



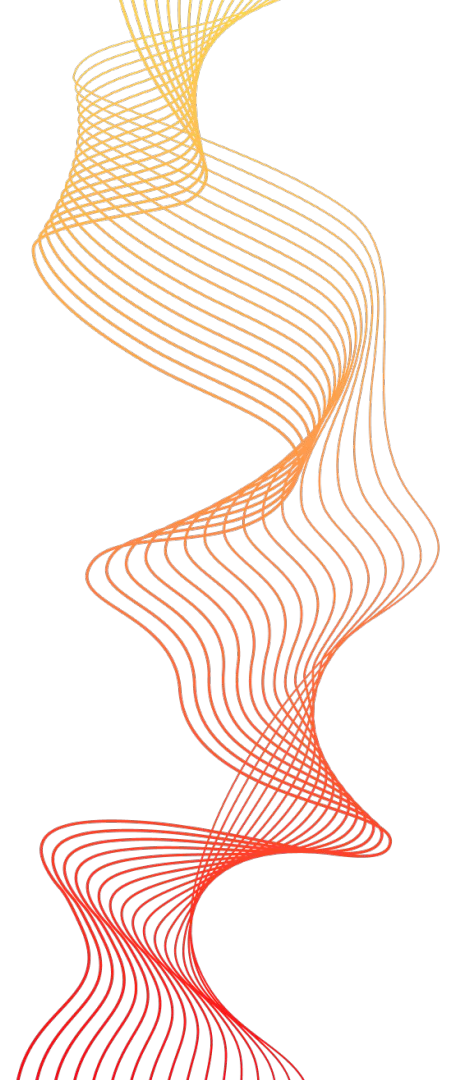
# Theology of Abundance

An exploration of the theology of abundance and its relevance to our work and everyday lives.

**The Rev Lorenzo Lebrija**  
*Executive Director*  
TryTank Experimental Lab



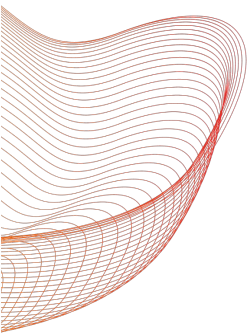
The Episcopal  
Diocese of Vermont





## Let's talk about God's abundance

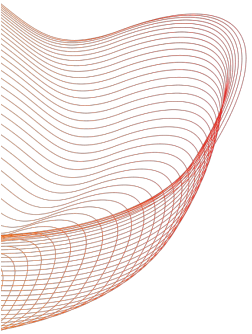
- Since humans started: 117 billion souls
- 140 million per year
  
- 8.7 million species





## Let's talk about God's abundance

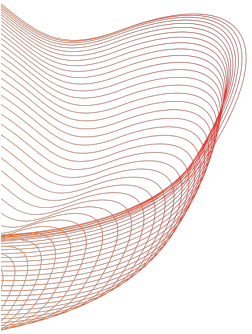
- There are around 2 TRILLION galaxies
- Each galaxy has between 100-400 billion stars





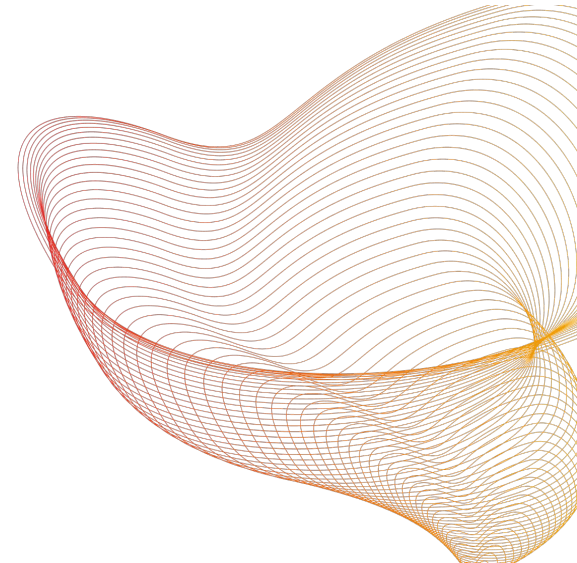
“Each day holds a surprise. But **only if we expect it** can we see, hear, or feel it when it comes to us. Let's not be afraid of the unexpected. Let's not be afraid of receiving each day's surprise, whether it comes to us as sorrow or as joy It will open a new place in our hearts, a place where we can welcome new friends and celebrate more fully our shared humanity.”

*-Henri Nouwen*





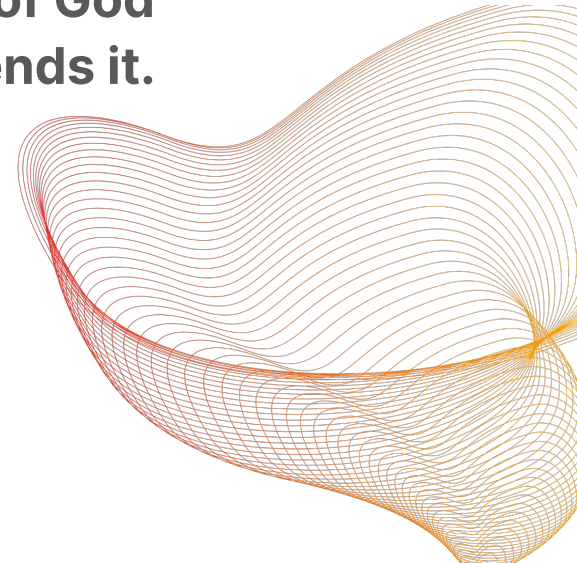
**God gives us everything we need.**





**God gives us everything we need.**

If we experience life as scarcity, it is because we  
have failed to receive the abundance of God  
**in the form** in which God sends it.

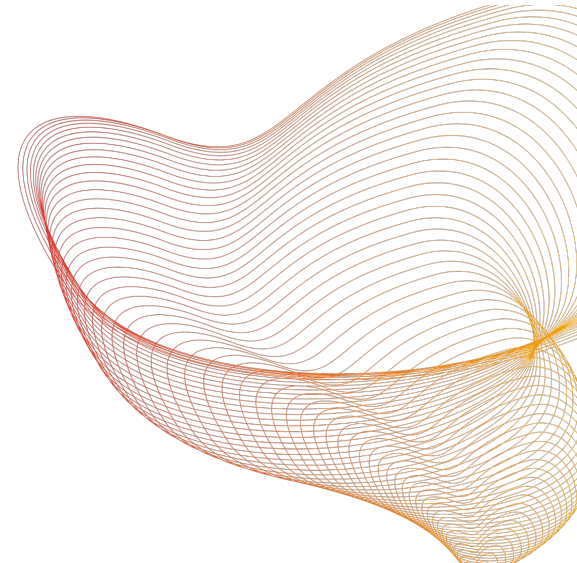




# Understanding the Theology of Abundance

The Gospel of John is full of examples of abundance:

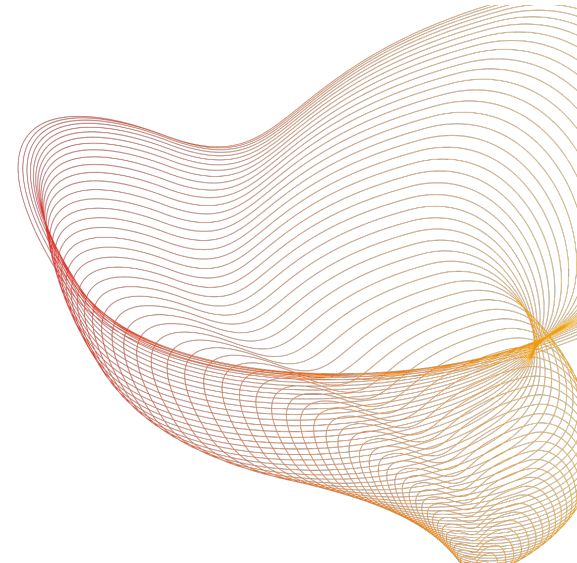
- Chapter 2: the wedding at Cana
- Chapter 4: the woman at the well
- Chapter 6: the feeding of the five thousand





# Understanding the Theology of Abundance

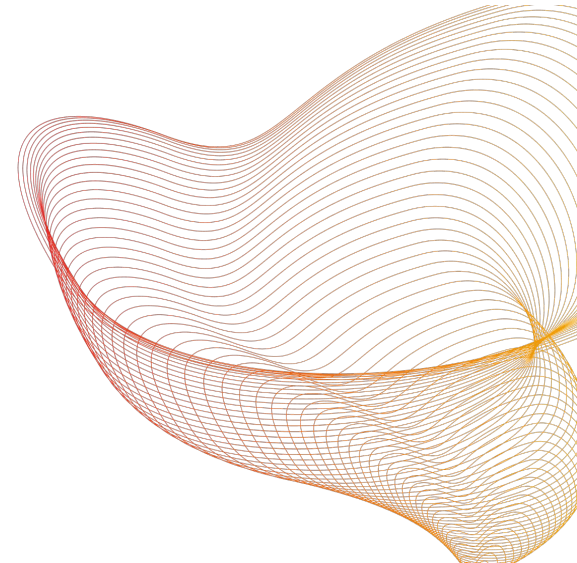
All of these tell us how the people of God found it hard to conceive of the abundant life breaking through Jesus because of **the form in which it came.**





# Understanding the Theology of Abundance

If we accept God's abundance, it **might mean changes**.

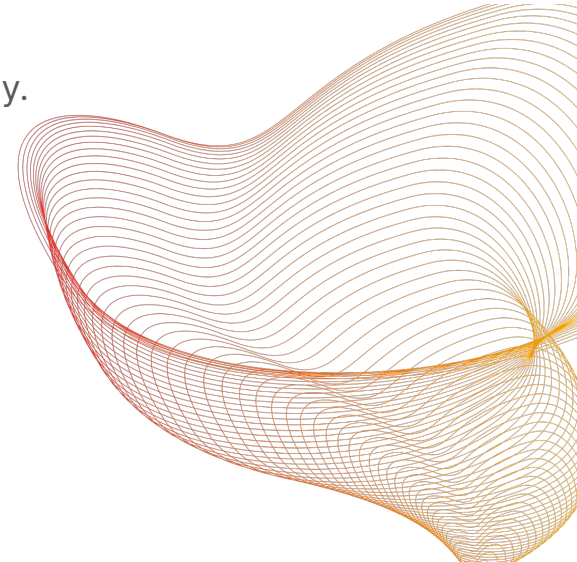




# Understanding the Theology of Abundance

If we accept God's abundance, it **might mean changes**.

- Structures we have set up that **place us at the center** of God's story.

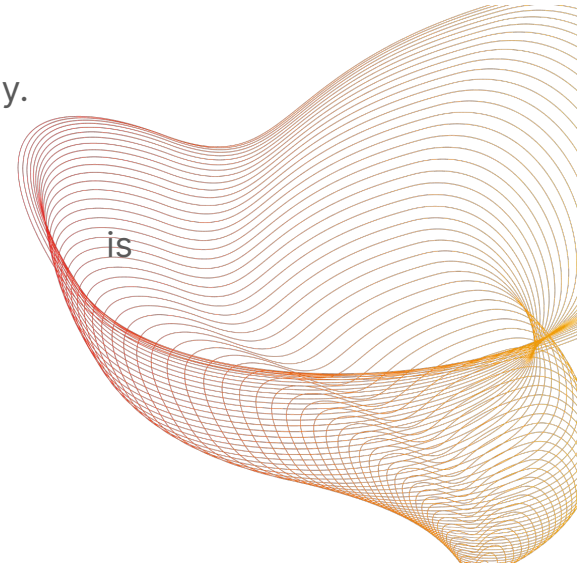




# Understanding the Theology of Abundance

If we accept God's abundance, it **might mean changes**.

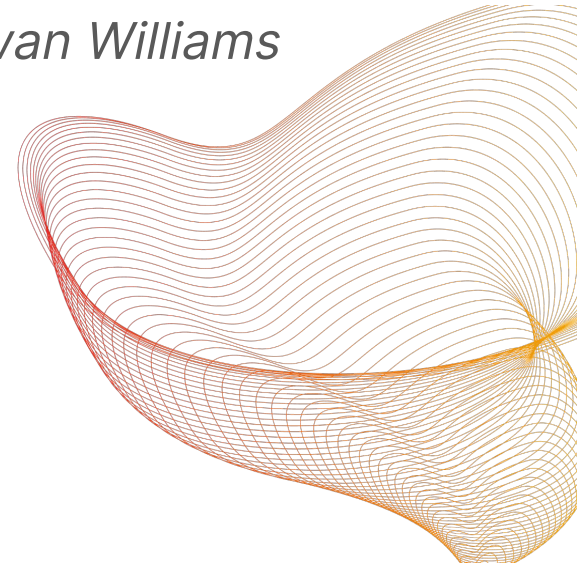
- Structures we have set up that **place us at the center** of God's story.
- Sometimes, the difference between scarcity and abundance is a shift to a story where **God is at the center rather than us**.





“God's action in the world - the way God works in the world - is designed to draw people out of themselves, which is indeed exactly how love functions.”

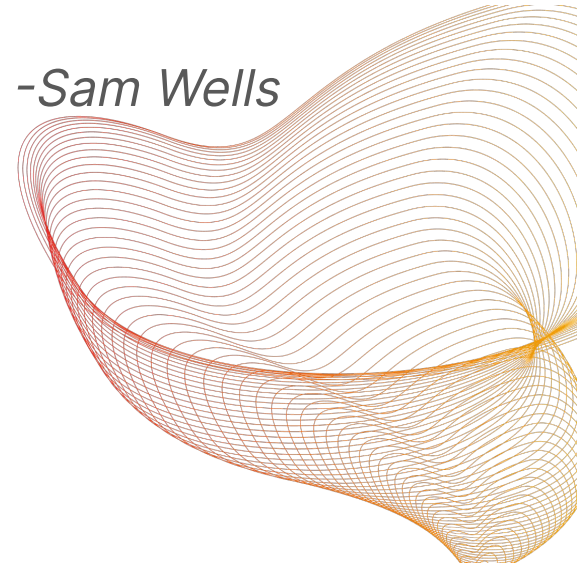
*-Rowan Williams*





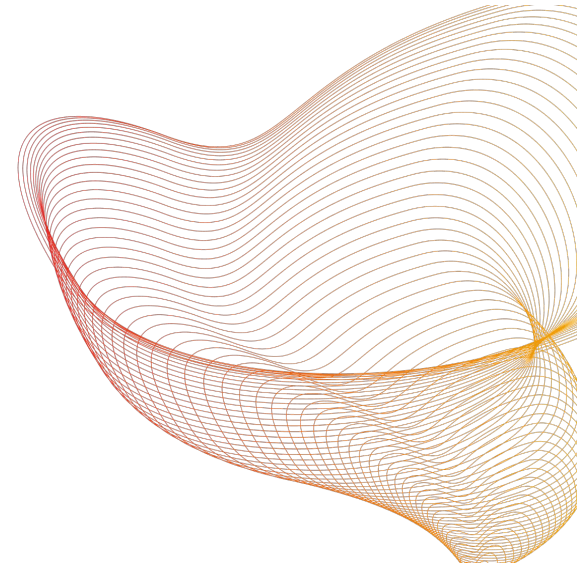
“It's only when the man by the side of the road is beaten up and left in the gutter that he's prepared to accept help from a Samaritan because a Samaritan is the last person he would accept help from.”

*-Sam Wells*





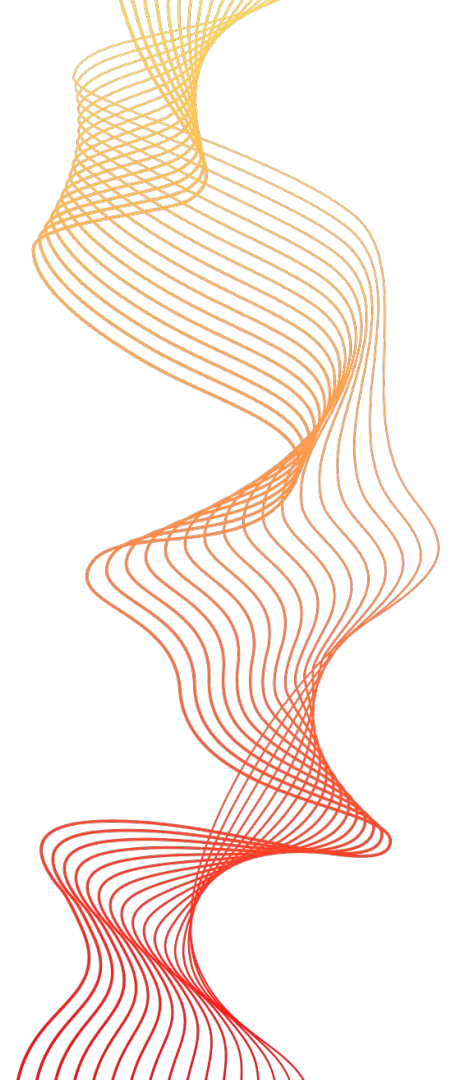
God is sending help in all sorts of places, but most of us, if we place ourselves in the New Testament, wouldn't dream of accepting help from most of the places from which that help is coming.





## Some examples

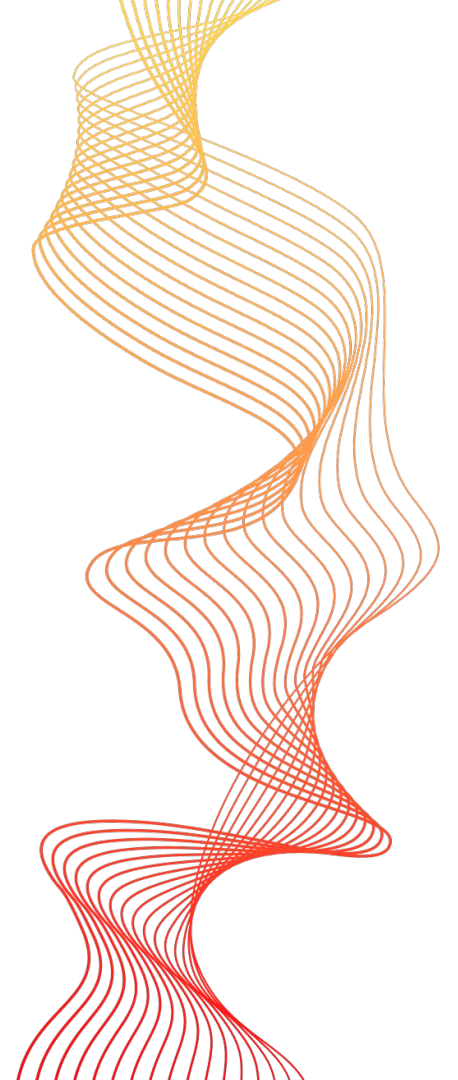
1. Homeless program at SMITF, London
2. Vivaldi's *Osperia della Pietá - Magnificat*
3. St. Stephen's, Hollywood





# Adjusting our imagination

**“If only...”**

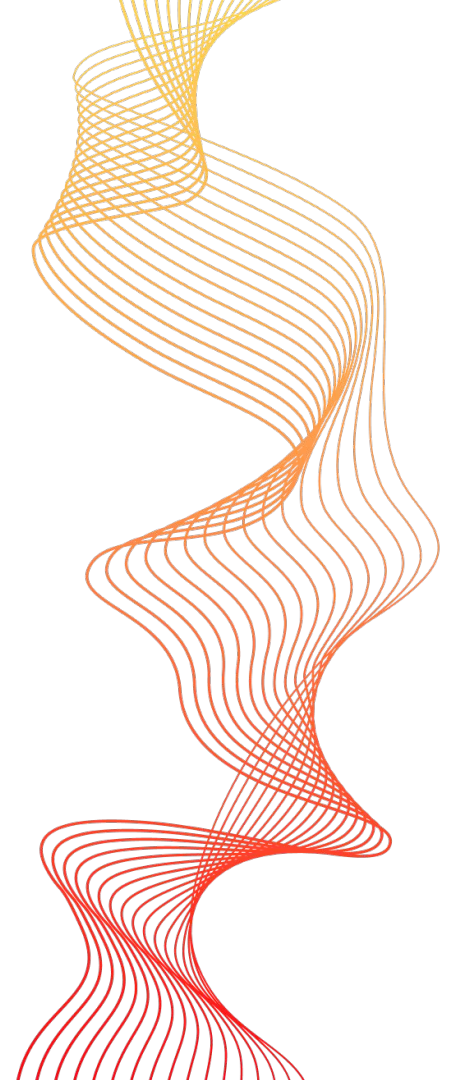




# Adjusting our imagination

**“If only...”**

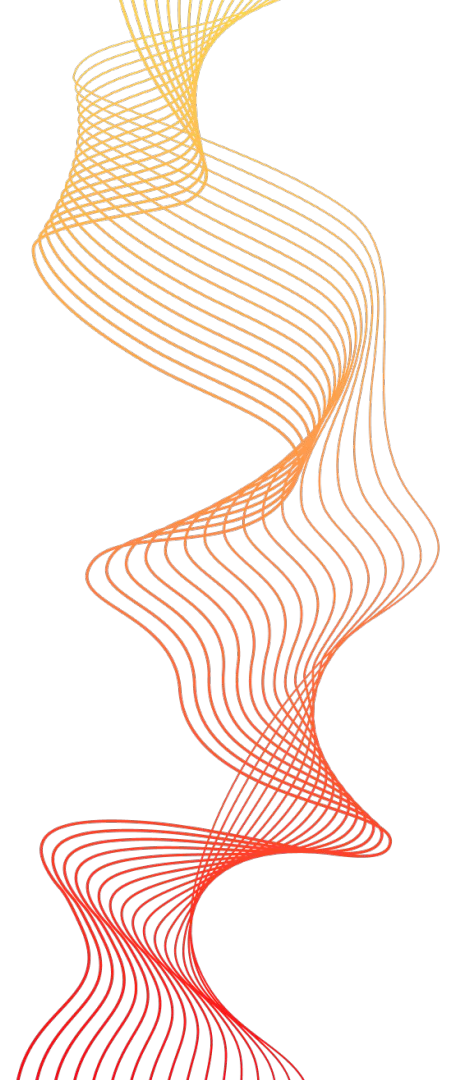
**New, interesting, more dynamic.**





# Adjusting our imagination

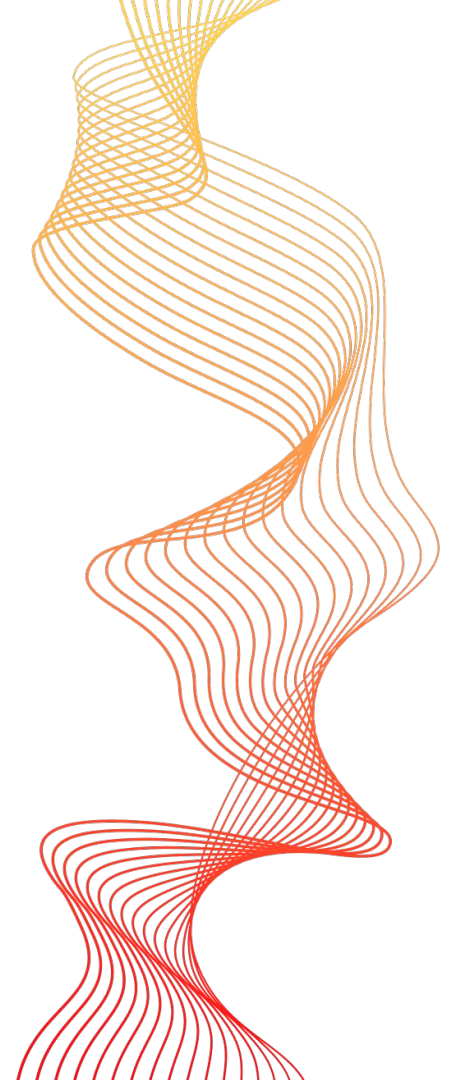
GIVE US THE  
STAMPS & NOBODY  
TO EAT HURT!  
X





# Abundance inventory

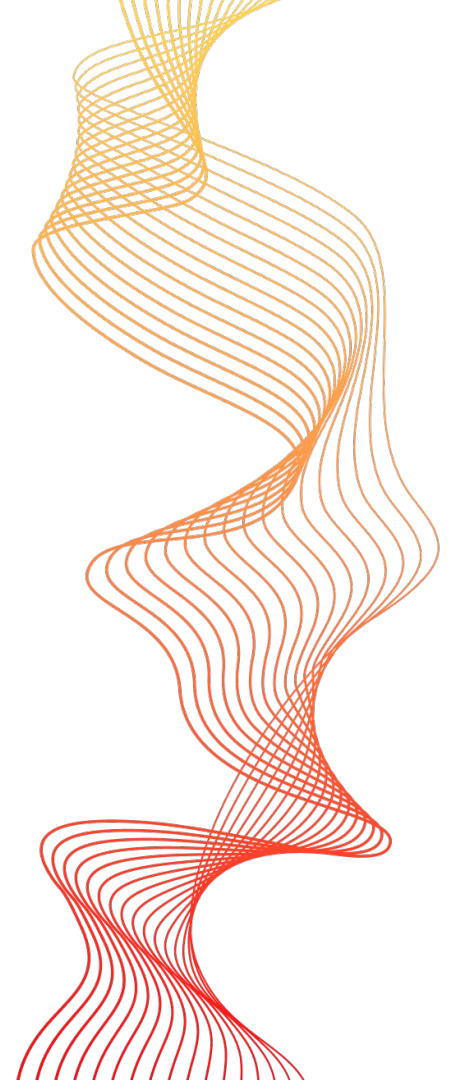
1. Begin by sitting in a quiet, comfortable space. Take deep breaths, centering your thoughts on the presence of God.
2. Write down what you perceive as the "scarce" resources in your life and ministry. These could range from time, community involvement, to spiritual fulfillment.
3. Open your Bible to the Gospel of John. Reflect on Chapters 2, 4, and 6 as you read. Take notes on how abundance manifests itself in these chapters.





# Abundance inventory

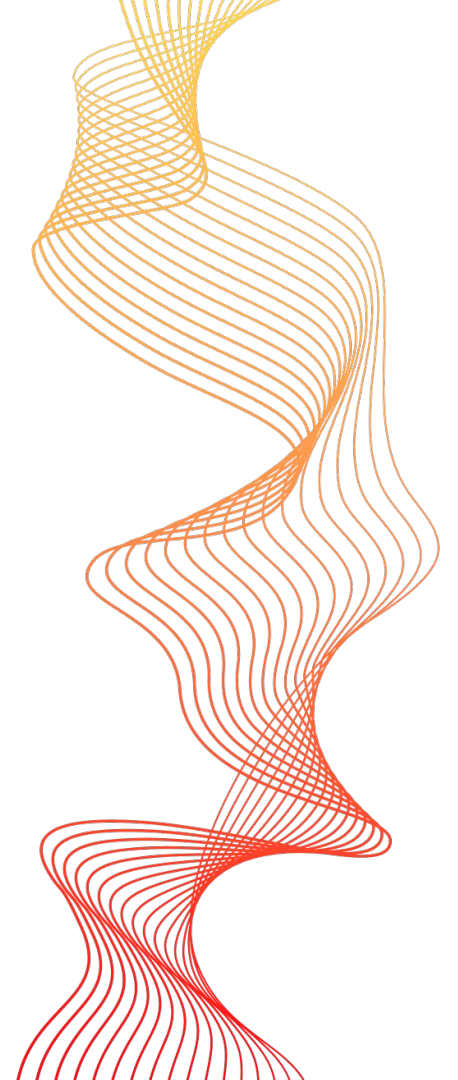
4. On a new page, list what you already have in abundance in your life and ministry—relationships, skills, particular successes, and so on. Now, think critically: Are some of these items also listed as "scarce"? How does viewing them through the lens of abundance change your perspective?
5. Rethink your current ministry plans or personal goals, placing God at the center. Rewrite them in a way that recognizes and utilizes the resources you've identified as abundant.
6. How would your church structure change if you leaned into this theology of abundance? What concrete steps could you take to enact this?





# Appreciative Inquiry 101

An overview of the Appreciative Inquiry approach and its application in a church setting.

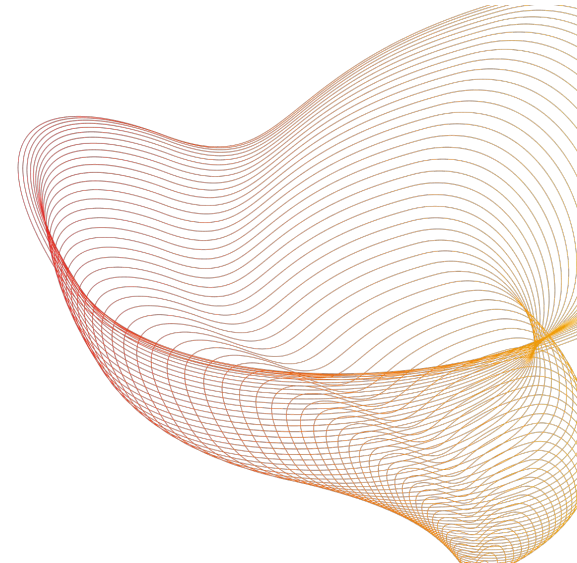




# Introduction

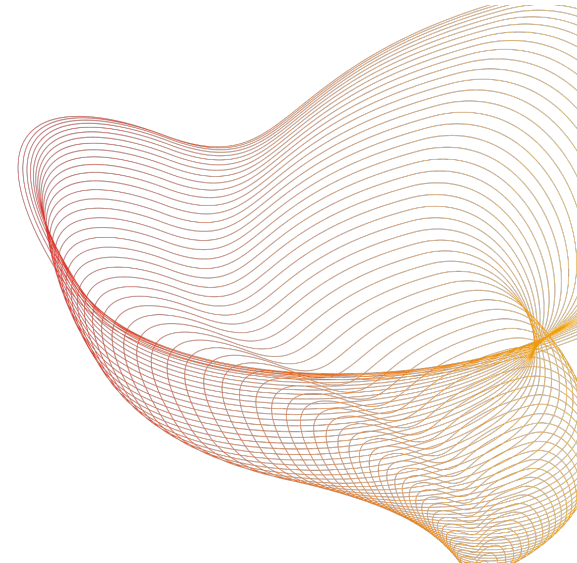
The Appreciative Inquiry approach is the most suitable for a church setting for the following reasons:

1. Focus on strengths (yours or borrowed!)
2. Inclusive and participatory
3. Positive and uplifting
4. Adaptable to different contexts
5. Emphasis on shared vision





**It all begins with a topic choice!!**



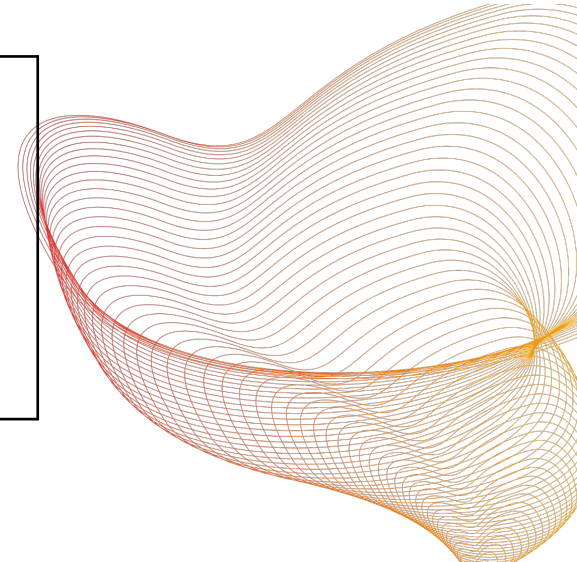


# Topic Characteristics and Rules of Thumb

Characteristics of good topics:

- Stated in the positive...some examples:

Original topic	Affirmative Topic
Communications Learning and Development Management behavior Commitment and Enthusiasm	Compelling communications Continuous learning Integrity in action / inspirational leadership Culture as a strategic advantage / Let's do it





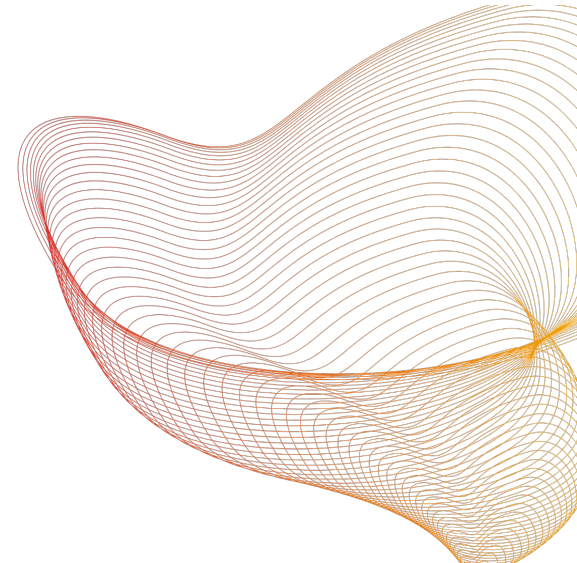
# Topic Characteristics and Rules of Thumb

Characteristics of good topics:

- Stated in the positive
- Desirable
- Driven by curiosity and genuine desire
- Consistent with values and direction of the congregation

Rules of thumb for topic choice:

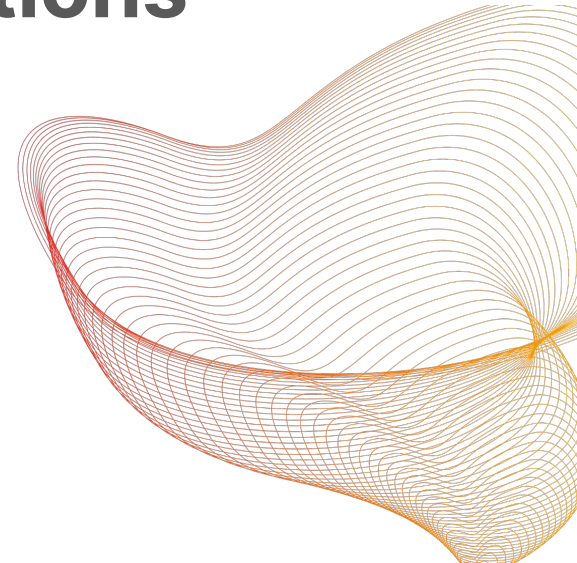
- Select no more than five topics
- Involve stakeholders in topic development





Our topic for today

# “Compelling Communications”



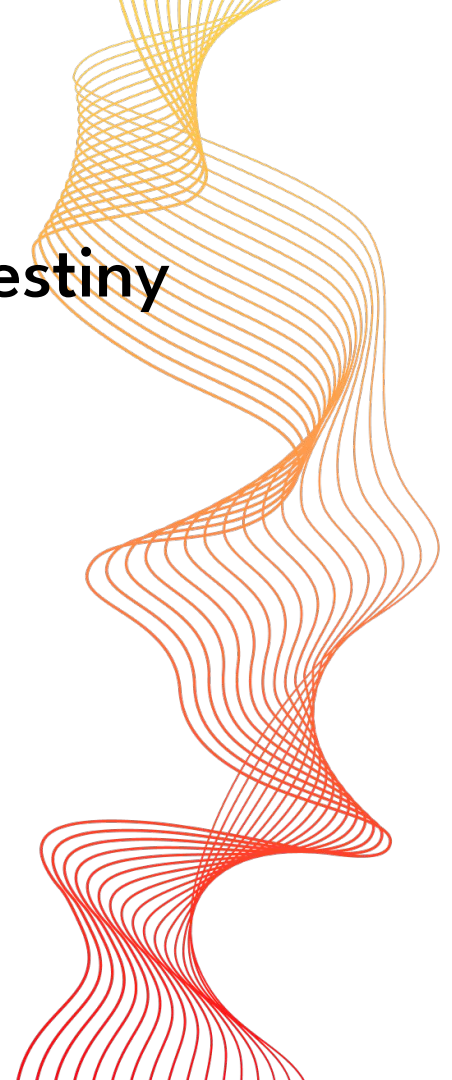


# The Four Ds: Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny

The Appreciative Inquiry process consists of four phases known as the Four Ds.

Each phase plays a crucial role in creating a positive and innovative culture within the church.

By following these phases, the church can identify its strengths, envision a better future, design strategies, and achieve long-term success.

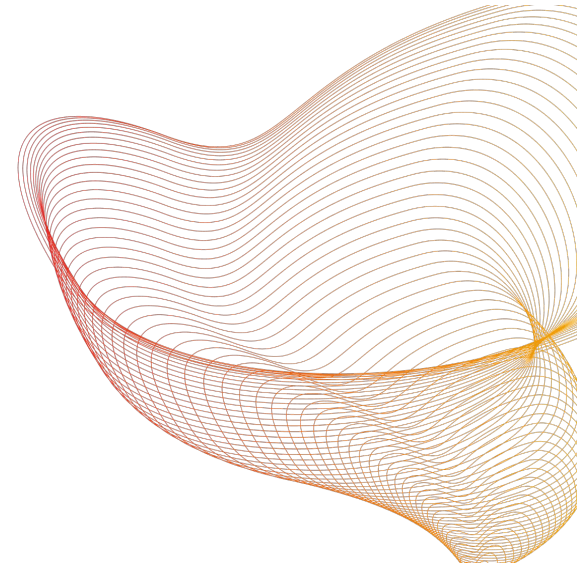




## **Discover** Phase: Appreciating the Best (deconstruct the best)

Understand the **unique factors** that made the high points possible.

What about the unique factors makes them “best”?



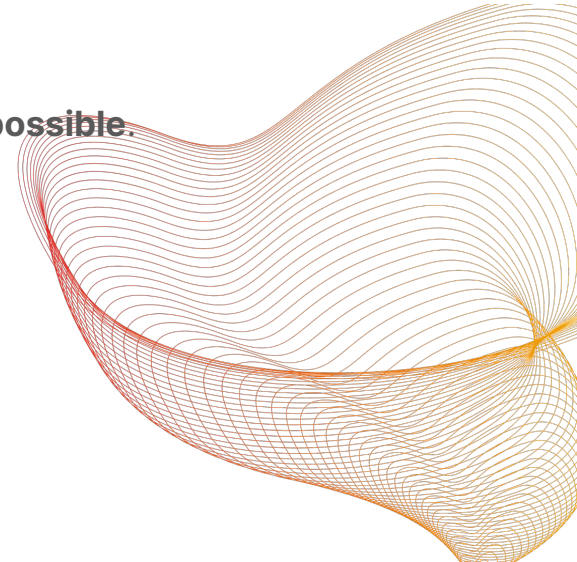
# Discover Phase: Compelling Communications

- Can you share an example of a communication that truly engaged and inspired you?
- What communication methods or techniques have you found most effective in conveying a message?
- Have you experienced any memorable instances where communication was pivotal in a positive outcome?
- How do you believe effective communication contributes to building strong relationships and connections?
- Are there any particular stories or narratives related to communication that resonate with you or your community?
- What are the key qualities or elements that make communication compelling in your opinion?



## **Dream** Phase: Envisioning a Better Future (make the “best” yours)

- From the deconstruct in the Discover phase, **dream of what your congregation could be.**
- Challenge the status quo and **expand people's sense of what's possible.**
- Clarify the **values and principles** driving these aspirations.



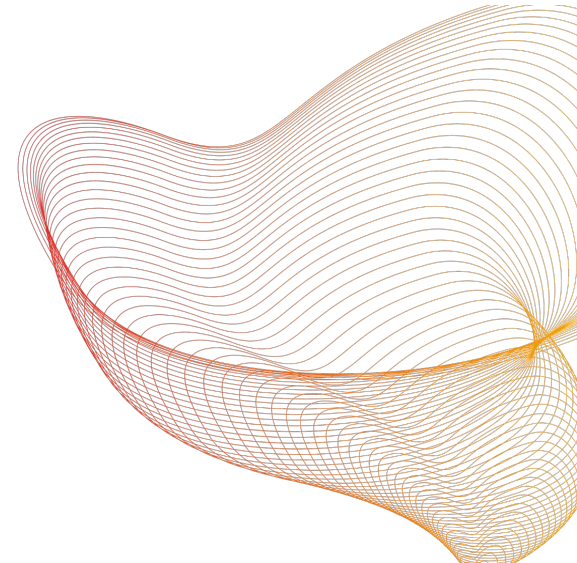
# Dream Phase: Compelling Communications

- What would a world with perfect, compelling communication look like to you?
- Can you imagine a scenario where your church's communication is so compelling that it deeply resonates with young people?
- What innovative communication strategies can you envision that would make your church a hub for young people seeking spiritual guidance?
- How might technology and digital platforms play a role in creating compelling communications for your congregation?
- If all barriers were removed, what impact could compelling communication have on your mission to make the church more appealing to young people?
- In an ideal future, how would compelling communication strengthen the bond between your congregation and the community?



## **Design** Phase: Constructing the Future

- **Identify the ideal** and construct the future.
- **Engage the community** in the design process.
- Translate dreams into **actionable strategies and plans**.
- Set clear **goals, timelines, and priorities**.



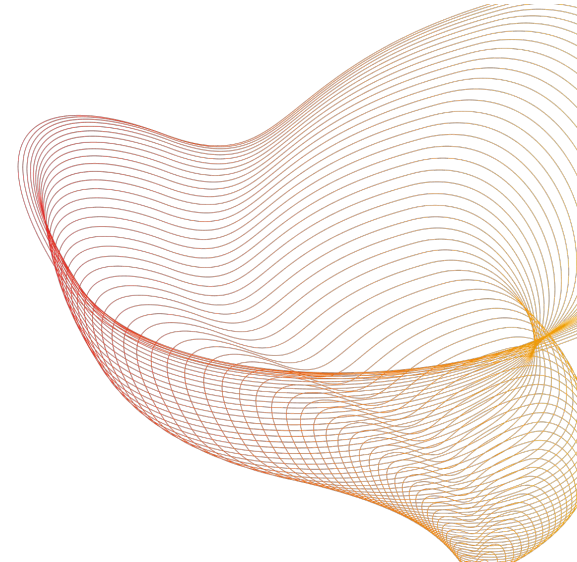
# Design Phase: Compelling Communications

- What specific steps can be taken to integrate compelling communication into your church's outreach efforts?
- How can you involve young people in the design and creation of compelling communication content?
- Are there resources or expertise you need to bring your vision of compelling communication to life?
- What measurable goals can you set to track the effectiveness of your compelling communication strategies?
- Can you outline a timeline for implementing and refining your communication plan?
- How will you adapt and iterate your communication approach based on feedback and outcomes?



## **Destiny** Phase: Empower, Learn, Sustain (maintaining the best)

- **Implement** plans and **monitor** progress.
- **Empower, learn, improvise,** and **sustain** what gives life.
- Continuous **learning, adjustment, and improvisation** are required.
- **Sustain and adapt** strategies over time.



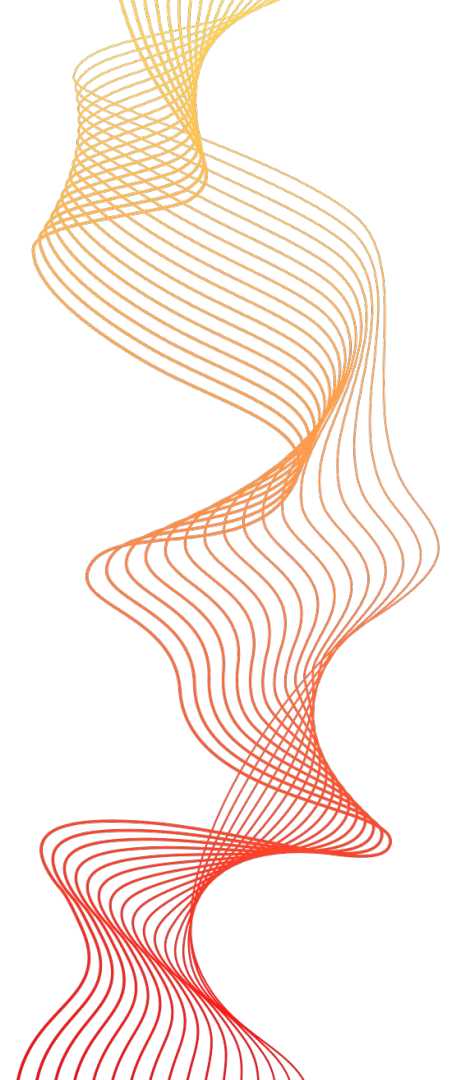
# Destiny Phase: Compelling Communications

- How can you ensure that compelling communication becomes an integral and sustained part of your church's culture?
- What role will you personally play in championing and supporting compelling communication initiatives?
- How can you inspire and empower others within your congregation to take ownership of this vision?
- Can you describe the long-term impact you hope compelling communication will have on your church's relationship with young people?
- What legacy do you aspire to leave in terms of transforming your church's communication for future generations?
- How will you continually adapt and evolve your communication strategies to remain relevant to the evolving needs of young people?



The Four Ds:

**Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny**





# How to try (recap)

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Design Thinking in Church Innovation


The Rev Lorenzo Lebrija  
Executive *Director, TryTank*



Before all the  
work

It is important to remember that this is about Jesus and spreading of the gospel.





Build your  
team!

A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing white text. The graphic is centered on a white background and has a rough, hand-painted appearance with some lighter blue and white speckles around its edges.

# Step 1: Generating Insights



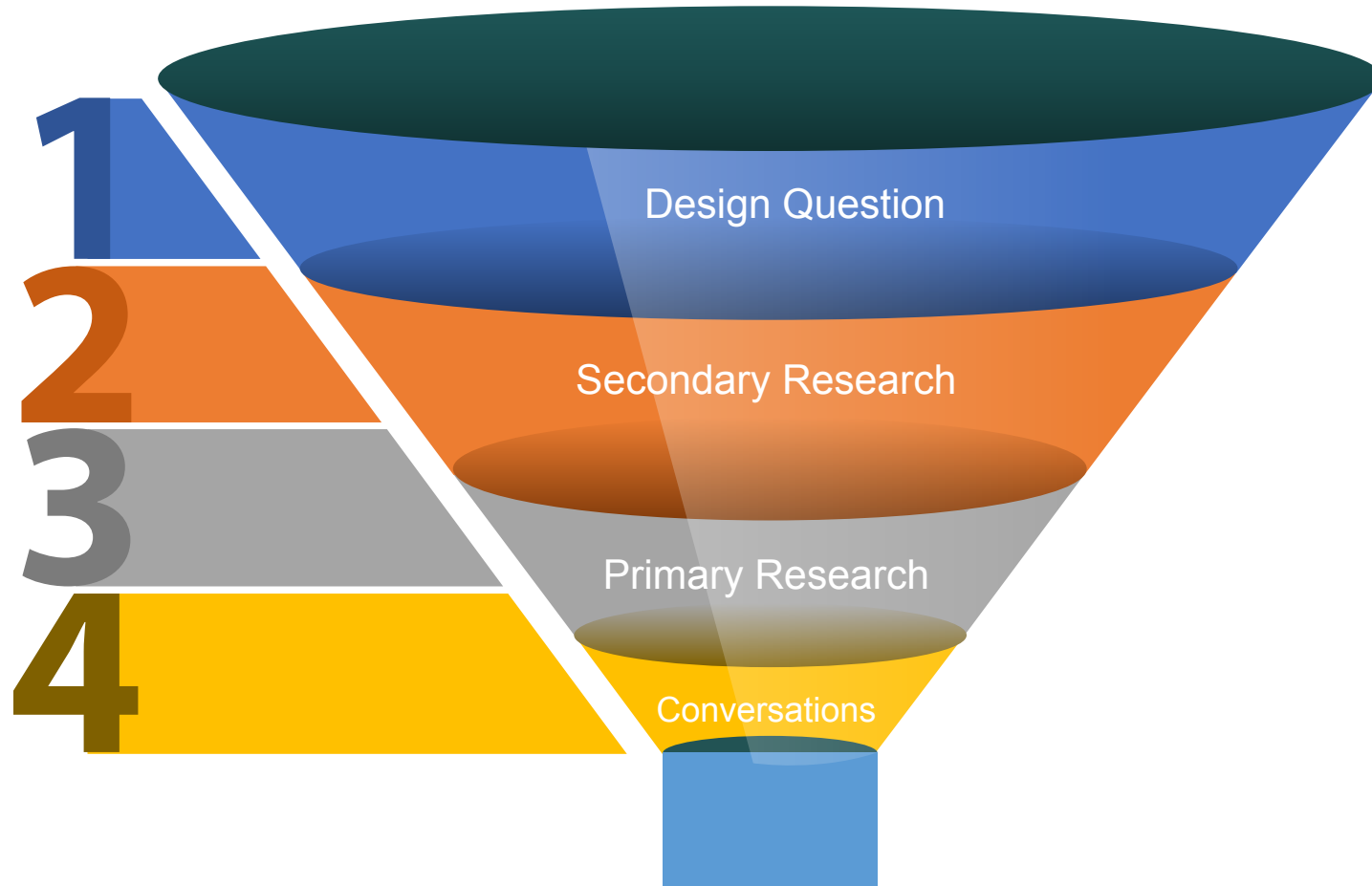
Mindset:  
*Be Curious*



## The Design Question

- What if we add a contemporary service?
- How can we better serve our neighborhood as it changes?
- What if we open a preschool?
- How can we bring in more revenue?

# Generating Insights



**Remember**

Get others  
involved and  
make sure  
stakeholders  
buy in.

A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing white text. The graphic is centered on a white background and has a rough, hand-painted appearance with some lighter blue and white splatters around its edges.

## Step 2: Developing Ideas



Mindset:  
Be Playful!

**Always  
begin with  
prayer**

This is when the Holy Spirit can be with you.

Invite the Divine to inspire you to spread the Gospel.

Trust that God will be with you in this work.

# Shift the Design Question

“What if...”  
Becomes  
”How might we...”

# Developing ideas

Other people's shoes

eStorm

Brainstorm

**HARD**



**EASY**

**HOW?**

**NOW!**

**WOW!**

**NORMAL**



**ORIGINAL**



# Step 3: Trying



Mindset:  
Be **BOLD!**

# Mission Canvas

(1) DESIGN QUESTION	(3) STAKEHOLDERS	(4) ELEVATOR PITCH	(6) PARTNERS	(2) OUR SOLUTION
EXISTING ALTERNATIVES	(9) KEY METRICS		(5) PATH TO TARGETS	
(8) EXPENSES			(7) FUNDING SOURCES	

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# Mission Canvas

15 minutes to fill out

Order is suggested only

OK to skip for a moment, but  
come back to it.

Do one for each idea.

<b>(1) DESIGN QUESTION</b>	<b>(3) STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>(4) ELEVATOR PITCH</b>	<b>(6) PARTNERS</b>	<b>(2) OUR SOLUTION</b>
<b>EXISTING ALTERNATIVES</b>	<b>(9) KEY METRICS</b>		<b>(5) PATH TO TARGETS</b>	
<b>(8) EXPENSES</b>			<b>(7) FUNDING SOURCES</b>	

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# Mission Canvas Parts

1- Design Question

2- Our solution

3- Stakeholders

4- Elevator pitch

5- Path

# Mission Canvas Parts

6- Partners

7- Funding Sources

8- Expenses

9- Key metrics

<b>(1) DESIGN QUESTION</b>	<b>(3) STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>(4) ELEVATOR PITCH</b>	<b>(6) PARTNERS</b>	<b>(2) OUR SOLUTION</b>
<b>EXISTING ALTERNATIVES</b>	<b>(9) KEY METRICS</b>		<b>(5) PATH TO TARGETS</b>	
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# MVP - Minimum Viable Prototype

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Using the Mission Canvas,  
especially section 9!

---

Must be able to measure what  
you'll measure for success.

---

Strip away from the completed  
project until you can't.

Try!



# WARNING!

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It is important to remember that this is about Jesus and spreading of the gospel.





Thank you.