

Best Practices in Receiving a Story

It is with much joy that we think of each of you. In our interactions with the fabric of friends participating in *The Journey* process, we've been reminded of the particular care required while sharing narrative stories with each other.

With that in mind, as a VP3 Team we discussed some of the Best Practices we have been a part of or experienced in receiving, or listening, to a life story shared.

If you find yourself with any questions before, during, or after the *Stage 2: An Examined Life* spiritual narrative process, please email us.

- It's possible there may be someone in your group really struggling with putting together their story for any variety of reasons. It can be honoring to that person, and to honor the group, by taking time in advance to individually care for this person by meeting with them to help them get ready for and through their story. Ask for the Holy Spirit to lead you if this is possible in your group.
- Plan ahead how to respond when the stories are finished. Some good ways to respond include:
 - Brief silence
 - Careful word of thanks
 - Particular words of HOPE
 - A few questions for clarification
 - Prayer
- As you plan for prayer at the close of each story invite one or two to lead. "Steve and Kay will you please plan to pray for Sue when she is finished?" Doing this helps Steve and Kay better prepare in their hearts while Sue is sharing.
- Some groups share small stones or small pieces of paper with the group. While a story is being shared, those listening write down a word or two that captures the essence of how they hear God at work in the storyteller's life. These words can be given to the teller and provide inspiration and encouragement. Later, it offers a reminder of how others see God at work in their lives.
- When we listen to stories, we sometimes hear very difficult things. It can be awkward to know how, or if, we should say anything about those topics when the story is finished. It is better to "grab hold" of that information than to be silent about it. Grabbing hold by asking a question, "How are you doing with _____," dispels tension and invites care.
- Remember that as listeners we are not to FIX the other. We are there to care and receive another's story in love.
- Assure your group participants ahead of time that there is great joy in hearing each other's stories. No one is alone. We are all the same, in need of a Savior and thankful for Christ.

