

BAPTISM Sunday

Wow! What an incredible Sunday filled with stories of real LIFE-CHANGE. Sharing stories is a huge part of who we are as a church. We believe that real community, and true life-change happens in the context of vulnerability.

This week, we want you to challenge your group to share Life Maps. We like to call these Life Maps instead of Testimonies because a Life Map helps you to explore specifically what has shaped who and where you are today. It can be a great tool to help you understand how God is continuing to progressively sanctify you.

When sharing, hit these 5 points:

Heritage: What geographical, ethnic, or family factors have influenced you? How? Why?

Heroes: What key people played a major role in influencing your character or shaping your direction? How?

High Points: What experiences illustrate your special abilities? What did you enjoy about them?

Hard Times: What experiences were especially painful? Why? How did they make you feel?

Hand of God: What were your most changing experiences or discoveries about God?

How we listen to and interact with someone's life story is **VERY IMPORTANT**. This time can be very significant not only for the presenter, but also for each listener of the group. Each listener should spend time listening, interacting, providing support, encouragement, and feedback. Below are several suggested responses for you to think about as you listen to one another's life stories:

HEAR: What did you hear? Share what you heard as you listened to the presenter tell their story.

CONNECT: What do you connect with? Share where you particularly connected or related to their story, or how their story impacted you.

ENCOURAGE: How can you encourage? Share some encouragement or insight that you feel God's Spirit would have you speak to the presenter.

Check out this Life Map guide on following next pages!

LIFE MAPS

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

As the facilitator of a community group, we want you to foster an environment of true community and growth. However, we believe group members need to know one another before they can truly grow together! One of the best ways to get to know one another is to share Life Maps. Plan either an extended time to meet to share your Life Maps as a group, or schedule several times for each person to share theirs. Below are some tools to help you and your group get the most out of your Life Maps.

- As the facilitator of the group, we challenge you to take the lead by sharing your story first. Your group will only be as vulnerable as you are.
- Set a recommended time limit for sharing Life Maps in advance. Around 20 minutes is a good amount of time per Life Map.
- Remember that it takes courage to share a Life Map. Many of your group members may be nervous about sharing theirs, so encourage them by affirming their boldness to step up and share their story.
- “What happens in the group, stays in the group”. Re-affirm that your group should be able to trust one another. However, we ask that you use discernment if someone shares something that maybe implies they should seek medical attention/counseling.
- Encourage your group to be attentive when someone is sharing their Life Map.
- After someone finishes their Life Map, ask each member of the group to share specific ways that his/her story encouraged them.

Once again, your community group will only be as vulnerable as YOU ARE, so lead by example in sharing your Life Map first!

LIFE MAPS

HOW TO SHARE

We like to call these Life Maps instead of Testimonies because a Life Map helps you to explore specifically what has shaped who and where you are today. It can be a great tool to help you understand how God is continuing to progressively sanctify you. Follow these steps to help develop your Life Map:

1. REFLECTION:

Spend some time reflecting on your past experiences and the people, places and events that have shaped your life. Spend time reflecting on each category:

- Heritage: What geographical, ethnic, or family factors have influenced you? How? Why?
- Heroes: What key people played a major role in influencing your character or shaping your direction? How?
- High Points: What experiences illustrate your special abilities? What did you enjoy about them?
- Hard Times: What experiences were especially painful? Why? How did they make you feel?
- Hand of God: What were your most changing experiences or discoveries about God?
- Other: Key events, trends, or relationships

2. ANALYSIS:

Now that you have reflected over your life, it's time to analyze what you want to put in your Life Map. While it would be nice to share everything, it would be impossible to share everything within an adequate amount of time. Focus on the most significant influences and experiences in your life. You should not plan to spend any longer than 20-25 minutes sharing your Life Map with your community group.

LIFE MAPS

HOW TO SHARE

3. ORGANIZATION:

You are now ready to synthesize this information into a logical flow of thought. How do these people, places and events fit together?

4. PRESENTATION:

You have the option to present this in whatever way you wish to. You can be as creative as you want or as simple as you want. You can share your Life Map as a timeline, map or object lesson. You can use photographs, music or just words. The point is for you to enjoy the process and help the team better understand who you are.

- Highlight formative experiences – the highest and lowest points of your life, and significant relationships, mentors or heroes in your life.
- Take the risk of sharing painful experiences and how they shaped you.
- Recognize God's grace and faithfulness in drawing your story into His story.
- Are there any themes that have surfaced in your life?

5. PERSONAL VISION:

After you have completed your Life Map, it's now time to ask the question WHERE AM I GOING? Although it's hard to know exactly what your future will look like, try to discover the themes or general direction that God might be leading you. How have the experiences, events and relationships of your past help direct your future? How has God used your past to direct your future choices, character, dreams and passions? What will you do differently moving forward? What will you pursue the next 10 years? What kind of person do you want to be? What have I learned about myself to help guide me the rest of my life?

LIFE MAPS

RESPONSES FOR LISTENERS

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