

Sharing Life Maps: Instructions for Leaders

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 theirs.

1. In advance, set a recommended time limit to share your life maps, about 40 minutes each. Re-affirm that everything that is shared is confidential and won't be shared outside the group. This gives freedom for complete honesty.
2. As the leader, take the lead by sharing your story first. It's 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 our lives have messy parts.
3. Encourage the group not to "check out" when someone is sharing but give the person undivided attention. There's nothing more discouraging than to be ignored when sharing something significant.
4. Allow a few minutes at the end of the presentation for group members to ask questions.
5. Affirm each person who shares their honesty. Some people may have never experienced an environment of acceptance when sharing potentially difficult events.
6. Follow-up with praying for each person, thanking God for the people He's brought into their lives, acknowledging His hand, even in times where it could not be seen, and for the person's worth. Be specific about details they mentioned in their story.
7. Optional (but effective) - write a note to each person after the life story sharing time, affirming their vulnerability and identifying specific ways his/her story encouraged you.

Developing Your Life Map

Have you considered how God has used significant experiences, people or 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 questions like, “Who am I, and where is the Lord leading me?” It can also help your LifeGroup get to know and understand you better. In Abraham’s life, his journey took him through both lows and highs and brought him in contact with all sorts of people and places. Most importantly, you can see how these experiences helped shape his relationship with God. All of your experiences - decisions, people, places, events, etc...help to form and develop you. These four steps will help you develop your Life Map so you can share it with others:

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| <p>Step 1: Reflection</p> | <p>Prayerfully consider people, places and events that have marked your life. 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:</p> | | | | |
| <p>Heritage How have your family relationships influenced your life? What ethnic or geographical influences shaped your life?</p> | <p>Heroes What relationships significantly influenced your character or shaped your direction (positively or negatively)? How? Why?</p> | <p>High Points What experiences have you especially enjoyed? Why?</p> | <p>Hard Times What experiences were especially difficult? Why?</p> | <p>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?</p> | |
| <p>Step 2: Analysis</p> | <p>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 plan to spend no more than 20-25 minutes sharing your Life Map with your group.</p> | | | | |
| <p>Step 3: Organization</p> | <p>You are now ready to synthesize this information into a logical flow of thought. How do these people, places and events fit together?</p> | | | | |
| <p>Step 4: Presentation</p> | <p>This is where you exercise your creative powers. How will you deliver your story? What medium fits your style of communication? You could draw your map like an ancient sea journey with battles, treasures and tropical islands. You could use a narrative story, graph, photos or music. Be as creative as you can be to depict your life story. If you’re presenting this to your Life Group, make it large enough for everyone in the room to see and read it easily.</p> | | | | |