

Life Map Exercise

What is a Life Map?

A life map tracks your journey through life and marks out important events along the way. It is intended to discern the highs and lows of your life, the influential people (both positive and negative), and the work of God throughout your spiritual journey.

The Process

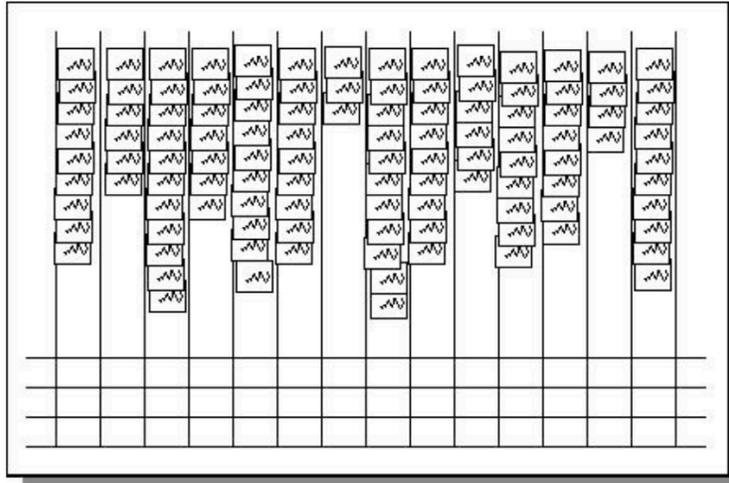
Over the next couple of weeks, I'd like you to take some time to put a Life Map together. I would suggest working on it in *at least two separate times*. The goal is to truly take time to discern critical moments and seasons, people, and spiritual elements in your life journey. It is important to let this be a "slow" process. The goal of this exercise is not to tell a captivating story, but to gain deeper insight and awareness of your own story, no matter what it feels like to others. The reality is this can be an incredibly therapeutic and difficult process, so please let it take the time that it needs.

Supplies Needed

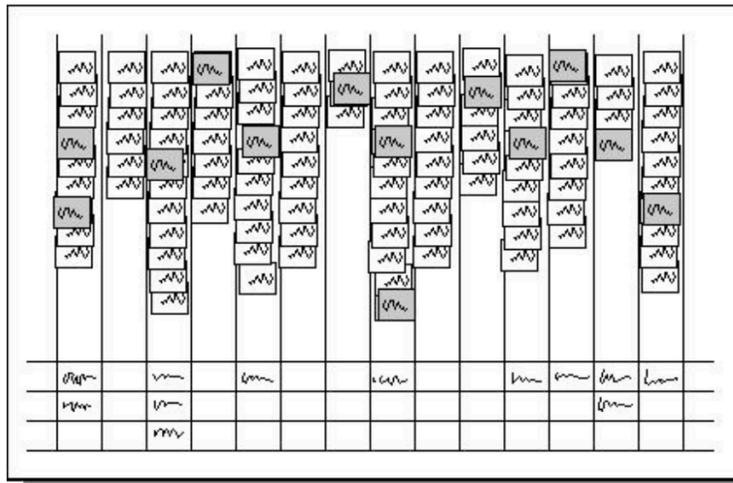
- 1 sheet of full-size poster board.
- 2 stacks of small or medium-sized Post-It notes (need to be two different colors)

Directions

- Start the Life Map exercise by simply brainstorming about your life history. Take one pad of Post-Its and brainstorm the people, places, and events that have shaped your life (**write only one of these per Post-It note**). Jot down a few words on each post-it to capture the idea so that you do not forget them. Let the ideas flow as a stream of consciousness. *Don't worry about particular order or sequence, just sit down with the stack and try to get as many as possible out... especially from your younger years.* One way of filtering this involves **High points, Low points, Heroes, Villains, Hurts, and Hand of God moments**.
- Some Questions to Help:
 - What might you share about yourself to a friendly stranger on a long plane ride? (i.e. people, places, events, education, job, hobbies/interests, conversion story, etc.)
 - What would you share about yourself with a dear and trusted friend? (i.e. successes, failures, high points, low points, traumatic experiences, etc.)
- After spending this time coming up with as many ideas as possible, arrange the notes in a logical sequence in the columns of the poster board. Most people arrange their notes in chronological order from left to right, some using different columns by segments in school or life stages, or different addresses or cities where they lived in. You can do this however feels most natural for arranging your story. See the image below as an example.



- Use the pad of **different colored** post-it notes to highlight the painful people, places, and events. Transfer the words/names/events on the original painful yellow not to one that is of a different colors. This allows you to see the groupings or stages of your life with more pleasant or painful notes to stand out from each other. Again, take your time and add additional notes for the appropriate color (for negative or positive, pleasant or painful) as you recall more.



- Look for clues to God’s calling and work in your life. Look at the emerging timeline for **patterns** or **themes**. Do this prayerfully and with a deep self-awareness as you are “retrospectively curious” in examining your life. Some sample questions:
 - What patterns do you see in the personal inclinations, pivotal decisions, unique opportunities and transforming experiences of your history?

- What was happening that might have been God at work, even in painful experiences?
- Reflect on each column of notes in turn. Pay attention to especially the colored painful notes. See if you can pinpoint one, two, or three (or more) **deep beliefs** that were formed during those portions of your life. What **deep values** have emerged as a result of this journey.
- Finally, spend some time in prayer asking Jesus what he might want to show in this lifemap. What haven't you seen? What might he be speaking about the parts of your life that you're now reflecting on? What healing or hope might he want to offer to you?
- Once you finish this, take some time to work through the Crafting Your God-Story exercise.