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# Authentic Storytelling

## Session Five Handout

### THE COMMUNICATION TOOLS we really own

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*THIS HANDOUT IS ABOUT speaking and writing true to our spiritual gift, as found in Ephesians 4:11. I expand on the communication style and tools authentic to each of the five spiritual gifts and provide writing prompts tailored to each gift. Each prompt relates to your response to the 3 Core Questions, reviewed here.*

THERE ARE FIVE BASIC SPIRITUAL LENSES WE WRITE AND READ THE WORLD THROUGH. These are found in the book of Ephesians, which is a wonderful guide into the roles and strengths of each of the spiritual gifts. When it comes to how we communicate with each other, understanding how our spiritual gift affects and filters what we hear and how we are perceived—and what we tend to focus on, promote and get excited about—is important.

*The better we know ourselves, the clearer our communication will be. When we know what we're really after, on a deep level because it's part of our spiritual DNA, we can be clear. We can be free. We can be strong—without becoming defensive or brittle or needing to apologize for giving it our all.*

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*“He gave some to be APOSTLES, some to be PROPHETS, some to be EVANGELISTS, and some to be PASTORS and TEACHERS...” Ephesians 4:11-12*

Knowing and loving ourselves for who we are and how God made us to be also goes a long way to being at rest with our audience. Our listener doesn't need to make us nervous. We're seeing the world through one kind of lens. And they're seeing it through another. This means they may or may not receive what we have to say wholeheartedly. If their set purposes and goals (spiritually speaking) align with ours, then, most likely, they'll be on board with what we're sharing and benefit by it. And if not, not.

We see this in motion all the time. Teachers easily talk and relate to other teachers. Likewise, those with a pastoral gift are at ease around other pastoral-types. Evangelists “get” other evangelists. They speak the same language. They carry the same heart. Hold similar goals. Are moved (and repulsed) by the same things.

When we write, we aim to speak in a voice and style that's true to who we are, spiritually speaking. Whether or not our writing is authentic on this level comes across loud and clear to our reader. So, knowing who we are—from the inside out—is key to communicating not only clearly, but in a way that is aligned with our set spiritual purpose and goals, and achieving them by connecting with our reader or listener in a meaningful way. When this happens the Kingdom of God advances and our relational ties grow strong, forging a vital and often vibrant kind of community. A place where people feel heard and understood, on a deep level.

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I feel this is worth the work; digging into who we are, spiritually. *One of the best ways I know to do this, is to WRITE.* To think about how we write. Why we write. And what choice and type of wording would most resonate with us AND our ideal reader.

## WHAT COMMUNICATION TOOLS HOLD TRUE TO EACH SPIRITUAL GIFT

1. TEACHERS — as **Scholars** who are both knowledgeable and trustworthy, this type tends to read material they can trust and cross-reference if necessary. They read to add to their knowledge store and expand imaginative horizons of what is possible. The more they know, the greater the possibilities they can explore; and in turn, become trustworthy guides to others.
  - This means they also like to write something helpful to others. They like to get their facts straight, give solid information and spot new patterns or spark discovery-based conversation.
  - If this is YOU, consider responding to the Writing Prompt [below] tailored to your spiritual gift with an idea, a teaching or lesson. You read to learn and so, writing-to-teach is often done in your most authentic, compelling and helpful voice. You are a teacher at heart; educate your reader. This is your gift to give.
  - EDUCATE. SPEAK UP.
2. PASTORS — as **Social Connectors** who love to be with people, foster community and expand the circle of belonging, this type of person enjoys Narrative. Drama. Dialogue. This the voice people use when meeting together with other people. It can be a short-sharing or long. But voice is key. The novel or short story, magazine article, blog post, podcast, in-person gathering is this type's go-to reading format/genre.

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- If this is YOU, I suggest responding to the Writing Prompt [below] tailored for your spiritual gift using a Narrative form. Make it relational. Dramatic. Focus on accent, idiom and dialogue. Let your characters come to life, through their own words and worldviews. Make them three-dimensional. Be pastoral. Sit with any pain points that may arise. Empathize through your writing. Be there with the people you write about, and for.
  - As a Pastoral Social Connector, you are typically the hub of the circle of people you befriend and serve. An important voice of affirmation, affection and invitation for others to trust they have found a safe haven to unearthen and reveal themselves. This is no small task when it comes to advancing the Kingdom of God in felt, relational ways.
  - In many ways, relationship is what it's all about; you understand that in a deeper way than most. Feel free to share who you are; like the other types, you make a difference simply by being (and writing) true to you.
  - EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS. BREATHE.

3. **EVANGELISTS** — as **Change Agents** who are on a mission to make the world a better place and so share the love of God in a tangible way felt by a large number of people (e.g. society), this type reads to move things forward! They like charts and bullet-form information, including statistics and pictures grounded in reliable numbers. This type tends to a Team Lead and is keen to read to be able to Equip others to move forward, accomplish the mission and change the world.

- Evangelists are cause driven. So, what they read also needs to relate to and advance the causes they care about. This makes them passionate, concerned writers. They bring a sense of urgency and priority to the page or stage. There is fuel in their tank to burn (although they also respond to messages against burnout).
- If this is YOU, respond to the tailored Writing Prompt [below] with all the power and potential of your spiritual gift. Let your passion speak and do not worry about its finished form. Consider this a first draft: raw material only.

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- Speak from your heart and your head: because you know of what you speak, you are informed, and you have the hands-on experience to back up your plea with real-world integrity.
  - As an Evangelistic Change Agent, intense passion and inner drive are authentic. Your writing is elemental. Raw. On fire. Get the basics on paper and go back to edit once you feel the burden lift; when you are calm and cool, which will be later. For now, equip your reader with what they need most: fuel to move forward to advance the cause.
  - EQUIP TEAMS TO SUCCEED. PRESS ON.

4. **APOSTLES** — as **Adventurers** who love to take on the challenges of life and help others do the same, this type gravitates towards stories that are high-risk, high-reward. They understand life takes courage to live well. Overcoming obstacles, whether physical, emotional, relational, intellectual or spiritual are all part of growing stronger and becoming more mature.

- This type is the type to show up when you need them. They see something in others—the potential for greatness in the Kingdom of God perhaps—others rarely see. They know the power of reaching the summit of a mountain. That success speaks to a deep part of us and that failure can be debilitating, robbing us of the best life. They love to read about people overcoming great odds and emerging the stronger and wiser because of it: they love that!
- If this is YOU, if you're someone who lends courage to face life's challenges to others, respond to the tailored Writing Prompts [see below] from your gut. Trust your instinct for story; for putting people in challenging situations for the sake of discovery. Tell your own story. Write tight. Do not meander or apologize.
- Be strong and lend your strength to others. Aim for the summit. This is your gift to others; to lead in friendship by example. You are a true encourager. Do that.
- ENCOURAGE. BLESS A FRIEND IN NEED.

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5. **PROPHETS** — as **Mystics** who embrace both the mystery and majesty of God, this type reads to know on a soulful level the truth of things. This means they love words with layered meaning. They read to know what's what on a factual, intellectual level, but are not content to build on that basis. They need to go deeper; to dwell in the words, the images and ideas; wanting the message and its meaning to be one. They seek to discern in what they read if this is something that applies to them in a personal way. If not, they will stop reading, as this type is careful to guard their time.

- They tend to be disciplined and like what they read to be the same. Sloppy or overly casual doesn't work for them. Also, the words on the page must come to life for them in a way that converges intellectually (e.g. matches up with where their thoughts are) and spiritually or relationally (e.g. speaks to what's going on in their heart and aligns with what God is saying to their spirit). If this sounds like a tall order, it is. But this is true for all five spiritual types. Each one responds best to the writer who is writing for them, specifically.
- If YOU are the Prophetic-Mystic type, pause before responding to the Writing Prompt tailored for you [below]. Pray and ask where the Lord would lead you. If you're a poet, write a poem. Or a song. Or a letter. Keep it sparse, intimate and personal.
- Write to align the words on the page with the thoughts in your head and the dialogue going on in your heart. Wherever the Spirit leads, go there.
- You typically write to see and enlighten others. This is good and, more importantly, life-giving. Do not doubt; only have faith.
- ENLIGHTEN YOUR LISTENER. IN YOUR HEART, BELIEVE.

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# WRITING PROMPTS Tailored to our Spiritual Gifts/Voices

As we consider the Three Core Questions in light of our own spiritual gift, we find ourselves holding a type of roadmap. We each navigate storytelling in our own way, for our own end. This is an important aspect of Authentic Communication, because we all have a God-given purpose to fulfill and each time we tell our story, we move closer towards integrating our lives with the themes, ideas, lessons and experiences that are ours to share with the world.

*As we tell our story, we move into our story. We become who we are.  
We become more authentic.*

If this sounds too lofty—too far from simple—you may never have tasted the true joy of a story well-told or noticed the long-lasting effects on its listeners.

Stories are simple. Straightforward.

But they also reveal a great deal of what God has done in our lives and the situations and people he has worked through to bring us to where we are today. Hearing this, seeing this lived out in the lives of someone we know, builds faith in God and trust in each other. These are building blocks of our lives and communities—and even stepping-stones towards eternity.

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## REVIEWING THE THREE CORE QUESTIONS:

- **HOME**—Home is where we house our dreams and sense of self. It’s where we grow strong, emotionally. Is this true for your first home? Is it true for the place (and people) you call home now?
- **VOCATION**—How’s your ego? Have you found work in the world; a service to others, that satisfies you and is rewarding in a meaningful way? Do you feel generous in turn, with others’ pursuits?
- **RELATIONSHIPS**—Is your relational network healthy and whole; or does it need shoring up? Is there someone, one person, who knows you well enough?

## PROMPTS

**DEAR TEACHER/SCHOLAR** — as you dig into these Three Core Questions of Telling Your Story consider responding in a way that helps others spot the patterns you do, explain as you expound. Do not doubt the weight of your voice; lean into your strength. Model how you’d have your audience respond to exploring similar questions in their own lives. Show your reader the way.

**TAILORED WRITING PROMPT:** “The stand-out thread, or theme, that connects these three core questions, for me, is...”

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**DEAR PASTORAL/SOCIAL CONNECTOR** — as you respond to the Three Core Questions of Telling Your Story, keep in mind the people who played the biggest role for you in these formational times of your life, remember their voices. Include dialogue and setting details. Honour the emotional aspect, the drama, of life, your audience shares these feelings. Invite your reader in.

**TAILORED WRITING PROMPT:** “The voice that comes home to me as I respond to these questions belongs to...”

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**DEAR EVANGELIST/CHANGE AGENT** — as you address the Three Core Questions of Telling Your Story, think of what it means to your listener to be shown the way forward in their own life; of how your story might equip them in their life’s work. Paint a (big!) picture with your words, use bold colour, push boundaries. Stir your reader.

**TAILORED WRITING PROMPT:** “For me, these three questions highlight the importance of, the necessity in, the imperative to...”

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**DEAR APOSTLE/ADVENTURER** — as you wrestle with these Three Core Questions and what they mean to you, notice the obstacles along the way, and celebrate moments of triumph. Share your story, with feeling. Think of it as a three (or four) dimensional map; talk about the journey. Encourage your reader.

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**TAILORED WRITING PROMPT:** “Life’s journey is never straightforward, as these questions suggest and I have learned, by experience.”

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**DEAR PROPHETIC/MYSTIC** — as you reflect on these Three Core Questions, resist the urge to filter your experience and responses for your listener; put down your ‘spiritual guide’ hat for a moment and simply let the responses speak for themselves. Be as plain as possible, while still guarding your own heart. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you, and simply let your reader come along beside you, enter in on their own terms. Be plain. Poetic, but concrete. And real.

**TAILORED WRITING PROMPT:** “Life is full of gifts, grace and goodness, as I see made plain to me in these three questions; I can see...”

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**IN THE END**, depending on which of the five voices resonates with your own experience, will determine how best to tell your story. The prompts shared here are ‘only’ suggestions but are also tailored with your spiritual gift in mind. If something else comes to mind as you write, great.

Follow that lead but try to also incorporate the Verb that best connects with your type of reader: *Educate, Empathize, Equip, Encourage or Enlighten.*

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See what happens; if *aligning your spiritual gift by employing your select verb* helps you tell a better story to your reader; brings you home to yourself, helps you on your way and gives you a sense of arriving together, with your listener—for me, this is the power of being heard & understood! Of being fitly joined together. Becoming one.

This is *unity* built on a deep honouring of each one's unique and blendable gift; of overlapping without losing our individuality.

This is how we become known. And, ideally, form a community of healthy, interconnected, authentic storytellers.