

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *WHEN CORPORATIONS RULE THE WORLD* AND *THE GREAT TURNING*

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CHANGE THE STORY,

CHANGE THE

FUTURE

A LIVING ECONOMY  
FOR A LIVING EARTH



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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*“We humans live by shared cultural stories. They are the lens through which we view reality. They shape what we most value as a society and how we structure power. Hope lies in reawakening to our true nature as living beings born of a living Earth born of a living universe. An authentic sacred life and living Earth story is emerging. This is a moment of unprecedented opportunity to create a future consistent with our true nature and possibility. Change the story; change the future.”*

— David Korten

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## Notes to Facilitators

Thank you for considering hosting a conversation about ***Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth***. The importance of a widely held framing story is often overlooked as we go about our daily lives, making in-the-moment decisions, attending to priorities, and drawn to the issues about which we are most passionate. While the work to address what isn't working in our society (inequity, injustice, and environmental destruction, to name a few) and support the growing movement toward a New Economy must go on, there appears to be a readiness, as well, to take a hard look at the large framing story that underlies the current dysfunctional state of life on Earth – and consider the Living Economy for a Living Earth alternative.

“My intention in this short book,” David wrote, “is to demonstrate the depth and significance of the contrast between the story by which we currently live and the nature and implications of the story now emerging.” In this book, he continues, “...we will explore the many dimensions of the challenge of turning from a world organized around a Sacred Money and Markets story to a world organized around a Sacred Life and Living Earth story.”

While making this shift on a global scale is no small undertaking, it is necessary to displace the current story, and this begins with each of us - wherever we are, within our circles of influence – to listen to and share the stories in our hearts, invite others into the conversation, and help shape a new public, life-supporting story.

This Guide is designed to provide opportunities to practice the art of telling our own stories, sharing our insights on critical issues, and asking tough questions of ourselves and each other; it offers a framework for conversations that will become the seedbeds for a new story and the acceleration of a much needed transformation to a life-supporting economy.

However you choose to use this Guide, we welcome feedback regarding your experience and ideas to improve it (what works, what doesn't). Please direct comments and questions to Kat Gjovik at [kat@greatturning.org](mailto:kat@greatturning.org) or 206-780-0108.

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Deep gratitude to all who have contributed to the development of this Discussion Guide, with special thanks to the members of the Bainbridge Island-North Kitsap Interfaith Council and the Earth & Spirit program at Grace Church on Bainbridge Island, especially Judy McKenzie, for participating in early discussion groups and providing invaluable feedback/input to David and this Guide.

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## Discussion Guide Format

There are many ways to host and facilitate a meaningful conversation about stories, how they influence our personal world views and our work in the world, and the implications for our future.

The depth of the subject matter in *Change the Story, Change the Future*, by its very nature and in our experience, invites conversation that goes well beyond what can be explored in a single two-hour session. (See Note) This guide is divided into four sections; we suggest two hours for each session.

- **The Power of Stories**
- **Our stories – Our Beliefs**
- **A Living Earth Story**
- **Living a Living Economy Story**

Each section includes a short excerpt from *Change the Story, Change the Future* and a list of questions to invite personal reflection, draw on participants' experiences, evoke personal stories, and encourage deep sharing and conversation.

We encourage local groups to adapt this guide to best meet their needs and make adjustments that enhance the experience based on the host's preferences and "tool box" of facilitation methods/approaches. To immerse even more deeply in the conversation for an organization/institution, please consider hosting a half- or whole-day "retreat" as part of planning, program or curriculum review/development, or community building.

### ROLE OF THE HOST/FACILITATOR

We recommend that two or three people share the responsibility for advance preparations and logistics, adapting this Guide, and setting up the meeting space. We also encourage a team approach to meeting facilitation to practice and demonstrate cooperative, shared leadership. Key roles include:

- **Reserve meeting space (to include unstructured time before and after the session)**
- **Arrange for supplies and equipment, if needed**
- **Send invitations and reminders (email, event announcements, social media, etc.) Reading the entire book in advance is highly recommended**
- **Arrange the room to be conducive to open conversation (a circle is recommended, with spaces for people to gather in small groups)**
- **Designate a time keeper**
- **Facilitate the meeting**

**Note:** If, after reading *Change the Story, Change the Future*, you are eager for conversation, although organizing/hosting a series of discussions is not feasible, invite friends to gather and consider, together, the Questions for Reflection on Pages 143-144 in the book.

## SESSION FORMAT

This guide makes room for many possible approaches. Depending on the size of your group, you may decide to use some or all of the questions with the whole group or break into dyads or small groups of three to five people. (Some of the more introspective questions might draw deeper expression in dyads.)

## FIRST MEETING

In order to set a welcoming tone and create a safe place for deep reflection and rich, open conversation, we suggest your first meeting include ample time for introductions, getting to know each other, and presentation – and adaptation, if desired by the group - of the ground rules.

**Introductions:** Allow enough time for participants to share something about themselves, e.g., Where were you born, and what is your family's country of origin? What do you value most about how your heritage has influenced your life? Also, more specifically to the topic, e.g., What drew you to this conversation? What interests you most about this topic? or What do you hope to experience and/or take away?

**Ground Rules:** Ask for agreement on these ground rules, adapted from Conversation Café, or similar rules for conversation. It may be helpful to write the ground rules on easel paper or white board to display at each session.

- Listen to and respect all points of view.
- Suspend judgment – or, at least, the expression of judgment – as best you can.
- Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- Question old assumptions, look and listen for new insights.
- Speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.
- Go for honesty and depth, without going on and on and on...

## ALL SESSIONS

Here is an example of how you might structure your time for a two-hour session:

**Greeting and Mingling (and Food):** Allow time before the beginning of the conversation for people to gather informally, greet each other, sign in (with follow-on contact information), make name tags, and share snacks and beverages.

**Opening ritual (5 minutes):** The ritual could be a few minutes of silence and/or a candle-lighting ceremony to honor the space you occupy and help participants become fully present.

**Whole Group Conversation (45 minutes):** Remind everyone of the group's agreement on Ground Rules. Select a few questions from the list provided to discuss as a large group. This

might begin with quiet reflection on one of the questions; the discussion might be conducted as a back and forth dialogue or by going around the circle for each person to express their ideas while others listen. You might also use a “popcorn” approach, which allows people to speak when they are ready.

**Dyad or Small Group Conversation (45 minutes):** Dyads and small groups often feel safer for personal reflection, introspection and intimate sharing of personal stories. Ask the group to break into pairs or small groups of three to five, choosing different partners/groups each session. You might want to explore more deeply some of the questions the whole group discussed, selecting questions that seemed to stimulate the most energy in the group.

**Debrief (20 minutes):** As a whole group, use this time to invite participants to share what they learned from the conversation – new insights, “aha” moments, more questions to consider, etc. – and remind everyone of the next meeting.

**Closing (5 minutes):** End the meeting by sharing words of appreciation and closing the ritual you used at the beginning and/or with a few minutes of silence.

**Lingering:** Allow time at the end for casual, unstructured conversation that is, often, as lively and juicy as the more formal part of the gathering, and helps deepen the relationships among participants.

## Session 1: The Power of Stories

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*“We humans live by stories. A shared story is the basis of the ability of any people to live together as an organized society. A society’s ability to organize as a secure and prosperous community depends on the authenticity (validity) of its story. Authentic stories are generally the product of the shared experience of a people and take form through largely unconscious processes extending over generations. There are also inauthentic sacred stories fabricated to serve the interests of a ruling class at the expense of the rest. We currently organize as a global society by such a story and we bear the tragic consequences.”*

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### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. What evidence do you see of the Sacred Money and Markets story playing out in society, in our economy, in the media?
2. In your observation and experience, how has this story gained so much power? Why does it have such a foothold in our culture?
3. What feelings come up for you when you think about what is currently happening to Earth and to humanity – for our communities, our families, and our personal well-being and happiness and that of future generations?
4. In what ways are you exposed to the Sacred Money and Markets story in your personal daily life? How does it influence your family, your work, your community, and your faith/spiritual life? How has this story gained a foothold in your life?
5. In what ways are you connected to or dependent upon major corporations, big banks, and large institutions? How are their values aligned with yours? In what situations are their values out of alignment with yours and what are the implications? What influence do you have on their operation and governance? What options do you have to reduce your dependence?
6. To what extent have you been inclined to accept the Sacred Money and Markets story? What are the benefits of accepting the Sacred Money and Markets story? What are the challenges and risks?
7. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Prior to this session, perhaps in the invitation, you might suggest that participants watch one evening – or Sunday - network news program and take particular note of the stories, the images, guests, the delivery (tone and bias, if any) of the interviews, commentary, and commercials.



## Session 2: Our Stories – Our Beliefs

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*“We humans have a deep need for meaning, for answers to the ultimate questions. In their pursuit of answers, prophets, sages, and wisdom keepers of all times and traditions have recognized a spiritual order and unity in creation that defies description. Necessarily, they communicate their insights through simple stories and familiar images within the context of their time and place. Such stories shape both individual and collective behavior.*

*Different stories prevail in wondrous variety at different places in a continuously evolving process. As stories and images pass from generation to generation and travel from place to place, critical nuances may be lost or modified.”*

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### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. Who and what informed, influenced, and helped shape your personal belief system about the nature of reality and how the world works – your role/purpose, your image/view of God or spirit, and your relationships to other living organisms? How have your beliefs evolved over the years?
2. Of the stories and cosmologies covered in the book, which ring most true for you (in part or whole) and in what ways?
3. What is your perspective on the nature, role, and importance of money and wealth? What is the source of this view?
4. What is your earliest recollection of being in relationship with nature, and how has your view of this relationship changed over time?
5. How would you tell the story that lives in your heart, now? [*A good question for personal quiet reflection before conversation...*]
6. If “sacred” describes that which is most important, most worthy of care and respect, and most essential to the well-being of humans and all life, what is most “sacred” to you?
7. Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Session 3: A Living Earth Story

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*“In its full expression, the Sacred Life and Living Earth story is an inspiring tale of the human place in the grandest of all epic journeys, the journey of an evolving Living Universe. The story draws from many sources of human knowledge and understanding to give deep meaning to our existence. It offers an appealing vision of human possibility.”*

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### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. What evidence do you see of an emerging Living Earth story?
2. If we are to have a viable human future and an economy that works for all, what must be done to displace the current Sacred Money and Markets story?
3. In what ways does the Sacred Life and Living Earth story ring true to you—or not? How does it align with or contrast with your foundational beliefs about the nature of reality (your cosmology)? How might your version of the story differ from the version in *Change the Story, Change the Future*?
4. How is the new story reflected in your view of the world, your current daily life and your personal choices?
5. What changes would you hope - or expect - to observe and experience, if a Living Earth Story were to influence the re-design of our economic system?
6. How might your life, your community, and global society change if a Sacred Life and Living Earth story were to replace the Sacred Money and Markets story as the shared public story?
7. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Prior to this session, you might suggest that participants find and bring a story, article, or video that reflects the Living Earth story.



## Session 4: Living a Living Economy Story

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*“The only valid purpose of an economy is to serve life. To align the human economy with this purpose, we must learn to live as nature lives, organize as nature organizes, and learn as nature learns guided by a reality-based, life-centered, intellectually sound economics that embraces the values and insights of the Sacred Life and Living Earth story.”*

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### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. What, for you, are the most critical elements of a new story for a Living Economy?
2. Given your distinctive interests, gifts, and affiliations, how might you contribute to advancing the emergence and broad public acceptance of a new Living Economy Story?
3. Considering the organizations, institutions, and groups with which you affiliate, what opportunities do you see for raising awareness and engaging the conversation?
4. Think of a specific program, curriculum, service, or product produced by an organization, institution or business you affiliate or do business with. Does it support/perpetuate the Sacred Money and Markets story or a Living Earth story? How might you start a conversation that helps shift the culture, planning, programming, and public outreach of these organizations? (See Note)
5. What might you do to bring the Living Earth story more fully into your own life – at home, at work, in your community, and in the choices you make in politics? What would be different?
6. Who (friends, family, colleagues, classmates, or book groups) would you most like to invite to read *Change the Story, Change the Future* and participate in a follow-on conversation about this Living Economy story, and what will you do to initiate it?
7. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** These conversations are happening with some frequency in grassroots organizations working to build the New Economy as well as in communities of faith/spirit and universities developing curriculum. For example, see [“We Know Who Stole the Economy – National People’s Action Moves to Take It Back”](#), a short article by David Korten for YES! Magazine, Dec 3 2013.

## Resources

These resources are offered as options to enhance your conversation with various types of input, which may require audio/visual equipment and or the purchase of a DVD. (If you discover other resources that are particularly relevant, please email us at [info@greatturning.org](mailto:info@greatturning.org) and we will update this page.)

1. Film: “[The House I Live In](#)” – This film “examines how political and economic corruption have fueled the war [on drugs] for forty years, despite persistent evidence of its moral, economic, and political failures.” (1 hour, 50 minutes) (For Session 1 or 4)
2. Film: “[Overview](#)” – A short (19-minute) film on the life-altering experience of the astronauts who viewed Earth from space. (For Session 3)
3. Film: “[Journey of the Universe: An Epic Story of Cosmic, Earth, and Human Transformation](#)” –“Big science, big history, big story...written by Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker. They weave a tapestry that draws together scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology, biology, ecology, and biodiversity with humanistic insights concerning the nature of the universe.” (60 minutes) (For Session 3)
4. Stories: [YES! Magazine](#) is a treasure trove of inspiring articles about the New Economy, People Power, Planet, Happiness, and Peace & Justice that exemplify the Living Economy for a Living Earth story. (Session 3 or 4)

### More from David Korten

Website: [www.livingeconomiesforum.org](http://www.livingeconomiesforum.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/davidkorten](https://www.facebook.com/davidkorten)  
Twitter: [www.twitter.com/dkorten](https://www.twitter.com/dkorten)

### New Economy Connections

New Economy Working Group: [www.neweconomyworkinggroup.org](http://www.neweconomyworkinggroup.org)  
New Economy Transition Discussions: <http://www.neweconomyworkinggroup.org/discussions>  
New Economy Coalition: [www.neweconomy.net](http://www.neweconomy.net)

**Note:** Please see the “Notes” in the book, *Change the Story, Change the Future*, for David’s list of additional resources, by chapter.