

DMin 399 Dissertation 1: Research & Writing at the DMin level

Michael Fast, Ph.D. October 5, 7, 9, & 19, 21, 23 DMin Students only

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Step #1: Formulating a Research Problem

- Knowing what you are researching & writing about makes research and writing easier.
- •The more specific your topic the easier your task will be.
- Not unlike preparing a sermon

Zeroing in on the target

First, the proposal needs to identify a specific research area in the broader landscape of the discipline & establish why it is significant and worth exploring.

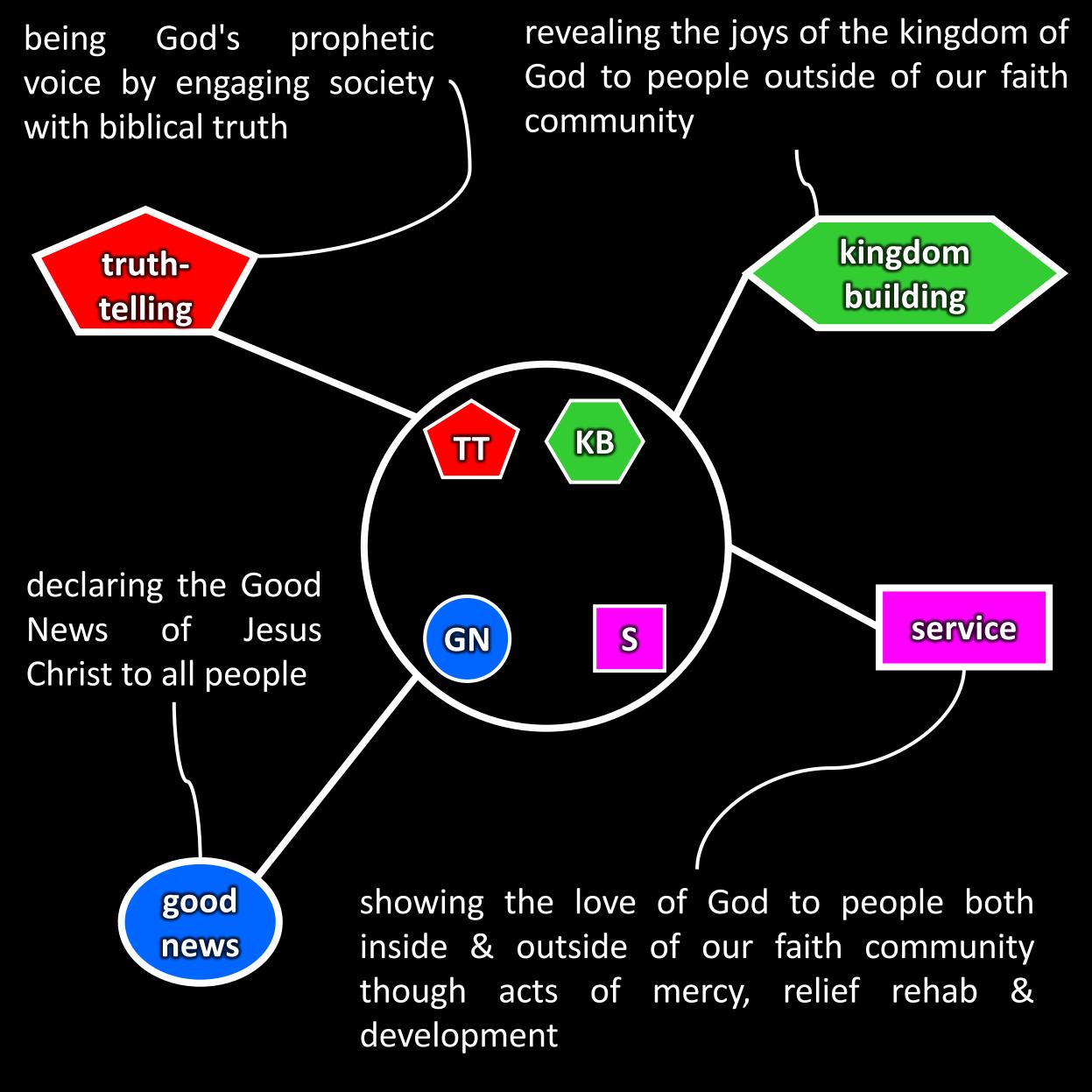
Second, the proposal need to identify an existing or newly identified gap in knowledge that can be developed into a significant research problem.

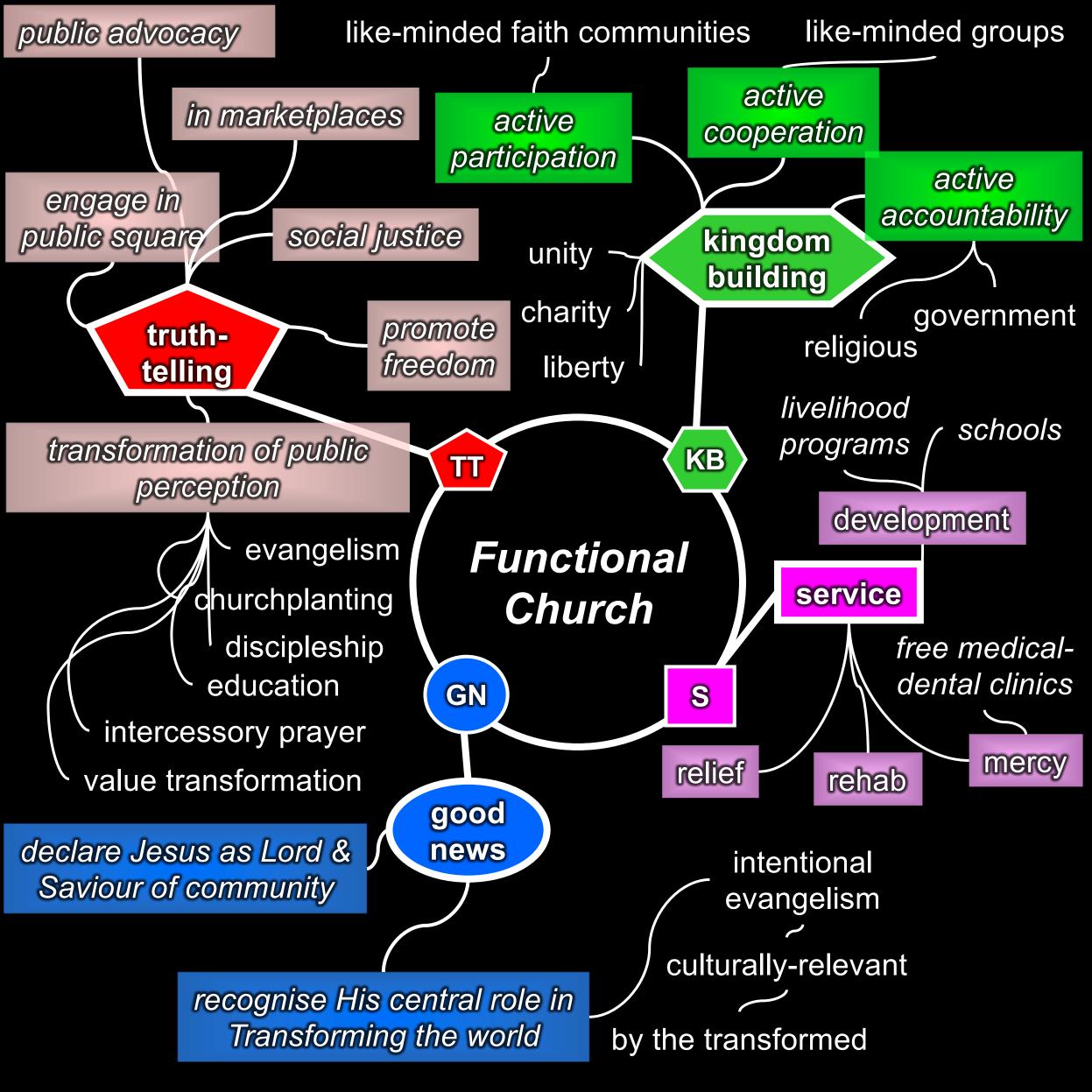
Third, the proposal needs to build a convincing case for your project as a viable way of approaching the research problem.

Finally, the proposal needs to demonstrate that your approach to the problem is achievable within the period of your candidature.

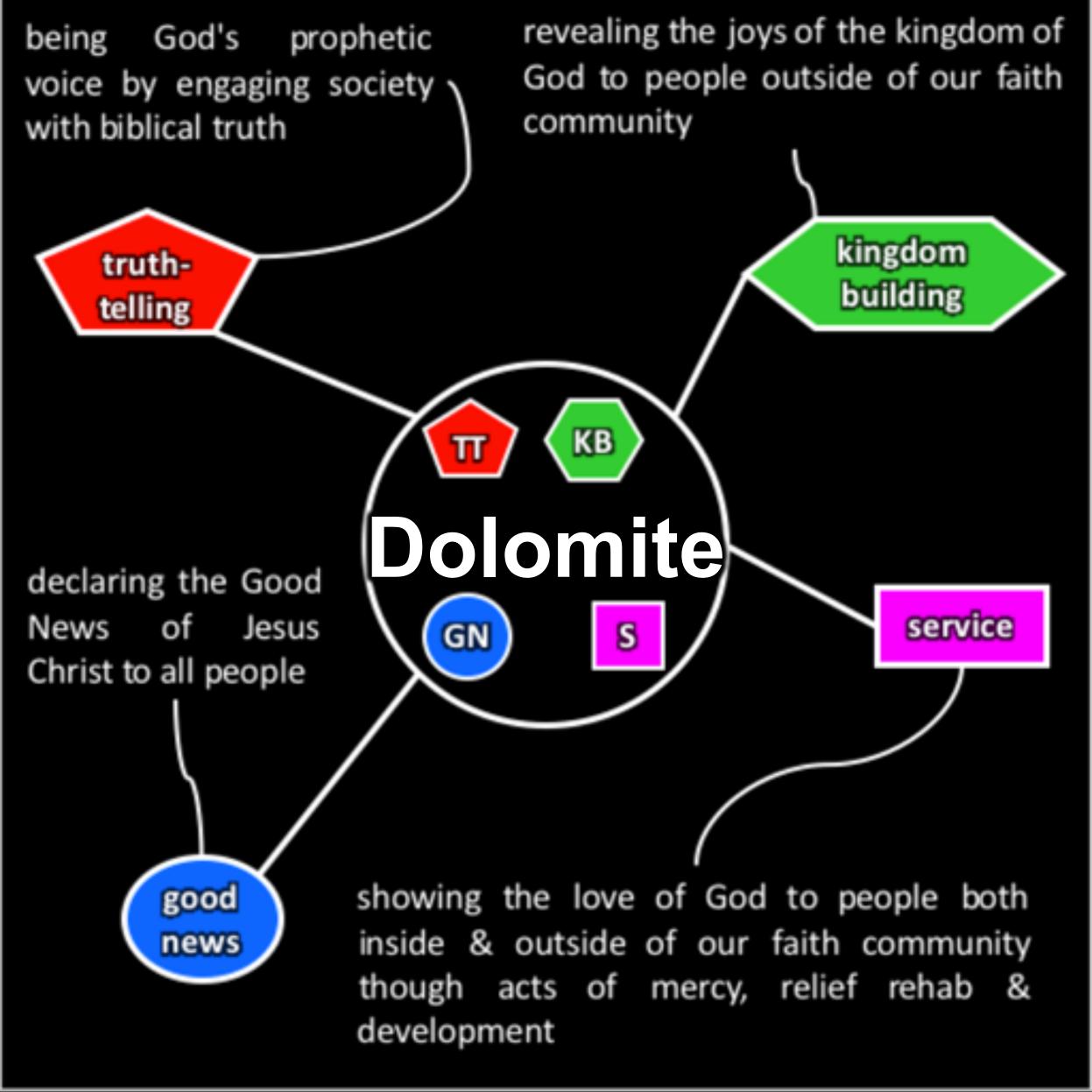
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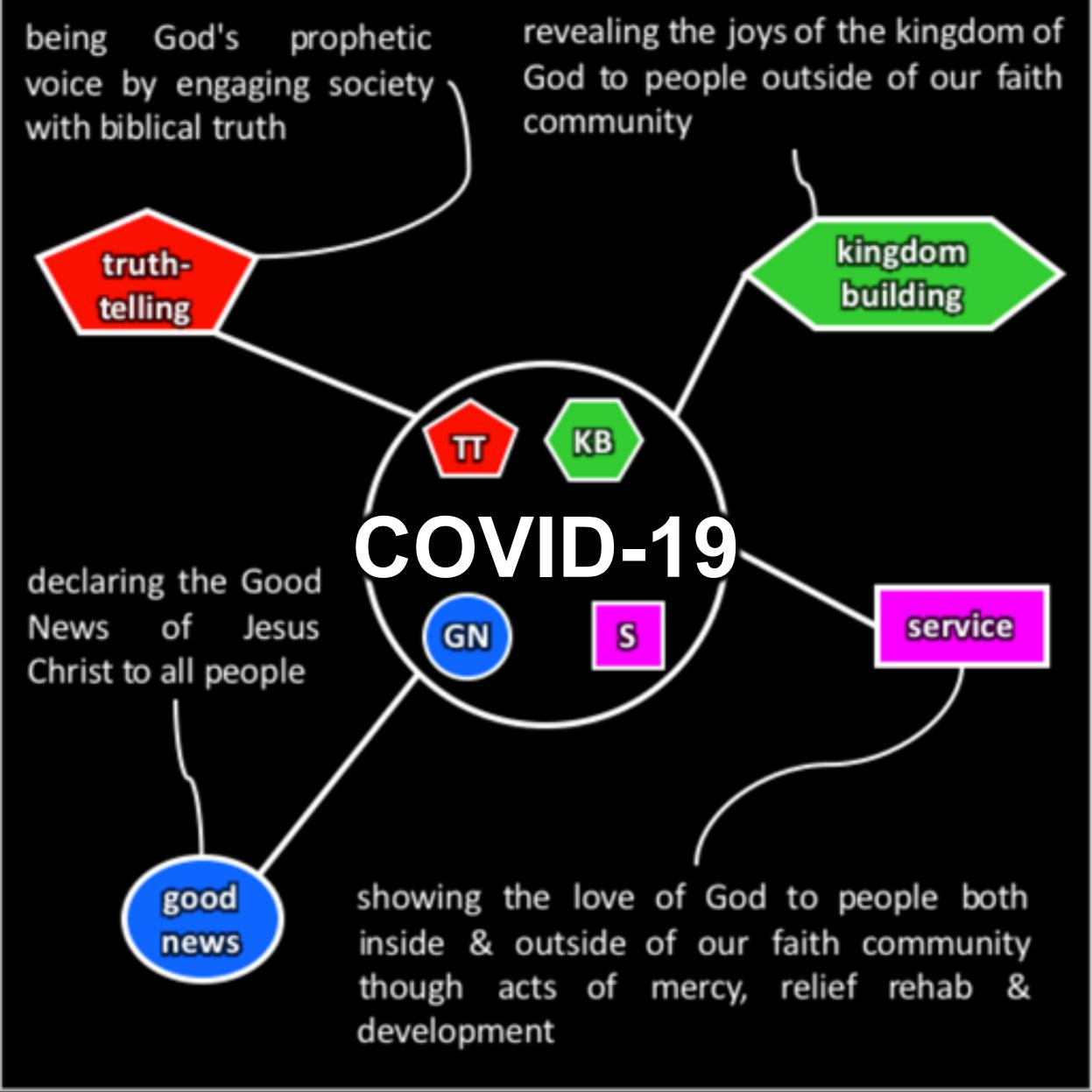
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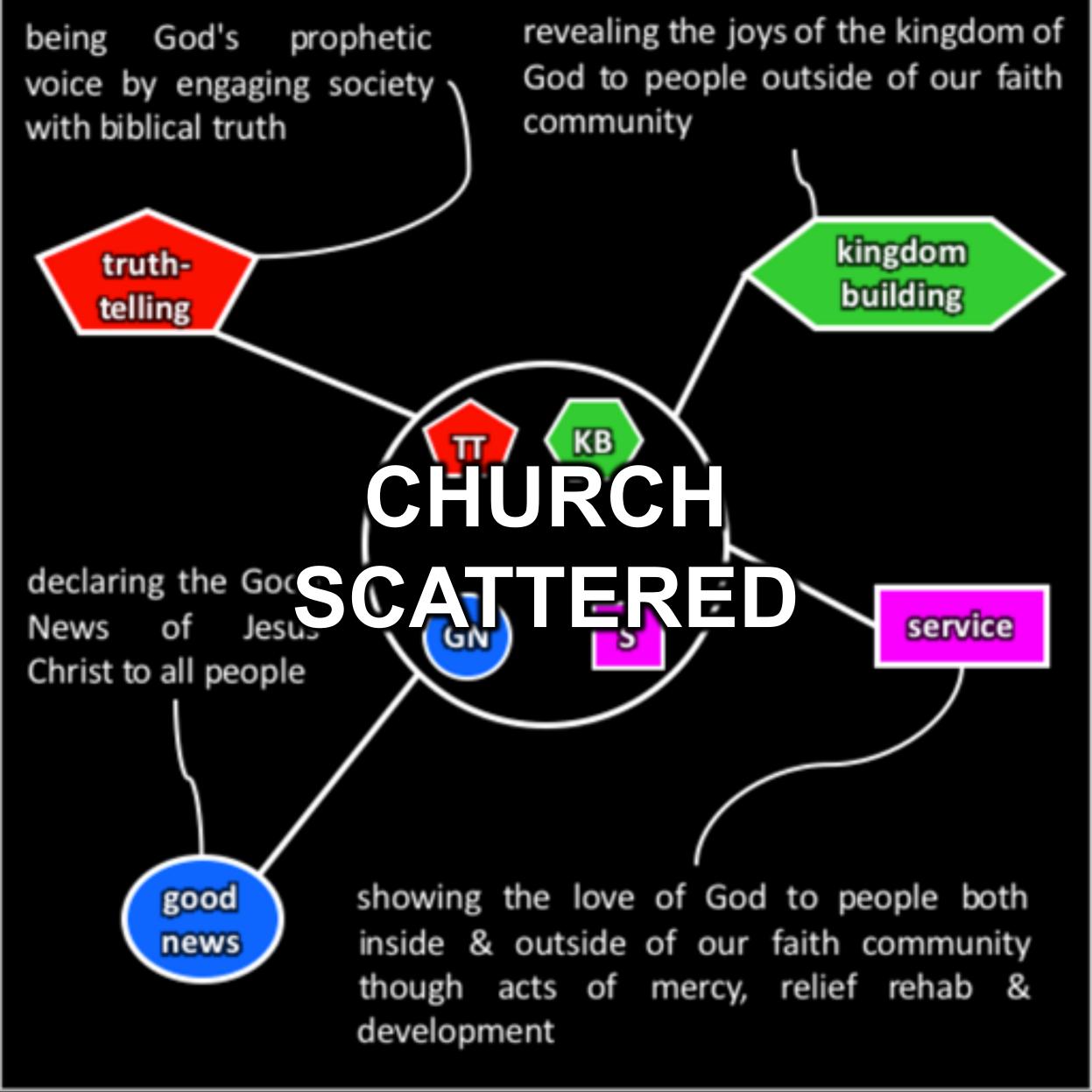


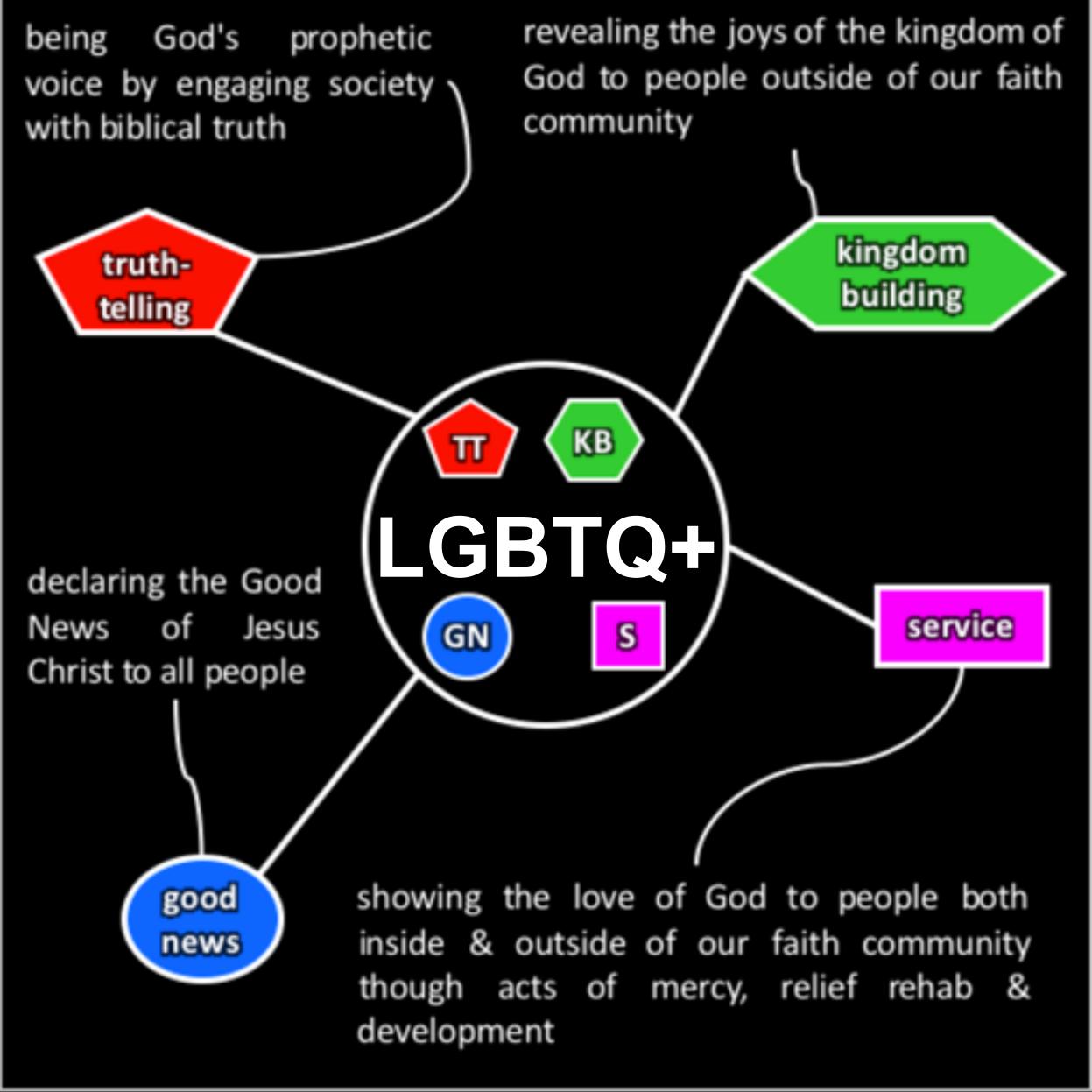


Examples









6 Types of Research Questions

1. Predicting an outcome.

- Does y happen under circumstances a and b?
- 2. Explaining causes & consequences of a phenomenon.
 - Is y affected by x or is y a consequence of x?
- 3. Evaluating a phenomenon.
 - Does y exhibit the benefits that it is claimed to have?
- 4. Describing a phenomenon.
 - What is y like or what forms does y assume?
- 5. Developing a good practice.
 - How can we improve *y*?

6. Empowerment.

How can we enhance the lives of those we research?

7. Comparison.

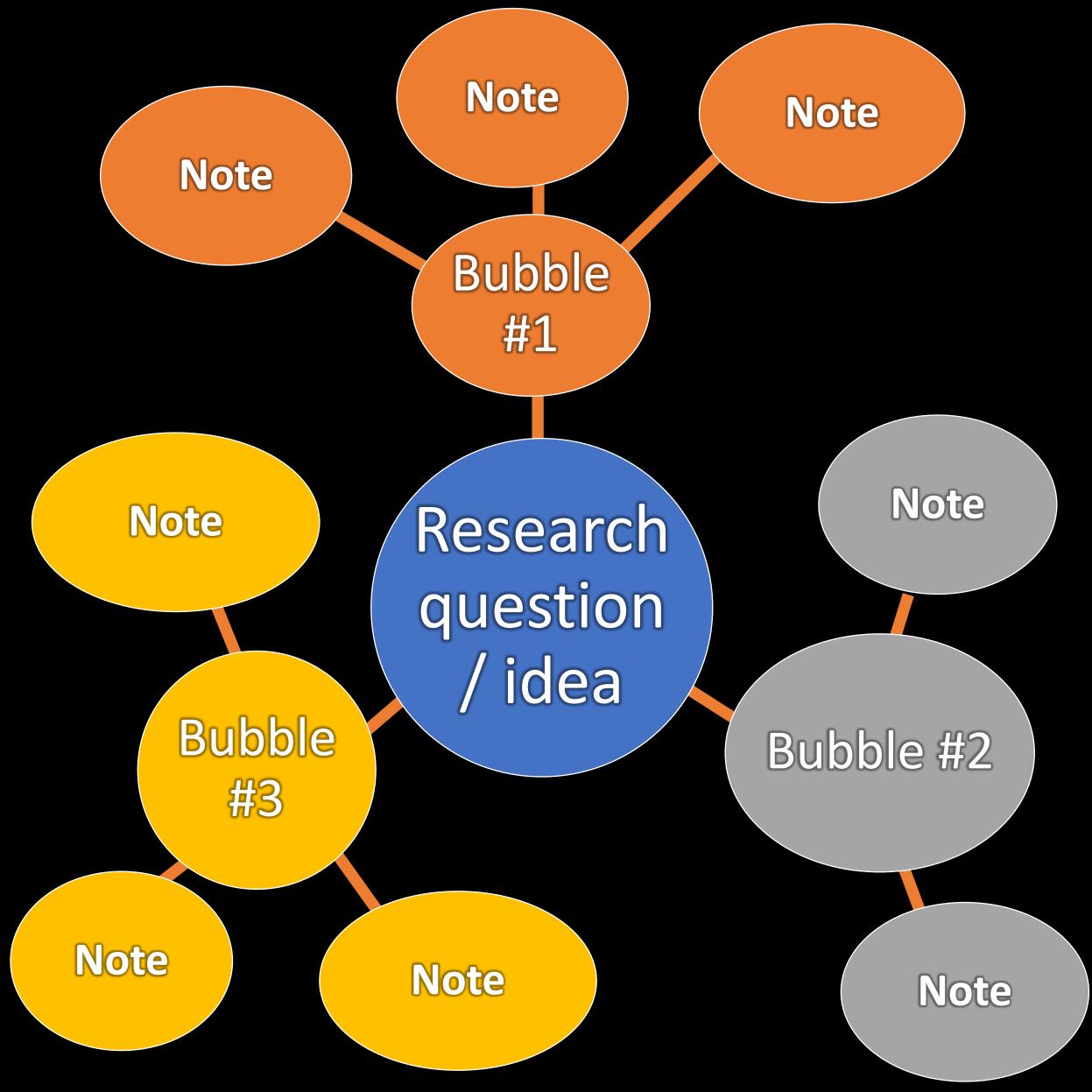
• Do *a* and *b* differ in respect to *x*?

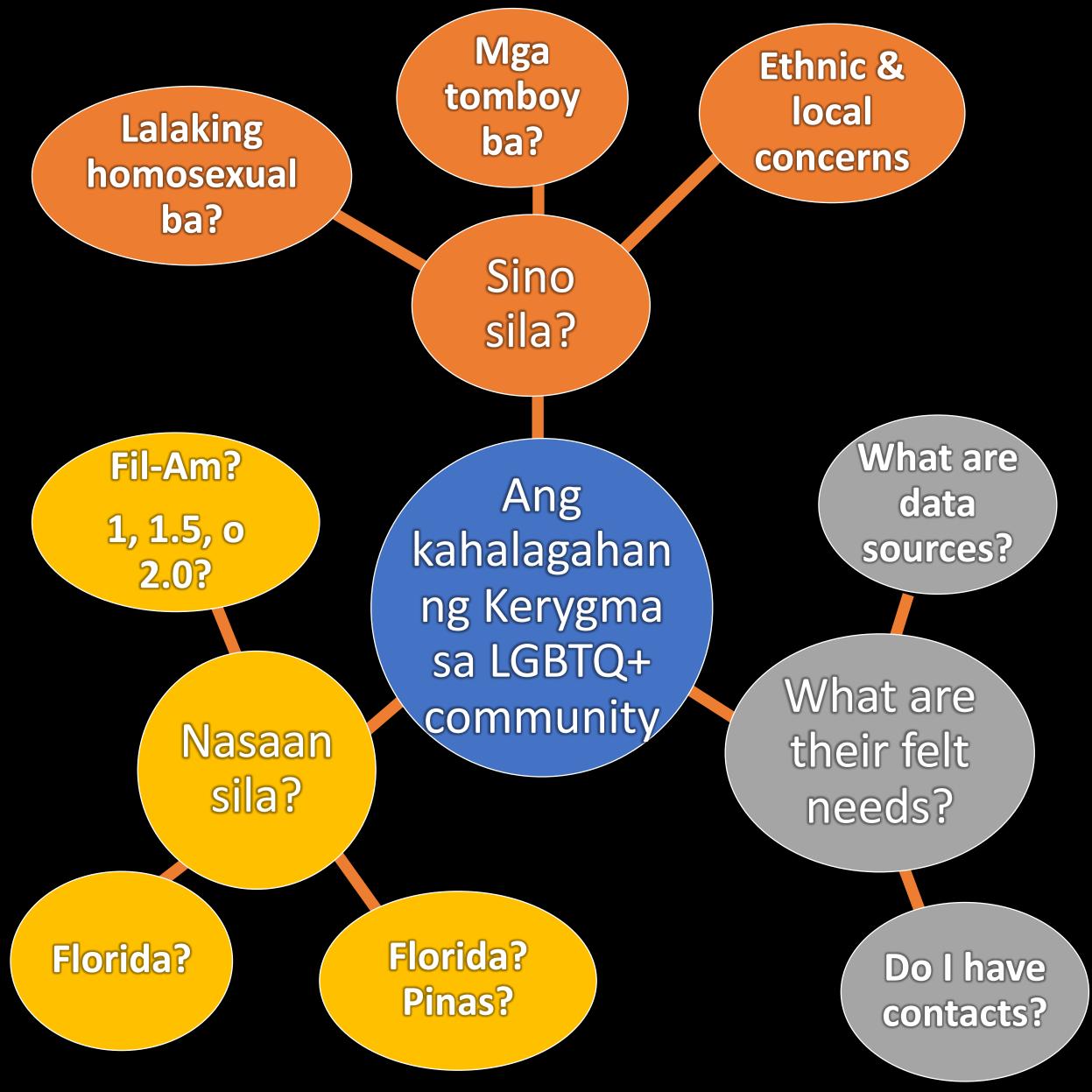
Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods (Oxford, 2015).

Spider Diagrams

- 1) Start with a question in the centre. This might be your main research question, but sometimes it works better when you use a sub-question because main research questions can be unwieldy, especially at the beginning of your project.
- 2) Draw 3 'legs' out from the circle. Using 3 is important. Humans think in binary opposites (like yes/no); by expanding the possibilities to 3 you are forced to think in an unfamiliar way. The small number of legs is crucial because it helps you start to establish which questions are more important than others.
- 3) Draw bubbles at the end of the 3 legs & put 3 more questions in them. Make sure these questions are logically related to the primary question.
- 4) Finally, draw out more 'legs' & start to make notes about things you already know, or things you need to find out.

Inger Mewburn, "Creating research questions using Spider Diagrams" (Handout from The Thesis Whisperer, www.thesiswhisperer.com), n.d.





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Fill-in-the-blank method

- Although most readers of _____ have argued that _____, closer examination shows that _____.
- 2) _____uses ____and ____to prove that _____.
- 3) Phenomenon X is a result of the combination of _____, ____, ____

Academic Learning Center. Thesis statement development by formula. University of Manitoba. http://umanitoba.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/thesis-statement-development-by-formulanew.pdf