

Telling Your Story

*"In a way, nobody sees a flower, really, it is so small,
we haven't time—and to see takes time,
like to have a friend takes time"*

Georgia O'Keeffe¹

God is always revealing Himself and always at work in His world and in the lives of the people He loves (which would be all of us). One of the characteristics of mature faith is the learned ability to “see God at work” in our story, in other’s stories, and amidst the chaos in the world. We see “by faith”. We see “by revelation”. We see by “listening” to God’s perspective on things.

The trailhead for this year’s pilgrimage in faith mentoring toward maturity in Christ and learning to “see God at work” is your life story. To read this topographical map by faith means listening to two things—each other’s life stories and God. Listening deeply to a life story and then to God’s perspective on that story will orient us to the journey ahead.

The summit to which we are headed to is *axios*²—a worthy, mature, healthy, robust life in Christ. We cannot get there by simply telling our life story. This would be like measuring ourselves by examining ourselves in terms of ourselves. The gospel truth from the Bible’s letter to the Ephesians is that when God’s calling and our walking fit, we are growing up in Christ. God calls, we walk³. The place to begin is to see where God has already been at work in our lives and then increasingly change course to fit into His calling.

¹ O’Keeffe is a major figure in American art chiefly known for paintings of flowers, rocks, shells, animal bones, and landscapes in which she synthesized abstraction and representation with crisply contoured forms and subtle tonal transitions of varying colors

² See the *Introduction to Mentoring Maturity in Christ* and the discussion of “the goal is maturity”

³ *Practice Resurrection*, Eugene Peterson; pp. 30-32

Spiritual Exercise: Telling Your Story

1. Goals:
 - a. to help you get to know each other
 - b. to pay attention to how God has worked in your life
 - c. to discern spiritual patterns in your life
 - i. e.g. how you trust; how you resist; where you are alive; where you are stuck
2. Options for the **PERSON TELLING THEIR STORY** [just pick one]
 - a. Option #1: Genogram
 - i. Do a sketch of three generations of your family⁴ and tell your story from there
 - b. Option #2: Five Aspects Of Life Formation
 - i. Telling one significant thing and why it is significant about your
 1. Childhood
 2. family
 3. romance[s]
 4. spirituality
 5. struggle or tragic incident
 - ii. Summarize by “how you see yourself” as a result of life so far.
 - iii. Where have you experienced God in these five aspects of life?
 - iv. Finally share what important decisions you are facing.
 - c. Option #3: Formative Events/People
 - i. Describe 2 or 3 significant events in your life and what made them significant
 - ii. Describe 2 or 3 significant people in your life and how their influence has made you who you are
 - iii. Describe how these events and people have positively or negatively impacted your faith journey
 - d. Option #4: Life Chapters
 - i. Divide your life into chapters—title each chapter
 - ii. Describe the character; dominant emotional tone; and main theme of each of these chapters and why you titled it as you did

⁴ Cf. *Meet Your Parents and the Rest of Your Family of Origin* in the *Resources for the Cap Mentoring Manual* at www.capchurch.ca

3. For the **PERSON LISTENING TO A LIFE STORY**
 - a. Listen deeply and prayerfully
 - b. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of God's involvement in the person's story
 - c. Do not comment on or critique the life story.
 - d. You can ask clarifying questions
 - i. "Tell me more about the significance of"
 - ii. "What was that experience like for you?"
 - e. When the person has finished telling their story ask:
 - i. "How do you see God in your story?"
 - f. Share your affirmations of where you see God in the story you have heard and "notice God together" as you discuss what you see.
4. Pray together about your experience.
5. "Switch places" and let the storyteller become the listener and the listener the story teller.
 - a. You may want to schedule another session for this rather than do both stories in the same
6. Optional Assignment
 - a. Follow up this session by working through these two exercise and reporting back
 - i. *Inviting God into Your Identity Formation*⁵
 - ii. *God and Your Family of Origin Story*⁶ and reporting back

⁵ Cf. *Inviting God into your Identity Formation* in the *Resources for the Cap Mentoring Manual* at www.capchurch.ca

⁶ Cf. *God and your Family of Origin Story* in the *Resources for the Cap Mentoring Manual* at www.capchurch.ca