

WRITING YOUR LIFE MAP

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose. - Romans 8:28 (NLT)

Have you considered how God has used significant experiences, people or events to form and develop His people? You have a story! It highlights events God has used to mold and shape your character. The insights you gain through the story writing process help you answer two important questions: “Who am I?” and “Where is the Lord leading me?” This also helps your group understand and know you better.

Consider the life of Abraham. His journey took him through both the lows and highs of life. It brought him in contact with all sorts of people and places. Most importantly, you can see how his experiences helped shape his relationship with God. All of Abraham’s experiences – decisions, people, places, events, etc. – helped form and develop him.

In this exercise you will write your story in 2 to 3 pages. The difficulty will be limiting your story to a *max* of 2000 words. When you’re finished writing, you want to be able to tell your story in 10 to 12 minutes. Answering the questions below should help you write your story. Do your best to begin your story with the trials, burdens, joys, and sorrows you’re facing *right now*. Definitely share personal history, but only as it relates to the person you are today and what you’re facing. Focus more on the present than on your past.

Please remember, this is not a time to give advice, ask questions, or teach one another. It’s a time for one person to share and everyone else to hear. It’s a time for someone to open up about his or her life while others in the group pay attention and listen well.

USE THESE QUESTIONS AS A GUIDE AS YOU BEGIN WRITING:

Where and what are you battling right now?

Please be honest! Identify the hardships, trials, anxieties, frustrations, lusts, discouragements, and conflicts that trouble you at the present time. Feel free to share the many troubles on your mind, but also try to focus on a few big ones.

To whom or what are you running to?

Write down who you have been seeking for help, whether yourself, other people, or the Lord Himself. Write down the resources and actions you have chosen to help, whether books, Scripture, television, drugs, sleeping, pleasure, prayer, or a community of people.

Who knows you and who is helping you?

Think about the significant people in your life. Think about recent personal and open conversations you have initiated with them. To what degree have you shared your struggles with them? In what ways are they helping? In what ways are they not helping?

What seems to be getting exposed in your heart and way of life?

Consider the loyalties, values, passions, and ambitions being made visible in your life right now. Maybe a longing for the praise of people; maybe a desire for riches; maybe a loyalty to Christ and His kingdom; maybe dreams for a certain kind of marriage or family.

Where do you see lifelong themes, patterns, and habits at work?

Try to see and share any longstanding themes in your life story. The way you relate to the Lord and people right now could be traced back to how you have always related to the Lord and people. Are these things connected?

What experiences from your history have most influenced you?

Share any experiences from your childhood, family relationships, or previous years as a whole that seem to have strongly influenced the person you are today. Perhaps there were specific relationships or events that were really significant to you. Perhaps there were decisions you made or others made for you that sharply changed the direction of your life.

If you are a Christian, how did Jesus Christ save you?

Write down the key people and circumstances the Lord used to draw you to Himself. Perhaps there was a particular passage of Scripture that opened your eyes, humbled your heart, and helped you see your need for the Savior Jesus Christ. How has the *Gospel* changed your life?

In what ways has the Lord been growing you as His follower?

Think about and write down a few ways the Lord has transformed you in recent months. Maybe there have been some punctuating moments where God freed you from particular sin struggles, or helped you notice and enjoy something about Him, or given you courage and compassion in the Christian faith in ways you didn't have before.

IN SUMMARY, REMEMBER TO TELL YOUR STORY IN SUCH A WAY THAT ...

- Makes God the Hero of your story (vs. you, a friend, a spouse, a mentor, etc.)
- Demonstrates at least one way that you have suffered or are suffering,
- Tells of a specific struggle with sin you have battled and how Jesus has freed you from it, as well as an area in which you are currently battling sin patterns.
- Honors God. Be careful not to boast in your sin or give details that may harm others.
- Shares how God is currently changing or challenging you.

SELF-REFLECTION:

Were you honest and clear in your story? Is there anything you withheld from your story because you fear what people will think of you, or because it is still too difficult to share? If the latter is true, please reach out to your leader or a staff member for additional support. As you read and think about your story, does it offer a good picture of who you are and what you're facing in your life right now? Is there anything you would want to add or take away from what you have written?

Tips

- Please read from a copy of your written story when you present to the group.
- Plan to share your story with your spouse before group for the sake of timing and practice. (This will help calm nerves. Not to mention... unrehearsed life maps tend to go LONG.)
- Do not feel obligated to cover all the points of the questions when you present.
- Contact Reengage leadership if you have questions or concerns about sharing your Life Map.
- Following each group member's story, the other group members should respond with gratitude. That is, thank the person who shared for sharing his or her story. Please remember, what is shared in group stays within the group.