



LIFE MAP: SHARING YOUR STORY

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADERS

Life Maps are a great way to get to know each other, specifically as it relates to loving others and being known. Below are seven ways that you can help your group get the most out of your Life Maps:

1. Plan either an extended time to meet to share your Life Maps as a group or schedule out several times for each person to share their Life Map.
2. In advance, set a recommended time limit to share your Life Maps, about 20 minutes each, with an additional 10 minutes for Q&A. Write down questions as you go, but wait until the end to ask them.
3. Reaffirm that trust is key. What is said within the group stays within the group. This is a safe place, where group members can freely share everything in an environment that fosters deep confidence and trust with one another over time. If widening the circle is the most loving thing to do to help someone in a given situation, those steps of trust will be taken together as a group, as well.
4. As the leader, take the lead by sharing your story first. It's just as important that the people in the group know you as it is for you to know them. Be honest, as you will set the tone for the level of authenticity and honesty. All of our lives have messy parts.
5. Encourage the group not to "check out" when someone is sharing but to give the person sharing their undivided attention. There's nothing more unmotivating or discouraging than to be ignored when sharing something significant. Put electronics away.
6. Affirm each person who shares for their honesty. Some people may have never experienced an environment of acceptance when sharing potentially hard things.
7. After each person shares their story, pray for them. Thank God for the people He's brought into their life and acknowledge His hand, even in times where it could not be seen. Be specific about details they mentioned in their story.

Optional: Write a note to each person after the Life Map sharing time, affirming their vulnerability and identifying specific ways that his/her story encouraged you.

DEVELOPING YOUR LIFE MAP

Have you considered how God uses significant experiences, people, and events to form and develop His people? A Life Map is a visual representation of your life from birth to present. It highlights events God has used to mold and shape your character. The insights you gain through the Life Map process help you answer the question, "Who am I, and where is the Lord leading me?" It can also help your small group get to know and understand you better. These four steps will help you develop your Life Map so you can share it with others:

STEP 1: REFLECTION

Prayerfully consider people, places, and events that have marked your life. Make a list. Be sure to use the Life Map worksheet to help you categorize your thoughts. The terms on the worksheet identify categories you should include. Ask yourself the following questions for each category:

1. Heritage: How have your family relationships influenced your life? What ethnic or geographical influences shaped your life?
2. Heroes: What relationships significantly influenced your character or shaped your direction (positively & negatively)? How? Why?
3. High Points: What experiences have you especially enjoyed? Felt closest to God? Why?
4. Hard Times: What experiences were especially difficult or painful? Felt furthest from God? Why?
5. Hand of God: When & how have you seen God's sovereign hand at work in your life? List specific events that illustrate His work in your life.

STEP 2: ANALYSIS

Now that you have reflected over your life up to today and have a list of your heroes, heritage, high points, hard times, and "hand of God" moments, it's time to analyze which of these you want to put in your Life Map. While it would be nice to share everything, focus on the most significant influences and experiences in your life. Spend some time praying through what you have listed. What you choose is totally up to you. You should not plan to spend any longer than 20-25 minutes sharing your Life Map with your small group.

STEP 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?

STEP 4: PRESENTATION

This is where you exercise your creativity. How will you deliver your story? What medium fits your style of communication? You could also use a narrative story, graph, photographs or music, but be as creative as you can be to depict your life story. If you are presenting this to your small group, remember to make it large enough for everyone to see and read easily.

