

Responding to God in Your Story

Sibyl Towner & Sharon Swing

Course Description: Housed in your life story are evidences of the activity and presence of God. Making a decision to look at your past, and consider your current life will allow you to have more confidence that your future will be filled with more meaning, purpose, and joy.

Using the My Life Story Visual Map, we will walk through the process of documenting your story in a way that allows you to see it from a new perspective. One purpose of documenting your story is to uncover how beloved you are by the God who created you, so that you can live gracefully, purposefully, and without fear. Reflecting on your own story helps you understand why you are the way are, move toward resolution of past hurts, and become more grateful. It will allow you to be more open to deeply listen to the beauty and pain in the stories of others.

Learning Outcomes: • An acceptance of God's redemptive work in redeeming our entire story.

- The capacity to listen with compassion to the stories of others.
- The naming and responding to God's unique call on our lives for the good of others and for the extending of the Kingdom of God

Resources Needed for Class: *My Life Story* by Sibyl Towner & Sharon Swing

- Available for \$8 at Seeds at Willow Creek Community Church
- Seed's Phone: 888-865-6222, www.store.willowcreek.org

Other Resources Used:

- Small Groups Conference 2003: Treating Wounds or Training Soldiers?
 - Speaker: Dr. Dan Allender; DVD available for \$25.95; VHS for \$3.00
 - Willow Creek Association; www.willowcreek.com; then Resources, then Dan Allender

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Class Two Agenda

- Welcome
- Homework Response
- Three Key Questions of the Spiritual Life:

1.
**Where did
I come
from?**

2.
**Where am
I going?**



3.
How do I get there?

- Knowing God & Knowing Myself
- Loving what God loves
- Fulfilling God's purposes

- Sibyl's Story
- Listening Guidelines
 - Invite the Holy Spirit
 - Participation is invited, not demanded
 - Confidentiality
 - Give the gift of focused attention
 - Unconditional acceptance – NO FIXING, ADVISING or RESCUING!
 - Turn to wonder instead of judgment
 - Listen to the silence
 - Affirm gifts and stories
- So that...
 - We create a safe place
 - We can be attentive to the Holy Spirit
 - We help people listen to themselves
- In a way which...
 - Moves us toward knowing God more fully
 - Knowing ourselves more fully
 - Illuminates and creates motivation for being who, and doing what God intends (Ephesians 2:10)
- Centering Prayer
- My Life Story Listening & Sharing
- Debrief Listening & Sharing
- Homework
 - Share a larger portion of your Life Story with friend or spouse, or other listener
 - Invite the Holy Spirit to join you as you re-read all the instructions and questions on the My Life Story Map and document your responses. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate what he wants you to notice.
 - Select two questions from the 'Questions to Journal, Ponder & Discuss' section on page 5 of the My Life Story package and journal your responses.

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Class Three Agenda

- Welcome & Debrief of experiences from last week's homework
- Prayer & Scripture
- Dan Allender DVD
 - Q: What pieces of Allender's content stood out to you?
- More reasons for going deeper in exploring your story
- Q: What choice will I make?

- Options for further exploration of your story
 - Continue journaling on the remaining questions on the 'Questions to Ponder, Journal & Discuss'
 - Read Dan Allender's book, To Be Told.
 - Review/Read Additional Resources listed on My Life Story map.
 - Go to or listen to the upcoming Spiritual Mentoring Wednesday night class taught by Susan Shadid and Sibyl Towner.
 - If you are looking for someone to listen to your story, ask for a list of local listeners.
 - If you enjoyed the format of My Life Story, then you might be interested in the full set of maps. You can purchase the entire set of Listen to My Life materials at Willow Creek's bookstore, Seeds. The full set includes My Life Now, My Life Story, Peak Experiences, Valley Experiences, Reviewing My Days, Desires & Longings and Life-Giving Rhythms.
 - Are you unsure of the next step? Email Sibyl Towner at stowner@willowcreek.org or Sharon Swing at sharon@swingconsulting.com or Rebecca Madden at rymadden@comcast.net.
- ABlessing