

Part 1 – Remembering Your Story: A Timeline Exercise

A Step-by-Step Guide

This timeline exercise is designed to be done together with your group during *Session 2: Remembering Your Story*. Feel free to take a look at it, but there is no need to dive into any of this activity until your group meets together. Your facilitator will guide this experience.

PREPARATION

- For this exercise, facilitators will provide each participant:
 - a white poster board (22" x 14")
 - 75–100 small yellow Post-it™ notes
 - 35–40 small pink Post-it™ notes
 - 5–10 small blue Post-it™ notes
- This exercise is best done together at a table or tables where each person has adequate space.
- We begin this exercise with a poster board, yellow Post-it™ notes, and a pen in front of us. Take all the manuals and Bibles off the table. Allow the facilitator to guide us through the whole exercise.

BEGIN BY PRAYING TOGETHER

Be mindful that God is with us and among us throughout this exercise. May the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ “protect us from the evil one” (John 17:15, 2 Thessalonians 3:3).

STEP 1: *Brainstorm Key Moments* (12-15 minutes)

Begin by recalling and jotting down as many key events, relationships, places, or experiences from your life as possible. Don’t dwell on their significance right now—jot a word or phrase for each one on a small yellow Post-it™ note. Place these notes on the poster board without evaluation or order. Be patient with yourself and follow the facilitator’s guidance.

STEP 2: *Recognizing the Positive and the Negative* (10-12 minutes)

Now, take any painful or negative experiences you’ve listed on the yellow notes and transfer them to pink Post-it™ notes. Place the pink ones on your poster board. Continue adding new memories or insights, whether positive or negative, on yellow or pink notes as thoughts come to mind. Keep this brainstorming process gentle and open.

STEP 3: Organizing Your Timeline (10-15 minutes)

Begin to arrange your Post-it™ notes on the poster board in a rough chronological order, leaving space at the top (two inches). Layer events from similar times or phases to create a visual flow of your life's milestones. This is a flexible and creative process—there's no need for a precise order. Keep capturing any new key moments or memories that come to mind on a Post-it™ note.

STEP 4: Creating Life Chapters (10-15 minutes)

Observe natural breaks or transitions in your timeline; these can be the foundation for different “chapters” of your story. Think of groups of related events or themes that form a coherent chapter. Keep your timeline to 3-6 chapters. Give each chapter a memorable title that captures its essence. Mark these titles in the top two inches of your poster. Feel free to add more key moments as they surface during this reflection.

STEP 5: Reflecting on Lessons (8-10 minutes)

After you've organized your timeline, pause to consider what insights or lessons each chapter offers. Write down one or two initial reflections on blue Post-it™ notes and place them at the bottom of each chapter on the poster. These serve as starting points for further exploration later.

STEP 6: Reflection and Discussion (15-20 minutes)

Finally, take a few moments to share any initial thoughts or impressions about this exercise with your group. Feel free to mention surprises, patterns, or feelings that arose. If you're comfortable, share a blue note from your timeline with others. End with a moment of prayer or reflection, supporting one another in this process.

MOVING FORWARD:

Keep your poster board accessible as we continue to reflect and add to it in future sessions. This is a working document—an unfolding story of your life that will help shape your spiritual understanding and narrative in the upcoming parts of the *An Examined Life* process.

WHAT IS A KEY MOMENT?

It's any experience, person, event, place, or circumstance that has significantly shaped who you are—whether it brought joy, challenge, or change. For example, it could be a gift, a broken promise, a meaningful trip, or a relationship that left an impression. Imagine telling the story of your life; what scenes or people would you highlight?

If something comes to mind, and you are not sure whether this is a “key” moment or not, write it down on a Post-it™ note. This is somewhat akin to a brainstorming exercise. Let these images or memories come naturally—this is about exploration, not analysis.