

# RULES OF DIALOGUE

BOTH SIDES ARE WILLING TO CHANGE

## THE PRACTICE

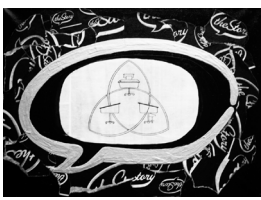
At theStory we value and use discussion a lot during our teaching times. We ask questions, have questions asked to us and wrestle with the text or topic out loud. In doing this we've learned a lot about public discourse. Here are the guidelines that we acknowledge as a community for our discussion.



**Umbrella of Mercy** - No matter what you say you won't get mocked or judged for the idea you are sharing. We want the dialogue to be a safe place where we can see value in everything and even if the idea isn't accepted, it is still given a level of mercy and grace.



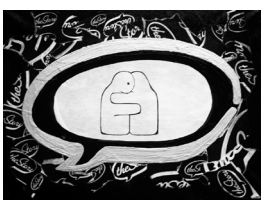
**Personal Stories** - Stories are always better than analogies. Tie in the topic with your life. Tell your story to get the point across. Be transparent and honest and share how the topic relates to your life personally.



**Teacher/Student, Student/Teacher** - There is no teacher who is not a student. We are all constantly learning and we all need each other to learn and seek truth more fully. We all have a capacity to teach and we all have a capacity to learn. Always default to learning.



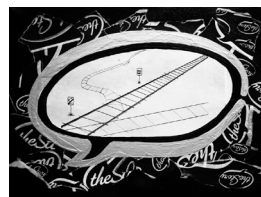
**Question Without Penalty** - All questions, about anything are fair game. There is no out of bounds. Even if it makes us squirm in our seat, you can ask the hard questions.



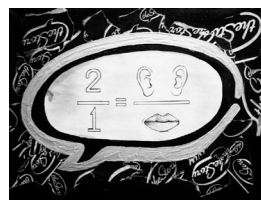
**Trust the Other** - Dialogue can only happen when you trust the other person in the dialogue. If you are skeptical, are constantly criticizing and rolling your eyes, then you will never be in true dialogue. Dialogue will only take place when you can trust and engage the other on their level, not just your own.



**Grow the Conversation** - "Never" and "always" are words we use to try to forcefully prove our points but don't really help. Be generous and graceful. Point out that it's from your experience that you usually experience something in a certain way.



**Stay on Topic** - Refer back to the original topic/question. If your comment doesn't directly relate to the conversation and/or especially the question, then write it down and bring it up some other time.



**Listen then Talk** - It's very easy to get so caught up in what you want to say that you forget to listen to the rest of the conversation that is happening. Listen to everyone and everything that is happening in the room. Engage a thought that you listened to and pondered, don't feel the need to offer a new thought every time.



**Grace to Change Your Mind** - If we are going to be honest in dialogue, we will always come up to a point where we can either keep fighting when we know we are wrong or suck up our pride, admit where we were wrong and then keep the discussion going. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to follow what they feel is right, not force them to have to put up walls just to hold face.

## THE THEOLOGY BEHIND THE PRACTICE

Dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue. To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created. Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is a logical consequence.

- Chad Brooks

It is the Hebraic intuition that God is capable of all speech acts except that of monologue, which has generated our acts of reply, of questioning, of counter-creation... there had to be, if man was to bear his being, the means of dialogue with God, which are spelled out in our poetics, music, art.

- George Steiner

True dialogue is as far as possible from neutrality or indifference. Its basis is the shared conviction that there is truth to be known and that we must both bear witness to the truth given to us and also listen to the witness of others.

- Leslie Newbigin

