

MODULE 4: CONTEXT

MODULE OBJECTIVES:

Understand how clarity about identity and context align to drive participation in God's story.

Explore the context that you and your team are hoping to see transformed.

Imagine a different future for your context

Seed Tools: *Scoping Context Tool*, "Theory of Change Canvas Introduction.pdf"

Selected Readings: Chapters 5, 12 & 14 of *Culture Making*, by Andy Crouch.

MODULE OVERVIEW:

The key question addressed here is, where has God placed you? Context is explored by first using the Redemptive Design tool *Scoping Context*, before moving onto Seed's unique *Theory of Change Canvas*. This tool walks participants through the key processes of imagining a future, unpacking their current reality before identifying practical next steps. In this module, we focus on the imagination piece. The two strands of identity (*who we are*) and participation (*what we do*) are then combined in the crafting of a purpose statement.

MODULE BREAKDOWN:

- 4.1 Identity and Context
- 4.2 Scoping Context
- 4.3 Introduction to Theory of Change
- 4.4 Imagined Future
- 4.5 Your Purpose Statement

Important Information for the Grower:

The Christian faith is not so much a matter of believing certain things about God, the world and our own identities. Indeed, understanding our place in God's story and our identity in Christ is just the start. The Christian life is ongoing participation in the story of Jesus.

This module presents two key Redemptive Design tools that enable participants to gain clarity about God's specific invitation to us to participate in the contexts where He has placed us, using the passions and skills that He has gifted to us.

As such, the central questions we want individuals to explore in this module are:

Where has God placed you? And
What is the Imagined Future, the story God is revealing to you about this context in 5-10 years time?

The goal of this module is to begin forming answers to these questions because good design starts with clarity. We want participants to gain clarity about the change that God is calling them to create.

Grower Tips:

- It is strongly suggested that you complete this module before leading a group through the Scoping Context, Imagined Future and Purpose Statement sections.
- Read in full the supporting document, "Theory of Change Canvas Introduction.pdf" and maybe have a copy on hand for those who appreciate the full picture (see section 4.3).



4.1 IDENTITY AND CONTEXT

SUGGESTED TIME: 10-15 MINUTES

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING...

 In previous modules, we have commenced the process of discerning God's story and our place in that story. Through this we have explored the idea that God is interested in both *who we are* (our identity) and *what we do* (how we participate).

So far, we have focused on identity, *who we are*, and now we are turning our attention to the question of how we can participate in God's work of redemption and renewal. These are two pieces of the same process, and our end point will be to combine both *who we are* and *what we do*.

We call this combination "alignment", and it hinges on the concept that God seems particularly interested in whether what we do is aligned with who he has made us to be.

If we are able to bring our context into greater alignment with what God intends for it, people will get a "taste and see experience" of life as God intends; of what life with Jesus is like.

Before we can seek to align our desire for change with God's intentions for our context, we need clarity about the context and the scope of what we (and potentially others who are working with us) are seeking to achieve.

Clarity is vitally important for effective design.

Another way to put it is that once we understand our identity in Christ, we seek, empowered by the Spirit, to embody (to live into and up to) the reality of who God has already made us to be through his grace in Jesus Christ. **We want to step into the invitation God has for us to do good works (Eph 2:10) but before we can do that we need to understand what God is inviting us into.**

Because living into who God made us to be happens in a particular context where God has placed us, our next step in the process is to unpack the question: *Where has God placed you?*



GROWER NOTES



Connect—welcome participants to the session.

Ask people how they went since the last session with their Identity Statements and questions about what they love and long for.



Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you in this session.



Read Ephesians 1:3-10. **Pause** for a moment and reflect in silence.

We want to allow a moment here for people to be grounded in what God says about us before we continue in the session.



Read aloud the introductory paragraphs above.



Ask participants if they have any questions before we move to the next section.



4.2 SCOPING CONTEXT

SUGGESTED TIME: 30-60 MINUTES



The Scoping Context tool is designed to answer the question

where has God placed you?

To start, consider where it is that you sense God might be leading you to be a redemptive influence and make a difference. We encourage you to broadly think of your vocational context. This may be your paid work, your work in the home, your study, or volunteer service. The context you choose will be the focus for the remainder of this changemaker community process.*

The context you have chosen may be quite complex. This exercise will help you more clearly define the various things in your context that would need to change in order for it to be more aligned with God's intention. It will help you draw boundaries around what is not important or outside your scope. And it will help you begin to define what is important, and what could be the particular focus of your part in God's story.

The tool simply asks you to list the various aspects of your context across four areas:

** If you are unsure about what context you are currently in, we recommend making a decision for now and revisiting it later. We have an additional module you can undertake after this session: "Discerning Vocation: how your current roles align with God's story." This optional module is recommended for anyone who wants to firm up their understanding of their context and their roles within that context. For more information, talk to your Grower.*



1. People – the groups of people that you serve in your context.

Note, if it is a small context, feel free to name individuals, but generally you will be naming groups like customers, colleagues, students, team etc.

2. Places – the physical spaces you desire to see transformed.

This may be a geographical community or region or a school, workplace or building.

3. Systems – the policies or structures you might want to change because they are preventing your context (and the people you serve) from flourishing as God intends

For example, a lawyer wants to give more time to their clients, but their firm's pricing policy means she has to charge clients for every 6 minutes. A teacher wants to attend to individual student needs, but class sizes make it almost impossible to do that.

4. Culture — the narratives and mindsets that exist within your context (or within wider society) that would need to shift for your context to flourish as God intends.

For example, the mindset at the law firm, might need to shift from "profit first, people second". Or the cultural mindset for pre-school educators needs to shift from "child-carers" to "early-childhood educators".



Once you have listed these, take some time to consider which of these are most important to you? Which stand out? Which are you really passionate about changing?

Note that all the various parts are interconnected, and in order for your context to flourish as God intends, there will likely need to be changes at all levels – the individual, the physical, the systemic and the cultural. However, it is important to understand what you think might be priority for you.

Highlight or circle a few (2-4) that stand out as a priority for you at this stage. Note that this may change as you go through the rest of the process and get a deeper understanding of your context and the ways in which God is already at work there.

GROWER NOTES

 **Watch** the video “Understanding Context”.

 **Read** aloud the text above.

 **Ask** participants the following question, Does this idea of context makes sense to you?

 **Invite** participants to start filling out the *Scoping Context Tool* (on the next page).

Before they begin, participants need to identify the boundaries and focus points of their context for this process. We encourage people to consider their main vocational context, or wherever they spend the most time.

 **Invite** participants to share either in pairs or together as a group the following:

Who are you seeking to serve?

 **(Optional) Which of the 4 areas of Scoping Context did you find easiest/hardest?**

The additional module, “Discerning Vocation: how your current roles align with God’s story”, can be undertaken as a group or individual as needed. It is recommended for anyone struggling to clearly identify their current context. We especially recommend it to anyone who is finding the Imagined Future exercise difficult due to a lack of clarity about the context they’re serving.

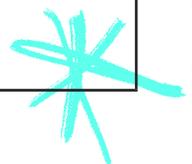




SEED

Scoping Context

PEOPLE	PLACES
SYSTEMS	CULTURE



4.3 INTRODUCTION TO THEORY OF CHANGE CANVAS

SUGGESTED TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

The *Theory of Change Canvas* (TOCC) is one of Seed's core Redemptive Design tools. The tool is purpose-built to help you discern what distinctive part you might play within God's mission in a particular context. The TOCC incorporates thinking from a number of disciplines including Human-Centred Design and Systems-Thinking. The TOCC draws on these disciplines and reframes them by making God's story and mission foundational to the design process.

The TOCC works through 8 different steps, helping to ensure that any idea or initiative is aligned with:

1. God's purposes for the context.
2. The needs of the beneficiaries in that context.
3. The mission/vision/strategic priorities of the user.
4. The particular capabilities that the user has to offer into the context.

In this module we will only be working through the first step which is **Imagination: considering what the context might look like if it were more aligned with God's design and desire by asking what the imagined future is for the context you have been scoping.**

For more information about the TOCC, see the handout, *Theory of Change Canvas Introduction* which will also show you what the full canvas looks like. A fillable PDF version of the canvas is available for download in the relevant folder on the Changemaker Course section of the Seed website. For now, we will be focusing on our Imagined Futures.

GROWER NOTES



Read aloud the text above.

Before this module, we recommend that you read in full the handout "Theory of Change Canvas Introduction" and even have a copy on hand for participants who are curious about the larger picture of the TOCC.

The main goal for now is to ask people to begin imagining a different future for their context with the awareness that we will be revisiting this imagination in future modules with some extremely practical steps that will help them land specific details about their next steps.



4.4 IMAGINED FUTURE

SUGGESTED TIME: 30-60 MINUTES

“Christians are people whose roots are in the future. Our branches are in the present, but our roots are in the future.” John Zizioulas

In this section we are going to prayerfully imagine what your context might look like in 5-10 years from now.

What would your context look like if it was more aligned with what God intends?

Each time you engage your imagination, you are learning to see your context as God sees it, as God intends it to be. Learning to imagine in line with God’s intent is a powerful force to help you see what might need to change now. When we lose the ability to imagine, we get stuck in the way things are.

It is important to note that this activity is not trying to lock in a concrete future that we must achieve. We aren’t trying to dream up a road map for how you will influence your context in the next 5-10 years. The future has an almost endless variety of possibilities that could be congruent with your purpose.

The point of using your imagination in this way is to open yourself up to future possibilities and good work (even outside your current context and comfort zones!)

Capture a snapshot of what could be, ideally in pictures. The preference is that you draw or be creative by writing a letter from your future self or a news article that describes what your context looks like in 5-10 years. Being creative engages the imaginative parts of the brain and allows broader thinking. But there are no rules!

Consider the following questions:

- Who is there?
- Where are you?
- What change has been achieved? Who has achieved it and how has it been achieved?
- How are the people in your context feeling?
- What are the people in your context saying?





GROWER NOTES



Read aloud the text above.

You may want to mention that we usually give the timeframe of 5-10 years because it is far enough away for real change to occur but close enough to be recognisable.



Encourage participants to pray individually for God to help them imagine a future for their context in 5-10 years.



Invite participants to begin capturing their Imagined Future. They may want to spread out and find space to contemplate.

Note: It is recommended participants have a clear *Scoping Context* list before moving onto their imagined future. If a participant wasn't clear on their Context, encourage them to go back to spend more time on it before moving on.



Ask participants to share what their Imagined Future looks like.

If time is a factor ask them to share in small groups or invite just one or two people to share with the whole group.



4.5 YOUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

SUGGESTED TIME: 15-30 MINUTES



A Purpose Statement is a powerful way to capture both your identity and your context and can provide great clarity about the invitation God extends to you to participate in his redemptive and renewing work in the world.

Your purpose statement integrates who you are (your identity statement) with who you serve and the change you seek to participate in (your context). It is the foundational or summary statement of your *Purpose Storyboard* but we revisit this here now that you have worked through your context in more detail.

At Seed, we use Ephesians 2:10 as a template for our purpose statements: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”.

With this profound template, your purpose statement can take the following format:

I am God’s *[my identity statement/ who I am]* **created in Christ Jesus to** *[participate in the change among the people I seek to serve]* **which God prepared in advance for me to do.**



GROWER NOTES



Read aloud the text above.

You may want to mention that we use Ephesians 2:10 as a template because the verse tells us our identity (we are God's workmanship) and speaks to our context (created in Christ Jesus to do good works).



Invite participants to attempt a draft Purpose Statement.

Encourage them to get specific by prompting them to consider the following questions:

- what sort of workmanship would describe you?
- what sort of good works do you have a sense that God has prepared in advance for you to do?



Metaphors make great statements! You may want to provide some examples, the first example uses the metaphor of a gardener:

- I am God's gardener created in Christ Jesus to create conditions for children and youth to flourish, which God prepared in advance for me to do.

- I am God's writer, created in Christ Jesus to creatively communicate truth that informs and inspires, which God has prepared in advance for me to do.



Ask participants to share their draft Purpose Statements.

Only if they are comfortable to do so, drafts can be vulnerable!



Pray to close, thanking God for the incredible gifts of hope and imagination.

BEFORE NEXT TIME

- Prayerfully revisit your Imagined Future, is there anything else you can add, anything that might require boldness or courage to speak out in front of others?
- Iterate over your draft Purpose Statement, take time to explore what metaphors might be the right fit for you.

