

## Share the Story

### Word for the Year 2026

**Thesis:** We are a people who want to grow in our capacity to share the story of what God is doing. Our sharing includes what we have seen, heard, and experienced of the Lord.

**Text:** 1 John 1:1-4

Each year, we seek the Lord for his word for us for the new year. I seek the Lord personally for his direction. And, I work with others as we try to discern what the Lord is saying and seek confirmation for that discernment process.

The word of the Lord for the year is an emphasis from God about what he wants to do in our lives both individually and corporately in the year.

Our desire is to respond to God's current prophetic word in our actions, attitudes, and affections.

**Word for the year 2026: Share the Story.**

*1 John 1:1–4 (NIV84) 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.*

**We live in 3 interconnected stories**, and we get to share what we have seen, heard, and experienced in regards to all 3 stories: THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.

1. **Share THE Story:** of the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:18).
  - a. We want to share what God has done, is doing, and will do as God unites heaven and earth, as God unites his heavenly family and earthly families, and as God sums up everything in Jesus.

- b. Jesus came proclaiming THE Story, the good news, of the kingdom of God.
    - i. *Mark 1:14–15 (NIV84) 14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”*
  - c. Jesus came demonstrating the impact, works, and reality of the kingdom of God.
    - i. *Luke 4:18–19 (NIV84) 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*
2. **Share Our Story:** of what God is doing in and through this community locally and globally.
- a. *1 John 1:3-4 (NIV84) We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.*
  - b. *1 John 1:5–7 (NIV84) 5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*
  - c. Part of the impact of our sharing THE Story is so that people can participate in Our Story: what God is doing in our community, what God is doing in and through us. God has called into fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit; and, we are compelled to tell others so that they can experience our fellowship with one another and with God.
  - d. Here is one practical takeaway into which we are living into as a church staff. **We believe that Lord is asking us to share what the Lord is doing through this home base (through this fellowship)** via testimonies, videos, pictures, podcasts, writing, etc.
3. **Share My Story:** of what I have heard, seen, gazed upon, and experienced of the Lord individually (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-4).
- a. *John 20:30–31 (NIV84) 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
  - b. *1 John 5:11–15 (NIV84) 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he*

*who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

- c. *John 15:5 (NASB95) “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*
  - i. My story is about my life in Christ. In his book, *Incarnational Christianity*, Pastor Steve Meeks talks about the process of **our journey with Christ: personal, intimate, organic**. God is looking for a place **to abide**. We start out with a personal knowledge of God. But God draws us into intimacy, deeply sharing our lives. Still, God is after something much deeper: our lives intertwined with his. **We are called into an abiding, mutually indwelling relationship with God.**

**We live in 3 interconnected stories**, and we get to share what we have seen, heard, and experienced in regards to all 3 stories: THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.

*1 John 1:1–4 (NIV84) 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.*

[John] used the relative pronoun, “that which” or “what,” so as to be more encompassing—and more compelling. John was speaking of the apostles’ total experience of the incarnate God-man, wherein they heard his message, saw his miracles, gazed upon his glory, and even touched him.

In the Godhead, the Son functions as the revealer of God and the reality of God. He is God made touchable. During the days of his ministry, Jesus was revealing the Father to the disciples and thereby initiating them into the divine fellowship. Once the disciples were regenerated by the Spirit and received God’s eternal life, they actually entered into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Having been brought into this divine participation, the apostles became the new initiators—introducing this fellowship to others and encouraging them to enter

into fellowship with them. Whoever would enter into fellowship with the apostles would actually be entering into their fellowship with the Father and the Son.

In summary, the one, unique fellowship between the Father and the Son began in eternity, was manifest in time through the incarnation of the Son, was introduced to the apostles, and then through the apostles was extended to each and every believer. When a person becomes a child of God (through the new life given by the Holy Spirit), he or she enters into this one ageless, universal fellowship—a fellowship springing from the Godhead, coursing through the apostles, and flowing through every genuine believer who has ever been or will ever be. (Osborne, Grant, Philip W. Comfort. *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 13: John and 1, 2, and 3 John*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.)

John's central purpose is to encourage his readers to persevere in their belief in the apostolic proclamation of the Christ as Jesus, the incarnate Son of God. (Akin, Daniel L. *1, 2, 3 John*. Vol. 38. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.)

And God has provided an advance display of this future! God has kept the age to come under wraps, as it were, waiting to reveal it at the right time. But the secret at the heart of the early Christian movement was that the age to come had already been revealed. The future had burst into the present, even though the present time wasn't ready for it. The word for that future was Life, life as it was meant to be, life in its full, vibrant meaning, a life which death tried to corrupt, thwart and kill but a life which had overcome death itself and was now on offer to anyone who wanted to come and take it. Life itself had come to life, had taken the form of a human being, coming into the present from God's future, coming to display God's coming age. And the name of that life-in-person is of course Jesus. That is the very heart of what John wants to say.

Of course, the very idea of God's new life becoming a person and stepping forward out of the future into the present is so enormous, so breathtaking, that a tone of wonder, of hushed awe and reverence, becomes appropriate. That is what we find in these opening verses. That which was from the beginning ... pause and think about that for a moment ... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have gazed at ... pause again: your own eyes? You didn't just glimpse it, you gazed at it? Yes, says John, and what's more our hands have handled ... you touched it, this Life? You touched him? You handled him? Yes, repeats John: we heard, saw, and touched this from-the-beginning Life. We knew him. We were his friends.

And we still are his friends. Once the future has come into the present, the present is transformed forever. The life has been 'displayed', has been put on show for all to see (though some still prefer not to look). And we who saw it, who knew it, who knew him, are now like witnesses in a law court, speaking to a surprised jury about the strange things which we have encountered. Oh, we **can** talk about Jesus and what he did and said. As John says at the end of his gospel, if you tried to write it all down the world would explode with the books that would be written. But when you reflect on what it means, then you have to say this: we have seen the future, and it is full of light and life and joy and hope. The rest of the letter will explore all this. For the moment, John explains his purpose in writing. Those who have seen this life, and have been captured by its beauty and promise, find that they have come to belong to a new kind of family, a 'fellowship' as we sometimes say. The word he uses at this point is sometimes used of a business partnership, but he means much more than that. It can also refer to the 'sharing' of particular goods or benefits between people; that comes into it, as we shall see, but John means much more than that, too. He seems to mean (stretching the word to fit the new reality, as the early Christians often had to do), that there is a kind of life, a quality of life, which is God's very own life, and which God himself is now sharing with the people who have heard and seen the life-come-to-life called Jesus.

Indeed, John sees God's own life as already a shared fellowship: the fellowship between father and son. Jesus, as Messiah, has been marked out as 'son of God', both in the sense that this was his rightful royal title as Israel's true king, and in a deeper, richer sense previously hardly suspected or imagined, but now celebrated by his followers as the only possible way to explain the extraordinary things that they had seen, heard and even handled. As his life, death and resurrection demonstrated, Jesus was clearly the life-in-person of God's coming age. He was, in fact, God's own new life, both the life of God himself and the gift of life from God to the world. The earliest Christians quickly seized upon the words 'father' and 'son' as the simplest and clearest way of saying the unsayable at this point: that there was a common life, a deep sharing of inner reality, between God and Jesus, enough to take your breath away at the thought of such a human being. And, indeed, of such a God.

But it doesn't stop there. It gets even more breathtaking. This deep sharing of inner reality, this 'fellowship' between father and son, has been extended. It extends to all those who came to know, love and trust Jesus while he was alive, while he was, so to speak, on display as God's public unveiling of the coming life. And now (this, it seems, is the point of the letter) this sharing, this 'fellowship', is open to others too, to others who didn't have the chance to meet Jesus

during his period of public display. This 'sharing' can be, and is being, extended to anyone and everyone who hears the announcement about Jesus. They can come into 'fellowship' with those who did see, hear and handle him. And they, in turn, are in 'fellowship' with the father and the son, with the two who are themselves the very bedrock and model for what 'fellowship', in this fullest sense, really means.

It may seem strange that simply telling people about Jesus is the appointed means by which such a momentous thing as this 'fellowship' can be extended to include new members. But John is very much aware that the opening move in the whole game was made by God himself as an act not of silent display but of verbal communication. Jesus was not only life-in-person: he was (verse 1) 'the Word of Life', Life-as-Word, Life-turned-into-speech, God's speech, God's self-communication to his people and, through them, to the wider world. In John's gospel, of course, he refers to Jesus simply as 'the Word', the Word who became flesh. The point is this. God has spoken in Jesus; and God now speaks, through the words which Jesus' friends speak and write about him, to others also, in the intention and hope that they will come to share this same 'fellowship'. That is the point of the letter. That should be our prayer as we read it. (Wright, N.T. *Early Christian Letters for Everyone: James, Peter, John and Judah*. For Everyone Bible Study Guides. London; Louisville, KY: SPCK; Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.)

**We live in 3 interconnected stories**, and we get to share what we have heard, seen, and experienced in regards to all 3 stories: THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.

- **Outcome:** Here is one outcome of living into this word for the year. The challenge for us as a congregation is learning to share the story. We need to catch the vision of what God is saying and doing, get equipped to share the story, practice sharing the story, reflect on our practice, and incorporate the learning into process all over again. **Our desired outcome for the year to is live intentionally into sharing the story of what God is doing in THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.**
- **Opportunity:** Here is our opportunity. **We are all in this learning together...** share the story in 2026... share THE Story, share Our Story, and share My Story.

**Actions:**

1. We want to **set the example** in church by telling **Our Story** more effectively, frequently, and passionately.

- a. Calvary is gifted and called to meet people at their places of need: belonging (authentic relationships), becoming (transformation), and experiencing (not just platitudes but a real adventure, journey, and pilgrimage).
- b. We invite you to get equipped in **Discover the Vision** on Wednesday nights.
2. We want to **equip people** to share **My Story**.
  - a. We want to equip people to have transformation conversations.
  - b. We want to equip people to have spiritual conversations, listening for what the Lord is doing, partnering with the Lord, sowing seeds, and offering invitations. (Open Set vs. Bounded Set thinking)
  - c. We invite you to get equipped in **Discover Mission** on Wednesday nights.
3. We want to **envision and equip people** regarding **THE Story**.
  - a. We are not just talking about the gospel of salvation, but the gospel of the kingdom of God.
  - b. We proclaim and demonstrate the good news of Jesus putting heaven and earth together, making all things new, extending his rule and reign one person / family / community at a time, and taking the initiative in our spheres of influence so that we get to partner with him together with others.
  - c. We invite you to participate **in Ministry Team Training** where we get equipped to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom of God.
4. **Conclusion: we invite you to respond to what Jesus is doing and to join him and others in that work, that family, and that eternal life.**

**We live in 3 interconnected stories**, and we get to share what we have heard, seen, and experienced in regards to all 3 stories: THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.

Our word for the year of 2026: **share the story**, which includes THE Story, Our Story, and My Story.

**Ministry Time:**

## Addendum. Our vision as a church:

1. **Our vision: intimacy, community, kingdom.**
  - a. Our vision expresses who the Lord has called us to be in this world.
  - b. Other congregations have other assignments.
  - c. We want to stay true to what the Lord is saying to us.
  - d. We are making progress of living into our vision as individuals and as a congregation.
    - i. **Establishing people in intimacy with God.** My Story.
      1. Reflective life where we learn to hear the voice of the Lord and co-create with God.
      2. Core outcome: awareness.
    - ii. **Expressing true Christian community.** Our Story.
      1. Authentic community where we are open and honest.
      2. Core outcome: authenticity.
    - iii. **Extending the kingdom of God in the earth.** THE Story.
      1. Joining Jesus on his mission in our spheres of influence, together with others.
      2. Core outcomes: alignment with the way of Jesus and action around what God is doing.
2. We celebrate the vision which God has given to us.

**We are living into three Stories.** And, these stories express our mental model of transformation. God uses all three areas of our vision to transform us.

## Calvary's Vision

There are three areas in which we are to labor.

### The vision of Calvary is:

1. To establish people in INTIMACY with God,
2. To express true Christian COMMUNITY, and
3. To extend the KINGDOM of God in the earth.

## Intimacy

- Principle: We live out of intimacy with God.
- Key issue: Significance.

- Purpose: To establish people in intimacy with God.
- Goal: Calvary is seeking to be a body that nurtures in each individual a personal, interactive, and passionate relationship with our loving heavenly Father.
- Outcome: Awareness.

## Community

- Principle: We live in community.
- Key issue: Interdependence.
- Purpose: To express true Christian community.
- Goal: Calvary is seeking to be an interactive community which provides a safe, loving environment where people work together with God to care for one another, appreciating and valuing our diversity. Relationships within the community will be based on a commitment to transparency, sacrifice, humility, personal responsibility, accountability, and discipleship.
- Outcome: Authenticity (open, honest).

## Kingdom

- Principle: We live toward the kingdom.
- Key Issue: Transcendence.
- Purpose: To extend the kingdom of God in the earth.
- Goal: Calvary is seeking to be actively demonstrating kingdom principles beyond our walls to the community and the world. We desire to proclaim and demonstrate God's kingdom through varying arenas including intercession, spiritual warfare, evangelism, missions, and an expression of apostolic and power ministries. Our desire is to know the heart of God, declare his kingdom on earth, and actively prepare for Christ to rule and reign.
- Outcomes: Alignment with the way of Jesus and action (radical obedience).

## Partnering with Jesus on his mission in the earth.

1. **Our missional identity:** we are a people who partner with Jesus on his mission, together with others, in our spheres of influence and in the earth.
  - a. Serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need,
  - b. Working for the common good,
  - c. And seeking to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design.
2. **Our vision at Calvary is a mental model of transformation. It expresses how God transforms us.**
  - a. **Establishing people in intimacy with God.**

- i. God is perfectly at home in Jesus. *"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).*
  - ii. Jesus is our model, showing us how God wants to be at home in us.
    1. *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2:9-10).*
  - iii. We want God to be at home in us individually.
  - iv. The core outcome of intimacy is to grow in our capacity for **awareness** of God.
  - v. **As we spend time with the Lord, we are transformed.**
    1. *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV).*
- b. **Expressing true Christian community.**
- i. God wants to make his home in the body of Christ, in the corporate community of faith.
  - ii. In John 17:21-23, 26, Jesus casts a vision for our unity and oneness with God and each other.
  - iii. In Ephesians 2:21-22, God's dwelling place is no longer in a temple of stone but a community of human hearts.
  - iv. In 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, we are God's temple; we are God's house. *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:16-17).*
  - v. We want God to be at home in us individually and corporately. There are things he does and does not want in his house; otherwise, he wouldn't feel at home, nor would he feel welcomed.
  - vi. The core outcome of community is to grow in our capacity for **authenticity** (being open, honest) in safe places with others.
  - vii. **As we walk in the light with God and others, we are transformed** (1 John 1:7, 9; James 5:13-16).
- c. **Extending the Kingdom of God in the earth.**
- i. God wants to make his home among us forever, the way it was meant to be. In Revelation 21:3, the Bible says that the dwelling of God is among people.

- ii. This theme of God making his dwelling with us is a primary theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:1-3).*
  - iii. The core outcome of community is to grow in our capacity for **alignment** with the way of Jesus and for getting in **action** to obey the Lord.
    - 1. Alignment with the way of Jesus (Acts 9:2, 18:25-26, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22).
    - 2. Action to obey Jesus (Matthew 28:20; John 14:15, 21, 23).
  - iv. **We are transformed as we radically obey the Lord, align with the way of Jesus, and join Jesus on his mission in the earth, with others, in our spheres of influence and beyond.**
3. We are not here to specialize in one part of our vision. Rather, our vision is the way to stay in step with our King and to experience the transformation God desires for our lives.