

Gatherings to Explore the Writing of a Spiritual Biography

First Session

- I. Introduction: why we began this workshop
 - a. Participants reasons for coming
 - i. Brief life summary
 - ii. Past experience of writing
 - iii. Autobiography different from diary
 - b. Beginning thoughts (put on paper)
 - i. Who are intended readers?
 - ii. What time period covered?
 - iii. Be conscious of God's presence as a running theme
 - c. Suggestions or concerns
 - i. Can I write a story?
 - ii. No pressure – take time – no deadline
 - iii. Need for a plan – outline – skeleton
- II. Beginning suggestions
 - a. Be comfortable – never concerned or rushed
 - b. You are telling ***your*** story
 - c. As you write, be aware how events affected you
 - d. Develop your descriptions of people
 - i. Physical makeup, personality, relationship to you,, how and where you met
 - ii. Tell what is unique about this person, what you shared (books, food, sports, gatherings)
 - e. Details are key to make the story real. Do some research.
- III. Assignment: Begin by constructing an outline - a beginning, followed with various life changes ending with a summary of your story. Leave spaces in your outline between major basic topics to fill in with notes as they come to mind. Write an introduction. Don't be fancy. Remember you are telling a story about yourself and life changes.

Gatherings to Explore the Writing of a Spiritual Biography *Second Session*

- I. Problems and questions about the assignment
 - a. Outline: share with group your experience in planning and organizing your thoughts
 - b. Does it cover the time span you intended?
 - c. Remember the outline is only a plan – make it topical
 - d. Still working on it. Any questions? Are you satisfied? If not, why not?

- II. Beginning your opening paragraph
 - a. Include your intentions for writing your story
 - b. Does the reader realize for whom this story is written?
 - c. Does the reader realize your story has a time span?
 - d. Make known our underlying theme: God's constant presence

- III. Beginning your story after opening paragraph
 - a. Basic information. Write as if you are talking.
 - i. Parents and siblings
 - ii. Growing up decisions: fortunate and unfortunate
 - iii. Transitions from child, teens, adult
 - iv. Schools: where, happiness, struggles, teachers, relationships, favorite subjects
 - v. Activities: sports, artistic endeavors, music, part-time jobs, illnesses, parties
 - vi. High school: memorable episodes, favorite subjects, clothing, hair styles, dating, worries, challenges
 - vii. World activities: political, social, church, personal concerns
 - viii. Be specific: paint pictures with words

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Third Session

Take time out to examine your work thus far.

- I. How far have you progressed in your story?
- II. Have you changed or added notes to your outline?
- III. What have you learned about yourself?
- IV. Does your story flow by connecting episodes?
Do you need or desire to insert paragraphs in your written material?
- V. Do you recognize God's presence where you never realized before? Include this recognition.
- VI. Have you shared your feelings, disappointments, successes, surprises? Write the details, not just the facts.
 - a. Have you outlined experiences you have never shared before? If not, why not?
 - b. What hopes do you have regarding your readers' reactions to your story?
 - c. Are you satisfied with your writing thus far? Explain why.
 - d. Do you want to make changes? Do it – but keep writing.
- VII. As you write, remember that you are living in the **NOW** not in the past. The days of the past reveal how we arrived at today – that is your story. It becomes more and more obvious how God has guided us in the yesterdays and will be with us in the tomorrows – think about that.

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Fourth Session

- I. Suggestions to make your autobiography more interesting
 - a. Have you included any surprising times you have experienced? Perhaps you have met a famous person, witnessed a scene that inspired or frightened you.
 - b. Have you visited any unusual places where you were exposed to a new culture, a new language, ethnic food, or churches of different denominations?
 - c. Make note of little gifts that God gave you in daily living, such as finding a lost article, renewing an old friendship, finding the right words when needed, received an unusual compliment, discovered you have a new talent, or fulfilled a lifelong desire.
 - d. Describe the decisions you pondered over and how the result affected your future life.
- II. Periodically stop writing and read what you have written.
 - a. Are you satisfied? What have you accidentally omitted and should be included or developed further?
 - b. Have you described your feelings of pleasure, disappointment, concerns, perseverance, laughter, discomfort or sorrow?
 - c. Have you included happenings in the world as you grew up? Do you remember good times, depressions, wars, elections, epidemics, medical breakthroughs, and world leaders?
 - d. Have you changed radically over the span of different landmarks in your life?
- III. Your readers would be pleased to read about your relationship with God, your prayer life, even times when your faith in God was challenged or seemed remote. How did you recover?
- IV. Has your appearance changed? Has your taste in music, reading material, occupation, pastimes, relationships with family developed over time?
- V. In your concluding paragraph repeat the reason for writing your story. What is your overall message, if any, and what personal words (not overly dramatic) would you like to share with your readers?
- VI. Be confident that God has blessed every word you wrote and your readers will realize more fully how precious life is as God's gift.

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