

Life Map¹ Prayer Exercise Instructions

Part 1: Prayerfully Make a List

Carve out 15 to 30 minutes of uninterrupted time. Bring a pen and a journal or paper, find a quiet place to pray, and open with the sign of the cross. Take a deep breath and call to mind God's presence with a moment of silence.

Pray in your own words something like: "Heavenly Father, I know you are here with me, that you love me, and that you know me. Thank you for my life and for leading me to where I am now. Please bring to mind meaningful moments or relationships in my life. Be with me as I remember and reflect."

Now, start brainstorming. Write down any events or people that come to mind. You don't have to be thorough and record everything that happened to you. Focus on what seems important to you now. Don't worry about how they all might fit on the life map yet. You don't even need to write them down in order. Just list things as they come to mind.

Use these prompts to help you remember:

- **High points**
- **Low points**
- **Defining moments**
- **Influential relationships**
- **Times you felt God's presence or apparent absence**
- **Seasons of growth/discovery**

When you're finished or your prayer time is over, thank God for helping you remember these parts of your life. Share with him any thoughts or emotions that came up as you made your list. If you feel your list is missing important people or events and you ran out of time, return to this exercise in another prayer time tomorrow. You'll use your list as a starting point for creating your life map.

Part 2: Draw Your Life Map

Once you have your list of noteworthy life events, you're ready to create your life map.

Set aside about 25 to 30 minutes of uninterrupted time in a quiet place. Bring your list, a pencil, and a blank piece of paper.

Begin your time with prayer. Start with the sign of the cross and call to mind God's presence with a moment of silence. Ask God to be with you and guide you as you create your life map.

Use the provided printed template for the map.

¹ Evangelical Catholic, Reach More Mission Training, "Nextstep: discover your story"

You probably won't be able to fit everything on your life map, so choose the most influential moments of your life. Think about how positive or negative they felt to you at the time. Then plot them chronologically on your life map. Events above the middle horizontal line felt positive, and events below the line were experienced as negative.

Don't worry about being exact. You don't have to record the precise time each event happened, and your map doesn't have to be an accurate representation of time. Some events you may want to include might even span many years or overlap each other. That's ok. Just draw it in whatever way makes the most sense to you.

If you're feeling more artistic, you could draw pictures to represent events, or you could draw a curvy or meandering path if you feel that represents your life better. It's really up to you!

Part 3: Pray With Your Life Map

After remembering key moments of your life and creating your life map, the final part of the Discover Your Story step is praying with your life map.

As long as you're taking the stuff of your life to God, talking to him about it, and trying to listen, there's no wrong way to pray with your story. We encourage you to come back to your life map several times, focusing on different events from your past, and trying a few methods that you feel drawn to.

However you pray, here are some general guidelines for your prayer time:

- **Choose a quiet place and time where you'll have minimal interruptions.**
- **Plan to spend 15 minutes (or more) in prayer.**
- **Open with the sign of the cross and call to mind God's presence with a moment of silence.**
- **Ask the Holy Spirit to guide this prayer time.**
- **Reflect on any aspect of your story. Share with God any memories, thoughts, or feelings that arise. Some people find it helpful to write in a journal as they pray.**
- **Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for the time you had.**
- **Don't judge how well you prayed or if it "worked"—it's the effort that counts!**

During your prayer time, you could focus on anything related to your life map. Here are some prompts to get you started:

- **How did you feel as you reflected on your life and created your life map? If this exercise brought any particularly positive or negative emotions to the surface, bring those emotions to the Lord.**
- **Do you see any patterns in your story as a whole? Does looking at your life map stir any questions about your life to bring to God?**
- **Any specific event from your past could be the focus of a prayer time. Are there particular events you want to revisit and process in a deeper way? Where was God during that time for you?**

- **How does this exercise affect your view of your past? Your experience of the present? Your feelings about the future?**

Part 4: More Ways to Pray With Your Story

Imaginative Prayer

First, find a quiet place and time to pray, open with the sign of the cross, and call to mind God's presence. Ask him to help you reflect on your life. Choose one important event from your story and put yourself back in that scene. Some things to think about:

- **How old were you?**
- **What were your surroundings like?**
- **Who else was there?**
- **What was said?**
- **What happened?**
- **How did you feel at the time?**
- **How do you feel now while remembering?**

Then, ask God: where were you in this moment? What would you like to say to me about this event?

Be still and listen for God's response. Pay attention to how you feel and to any new thoughts. Subtle changes in yourself could be part of God's answer to you.

Scriptural Reflection

Looking back on your life, you might recall particular times when you felt God's presence. Or, you may not remember any times like that. Maybe there was even a time when you felt like God wasn't there for you.

No matter our subjective experience, God is everywhere, and he chooses specifically to be present to each one of us. Take a moment to reflect on these Bible verses about the nearness of God. If you feel it is appropriate, pray for an increase in faith to believe these promises and to see God's faithfulness more clearly in your own life.

How does the truth of God's constant presence and loving attention affect your reflection on your life story?

- **"I will never forsake you or abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5, NABRE).**
- **"And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, NABRE).**
- **"I am with you and will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you" (Genesis 28:15, NABRE).**
- **"Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9, NABRE).**

- "The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior, who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, who will sing joyfully because of you" (Zephaniah 3:17, NABRE).
- "Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." (Isaiah 41:10, NABRE).
- "For I am the Lord, your God, who grasp your right hand; It is I who say to you, Do not fear, I will help you" (Isaiah 41:13, NABRE).
- "Be strong and steadfast; have no fear or dread of them, for it is the Lord, your God, who marches with you; he will never fail you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6, NABRE).
- "When you pass through waters, I will be with you; through rivers, you shall not be swept away. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, nor will flames consume you" (Isaiah 43:2, NABRE).
- "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jeremiah 31:3, RSV-CE).
- "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NABRE).
- "For great is his steadfast love toward us; and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever. Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 117:2, RSV-CE)
- You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely (Psalm 139 1-4, NIV).