

Life Inventory Exercise

Answer each question with the first word or sentence that comes to you as a way of stirring up some of the memories you carry. Don't overthink these; just put down the first thing that comes to mind.

- + A teacher to whom I owe a lot...
- + Someone I once imagined marrying, but didn't...
- + Someone I wanted to be like...
- + A relative who fascinates me...
- + Someone I very much envied, or was jealous of...
- + A pet I once had, but don't have anymore...
- + A special hideout or getaway place in the past...
- + A favorite home of one of my friends...
- + The first place I lived on my own...
- + A place where I learned a lot about nature...
- + A place I once considered especially magnificent...
- + A place that's sacred to me...
- + A piece of clothing I thought would give me a new image...
- + Something I thought gave me magic powers when I was a child...
- + Something I associate with my mother/father/parent/guardian...
- + Something of my own that I broke or lost and sorely missed...
- + A reunion I once had...
- + A time when I narrowly escaped disaster...
- + The time I first began to feel like an adult...
- + A memorable birthday...
- + A strange party I attended...
- + A time I felt especially free...

After everyone has had 5 minutes to answer these, take a couple more minutes, and look over your list. Circle two that were especially meaningful for you.

Now pick one of those and share in pairs briefly...

- Developed by Mark Yaconelli

Personal Storytelling in Ministry

1. Share stories that fit the business, task of a particular meeting:
 - “Good Teachers” in Christian Ed. meeting”
 - “Sacred Moments” for worship committee
 - “Experiences of the Kingdom” on leadership boards
 - “Mentors in ministry” while on pastor search committee
2. Incorporate the Awareness Examen in committee/board meetings to help unearth stories of gratitude, love, life in congregation (see the “Liturgy for Discernment” in Contemplative Youth Ministry, Yaconelli and Sleeping with Bread, Linns)
3. Gospel According to Everyone. Have a writer in congregation collect sacred experiences. Read these encounters as part of worship liturgy or sermon.
4. Invite members to share stories in worship that match Biblical passage. If biblical story is about a healing have people share healing stories, passage is about encountering God in stranger have people share stories of memorable encounters with strangers, if passage is about fear have them share a moment of fear, etc.
5. Have one person each month share their testimony or life story as a sermon.
6. Have a life story class or retreat.
7. Have regular special events where people tell stories (intergenerational): Example: All Saints (tell stories of a beloved person who has died), Seasonal (tell stories of spring, summer, fall or winter memories), Back to School (tell stories of childhood memories). Have someone there who can connect God to these stories.
8. Have children/youth record stories of elders and then play them or present them after church.
9. Have leadership members tell their story, record them and post them for congregation to watch.
10. After mission trips, service outings, outreach events have a person share a story in worship (not just the facts and statistics).
11. Create a storytelling series like “The Moth” as an outreach event. (See “Storytelling Events at Shamrock’s Pub” for examples).

Using Storytelling with Children and Youth and the life of the Church

1. Do an exercise very similar to what we did today. This works especially well for an intergenerational gathering—everyone of every age has a story. Great event for a confirmation class with their parents, for example.
2. Incorporate storytelling into Sunday School, Confirmation, or Youth meetings. Instead of always having the leader or teacher tell a story and then make a point, bring up the topic (forgiveness, peer pressure, generosity—WHATEVER) and then ask the kids to think of a situation around that topic in their own life. You could look volunteer storytellers in advance, or simply do a memory-storyboard exercise like today.
3. Once youth get more used to telling stories, have them share their stories in worship.
4. While you are at it, have adults share their stories too.
5. Biblical storytelling: give youth (or whoever) a Bible story. Instead of reading the story, have the youth share the story in their own words.
6. Other ideas from the group...

Storytelling Events at Shamrock's Pub
Sponsored by Humble Walk Lutheran Church and Edgumbe Presbyterian Church

Wilderness Tales (In Advent/December)

The wilderness.

It's where we go to find ourselves.

It's often where we feel lost.

It's where we go to re-learn how to be human.

It's where we are often cut off from our usual comforts.

It's where John the Baptizer yells that we need a complete teardown--do over--everything much change.

It's where we realize that the beginning is near.

Do you have a Wilderness Tale? Send a one paragraph description to pastorjodihouge@gmail.com.

I Was Once a Farmer

Farming means honest hard work, food on our tables, and connection to the land. It also means sunburned necks, weeds, sore muscles, and falling head-first into the manure pile. Jesus loves a good farm story. So do we. Got dirt-based story of abundance or famine? We'd love to hear it. Email story ideas to jodi@humblewalkchurch.org.

Border Crossings

Theme: Border Crossings. As in, Jesus crossed the border into human skin. Refugees swim for safety. Where you go I will go. New people, new language, new experiences. We cross all sorts of borders every day. Got a story? Email pastorjodihouge@gmail.com.

Coming Out

Every story is a coming out story. Jesus comes out of the tomb. We come out of our childhood, out of Africa, out of Mankato, out of the closet, out of the dark, out of the woods. Coming out is about movement; it is about seeing the world from a new place; it is about being known for who you really are. Does that spark your imagination? If you have a story to share, email jodihouge@gmail.com.

Waiting in the Dark (Advent)

Bring Out Your Dead (Easter)

Love, Lost and Found (Lent)

Neighbor/Stranger

When the Sinners and Saints Go Marching In (All Saints)

STORYTELLING GUIDELINES

Remember these are true stories (at least in your own mind), told first person, in ten minutes (or less). The theme is "_____." Feel free to make as broad a connection as you want to the theme.

As you prepare your story remember this is more like talking to a group of good friends, it should feel more like confession, less like a performance. There is no right way to tell your story. Everyone has a different style. Talk in a way that's natural to who you are.

Here are some guidelines to think about for this kind of telling.

A. Story. Remember you're telling a story. No preaching nor teaching. No group therapy. A story means there is a conflict or change that takes place. Something happens. Try to focus on one interaction, one moment that changed/opened/enlightened you. Remember stories have a beginning middle and end. One way to help you think of the heart of the story is this: If you were to give your story a title what would it be? Or if you were to pitch this story to a movie producer, what's the one sentence pitch? For example: "How I Learned to Forgive my Mother." Or "Adventures in the Sewer System of Boston."

B. Opening lines. Know your opening line. This will keep you from wandering when you begin. Then tell us what we need to know: place, time, age, others involved and your relationship to them. This gives your story a context, a setting and characters. Listen to Jon Levin, an elevator ER, at themoth.org/listen. His opening lines: "When I was young I was a bright, happy, enthusiastic kid. So, some people were surprised when years later I'd become an angry, sullen, disaffected high school dropout."

C. Action. Get into the central (conflict) action of the story as directly as you can. Show, don't tell. Imagine the action of the story taking place as if you were watching a movie...*Scene 1: Me sitting in the police station. Scene 2: My grandfather driving me to the shooting range.*

Scene 3: Burying my BB gun under the backyard dog house. Sometimes it's good to think in terms of images, like the storyboard from a movie. Describe scene 1, then scene 2, then scene 3. Turn on your mental movie projector, conjure up the detailed images that make your story easy to remember and spontaneous to tell.

D. Conclusion. Know your last line. Let this line summarize what you learned. This can be one sentence. A recent storyteller ended her story about falling in love with and adopting 7 Haitian children over a ten year period this way: "I never set out to start a family as a single woman. I just fell in love. And when you fall in love with someone, if you can, you try and bring them home."

E. Remember when you come to the end of your tale, end it. Say nothing else. Pause. Wait for the applause; it will come. Make eye contact with the audience. Leave the stage. The story has been told. No need to talk about the story after it is told.

Summary: Introduce the story, begin it, follow it through the action, end it and tell what it all means to you. Remember color, beauty, feelings, touch. Turn on the lights, camera, action, feel it, see it, place the characters and action in mid-air between yourself and your listeners. Don't talk about it, tell it. Live through it again

Questions for conversations around tables

1. If you could invite anyone (living or not) to dinner, who would it be and why?

2. Who is someone you know who lives their faith “out loud” who you look up to?
What do you find inspiring about them?

3. Where is a place that is sacred to you, and why?