

## A Framework For Conversation

### Introduction

**John 4:4-30; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and Hebrews 4:12**

The question now becomes, “How do we put all of this stuff into an actual conversation that matters?” It’s important to note that not every conversation needs to go down this path. But, when a particular issue, problem, or challenge surfaces (whether in casual conversation, during a discipling time, or at a specific request to get together), it’s an opportunity to employ what we’ve learned.

### Conversational Flow

The conversation typically progresses as follows:

1. Someone has shared something in their life that has caught their attention. It’s either a trouble (“My son is smoking marijuana”) or an allure (“I keep coming back to porn”). They present it to you as their present JR, seeking your input in guiding their response.
2. You immediately attend to your own IW with the expectation of moving through the spiritual cycle of brokenness, repentance, abandonment, and confidence that leads to the release of Christ’s energy out of your soul, guiding and carrying all you say. You now humbly depend on the Spirit, trusting that the ruling passion of your heart is His.
3. Next, you begin your search for Spirit-filled wisdom by submitting to the Spirit’s authority and not giving in to the pull of the other. You seek Him to provide for you with a vision of what could happen and what will happen if He were to move freely in this person’s life. You envision their SF (movement toward spiritual maturity) that will provide them with joy and wisdom, joy in God as their first-thing pursuit and wisdom provided by the Spirit’s anointing in response to their JR.
4. You pray for general discernment to better grasp 1) a theology of their FD lying beneath all that is unnecessary and unspiritual in their JR and 2) a theology of SD that makes possible movement toward SF.

5. With a good sense of general discernment, you now want to gain a particular discernment of FD and SD. That happens when you:
  - Enter their JR with supernatural curiosity that reframes (see section below) the trouble or allure so that the disciple tells the story of his or her soul. You do this with intrigue and hope;
  - Engage in spiritual listening (listening energized by the Spirit and guided by the revealed biblical CoU) so that you see the particular operation of the flesh and Spirit in their immediate life while they share their SS;
  - Touch the other person's soul aiding them in putting to death the FD and bringing to life the SD that release their new heart (TRUE SELF) that exists for their joy and God's glory resulting in SF.

## A Note On Reframing

Our passion as effective disciplemakers is to 1) enter the SS of another through their immediate, primary, past, and deepest relationships and 2) listen to the telling of that story with CoU that provide particular discernment of the FD and SD. When done well, reframing turns the disciple's attention away from their specific immediate trouble or allure (JR) toward the relationships in their life and how they impact and are impacted by those relationships.<sup>1</sup> Reframing happens primarily by:

- Reinterpreting. "Sounds like your temper toward your son comes out of some pretty sensitive spots in you."
- Questioning. "When you found the marijuana in your son's room, what thoughts did you have about telling your wife or calling a friend or talking to God?"
- Observing. "So you were eager to tell your wife, but you didn't feel like praying."
- Waiting. You could respond, perhaps, with attentive silence. This is probably one of the harder things to do because we want to feel adequate in the conversation. It's good and appropriate to respond at times with "I don't know what to do right now." When we are silent, the Spirit has room to speak.

Reframing should begin within the first half hour and is part of the conversation after that. Note: Curiosity about the JR, if overdone, does not prepare the way for reframing. Rather, it fixes the other person's mind on the details of the JR and creates an expectation that specific advice is coming. (This is similar to a doctor asking a dozen questions about your chest pains, then saying, "Here's the medicine that you

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<sup>1</sup> Notes from the School of Spirit Direction, Dr. Larry Crabb. Pg 113.

need.”)

Reframing is simply a bridge to help the disciple cross over from their immediate JR to their SS that lies beneath the surface. Note: The disciple may attempt to cross back over the bridge many times to focus on their JR. That may require specific attention and perhaps a discussion of why they are directing their attention away from their SS.

Sometimes, a disciple’s return to their JR reflects insufficient curiosity on the part of the discipler towards the JR. When reframing is successful, the disciple will be absorbed by the relational Story of his or her Soul (SS). Is it at this point, spiritual listening takes over and particular discernment occurs to better understand the FD and SD in this person’s life.<sup>2</sup>

## An Example From The Bible

Let’s analyze the interaction between Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4:4-30.

Verse	Input from Jesus	Analysis
8	“Will you give me a drink?”	The woman came to draw water, aware of her physical need of thirst. This was her present JR. That is where Jesus met her. But his question provoked curiosity in her. We can tell this by her response (v9), “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” There was obviously more to his question than merely a focus on either of their JR’s.
10	“If you knew...you would have asked...”	Jesus observed that the woman was unaware of the deep need that was in her (the thirst in her soul) and God’s provision for the need (Jesus himself). Yet, his statement still provoked more curiosity from the woman as she says (v11-12), “Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob?” She was wanting a quick fix to her JR (v15), “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”
10	“...and he would have given you living water.”	Jesus developed a vision for what her life could be like if her soul were spiritually formed (SF).
16	“Go call your husband...”	Before he could give her the gift that she needed deep in her soul, he shifted the focus from her immediate JR (physical thirst) to her SS (relational thirst, beginning with the fact that she was living with a man, the primary relationship in her present life). Jesus was reframing her need from her JR to her SS.

<sup>2</sup> Notes from the School of Spirit Direction, Dr. Larry Crabb. Pg 113-114.

Verse	Input from Jesus	Analysis
18	“You have had five husbands”	Jesus then moves to her past relationships that show the history of her search for “soul water” without God. He sees and then humbly exposes her FD in her story.
21-24	“You worship what you do not know, . . . but true worshippers will worship the Father . . .”	Jesus discerned that the Spirit was working in this woman. He therefore sees SD by speaking of a reality the Spirit is preparing her to also see. Jesus was preparing her to see and embrace him.
26	“I who speak to you am he.”	Jesus was leading the woman through a conversation that mattered in preparation to receive Him. At this revelation, she indeed received Him and began to live out of a new perspective (v39), “Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony.”

## An Example From Culture

Let’s return to the marijuana example and analyze the flow of the conversation up to the point where reframing begins. The abbreviations DE will be used for disciple and DR for discipler.

Speaker	Information	Analysis
DE	My son smokes marijuana. I don’t know what to do.	The DE is presenting his present trouble, his JR that exists with his son.
DR	How did you find this out?	The DR is curious about the whole thing. He wants to know as much about this specific station as possible. This seems as good a place as any to begin.
DE	He left some of the paraphernalia in his room, right in plain sight. I went into his room to get something else and just saw it there. When he came home, I asked him about it. He said, “Yes, I am smoking dope. Big deal!”	The DR listens intently to “be with” the DE. The description of the interaction with his son gives some clues to this primary relationship in his life. As the DR listens, he is checking his own IW, moving through the spiritual cycle of brokenness, repentance, abandonment, confidence so what’s alive in the DR can be released into the DE.
DR	What did you do?	The DR doesn’t want to ask how the DE felt yet. He wants to get a sense of how the DE handled things, what his impact was on his son. The DE’s choices will reveal his thoughts and feelings better than a direct question about either.

Speaker	Information	Analysis
DE	I really stayed calm. I asked him how long he'd been smoking this stuff. He said a few months. Then I tried to probe a bit by asking what it did for him, if he was feeling bad about things, whatever. He just got sullen, told me I was weird, and said he wanted to watch TV. That's when I got angry.	Notice how the description of his choices revealed and even exposed his thoughts and feelings.
DR	Angry?	Through a simple expression of curiosity, the DR could lead the DE to telling more of what he did. This could provide a picture of the DE's style of relating or a gateway to his IW where he may struggle with blocked goals of competence, respect, power, etc.
DE	Yes, I kind of lost it. I told him he was grounded, that he could not live in my home and smoke pot, all the stuff I know is wrong. What do you think I should do now?	Notice the pull that the DE is attempting to get from the DR. At this point, the DR doesn't want to give in to the pull, but needs to explore the DE's other primary, present, past, and deep relationships. In this, the DR is developing a vision of what SF could look like if the DE sees God as bigger than the present problem.
DR	Tell me how you and your wife have talked this over.	<p>This is the DR's first attempt at reframing. The DE's pull is for the DR to offer himself as an expert in parenting adolescence who can tell him what to do. The DR feels present with whatever God is doing and resists the DE's pull by exploring his other primary relationships. The DR wants to see if the DE feels and behaves strongly toward his wife. If the DE exposes core weaknesses, the DR can then move toward seeing patterns of relating, how the DE was shaped by earlier relational events in his life with his parents, etc., and then how he sees God being present in this whole mess.</p> <p>From this point forward more work on behalf of the DR would be necessary to complete the reframing process (helping the DE move from his present problem, JR, to the story of his soul). When the DE's soul is touched, he begins to see God and the pursuit of Him as the primary pursuit of life. It helps to put the current JR into the proper perspective.</p>

## Conversational Anchors

The summary below is a good framework to consider using when dialoguing with others in a conversation that matters. These will aid in keeping the conversation on point and moving in a good direction.

- **Attend/Release.** The conversation begins with a defined JR. We want to attend to our own IW and move through the spiritual cycle of brokenness, repentance, abandonment, and confidence so that what's alive within us can engage with the other person. We need to resist the pull of the other person while working towards reframing.
- **Curiosity.** We need to “be with” the person we are having a conversation with, spiritually listening to what's being said. We want to be generally discerning their FD and SD as we engage. We are looking for bridges to move from the current JR to the Story of their relational Soul (SS). We do this through asking questions about their primary, present, past, and deepest relationships. Then, while listening through the Categories of Understanding (CoU), we seek particular discernment and wisdom from the Spirit as to what they need, resisting their pull to give them what they want. Through this process we also uncover their definitions of death and life that are helpful in understanding how their FD are playing a role in their SS.
- **Timing.** Timing is very important. Giving wisdom too soon may result in the person not being fully heard or fully understood. This “wisdom” may not necessarily meet the deepest needs of the soul of the person. Resist giving “advice.” Resist sharing your own experience. Resist wanting to provide information that sounds full of wisdom because you feel inadequate. Continue probing and investigating and discerning what the Spirit is truly wanting to provide and do in the other person. Many times, silence is okay. Remain in prayer. Remaining processing the CoU. “Wait for His wisdom...”
- **Vision.** This is what SF would look like in the other person if they were to see the pursuit of Jesus as the primary affection of their life over and above their current JR. The process of the conversation matters tremendously. Think of how Jesus led the woman. He did not just blurt out, “You need me” at the onset of the conversation. He led her through a process of realizing her own deeper need and then posed himself as the solution to that deeper need. When the vision for SF is from the Spirit (not your flesh), it will help the other person surrender to the spiritual cycle of brokenness, repentance, abandonment, and confidence to release what's alive in them for the glory of God. They will be touched. Their perspective will change. They will be transformed by the renewing of their mind. They will want a deeper relationship with Jesus more than a quick fix to their present problem.

## Connection to Worldview Pillars

The role of Truth from Scripture is vital in spiritually fortifying another believer. Touching what is alive within them is important, but anchoring them in the Truth is vital if they are to become spiritually stable and effective in living for Jesus, confirmed in several areas of Scripture (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and Hebrews 4:12).

Through the process of uncovering the Story of the Soul, you may discern some worldview pillars<sup>3</sup> that align more with the natural worldview than the biblical worldview. When this is the case, we encourage you to validate this through subsequent conversations and through prayer. If confirmed, we encourage you to make a plan to feed the necessary truth into the mind of the person you are discipling to nourish, strengthen, and stabilize them in the truth. We have provided potential areas of the Bible to consider for each pillar within the curriculum document for the Discipleship workshop.

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<sup>3</sup> See the MC Leader Workshop called “Discipleship” for an explanation of the worldview pillars of authority, righteousness, opposition, mission, identity, faith, hope, and love. The Discipleship curriculum document can be found by navigating to the “Leaders - Workshops - Discipleship - Curriculum” page on the website or in the Church app.