



SPIRITUAL JOURNEY EXERCISE

How did I get here?

We are here today because we are leaders or are considering becoming more involved in ministry. But *how* did we get here? Surely we didn't just 'arrive' at our personal or spiritual destination without any effort, change or challenge. For all of us it has been a journey – one marked by our individual and collective experience.

Once we acknowledge our journey, we can learn to look at it objectively – ultimately learning from it. If all leaders are learners, there is something for us to learn – even today.

Because we are committed to becoming more like Christ, our journey will be marked with highs, lows, celebrations and challenges. Personal reflection plays an enormous part on our journey and being able to evaluate this is crucial for our development.

This becomes the “story” of how we arrived at the place we are today.

Being able to share current, up to the minute testimony assumes a current, up to the minute experience of Christ. In addition to discovering our story, this exercise is designed to help us reflect upon, and put words to our experiences.

Once we can document our journey, we can each commit to work on areas of our lives that will grow us, both personally and spiritually.

Although personally taxing at times, this exercise can be rewarding when we come with an open heart, mind and ear to God.

Instructions:

- Take your bible, pen and this evaluation and start working through sections A & B. Pray for God to teach you from your experience. Don't spend too long on any one area – write what comes to mind immediately.
- When you have drawn in your timeline and worked through sections A & B stop and wait and we will work through the rest together.
- 20 minutes is allocated for this first part.

A. The Life-Line

- Mark the significant events of your life on the lifeline (separate piece of paper). You may want to use multiple 'lines' for different type of events. (see next page)
- Name them so you understand them (e.g. met spouse, death of mother, first job etc.)



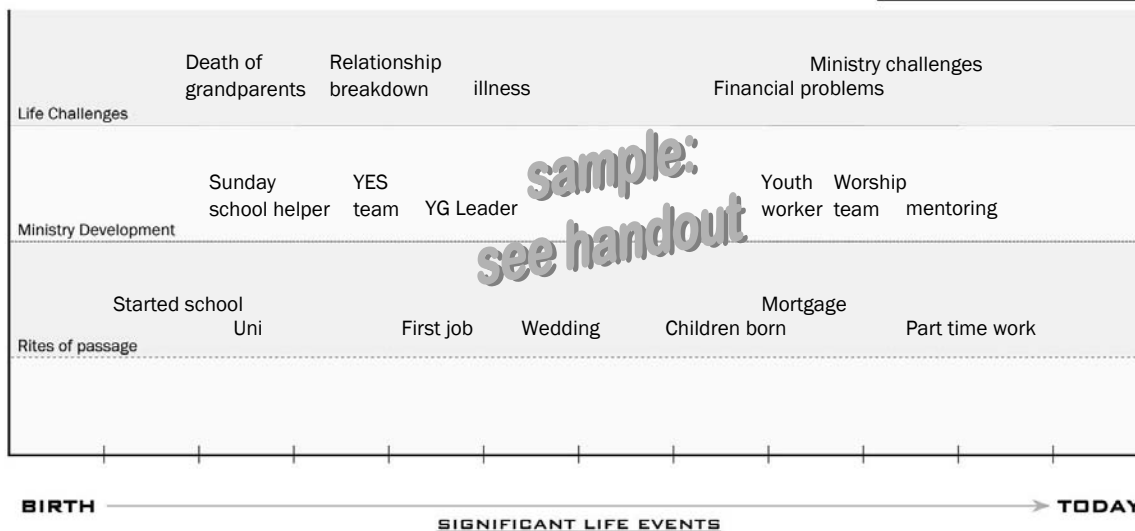
THE LIFELINE



Life challenges
(death, illness, divorce etc.)

Ministry development
(leadership, soldiership, conversion)

Rites of passage
(births, marriage, schooling, retirement)



SPIRITUAL FORMATION
SESSION 1: SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

After you have done your timeline, work through the questions in sections A & B ONLY.

Look at what you have packed into your life. What is your initial response?

Share with the person next to you where on your lifeline you were FIRST aware of God.

Now mark on your lifeline a time (or year) where you felt God calling you/leading you to ministry or leadership.



B. Going Deeper

Our relationship with God is a living, breathing thing. Because of this it is right to assume that life situations and changes we have identified invariably affect our relationship with God. The way we approach our ministry is also coloured by these experiences.

Consider more carefully the life situations you have plotted (possible ones are listed below)

- Employment situation
- Conversion/acknowledgement of Christ in your life
- Loss of spouse or family member
- Marriage/family tensions or breakdown
- Financial problems
- Birth of child
- Children leaving home
- Caring for elderly parents
- Significant vacation or holiday
- New living situation
- First ministry experience
- Marriage
- Illness or accident

How have specific life situations, questioned or strengthened your relationship with God? You may like to expand below on **just one**.

Take time now to acknowledge some of your life situations. Offer a short prayer silently to God.

Look at your 'life challenges' line. What has God shown you through the harder times? How has this contributed to who/where you are today?

SHARE: In groups of three, take turns to share a 3-MINUTE insight on anything you've discovered so far. When each 3 minutes is up, a bell will ring indicating to move to the next person in your group.



Wins & Inspiration (group exercise)

In the same way that we acknowledge difficulties in life, we are also called to celebrate personal joys and successes – not just in life, but also in ministry. A great part of our discipleship journey is learning how to celebrate personally and with others.

WINS help us:

- See how God has d_____ us
- Affirm and validate our w_____ in Christ
- Allow us to acknowledge the g_____ in ourselves and others

In what areas of your life and ministry have you felt a WINNER? How did it affirm/confirm your calling or involvement in ministry?

CELEBRATION helps us:

Remain positive

Acknowledge God in every circumstance

Show others how they have been part of God's plan in us

How have you celebrated ministry wins?

Who has encouraged you along the way? In Hebrews 12, people who have 'gone before' and encouraged the saints are referred to as a 'cloud of witnesses'.

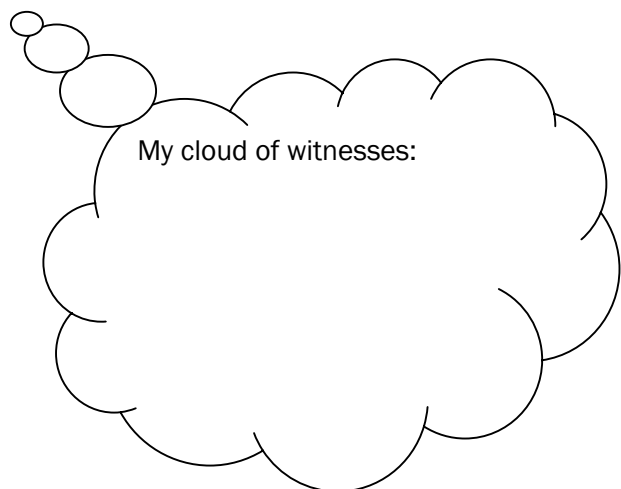
Read Hebrews 12:1-3 (this scripture is written particularly in light of our struggles. These people help us:

Stay f_____ on the goal

Encourage us not to l_____ heart

Show us l_____ from their lives

What specific things have brought encouragement, direction and focus to where you are now. Share ONE thing (scripture passages, poetry, songs.) with the group.





Bringing Everything Together (group exercise)

We all carry degrees of emotional baggage. As we move through the “stuff of life”, much is learnt. Sadly, much hurt is caused. How we deal with and apply biblical principles to these hurts greatly affects our ability to handle them.

If unresolved, our issues ‘reappear’ later. When we are in leadership and ministry, actions and issues in the people we minister to can bring us face to face with what is unresolved in us.

Christians are not immune from struggle with certain life issues. It is our maturity in handling them that demonstrates how we are travelling on our spiritual journey. More importantly, every struggle brings an opportunity for intimacy with God. The end result: we are better people and more influential leaders.

We will share together two helpful insights from scripture:

Job’s lament...JOB 2:7-10

Insights...

Job accepted both GOOD & BAD from God.

Job retained his INTEGRITY despite the circumstances.

Job sat with the PAIN.

Relate this back to your own life. What can God teach you from JOB?

The dim mirror...1 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13

Insights...

The way we handle life is often CHILDISH

The way we look at life is like peering through a foggy MIRROR

There is HOPE for COMPLETENESS

Relate this back to your own life? What waiting do you need to do?

If you could sum up what you think God has taught you to VALUE in life though both wins and hardship, what would it be?

I am learning to value...



Moving On (my action plan)

HOMEWORK

Moving on is not a quick fix. Some of your thoughts from this exercise may cause you to feel pain, re-live difficult times, or dwell on past situations. By no means is there expected to be closure on every level. Some things take many years to heal.

If we are to be true Disciples of Christ, there is an understanding that we must take the good with the bad, trust God to show us what to do next and pray for healing and wholeness in our lives. Often the reality of “taking up our cross” and following Jesus is not the journey we had envisaged.

Go back and read everything you have written to catch what God has been saying to you.

Read again Hebrews 12:1-13. Find a verse in this passage that you can claim to have victory over situations and issues.

Remember to thank God also for the positive things you have learnt from this exercise. You may want to write a prayer of thanks below.

Suggestions for Follow Up:

If you are attending from a Corps' group, ask the Corps Officer to follow the group up with this homework. Perhaps the Code Blue participants could share a meal together after a worship service.

If you have a mentor or trusted friend, you may like to share this with them over coffee. Perhaps you could work through some of these ideas and scriptures in a bible study group you are part of.

There may be very difficult issues that have arisen from this exercise. Some may at some stage require more professional counsel. If this has happened to you, it is recommended you talk to someone (mentor, Corps Officer) about someone to be referred to.