

SECTION 7

Participant Pages

Readings for Huddle Participants



SouthBrook
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SECTION 7: THE LEARNING CIRCLE (NUMBERS 23-25 IN “52 WEEKS OF HUDDLES”)

Of all the S's, the one with perhaps the most potential to dramatically impact our lives in the moment is Significant Events, our fifth of the Five S's. The Greek word found in Scripture that means “Significant Event” is **KAIROS**.

What is a Significant Event?

Simply stated, a **Significant Event, a kairos, is any moment in time in which our emotions or our will is impacted**¹. It's a moment that grabs our attention. It makes us *feel* something. It causes a recognizable response in us.

“Wow.”

“Ouch!”

“Hmm....”

“Aha!”

“No. It can't be.”

“What the...?”

“Grrr...”



A Significant Event, a *kairos*, can be big or small, short or long, positive or negative, intentional or unintentional.

Some are like *speed bumps*. They're not major, but they may jolt you out of a daydream, or cause a sudden rush of emotion. A quote from a movie, a sermon you just heard, a passage of Scripture you just read, something spoken to you by your boss at work, an argument with your spouse, or news of your own success or failure are all things that can cause you to *feel* something. They are Significant Events through which God can work.

Some are like *rumble strips*. A rumble strip is that forever line of small bumps on the highway that make your car hum when you start drifting toward the shoulder. Have you ever had a nagging thought or feeling “humming” in the background of your brain as you go through your week? You've been feeling anxious since Tuesday. You've had this sense you should call your sister. You're angry and you don't know why. You just can't focus at work. You have this sense that you're missing out on something. Those are Significant Events.

Some are like *brick walls*. They stop you in your tracks. Life, as you know it, is over. You get fired. You have your first child. A thief breaks in and steals your valuables. A family member dies. Your spouse asks for a divorce. You have a miscarriage. You win the lottery. Sometimes these events are so big, you don't even think of trying to work through them at first. Heck, sometimes you can barely breathe. But take heart; God's kingdom is near in these moments. He wants to meet you there, and will, if you turn to Him.

We experience Significant Events of varying magnitudes every day. The potential for growth from them is huge! However, just because a Significant Event occurs in our lives does not automatically mean it will cause us to grow to be more like Jesus.

¹ This is a quote from Charlie McMahan

One guy has too much to drink and ends up in the hospital with blood alcohol poisoning. This Significant Event is a wake up call for him. He cries out to God for help for the first time in years and checks himself into rehab.

Another guy experiences the same thing. But lying in his hospital bed, he thinks, "What a drag. This hospital time is really getting in the way of my partying."

The event itself is not what grows us. What we do with the event is what matters. And as the apostle Paul tells us, we can be intentional about what we do with these moments:

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity (kairos), because the days are evil. —Ephesians 5:15

We can make the most of the Significant Events when they occur, choosing to turn to God and seize those moments for His glory and our growth in Christ. Or we can ignore them, and race right on by. We've all missed opportunities at points, haven't we? We don't want to pop the hood when the car starts making weird noises. We'd rather ignore it and hope it goes away. But that noise might have been just what we needed to hear to prevent our car from blowing up.

Once we recognize a Significant Event has occurred, whether a speed bump, a rumble strip, or a brick wall, how then do we make the most of it?

Jesus shows us a way. Jesus told His disciples how to respond to a particular Significant Event that was occurring in a way that would enable them to experience a life-changing breakthrough in their lives. Here's what Mark records:

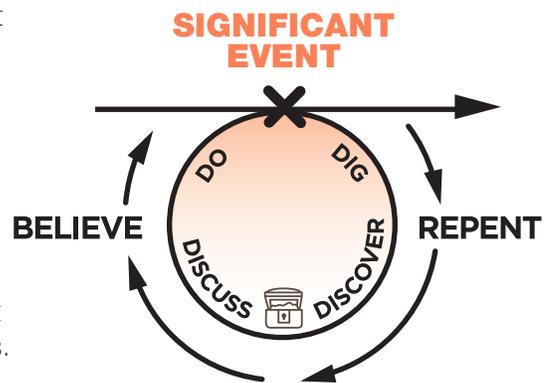
After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

"The time (KAIROS) has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" —Mark 1:14,15, emphases mine

Jesus had come to proclaim the good news. THAT was a Significant Event if ever there was one! And Jesus acknowledged it as such. "A Significant Event, a *kairos*, is occurring right now!" He said. "Heavenly, life-changing treasure is *available* to you, if you'll respond the right way. And the way to respond is to **repent** (turn your heart and mind toward God) and **believe** God's good news!"

And because God instructs us to make the most of every *kairos*, and because God is *always* at work, we can follow this same pattern for any Significant Event we experience. *Repent* and *Believe*. Thus, each Significant Event—good, bad, big, or small—becomes an opportunity to experience His transformative work in our lives.

We have a tool we call the Learning Circle², based on Jesus' words in Mark 1:15 above, that helps us make the most of our Significant Events. The Learning Circle helps us walk through



² This learning circle was inspired by a similar one created by Mike Breen and 3DM.

a process of repenting and believing, so that we can grab hold of the kingdom treasure available to us and put it to work in our lives. It helps us learn from our life experiences, and put into practice the things God teaches us.

Let's explore how it works.

REPENT

I used to think the word "repent" just meant "stop sinning."

"Stop getting drunk."

"Stop being mean to your kids."

"Stop lying."

Addressing those behaviors can be helpful in a short term way. But God doesn't want to just change our behaviors. He wants to address the beliefs that are *driving* those behaviors, and *replace* them with His truth. All behavior is rooted in some core belief we hold. If we don't address the belief, any changes in behavior we make will likely be short-lived.

To repent literally means a change of heart and mind. It means turning from our own understanding to embrace what *God* thinks. So the question we're seeking to answer on the "Repent" side of the circle is this:

What is God saying?

How do we figure out what God is saying through our Significant Event? Two steps will help get us there.

The first step is to "DIG".

When a Significant Event occurs, the first thing we need to do is prayerfully examine our response. We need to DIG beneath the surface of our reaction to uncover what it reveals is present in our hearts. Our reaction shows us something about what we *currently* believe, including false or incomplete beliefs that still may not yet be aligned with God's truth. We're all still works in progress. Digging is about searching for the answer to this question: *What false or incomplete beliefs do I still hold?*³

Often, the most important part of digging is asking questions, and answering honestly. This helps us get to the bottom of things.

What happened?

How did I respond?

What else was going on at the time this happened?

How do I feel?

Why do I feel this way?

And again, the answer we're ultimately digging for here: *What false or incomplete belief has this significant event revealed in me?*

Digging can take a minute. Or it can take a week. Often we need someone else to grab a shovel and help us dig. God wants to unearth these beliefs so they can be addressed.

Let's take a look at how "Carly" responded to a Significant Event in her life. Carly's long-time friend, "Gaby," excitedly sent her a text one day that she just got a promotion at work. Instead of being happy for her, it made Carly angry and she had

³ This quote from Neil T. Anderson's work reaffirms the importance of digging: "I believe God has designed you in such a way that you can know on a moment-by-moment basis if your belief system is properly aligned with God's truth. God has established a feedback system designed to grab your attention so you can examine the validity of your goals and beliefs. When an experience or relationship leaves you feeling angry, anxious or depressed, those emotional signposts are there to alert you that you may be cherishing a faulty goal based on a wrong belief." Anderson, Neil T, *Victory Over the Darkness*, p. 126, Bethany House Publishers

this odd hope that Gaby would fail in her new position. Whoa, hold on. Something was off here. This was a Significant Event. Time to DIG.

Through digging—talking with God, processing with a trusted friend, and thinking it through—Carly discovered she had some bitter feelings toward Gaby. A couple years before, Gaby had belittled her college degree, saying it would never get her a job as good as she could get. Carly had worked hard for that degree! For Gaby to say something so callous and reductionary made Carly seethe with anger. And she had held onto that anger ever since.

Now, Gaby realized the next day what a terrible thing that was to say, and tearfully apologized, but Carly never let go of it. Two years later, the bandaid was now ripped off. And through digging, Carly uncovered an unredeemed belief she didn't know was there. It went something like this:

“Gaby should have to pay for what she said.”

“What an ugly thought!” Carly thought. Digging had revealed an area of incompleteness in her—an area to which God wanted to bring His truth and grace to make her whole.

Jesus was great at getting people digging. He was always saying and doing things that exposed the current state of people's hearts. Consider his interaction with a rich man, who asked Jesus how to have eternal life. Jesus told him:

You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’[d]”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

This guy seemed to have it all. He was rich, and he at least *thought* he was on track with God's commandments. He was covering his bases, just making sure there wasn't something he was missing.

But Jesus saw a false belief the man held that would cripple his relationship with God. It went something like this: *“I am safe, secure and happy because of my wealth, rather than because of God.”* So Jesus, in his love for the man, dug it out and held it right up in front of him so he could see it. Now the man could address it should he choose to do so—but he didn't. Not at this time anyway.

Digging helps us see where we are not yet complete in Christ. We need to clear away the dirt. Digging helps us uncover what we need to turn FROM. Now it's time for step two.

The second step is to “DISCOVER.”

Clearing the dirt helps us find the **treasure**. The treasure we're after is a *new* belief, the *King's* truth, the “good news” with which God wants to replace that old false belief. Whatever has happened, whatever decisions we have made, God *always* offers good news for us to Discover if we will look to Him. In fact, the Holy Spirit,

who lives in us, is constantly working to lead us into transforming truth, offering a redeemed version of the story to embrace⁴. Every time we receive the truth and grace the Holy Spirit brings to those places in us that are yet incomplete, we experience transformation. We become more like Jesus.

To DISCOVER that treasure, I turn to God and ask, "God, what is the NEW truth I need to receive? What word of grace do you have to replace what's broken or incomplete in me? What's the *good news*? *What are you saying*?"

Thus, we seek God for His answer. It may come through a wise word from a friend. A story or testimony we hear. A God-directed thought or picture in our minds. A passage of Scripture. It will *always* align with the truth of Scripture.

Back to Carly's story...she recognized she'd been harboring the thought that "*Gaby should have to pay for what she said.*" That was the broken part in her. So Carly began asking, "God, what is the *new* truth you want me to receive?" She prayed, thought, and talked to her friend. Her friend said, "I heard someone say at a Recovery meeting last week that bitterness is what happens when we don't forgive. Holding onto bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping someone else dies. The only antidote is forgiveness."

That led her to search Jesus' words about forgiveness. She found the story Jesus told about a guy who owed like 11 trillion dollars to the king, which he couldn't pay. He begged the king for mercy, and the king canceled his huge debt! But then that same guy went outside, found a guy who owed him 100 bucks, and beat him up because he couldn't pay it. So the king threw him in prison.⁵

Sifting through it all, she DISCOVERED the new kingdom truth to replace the old one: *My King has forgiven my enormous sin debt, and wants me to extend that same grace to others.*

Carly had now turned from her own thoughts to discover what *God* thought. That's repentance.

Once we discover what God thinks, what *He's* saying, it's time to move to the left side of the circle.

BELIEVE

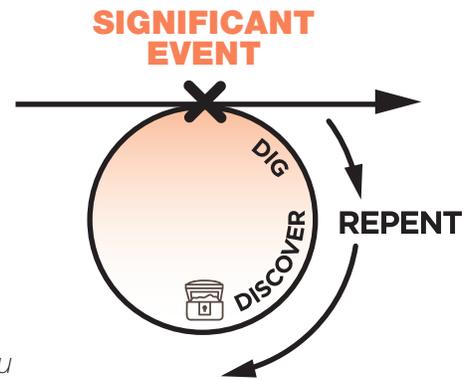
The word "believe" in Mark 1:15 means to be persuaded of something. If I am truly persuaded that something is true, it will be shown by how I live. So, once we've repented and discovered what God is saying, it's time to complete the circle, demonstrating by our *actions* that we believe it.

The question, then, that we need to answer as we move to the left side of the circle is this:

How will I respond?

Steps 3 and 4 on our journey around the circle will get us there.

The third step is "DISCUSS."



⁴ John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

⁵ Matthew 18:21-35

If I found treasure, I'd want to talk to someone I trust with whom could help me decide what to do with it. That's the idea here.

Once you think you know what God is saying, the next step is to let someone close to you know what it is, and DISCUSS how best to respond. This does two things:

1. **It makes it real.** Many of us have learned or received transforming truth from God—only to forget it or put it off until it fades from memory. What a tragedy! Speaking it out loud makes us own it. And talking it through will help us make a plan for how we will respond. What *weren't* we doing yesterday that *we will* do now in light of this new understanding?
2. **It gives you accountability.** *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another,"* Solomon writes⁶. Discussing means you now have someone who can help you step into your transformation by asking you later, "Did you do that thing you said you would do in response to that thing God said?"

When discussing a plan of action, it's helpful to land on something concrete, measurable. If you've discovered the value of spending time in prayer, instead of saying, "I will pray more this week," it may be more helpful to say, "I'm going to spend 10 minutes a day this week in prayer." You may end up praying more than that and you may need to make adjustments the next week, but this gives you a tangible goal, about which your accountability partner can ask you.

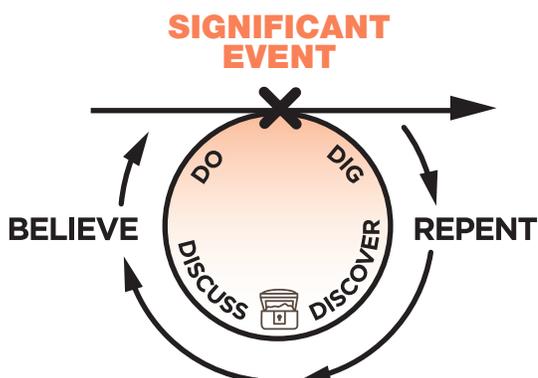
Carly had received the truth that God had forgiven her and now called her to forgive Gaby. She had been missing out on God's peace because of that bitterness still there. So she DISCUSSED it with her friend. "God's forgiven me, so now I need to forgive Gaby."

She made the choice to forgive Gaby. Her friend challenged her to even go a step further and call Gaby to congratulate her on her promotion. She accepted the challenge with a plan to call later that night. Her friend would call and ask her how it went the next day.

Once we have discussed what God is saying and how we'll respond, it's time for the final step.

The fourth step is "DO."

Once you've discussed, and a plan is in place, all that remains is to execute the plan. DO it. This expresses our belief and trust in God's ways.



Carly called Gaby later that evening to offer her congratulations, and asked Gaby to tell her a little bit about the promotion. Gaby was hesitant to share. Carly asked her "Why?" With emotion in her voice, Gaby shared that of all the people she would tell, she was most nervous about telling Carly because of the awful thing she said a few years ago. It was still on her mind too! She still felt shame. Carly extended grace. Carly let her know that she had completely forgiven her and now wanted to celebrate this new thing with her.

⁶ Proverbs 27:17

Not only had Carly experienced freedom in her own life from bitterness. A relationship had also been restored. That was a kingdom breakthrough.

So in short, when a Significant Event occurs, we:

DIG: Uncover the false belief, what's incomplete in us.

DISCOVER: Find the "good news" God offers with which He wants to replace that old belief.

DISCUSS: Talk with someone about what God's saying, and plan how we'll respond.

DO: Execute the plan.

PRAYING FOR SAUL

Do we see this pattern for responding to Significant Events in Scripture?

YES. We don't always see every step spelled out, but it's *everywhere*. A Significant Event takes place. Unbelief is uncovered. God's kingdom is revealed. The faithful step forward together in obedience.

Consider this trip around the circle made by a follower of Jesus named Ananias in Acts 9.

- The Lord shows up to Ananias in a vision, and tells him to go pray for a guy named Saul to be healed of blindness. This was a Significant Event for Ananias. How do we know? He's afraid.
- Ananias DIGS out loud with the Lord, revealing his unbelief. "I've heard a bunch of bad stuff about this guy." Ananias said. "He's beating and arresting people who follow You." He doesn't yet trust that what God is asking him to do is a good idea, and he's asking God to fill in some gaps.
- God speaks, and Ananias DISCOVERS the new truth to replace the old. God says, "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel." God replaces Ananias' incomplete perspective with His new perspective.
- In faith, Ananias goes to the house God indicated and DISCUSSES what God told Him to do with Saul! "Hey Saul, God told me to come here so you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." If it didn't feel real before, it sure was real now.
- Ananias opening his mouth to discuss with Saul also fulfilled what God had called him to DO. Immediately, Saul's blindness was healed and he was baptized.

Ananias got to experience incredible breakthrough because he repented and believed. The same can be true for us, each time we experience a Significant Event.

Caesar Kalinowski says, "*Discipleship is the process of moving from unbelief to belief about what is true of God and the gospel, in absolutely every area of life.*"

Each trip around the circle is another breakthrough, another step in our transformation, another move toward belief in every area of our lives. We ourselves will continue to grow toward wholeness in Christ. We will be kept from getting "stuck" or "stale" spiritually. And God's kingdom will break through in the world around us.