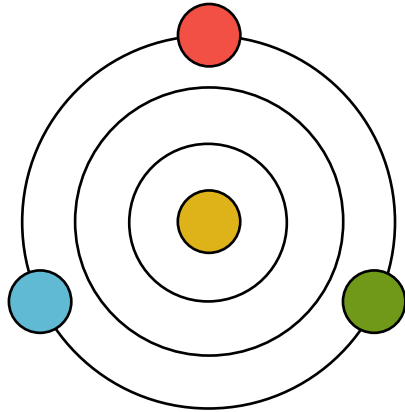




# C<sup>O</sup>RE 4

Foundational Discipleship  
for the People of Cornerstone



## **Introduction to Core 4: Foundational Discipleship for the People of Cornerstone**

By Christian Burkhardt, 2020.

Cornerstone Community Church  
2080 Winifred St.  
Simi Valley, CA 93063








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And Jesus came and said to them, "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

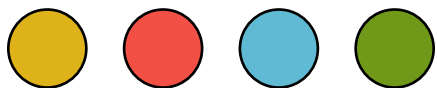
**MATTHEW 28:18-20**

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# INTRODUCTION TO CORE 4

*Foundational Discipleship for  
the People of Cornerstone*



**“This is a football.”**

The year was 1961, and the Green Bay Packers had assembled for training camp, in preparation for the upcoming football season. They were coming off of a very successful year in which they came up just a few yards short of winning the 1960 NFL championship. As their coach, Vince Lombardi, spoke to the team during their first meeting, he was surrounded by a group of men who were among the best at their profession (five would later be inducted into the Hall of Fame).

Yet Lombardi addressed them in an **unexpected way:**

*He began a tradition of starting from scratch, assuming players were blank slates who carried over no knowledge from the year before.*

*He reviewed the fundamentals of blocking and tackling, the basic plays, how to study the playbook. He began with the most elemental statement of all. “Gentlemen,” he said, holding a pigskin in his right hand, “this is a football.”<sup>1</sup>*

One player jokingly responded, “Uh, Coach, could you slow down a little? You’re going too fast for us.”<sup>1</sup> The team could have taken offense at Lombardi’s approach. They could have checked out until he got around to more “advanced” stuff. But instead, the players bought in. **They committed to master the fundamentals**, knowing that no matter how far you progress in the game of football you never move past the basics of blocking and tackling, throwing and catching, studying and executing the playbook. And the proof, as they say, was in the pudding: The Packers went on to win the championship in 1961... and in ‘62, ‘65, ‘66, and ‘67.

Vince Lombardi is widely regarded as one of the greatest coaches in football history—not because he played the game *differently* than everyone else, but because he motivated his players to do the essential things better than everyone else. As one writer put it, “Mastery in nearly any endeavor is the result of deeply understanding simple ideas.”<sup>2</sup>

This principle also applies to our discipleship. No matter how long you have been following Jesus, you never move past the fundamental realities of who God is, why we were created, what has gone wrong, and how Jesus is making it right again. Tim Keller explains,

*The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom. We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience, but the gospel is the way we grow (Gal 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom 1:16-17). 3*

Just like Vince Lombardi's Packers, our growth as Christians comes as we master the fundamentals of the gospel. But what are the fundamentals of the gospel? What is the foundation of the Christian life? That is what Core 4 is all about.

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# **The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity.**

TIM KELLER

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## EQUIPPING FOR THE MISSION

CORNERSTONE'S MISSION:



**To give every individual an accurate picture of God by helping those who believe become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ.**

Our mission statement, based upon Jesus' Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), reflects our conviction that an "accurate picture" of God is portrayed to our community not just as a few people speak about God within a formal worship service, but collectively as every person within our church lives a life of growing, obedient faith in Christ, in fellowship with one another (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23).

If this mission includes every member of Cornerstone, then every member must be *equipped* for that mission. Your pastors and elders recognize that our primary responsibility is not only connect you with opportunities to serve and lead others—but even more to *equip* you to serve and lead faithfully (Eph 4:11-12). In other words, our job is to help you to be a disciple who is able to make disciples of others—who will be able to make disciples of others too (2 Tim 2:2)! Therefore, it is essential that we provide you with a clear, simple, and robust discipleship process as a unified foundation for all areas of life and ministry at Cornerstone.

However, up to this point we have not had a consistent way to equip our people to carry out our mission. The equipping that has been happening has

mainly focused on training people to serve in particular ministry activities (how to teach a children’s lesson, lead a Bible study, etc.). As helpful as this has been, it hasn’t been sufficient to equip people to be “fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ” in all of life—nor was it intended to do so! If our mission is to give every person in our community “an accurate picture of God”—and not just to organize church activities—then our equipping must be broader.

We need training that can unite the *whole church* with a consistent biblical vision for all of life and ministry. We need training that equips the *whole person*—with biblical knowledge and skill, but also with godly passion and character. We need training that helps us to grasp the *whole story*—that orients us in the grand narrative of Scripture, with a deep awareness of God’s mission for his world and of the role that he has called us to play.

As the Equipping Pastor, I (Christian Burkhardt) have worked with my fellow pastors and elders to identify the essential elements of this foundational equipping process. I was looking for a “Goldilocks” level of education: not too long or too short, not too simplistic or too complex. Something *basic* enough

that the children in our church could grasp it, *substantial* enough that seasoned believers would still be challenged by it, and *comprehensive* enough that any ministry endeavor could be built upon it and evaluated by it. Over time, we came to identify four core components (hence the name, “Core 4”):

-  **The Biblical Story**
-  **Gospel Transformation**
-  **Basic Doctrine**
-  **Mission / Evangelism**

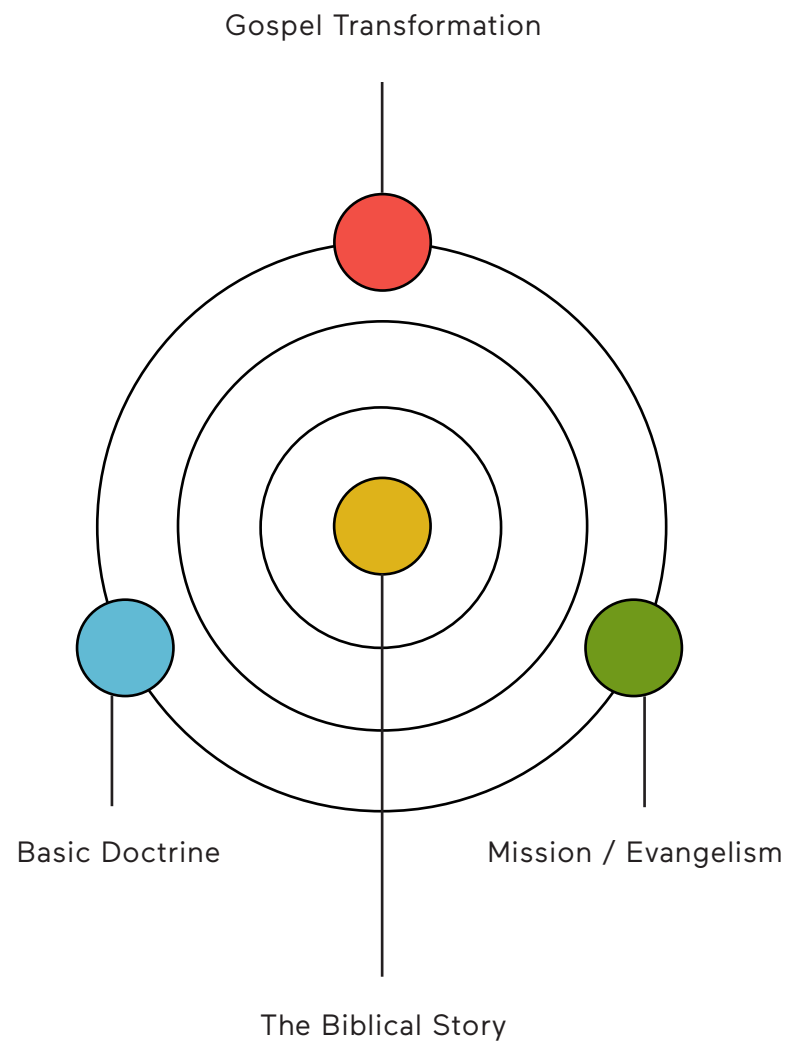
These four components are interconnected, like the four legs of a chair. Take one away and the whole thing falls over. Yet, while all four are essential, the Biblical Story stands at the center of them all. It is like the sun at the center of the solar system, with the planets of Gospel Transformation, Basic Doctrine and Mission/Evangelism orbiting it, each addressing different aspects of how to live in light of the Biblical Story.



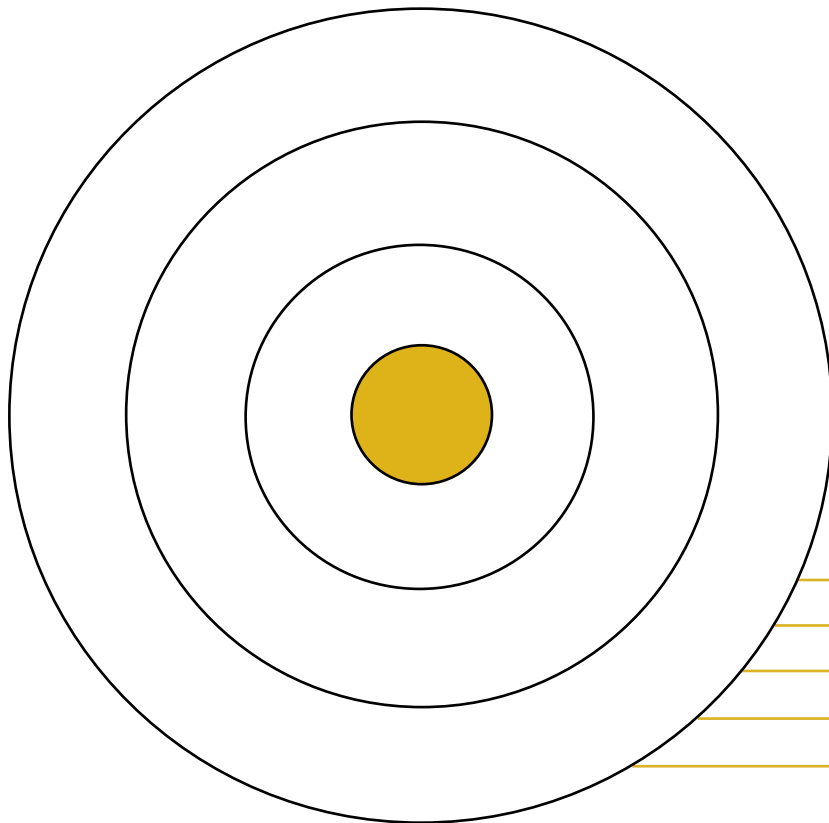
We believe that these four components are not only essential for ministry at Cornerstone but for all of life!

**As followers of Jesus,  
we are always seeking to  
learn more of God's story,  
the truth it communicates,  
how this truth changes us,  
and how to share it with  
others.**

Every believer must seek ongoing growth in each of these four areas for their own discipleship and their ability to disciple others. That's our mission. And that's why I'm excited for you to begin this process. However you may already be involved in our church, or however you may get involved in the future, Core 4 is the foundation for all of it.



As the diagram illustrates, everything begins with the Biblical Story. If Core 4 is foundational to the Christian life, then the Biblical Story is the foundation of Core 4. In this study, you will survey the overarching storyline (or *metanarrative*) of the Bible and how it addresses the five essential questions that every person and culture seeks to answer:



How did we get here?

What is wrong?

How can it be fixed?

How will it end?

What time is it now?

(At what part of the story am I living?)

**N°1**  
**THE BIBLICAL STORY**

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You will learn a simple, memorable model of the Biblical story in four movements: Creation, Rebellion, Redemption, and New Creation. To guide you in this study, you will read and discuss *The True Story of the Whole World*, by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen. This book provides a helpful survey of the biblical story, highlighting the overarching themes of kingdom and mission, and especially focusing on what it means to live faithfully in our part of this story. You will also practice tracing a topic or theme through the Biblical Story and will lead a discussion on this theme with your group.

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**The church finds its identity in the role it plays in the biblical story;**

**theology deepens our understanding of this story;**

**worship enacts and tells this story;**

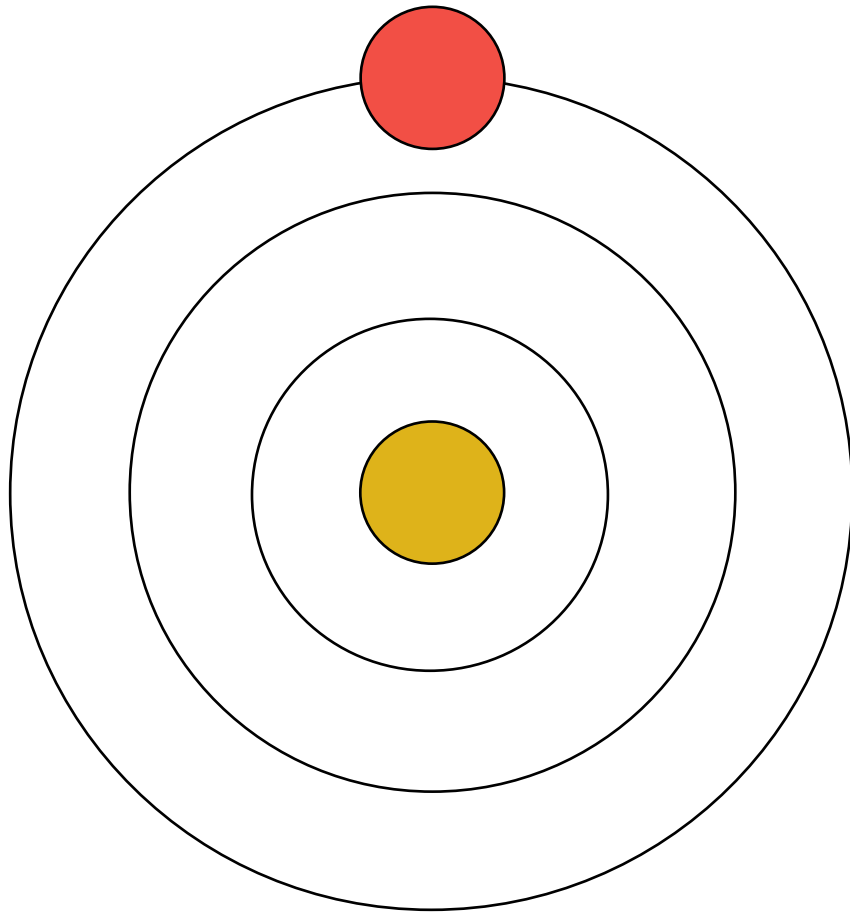
**spiritual formation equips the church to embody this story;**

**and the believer's life in the world, including all of public life, is a witness to the truth of this story.**

BARTHOLOMEW & GOHEEN

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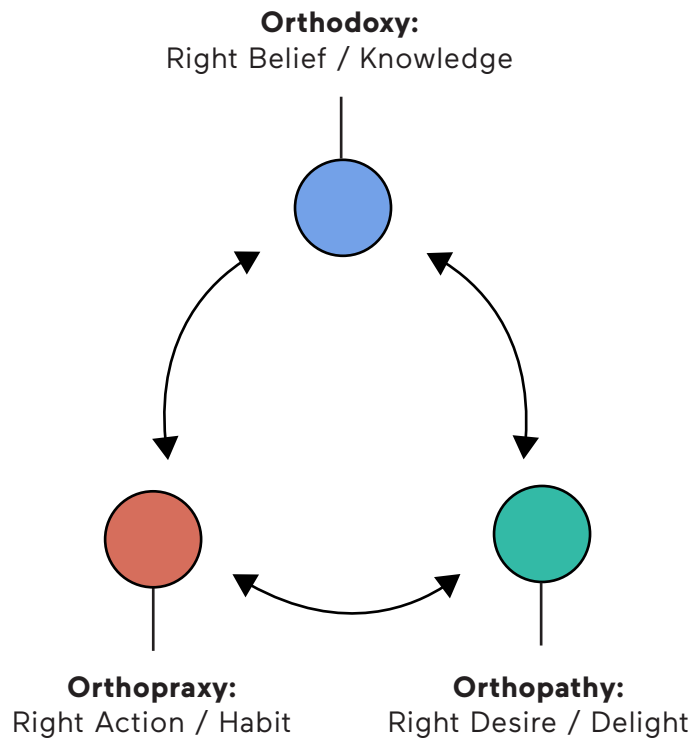
## Nº2 GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION

The gospel—God’s message of rescue and renewal through Jesus Christ—is not just a story that we *believe*; it is a story that *changes us*. Over the course of our lives, the Holy Spirit works to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18), but we are also commanded to “keep in step with the Spirit”—to join him in his transforming work in our lives (Gal 5:16-25). But how do we do this? That’s what the Gospel Transformation study is all about.

As this study will demonstrate, gospel transformation happens in three inter-connected ways, which we call the “three orthos”\*:

- Ortho**doxy** – Right Belief/Knowledge
- Ortho**pathy** – Right Desire/Delight
- Ortho**praxy** – Right Action/Habit

\* From the Greek prefix *ortho*, meaning “straight,” “right” or “correct.”



This three-dimensional approach is necessary, because sin has affected us in all three dimensions too. We all have “exchanged the truth about God for the lie” (Rom 1:25) and are prone to deception and distortion in our thinking. Yet, according to Ephesians 4:21-32, learning the “truth that is in Christ Jesus” involves more than believing the facts of the gospel. It also includes turning from deceitful desires and destructive habits.

## Gospel Transformation is a journey of ongoing repentance and growth in all three "orthos": our beliefs, our desires and our actions.

But here’s the problem: part of how sin has twisted us is by making us imbalanced in regard to the three orthos. We tend to emphasize one or two and neglect the other(s). There are intellectual types who love to think and discuss, but struggle to put what they know into practice. Then there are busy types who are always doing *something* but rarely give much thought to what they are doing. And we all struggle with engaging our desires. Some try to suppress their desires, while others are carried away by them like an untamed horse!

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None of us are naturally balanced in our beliefs, desires, and actions – let alone when we try to focus them on the gospel. This is why transformation cannot be merely an individual pursuit. You need other believers to be actively involved in your life in order to help you focus on the aspects of gospel transformation that you normally neglect, and they need the same from you. As we speak and practice “truth in love,” we balance one other out, lean into each others’ strengths, and grow up together in all three orthos (Eph 4:15-16).

During the Gospel Transformation study, you will read and discuss *Christ Formed in You*, by Brian Hedges. This book takes much of the content you covered in the Biblical Story study and helpfully arranges it into three categories: truths to believe, desires to cultivate, and actions to practice. You will also apply what you are learning to a specific area of your life where transformation is needed and share about this with those in your group.

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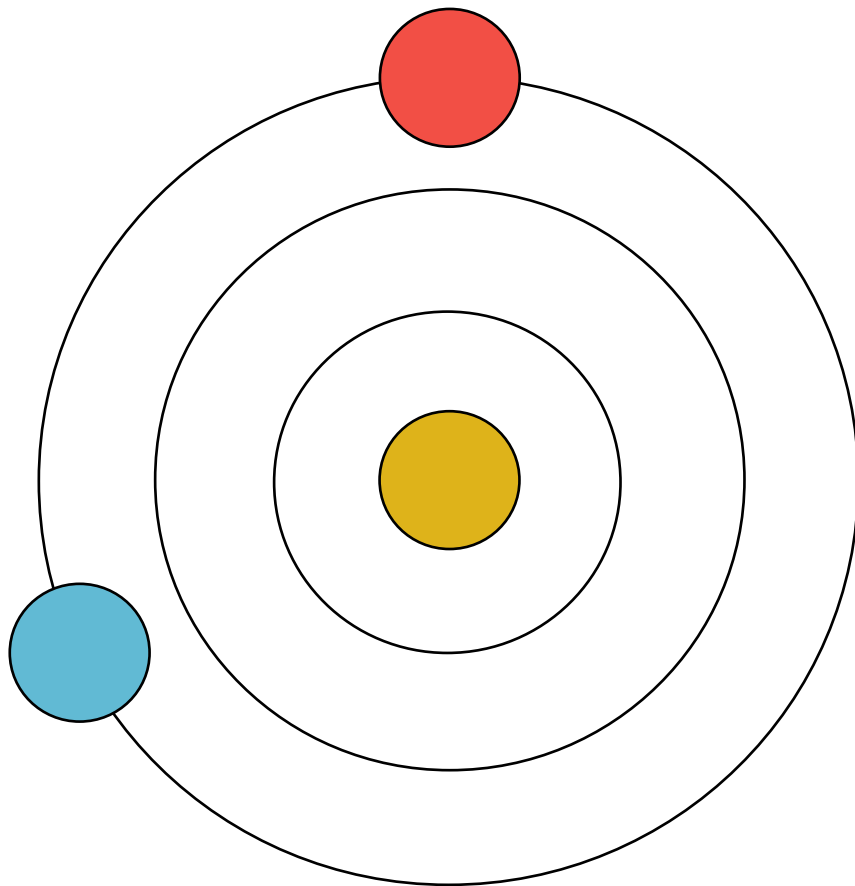
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**Holiness is nothing but  
the implanting, writing,  
and realizing of the  
gospel in our souls.**<sup>4</sup>

JOHN OWEN

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### N°3 BASIC DOCTRINE

The Basic Doctrine study builds upon the Biblical Story by taking the truths that the Bible progressively reveals about God, ourselves and our world, and organizing them into clear concise statements. This is an essential part of discipleship, and many discipleship curricula actually begin with an overview of basic doctrine. However, at Cornerstone we believe that's a little like "putting the cart before the horse." Instead, we begin with the Biblical Story, because that is how God has revealed himself to us—through a progressively unfolding drama of his words, actions and purposes in history. With an understanding of this overarching biblical narrative, we can then begin to faithfully summarize what the Bible says about any given topic. <sup>5</sup>

The main purpose of the Basic Doctrine study is not just to gain more biblical information, but to learn to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:10). In other words, Basic Doctrine is essential to our discipleship so that we might be "fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ" in all of life. <sup>6</sup>

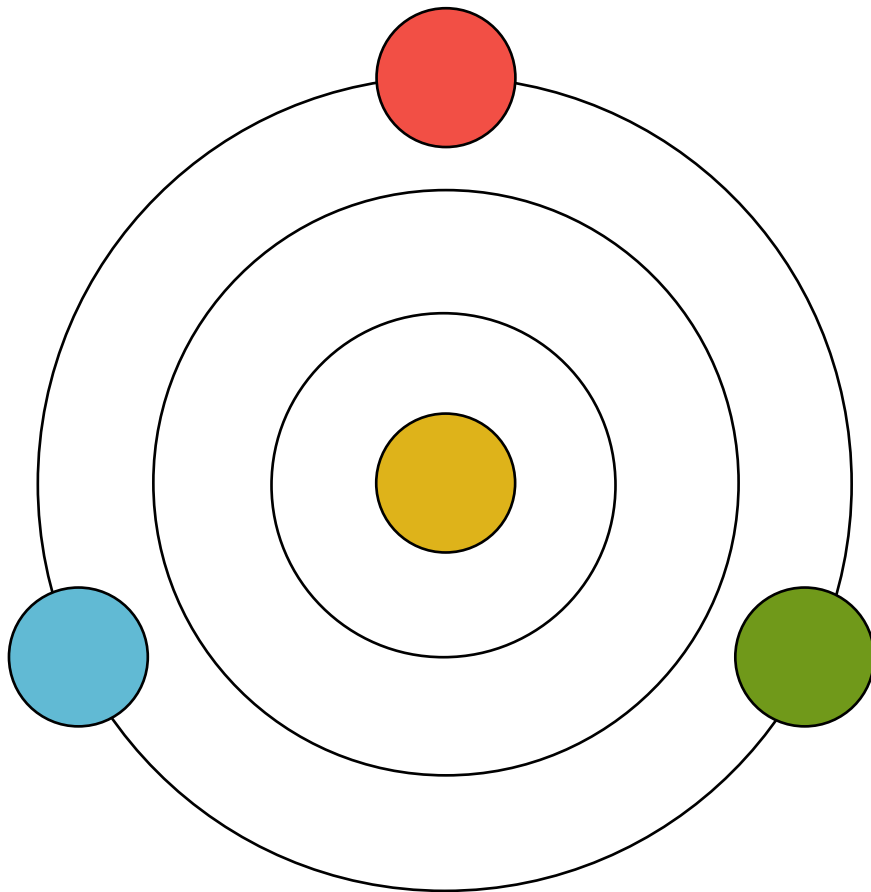
During this study, you will read and discuss Cornerstone's *Doctrinal Statement*, which addresses historic Christian doctrines (e. g., the Trinity, the work of Christ, and the nature of Salvation) as well as contemporary issues (e. g., gender, sexuality, and the environment).

You will also read and discuss *The 3D Gospel*, by Jayson Georges. This short book will introduce you to the three primary cultural worldviews (Honor/Shame, Guilt/Innocence, and Power/Fear), and explain how the gospel beautifully addresses each one. You will grow in your appreciation of your own worldview—while also acknowledging its limitations—and you will also grow in your appreciation of the other worldviews. Most importantly, you will see how a robust, multi-cultural church community helps us all to develop a more three-dimensional understanding of the gospel, enriching our worship of God and our witness to those around us.

**Doctrine is the  
application of the  
Word of God to all  
areas of human life.**

JOHN FRAME





N°4  
MISSION / EVANGELISM

The Mission/Evangelism study builds upon our understanding of the Biblical Story by focusing on the role that God has given us to play in his story. God is on a mission to reconcile the world to himself through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:19). Ultimately, this mission will be accomplished when all of heaven and earth will be fully renewed and restored to God's intent (Rev 21:1-5). But God is already at work, reconciling people all over the world to himself as they hear and respond in faith to the gospel.

If you have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, never stop praising him for that! But understand this: To be reconciled to God is also to be entrusted by God with the "ministry of reconciliation": to call others to be reconciled to God too. To be a *disciple* of Jesus is to be an *ambassador* for Jesus (2 Cor 5:17-21). Those two identities are inseparable from each other. Therefore, the purpose of the Mission/ Evangelism study is really the same as the rest of Core 4: to equip you with the knowledge, desire, and practical skills you need to be a *disciple* who can *make disciples*.

In the Mission/Evangelism study, you will focus on four questions:

- What is *God's mission*?
- What is the *church's role* in that mission?
- How does *Cornerstone* engage in this mission, both locally and globally?
- How do *I* engage in this mission, both personally and as a part of *Cornerstone*?

As these questions indicate, you will review some of the major themes of the Biblical Story— especially the church's role in that story. You will also learn more about *Cornerstone's* vision for local and global outreach and how you can be involved.

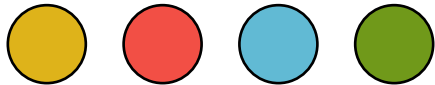
During this study, you will read and discuss *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*, by Scott Hildreth and Steven McKinion, which is a practical guide to sharing the gospel in the context of everyday life through the lens of the biblical story. You will learn that evangelism is an act of *worship*—flowing first from a heart of gratitude and love for God and also from a heart of love and service for those with whom you are speaking. You will also consider your

vocations: the places and people with whom God has positioned you as his ambassador, and you will pray for the wisdom and courage to represent Jesus faithfully in all of life.

**As the Father has  
sent me, even so I  
am sending you.**

JOHN 20:21

# EXPECTATIONS AND VALUES



## Core 4 Groups

Each Core 4 group will consist of a leader (and possibly a co-leader) and 4-6 individuals or 3-4 couples. Groups will meet about twice a month, with each participant completing the reading, writing, or video assignments before the meeting in order to be prepared for the discussion. At this frequency, a group should complete each Core 4 study in 3-6 months, and all four in approximately two years. Life situations can change and may force participants to pause or postpone their training. Leaders will also evaluate each participant throughout this process and may recommend that a participant pause or stop their involvement if a life situation, character issue, or other matter should arise that would cause the participant to not be able to give sufficient time and attention to Core 4.

The reason for this recommended frequency and commitment goes back to how foundational we

believe Core 4 is. As previously stated, "Every believer must seek ongoing growth in each of these four areas for their own discipleship and their ability to disciple others" (p. 9). Therefore, we believe this is worth the time and effort, even if it means that you may have to decide not to pursue other good activities in order to participate. The long-term gain will be worth the short-term sacrifice.

## Core 4 Values

Every Core 4 Group will be shaped by each participant's unique personality, experience, and gifts. However, there are (appropriately) four core values that ought to be consistent within every group:

- **Accessible**
- **Effortful**
- **Reproducible**
- **Personal**

First, Core 4 is intended to be **accessible**. Instead of being limited to a Sunday morning or mid-week class, each group can work to find a day and time that will work for everyone--and even change that schedule as needed. Groups can also meet at a location that works well for their group, whether that be a living room, coffee shop, restaurant, etc.

The main point: most of this training will take place away from the church campus (which also happens to be where most discipleship and evangelism takes place too).

Second, Core 4 is intended to be **effortful**. The *benefit* you get from Core 4 will be in proportion to the *effort* you put into it. Rather than coming to hear your leader teach you the content, you will first interact with the content on your own, primarily through reading but also through watching videos or listening to audio. You will also complete short writing assignments in which you will seek to explain what you are learning in your own words. When you meet as a group, your leader will facilitate a discussion in which all of you will interact on content that you began learning separately.

Also, meeting twice a month will allow enough time between meetings for you to begin to forget what you previously discussed. It's counterintuitive, but recent studies on the science of learning have shown that *forgetting* is one of the most important parts of the learning process. <sup>7</sup> When you forget something, it doesn't seem that the information vanishes from your mind; you simply lose track of how to access the information. It's

like a trail in the forest that gets overgrown with plants and fallen branches in the off-season. The effort that it takes for you to try to *re-access* the information actually makes it easier for you to find your way back to it the next time. Like a park ranger clearing the brush and branches from that forest trail, each time he does the trail becomes a little more defined and permanent. In other words, in order for the truths that you learn through Core 4 to stick with you, you will need to forget them and work to remember them several times. As you all help each other remember what you've learned, the information will be much more accessible and useful to you in the long run.

Third, Core 4 is intended to be **reproduceable**. The purpose of this training is for you to pass on what you've learned—to be a disciple who makes disciples of others. As Paul told Timothy, "...what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). So, know this from the start: you are being entrusted with this teaching so that you can use it to teach others, who will teach others, and so on. And, if you've ever taught before, you know that the best way to learn something yourself is by preparing to explain it to someone else.

There are two main ways that we envision this reproduction taking place: through *teacher-leaders* and *practitioner-leaders*. Teacher-leaders are those who demonstrate a strong grasp of the Core 4 content and are able to explain it well to others. Upon completing Core 4 (or perhaps earlier), their leader will encourage them to lead a Core 4 group of their own, in order to help others to form this foundation. Practitioner-leaders also have a firm grasp of the content, but more than just wanting to help others to *understand* it, they want to put what they've learned into *practice*. Their leader will encourage them to get involved in a ministry area within Cornerstone (if they aren't already) and to begin leading others in applying what they've learned in practical, tangible ways.

Both teacher-leaders and practitioner-leaders will be essential as we move forward, because Core 4 is not just intended to be a *conceptual* foundation for ministry, but a *practical* foundation as well. Therefore, group leaders will regularly pray for wisdom to perceive the passions of those in their group, in order to know how to encourage their participants to pass on what they have learned.

Reproducibility also means that Core 4 is not a "one and done" thing. Rather, just as Coach Lombardi would regularly return to the fundamentals with his football teams, both teacher-leaders and practitioner-leaders will regularly revisit what they have learned in Core 4, because it is the "playbook" for all that we do. Repetition is key to continued growth.

Reproducibility also includes additional training that may be needed for particular ministry roles. For instance, someone who desires to serve in our counseling ministry will need further training in how to walk others through the process of gospel transformation, especially in sensitive or painful situations. Likewise, someone who desires to serve in our global ministry will need further training on how to prepare, send and support cross-cultural missionaries. Children's Ministry teachers will need training on lesson preparation, classroom management, and so on. In other words, much of the ministry-specific training that has already been taking place will continue, but it will be based upon the foundation of Core 4.

Last, but certainly not least, Core 4 is intended to be **personal**. You are not just a student of God's word or the other quality books and resources. You are also a student of the *people* in your group! That's the main reason why we're not doing Core 4 one-on-one or in a classroom setting. We believe that a group of 5-10 people is the best size for you to learn the material and learn about one another. God has much to teach you *about* the people in your group, *from* the people in your group, and especially *why you need* the people in your group.

As you set out on the journey of Core 4, may God bless you and your group, and may he knit you together like the church in Thessalonica, with whom Paul shared "...not only the gospel of God but also our very lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess 2:8).

# REFERENCES

- 1 David Maraniss, *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 274.
- 2 James Clear, "Vince Lombardi on the Hidden Power of Mastering the Fundamentals," <https://jamesclear.com/vince-lombardi-fundamentals>
- 3 Timothy Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel," Redeemer Presbyterian Church of New York City. Available online at: [http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Centrality\\_of\\_the\\_Gospel-Keller.pdf](http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Centrality_of_the_Gospel-Keller.pdf).
- 4 John Owen, A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit, in William H. Gould, ed., *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 3 (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967 reprint of 1850–53 edition) 370–371
- 5 Accordingly, John Frame defines doctrine as "the application of the Word of God to all areas of human life." John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2008), 9.
- 6 As Frame specifies, doctrine is not merely "theological propositions, but...an active process of teaching that leads to spiritual health..." Ibid.
- 7 See Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, & Mark A. McDaniel, *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, (Boston, MA: Belknap Press, 20014).

## NOTES





CORNERSTONE  
CHURCH