand in his, and helped her up. The fever disappeared, and right away she began to serve them.

That evening, after sunset, crowds from the city brought all the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus. The whole city was crowded at the door to the house. He healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases, and cast out many demons. When he cast the demons out, Jesus wouldn't allow the demons to speak, because they knew who he really was.

Early the next morning, before dawn, Jesus got up and headed out to a quiet place in the desert where he prayed. Simon and the others came looking for him. When they found him, they told him, "Everyone is looking for you."

Jesus answered, "Let's go to some other towns, so I can preach there too. This was the reason I was sent." So Jesus traveled throughout the whole region of Galilee. He went into all the synagogues, preaching and casting out demons.

One day, a man with a very contagious and disgusting skin disease came to him. Kneeling down before Jesus, the man begged him, "If you want to, you can make me clean."

Jesus had compassion for the man, so he touched him with his hand. Then he said, "I want to. Be clean." Instantly, the disease disappeared from the man's skin, and he was clean. Jesus warned him seriously before letting him leave, "Don't say anything to anyone. Just go straight to the priest and show him you are now clean. Then, offer the gifts to God for your cleansing which Moses commanded, as evidence that you are clean."

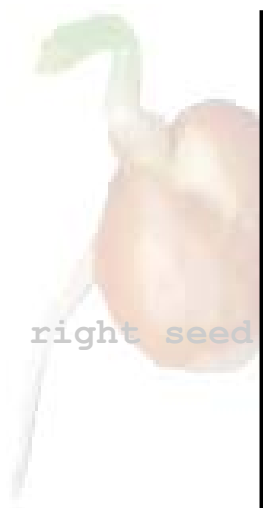
Instead, the man told everyone on the way to the priest and the rumor spread far and wide. As a result, Jesus became so famous, he couldn't enter a city without being mobbed. He had to stay in the countryside in lonely places, but the people still came from every region to see him.

Understanding the Kingdom Gospel

Take a look at Jesus' concise summary of the Gospel:

Now is the time, the Kingdom of God is very close! Change your mind and heart, and believe the good news.

Now is the time: The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking had been waiting for hundreds of years for the promised restoration of David's kingdom by God's servant, the Messiah. Jesus is declaring that this promise is being fulfilled right now.



The Kingdom of God is very close: The ancient concept of kingdom was more than just boundaries and armies. It was the power and authority of the ruler himself (see 1 Sam. 15:27-28; Dan. 4:28-37). Jesus is announcing the imminent arrival of the King.

Change your heart and mind: Literally, “Repent.” The Bible uses the same concept for God when he was sorry he made mankind and when he made Saul king over Israel. This means it is more than apologizing for what you’ve done. It means a total change of mind and heart about something. If the Kingdom is coming, Jesus is telling the people to change their hearts and minds about who is in control.

Believe the Good News: This includes a deep conviction that everything said so far in Jesus’ statement is true. But it also means that one must believe that this message — that God is in control and that we should accept this — is actually “good news” and is an extreme improvement over controlling our own lives.

Demonstrating the Kingdom

Assuming that Jesus’ message and actions are consistent (that he practices what he preaches), the miracles in this chapter are “Kingdom previews” -- they show what the Kingdom of God is like. Based on this idea, answer the following questions:

Why would the Kingdom be Good News (Gospel = Good News)?

Over what is Jesus demonstrating God’s authority?

According to this part of Mark, where does God not have total authority?

Where, then, does the Kingdom of God still need to come?

An Example of Competing Kingdoms

Read Mark chapter 10:17-23:

As Jesus was leaving for the road again, a man ran to him and fell to his knees in front of him. The man asked him, “Good Teacher, what should I do so I can inherit eternal life?”

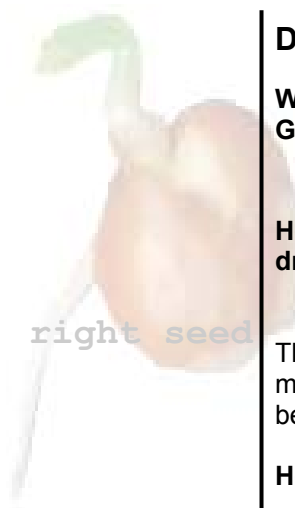
Jesus asked him, “Why do you call me ‘good’? There is only one who is truly good - God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not lie,’ ‘Do not cheat,’ ‘Respect your parents.’”

The man answered, “Teacher, I have done these things since I was a child.”

Jesus looked at the man and loved him. He said, “Then you only need one more thing. Go, sell whatever you own and give the proceeds to the poor -- and you will have treasure in heaven -- then come, follow me.”

But when the man heard this, his expression changed. He left depressed because he had many possessions. Jesus looked around, and said to his disciples, “It is extremely difficult for people with wealth to enter into the Kingdom of God!”

The disciples were shocked at what he said. But Jesus repeated, “Children, it is extremely hard for those who trust in wealth to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.”



Discussion Questions:

Why do you think Jesus corrected the man by saying only God is good? Isn't Jesus God?

How was Jesus showing love for this man if he knew what he was about to say would drive the man away?

This man was influential, wealthy, and moral – all the qualifications of the “ideal Christian” in many of today’s circles. We tend to think that a person who has “made it” in life, but yet has been moral, is the ideal of what we are trying to be.

How does Jesus challenge that thought?

Why was this man not qualified to enter the Kingdom?

The Kingdom Come: Belonging to Christ

Read Acts Chapter 2:36-39:

[Peter is finishing his sermon:]

“...So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!”

Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must change your heart and mind, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles – all who have been called by the Lord our God." [NLT]

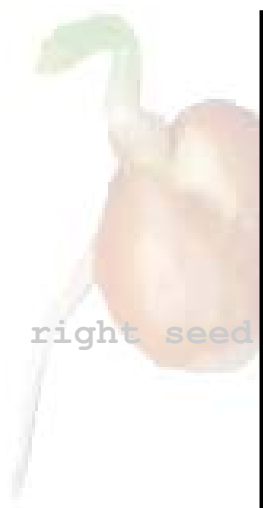
Think about the video clip shown at the beginning of this session. What did wearing the name “Andy” mean to Woody?

What should being baptized “into the name Jesus Christ” mean to a Christian?

Read 1 Peter 3:21-22. This passage says it's not the dunking in water that saves us.

What is the “pledge of a clear conscience” that saves us?

Look at the phrases “saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” “God's right hand,” and “angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.” Although he humbled himself and died on the cross in weakness, Jesus’ saving role is that of a powerful hero, raised from the dead to be Lord over all. This means that rather than “inviting Jesus into our hearts” we are called to follow him into his Kingdom. It moves the center of the Gospel from our response to Christ’s actions.



Jesus, the Gospel, and You and Me

[Taken from *Organic Church Planter's Greenhouse: The First Story* by Niel Cole and Paul Kaak, pg. 3-3]

Jesus & the Gospel	We need to make HIM our Message	We need to follow HIS Example
He EMBODIES the Good News	Stories of his life and person; his compassion and integrity	Selflessly identify with others, including their suffering. Give evidence that Christ, the “hope of glory”, is within you.
He EXPLAINS the Good News	Stories of his teaching; his stories and the life he endorses	Communicate and discuss the good news of the King naturally and appropriately to persons & groups.
He EXHIBITS the Good News	Stories of his power; the miracles and ministry that compel belief	Display God's transformational power with progressively more spiritual authority.

How Did We Miss It?

There are at least three reasons why the Kingdom Gospel has not been the predominant Gospel preached in contemporary times:

1. The message of the Kingdom Gospel goes against human nature. From the Garden of Eden, man has preferred to rule himself. Taking the fruit for the Tree of Knowledge was a declaration that humanity would rather define their own reality than listen to God. (Think of how this relates to the formation of worldviews.) Even when people accept the Kingdom Gospel, they will be involved in a constant battle to make it a reality in their lives – there will always be more self-will that will have to be overcome by God's will.
2. For most American/Western people, the Kingdom Gospel grates heavily against our over-inflated sense of individualism. Western culture and society are founded on the idea that humans have the right to rule themselves, provided they do not harm anyone else. This has become the guiding principle of life in our culture. Any activity is permissible as long as “I'm not hurting anyone.” We instinctively seek to maintain our rights of self-direction, and like stubborn teenagers, we will automatically resist any outside authority—even God.
3. To a certain extent evangelists and ministers are responsible for watering down the Kingdom Gospel to make it easier to “sell.” The idea is that it is easier to get someone to “buy” Jesus if you concentrate on the eternal upside of the Gospel. The idea of obedience and God's authority are reduced to basic morality and church membership, and the Kingdom ideas are reserved for “mature” Christians who have bought into the church enough not to be chased away by the Kingdom's “tough” message.

Translating the Kingdom Gospel

The idea of “Kingdom” is somewhat removed from modern Western life. Therefore, it's important to be able to express the ideas of the Kingdom Gospel in your own terms:

How else could you explain the Kingdom Gospel without using the term “Kingdom,” which may have less meaning to modern audiences?

What do you think of this description:

The Gospel is God's enduring, aggressive reality breaking into our synthetic, temporary pseudo-reality. The good news is that true life is found in God's reality, not human strategies of mere “life-support.” By entering God's reality, we escape the inevitable collapse of human pseudo-reality. But entering God's reality means we must allow him to define our reality and remove our synthetic “life-support” and replace it with the true life of His Son.



What do you think of the previous description? What would you restate or add to it?

Look at the “What every worldview should know” chart on page 9. Often people build personal “kingdoms” according to their worldview. What are you likely to make into your “kingdom” based on your worldview?

Translate the Gospel of the Kingdom of to your life. What is God saying to you about your personal “kingdoms” and his coming Kingdom?



Session IV: Lasting Growth

The Big Change

What could change a teenager from super-geek to superhero overnight? Nothing, short of a change in DNA. In Spiderman, this is just what happens to Peter Parker, pathetic nerd in love with Mary Jane, who is way out of his class. But things change for Parker when he's bit by a special bug on a class field trip. This genetically-modified spider bite causes Parker's senses to sharpen and his muscles to bulge, and — most important — he finally catches Mary Jane's attention.

This comic-book tale demonstrates a basic truth. Radical transformation requires change on the cellular level, which works its way through the whole organism. The transformational power of the Gospel is no different. It must work its way through every part of the body before real change can occur.



Session Objectives:

- Illustrate the three values implicit in the Gospel using the DNA Analogy
- Show how the DNA Analogy affects Christian living and church life.
- Brainstorm applications of how to practice DNA as individuals and as a group.

Scripture Reading:

With what can I compare the Kingdom of God? Or what story can I use to illustrate it? It's like a seed from the mustard plant. At the time it is planted in the earth, it is the smallest of all seeds. But after it is planted it grows up and becomes the largest plant in the garden. It even has branches where birds can stay in the shade [Mark 4:30-32]

Opening Discussion

Read the following quote:

The church is nothing more than an expression of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the hearts of his people.

React to the above statement. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

Is the statement a sufficient definition of church, or does it need more?

An Organic Analogy

Jesus and Paul used organic metaphors to explain the nature of Christians and the church. Sometimes they even used the metaphor of the human body itself. Following this metaphor, what if we think of Christians as cells woven together into tissues and organs to form the whole body of Christ.

What do all the cells have in common with each other?

What are their differences?

What do the cells have in common with the body as a whole?



The DNA Analogy

DNA, one of the most amazing substances in biology, is the same on both the cellular and organism level. Each cell contains a complete pattern of the larger organism. The pattern is the same for every cell, even if the cell expresses the pattern differently in its specialized role.

[taken for *Organic Church Planter's Greenhouse: The First Story* by Niel Cole and Paul Kaak, pg. 1-6]

D	Divine Truth	Truth is the foundation for everything. By Divine Truth, we mean the dynamic and living presence of Christ and His Word.
N	Nurturing Relationships	Healthy relationships are what make up a family. Love for one another is to be a constant pursuit of the family of God. This is the most basic of Christ's commands.
A	Apostolic Mission	Apostolic means, simply, "sent." Just as Jesus was sent on a mission, so we are sent out on a mission for Him. Our mission is to go into the world and disciple the nations for their good and God's glory.

Spiritual DNA is really 3 core values of God which facilitate the coming of the Kingdom into the lives of His people. These values are the natural result of the Gospel as shown in these passages:

Individual DNA (cell level): Matthew 28:18-19

D	N	A
All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me; Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you	Make disciples baptizing them Teach them And surely I am with you always even to the end of the age.	Therefore go baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Community DNA (organism level): Acts 2:42-47

D	N	A
They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer	All the believers were together and had all things in common. Selling their goods and possessions, they gave to anyone as they had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.	And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



Some truth about DNA in Christians and the church:

[taken from *Organic Church Planter's Greenhouse: The First Story* by Neil Cole and Paul Kaak, pg. 1-6. Scriptures added.]

1. The DNA is not something we add to our life, it is the code that dictates the makeup, health, and development of life (Mt. 6:25-34).
2. DNA unraveled is not DNA. The potency and potential is found in the component parts working together. You cannot truly have one and not have the others (James 2:14-19).
3. The DNA should be found in every cell, or sphere of church life – disciples, leaders, families, churches, regional gatherings, movements (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:1-16; Gal. 3:26-29).
4. The DNA provides a pattern for diagnosing the health of a church's life and practice (Rev. 2-3).
5. Genetic mutations of the DNA can result in malformations, infertility, and illness in the body (Acts 20:25-27, 1 Cor. 3:10-15, Gal 1:6-10).
6. New followers and mature disciples alike need DNA as the code that dictates life and development (Ephesians 4:1-16).
7. DNA is not about spiritual gifts. It is about loving obedience. Spiritual giving is more important than spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-13)

Comparing Church Concepts

[taken from *Organic Church Planter's Greenhouse: The First Story* by Neil Cole and Paul Kaak, pg. 1-5.]

A typical contemporary definition of church:

- A group that meets regularly at a common location.
- Considers themselves a church.
- Has qualified elders.
- Regularly practices sacraments or “acts of worship” (i.e. communion, singing, preaching, praying, and giving).
- Has agreed doctrinal base or statement of faith and evangelistic purpose.

Do you notice anything missing from this definition?

What if we used this definition instead:

The presence of Jesus among His people called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on this planet.

Locate the components of DNA in this definition.

Which definition do you think is more Biblical and/or functional?

Group Brainstorming:

Using the next page, as a group come up with ideas of what you can do to promote the development of your spiritual life as individuals and as a group according to the DNA code. Feel free to ask questions of each other and search the Bible together, but please stay focused. It is important in brainstorming to get all the information on paper without critiquing any of it. At this point no idea is stupid or should be disregarded. Evaluation of the ideas will come later. For right now, everyone should express whatever ideas they have out loud to the whole group with only positive feedback.



Following Up:

Save these ideas for the next booklet in the COME TOGETHER series *Becoming the Body*. You'll have a chance to evaluate these ideas as you learn about healthy church life.

	Individual	Group
<p>D Divine Truth</p>		
<p>N Nurturing Relationships</p>		
<p>A Apostolic Mission</p>		