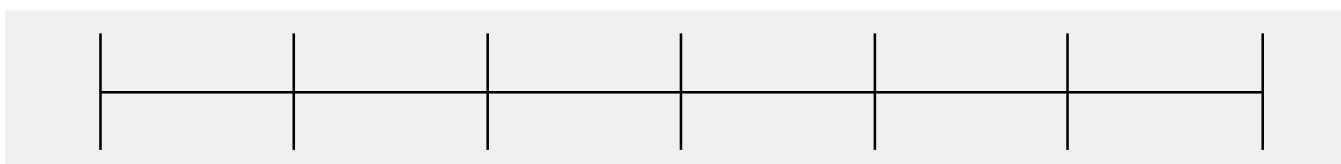


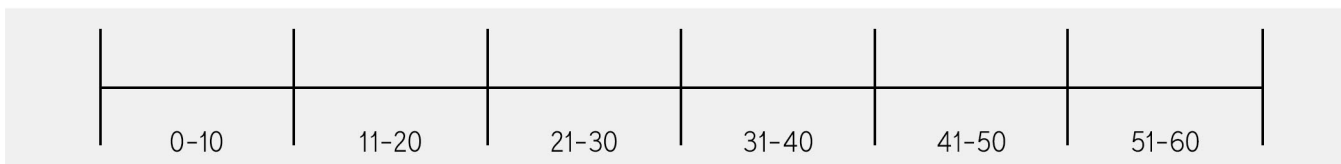
SHARING OUR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHIES.¹

Many Christians have given their testimonies of becoming a Christian at some time or another. It's often fashioned after Paul's talk to King Agrippa where Paul described his life before Christ, how he came to Christ, and then what his life had been like since. Such a testimony is nice and neat and helpful for some contexts, such as within a presentation. Yet transparent relationships require more. We want to ask you to share your whole story so we can start at a deeper and more transparent place. Such a spiritual biography will include the positives, the negatives. To be honest about the good, the bad, and the ugly, you need a different way to approach telling your story. The following is a helpful guide for sharing your spiritual biographies. The group leader will go first and set the example (especially with true transparency), using this outline:

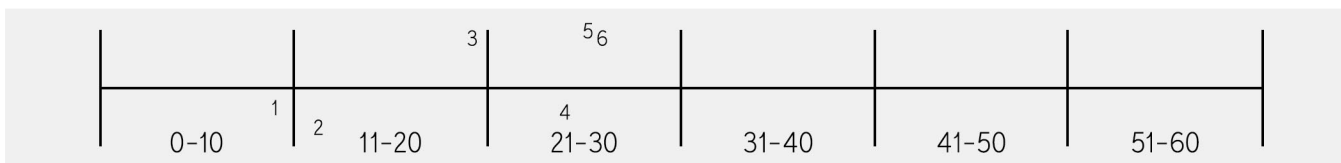
Divide into decades – Draw a line on a piece of paper and divide that line into sections, creating one section for each decade of your life. We'll call it your "lifeline." It might look like this:



Each section represents a decade. Assigning numbers, it goes...



Now, if you are a believer, ask God to remind you of critical events, turning points, moments of truth, disasters, failures, victories. These are the *really important life-shaping events that happened in each of these decades*. If you are not a believer, do the same thing, as best as you can. Put a number on the scale to mark your age when it happened. Put it above the line if it was a positive event for your spiritual growth, and put it below the line if it was a negative one. Your graph and notes might start looking something like this:



Corresponding with the numbers on the chart,
these could be sample notes on our example lifeline:

1. My dad abandoned our family.
2. My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer.
3. I met Mary, my future wife.
4. Mary left me.
5. I made the decision to explore what it meant to trust and follow Jesus.
6. I was baptized.

Now take a few minutes and complete your "highs" and "lows" on your lifeline with a brief note on what happened to make it a significant event. If you end up with more than 12-15 points, strike through any that are not absolutely essential to your faith journey..

¹ This material was developed by Radical Mentoring and is edited and used by Bobby Harrington with Regi Campbell's explicit permission.



THE GOD PART...

Beside each of your notes, jot down where God, as you understand him, was in each of these moments. Be completely honest. On the positive ones, did you see his hand at the time? When did you begin to see God as real or not? How was God guiding you, blessing you, and protecting you in these positive events? If you still have trouble seeing God in one (or more) of them, say so. On the negative ones, those below the line, what did God teach you? How did he redeem the situation for his glory? It may be easier to be honest on the positive events, but make sure to make honest notes about the negative events too; your group will pay more attention to how you got through the down times than they will to your victories. Here's how notes might look for the example above...

EVENT

1. My dad abandoned our family.

2. My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer.

3. I met Mary, my future wife.

4. Mary left me.

5. I surrendered my life to Jesus.

6. I committed to church.

GOD

1. I didn't know God then. I felt alone and abandoned. Unloved.

2. I thought, "If there is a God, how could he be good?" I turned away in anger and unbelief.

3. Mary was a Christian. I loved her instantly so I "paused" my unbelief and started acting like I believed, especially around her.

4. After 12 years of marriage, Mary had enough. She wanted the husband she thought she married in the beginning... the one who wasn't criticizing her all the time. I was shocked and devastated.

5. Mary's leaving forced me to look at myself in the mirror, and I didn't like what I saw. I knew God had been working on me, but I was too stubborn and pigheaded to listen. I was humbled. I dropped to my knees and asked him to forgive me. I asked him to change me. I was baptized, and I started to worship and pray and study his Word. My thoughts slowly became more like his.

6. As I've become more and more aware of his presence in my life, I wanted to go all in with my faith. I attended the church's membership course and made a commitment to a local church. God used that day to warm Mary's heart toward me. We got back together and...

DO YOU GET THE PICTURE? You are telling your group where you were, the role God played (or didn't play) in your life, what happened next, and you are allowing them to see the journey you've been on.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Our goal as we tell our stories is to share our thoughts and let people know us. Where possible, we also want to bring God the glory, seeing his hand and giving him glory for the "above the line" moments. But maybe even more importantly, we're telling how God showed up in the bad and worked it for good. How he redeemed it.

Here's Where I Am Today. You will close your spiritual biography by explaining where you are today spiritually. The "Here's where I am today" close happens once you've identified your positive and negative moments. After you've added the God part to them, you'll end with a statement of where you are *right now*. Again, this requires you to tell the truth.

Examples:

"I've gotten involved in this discipleship thing and I'm scared to death. I don't feel worthy. I'm not sure what I have to give, but I'm in and I want God to use me in the best way possible."

or

"I've been a faithful student of the Bible for years. But telling my personal stuff to you guys feels very awkward and uncomfortable. I trust my leader and God that they're leading me right. I'll be praying a bunch as I step into this role of mentor. Please pray for me and let me know how I can be better at it."

or

"I've grown in my faith but not as much as I wish I had. It's going to be a challenge to do this much reading, but I love Jesus and I'm willing to be a faithful follower and give it my best shot."

or

"I don't really believe in God or a divine Jesus, but I'm curious to learn more about the Christian faith and in what it might look like to follow Jesus' teachings in some areas of my life."

GET THE PICTURE? It's about being real. Transparent and vulnerable. The worst people in a disciple-making group try to keep up appearances, maintaining squeaky-clean "Sunday school" personas at the expense of being real. In our best moments, we want people who will tell us the truth, and, if you are the leader, *you will set the tone and the trajectory for others of your group by how transparently you tell your story and how much of your life you've surrendered to Him.*

Remember, if you are the leader, and the one to go first, you are modeling for everyone else how to share their spiritual biographies. The others will be telling their stories too. What you model is what they will deliver. So be bold. Be brave. Tell it all so they can see the work he has done in you!