

CONNECTING *THROUGH LIFE STORIES*

By Gladys Thompson



Christian Memoir Workshops

Participant's Manual

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Facilitator's Name: _____

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Facilitator's Phone Number: _____

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Introduction...

Welcome to our memoir-writing course! These workshops will help you reflect, remember, and record the stories that shaped your life. You don't need to be an experienced writer—just someone with memories to share. You'll find practical tools to guide you, whether writing for your family, exploring your personal history, or just enjoying connecting with others.

Even if you're not a writer but want to learn how to share your life stories, these workshops can help you. Instead of writing and reading your story to the class, you can tell it in your own way.

The lessons mainly target seniors but can be adapted for teens to older adults. A few mention Salvation Army terms, but they're easy to modify for any Christian denomination.

These lessons are based on my teaching over the past few years. With the help of a facilitator and a few others joining you, I trust you will find these workshops an interesting and enjoyable way to share your life stories.

While you could tackle writing your memoirs by yourself, you'll find that the information from your facilitator, along with class discussions and stories from others, will make it a much more enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

Tips

These are simple, practical suggestions to guide your writing and help you build confidence in sharing your stories. While many more writing techniques could be provided, the goal here isn't to publish your memoirs for the public, but rather to share them with your family and friends in a memorable way.

Action Items

Action items are your weekly projects to complete and bring to the next class. Once you get into actually writing your memoirs, you'll receive several story suggestions based on that week's theme. Choose one of the topics to write about and share with the group during the next session.

After each reading, the group will have the opportunity to offer positive, constructive feedback. They may comment or ask questions to help you see what worked well, what could be improved, and how your story affected them.

This process helps to build confidence and you'll find that you'll become an intimate group of friends, building connections with one another.

I've found that stories of about 750 words tend to work best. These short stories are easier for busy readers to enjoy as they read your finished book. Also, class time is limited, so these shorter pieces allow everyone to share. Then, later, when assembling your book, you'll find that these shorter stories give you more flexibility in organizing your themes and chapters.

Here's an example for the birth and childhood lesson:

- Instead of one long chapter covering your entire childhood, break the topic into several short stories:
 - your birth
 - elementary school
 - church life
 - home life
 - playtime, camping, etc.
- When compiling your book, you can:
 - keep them all under "Childhood," or

- place each story under a different theme (e.g., schooling → Education; Sunday school → Spiritual Growth).

Most participants find themselves thinking about the topic throughout the week; the actual writing and revising typically take an hour or two, and you'll find it generally comes more easily with practice. But if life gets busy or you're not quite feeling up to writing about that week's topic, it's okay to say "Pass." Attendance and participation are encouraged but not pressured. Just remember, the more you participate, the more you'll enjoy and benefit from the class.

Memory Joggers

Think of the memory joggers as a menu. When you're at a restaurant, you don't order everything—you choose the dish that appeals to you in the moment. The next time you visit, you might pick something entirely different.

The joggers work the same way. Each week, you'll get a list of prompts for that theme. Pick the story that feels the most meaningful and bring it to class. Some items won't apply to you. Later, you can revisit the same joggers and choose a different memory.

There's no right or wrong choice—simply follow the memory that feels most meaningful to you in the moment, and save the others for another time. These joggers will remain useful as you build your collection of stories to add to your book.

This course is also about personal reflection and growth, not just producing memoirs for others. So, some joggers are meant to help you explore your inner thoughts, rather than a written piece. It's entirely up to you which reflections you choose to share and which you keep for yourself.

Resources You Will Need

- **Binder:** Bring a 3-ring binder (min. 2" or 5 cm) with you to each workshop to contain your notes and memoirs. It's suggested you also use dividers for: Workshop Notes; Written Stories; Story Ideas; Timeline; Note Paper.
- **Participant's Manual:** Because you will need to read from this manual in class, it's suggested you bring a print copy of it to each workshop, included in your binder. Add your name on page 4, so it can be returned if misplaced. The links in the PDF copy will be helpful for checking out information on the website.
- **Writing Tools:** Pen or pencil.

Expectations

- **Attendance:** Attend each workshop unless you're ill, on vacation, or have a genuine reason.
- **Participation:** Be prepared to share your memoirs and enter into the discussions.
- **Honesty:** Be truthful in the stories you share.
- **Confidentiality:** Please keep the workshops a safe place and refrain from sharing personal information about any participants outside the group unless they have given you permission to do so.
- **Supportive:** Support and encourage each other, offering constructive suggestions when asked.
- **Respectful:** Please do not judge others, argue, or engage in political or hurtful topics. All interaction should reflect the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Workshop 1:

The Big Picture

Have you ever felt puzzled about what a memoir is or how to start writing one? You're not alone!

Group Action Item: Discuss how creating memoirs is something like putting together a jigsaw puzzle.

What Is a Memoir?

Many people find the difference between memoirs and autobiographies a bit confusing. An autobiography generally tells a person's life story in chronological order, often sounding like a straightforward, textbook-like record of facts. Memoirs, however, share specific experiences that have shaped, taught, or deeply touched you. They're genuine, heartfelt, and often serve as a healing journey. Whether they cover your entire life or just part of it, memoirs give your readers insight into your personal story in a warm and sincere way.

Memoirs are a great way to share your unique story. You can include your point of view, adventures, experiences, and feelings, maybe even revealing a side of yourself that others haven't seen before. It's not just about telling what happened; it's about sharing how those events made you feel and what you learned along the way. Memoirs don't just tell a story—they make a point.

What Is a *Spiritual* Memoir?

While we often think of our lives as the story, they are actually just chapters in God's much bigger story. Realizing this gives meaning to the journey we've been on. It helps us better understand why our lives unfolded as they did

and what role God played in them. So, spiritual memoirs don't just recount events; they look at how God brought us to faith, answered our prayers, and guided us. These can be meaningful stories that don't just highlight what we did, but how He moved in our lives.

The Bible is filled with memoirs that inspire and teach us. Nehemiah's story is one of my favourites. I also think of Paul's testimony. In Acts 26, he shares his story with King Agrippa, including his turning point and the transformation that followed.

Now that you understand what memoirs are, what are the reasons for writing them?

Why You Should Share Your Stories

1. Because God Wants You To

Many Bible verses encourage us to share our God stories, such as Psalm 78:4 and Psalm 22:30-31. As believers, we should obey God's commandments and teach them to our children through spoken words and visual reminders. Jesus also instructed us to "go and tell" others about what He has done for us.

2. You'll Learn More About Yourself

No one can tell your story quite like you. As you begin reflecting on your life and writing about it, you'll start to see more clearly who you are today—and just how meaningful your journey has been.

Sometimes, in the busyness of life, we might feel like just another face in the crowd. It's easy to wonder, *Why would anyone want to read about me?* But that's precisely why your story

1. The Big Picture

matters. As you reflect on the details of your life's journey, you'll start to notice its unique purpose and beauty.

It's easy to forget things. However, throughout this course, as you share your stories and listen to others' memoirs, memories will start to come back.

Memoir writing can be therapeutic. You might be surprised by what you notice now that you didn't see before. Sharing those memories with others in the group can help you gain a clearer view, possibly from a completely different perspective.

Together, we'll learn how to organize our ideas and express them clearly, not only in our writing but also in meaningful conversations.

3. They Can Instruct, Inform, and Inspire

I never really knew my maternal grandfather—only a vague memory of him sitting in a large armchair during his 90th birthday celebration. I was seven, and much more interested in playing with my cousin and her dolls.

My mom had told me stories about her father over the years, but it wasn't until much later when I read his memoirs that I began to feel like I was really getting to know him. It made me want to visit the places where he lived and worked. I was inspired by the way he faced many of the challenges that came his way. It made me eager to learn more—not only about him, but also about my other ancestors. Their stories made me enjoy learning history!

My life hasn't been as adventurous as that of the pioneers on the Canadian Prairies, who left their homeland to build a new life in Canada. However, I've realized that my children and grandchildren know very little about my childhood, my experiences in various forms of ministry, or the joys and challenges I've faced. For them, it's not so easy to imagine a world before computers, smartphones, YouTube, Google, and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Sharing our life stories—such as the types of homes we lived in, how doctors treated illnesses, how people travelled, and other traditions that shaped us, including the games we played and

how we coped with personal and economic crises—can bring history to life. Isn't that more interesting than studying a textbook?

Perhaps you were a nurse, firefighter, or police officer, but your grandchildren might have never seen you in uniform. Regardless of your career, they may not have understood why you chose it, what kinds of tasks you did, or what it meant to you.

Your unique combination of experiences, traditions, beliefs, and values defines who you are, and that's worth sharing.

In our rapidly changing world, our stories help maintain family bonds and core values. Sharing stories about our cultural or ethnic background, traditions, challenges, or even genetic health issues provides future generations with a deeper understanding of who they are.

Your love, wisdom, and life stories can leave a lasting legacy—gifts that live on long after you're gone.

What Kinds of Things to Tell

A compelling memoir answers the question, "What difference does it make?"

- Is it essential for family history?
- Does it offer insight on the culture?
- Does it teach a life lesson?
- Does it inspire others to overcome the challenges of life?
- Does it teach them more about God?
- Does it illustrate a turning point in life?

Here are some things to consider:

- What do you wish you knew about your own parents or grandparents?
- Who do you want to read your memoirs?
 - What do you want them to know?
 - If you were chatting with them, what would you tell them?
 - Why do you think it should matter to your readers?
 - How would you inspire them to overcome life's challenges?

Throughout these workshops, we'll look at how to bring your unique personality into your writing—to make funny experiences humorous, to

stir up your readers' emotions the way you were stirred, to make them feel like they were right there with you.

Always strive to be truthful. If people read facts they know aren't true, everything you write could be questioned. Write about the unfamiliar—it makes your readers want to know how things turned out.

Use variety, such as humour, family sayings, poetry, quotes from letters, a family tree, snippets of dialogue you remember, artwork, and even good recipes.

Even everyday activities can be fascinating. For example, how you got to school and how much you paid for a coffee and a doughnut (or even your house). The difference between how you grew up and how your grandchildren and great-grandchildren are growing up could be quite an eye-opener for them.

Don't feel intimidated. If God has told you to share your story, it's valuable and worth sharing. He has a plan to use it.

So, Where Do You Start?

1. Remember

Have you ever noticed how a song you hear can trigger a memory of something you haven't thought about in years? Or how seeing a car can remind you of one you owned decades ago? Sometimes, even a casual comment from someone can stir up memories you didn't realize were still tucked away in your mind.

Throughout our workshops, we'll use "Memory Joggers"—prompts that will help unlock stories from your life. We'll also look at various resources

to bring the past to mind.

Here's a simple tip: keep a small notebook nearby. When a memory comes to mind, write it down in a few words—just enough to remind you of the story when you have time to write about it.

Action Item: Let's look at how a prompt can spark a memory . . .

2. Reflect

There's always more to us than what meets the eye. Some of the most meaningful parts of your memoirs may come from your reflections, not just the events themselves.

When we pause to reflect—truly consider our life's events—we begin to uncover what lies beneath the surface. We revisit how we felt at that time and how our perspective may have shifted since then. As we grow older and gain more wisdom, past events often take on new significance. When we share our insights with others in the group, their perspectives can open our eyes to new ways of understanding our stories.

Reflection encourages us to ask deeper questions: Why did I act that way? Where was God in that moment? What did I sense about His presence—or about His silence? What can I learn from this?

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get distracted. Sometimes, it requires a conscious pause—a moment to breathe, notice, and be still—to truly savour the moments of our lives.

Action Item: Please read the following . . .

The Power of the Pause

Since the beginning of time, storytelling has been an important part of communication. Parents and grandparents passed on what they learned to their children and grandchildren. Think too of how the cavemen used graphic to share their heritage. Jesus used simple stories from life to teach His followers. Today we have many ways of sharing our stories, right from blogs where we can share with thousands to sitting on the bed while tucking in a child. Sharing stories can shed light on what we believe and why. It helps both us and those we are sharing with to see situations

1. The Big Picture

anew way This can lead to healing, grace, and forgiveness. Sharing stories helps us to understand why we make the decisions we make and why we value certain things in life. Often it helps to show others that they're not the only ones going through what they're going through. Sharing your story can be that powerful. Often the stories worth sharing are the ones we don't want to tell. Remembering them stirs up emotions within us and we don't want others

3. Record

Over the next few weeks, we'll gather our resources and story ideas. Then, we'll begin putting together a first draft of our stories. The main aim is to get the stories down without stressing over grammar, punctuation, or choosing the perfect words. Just write what you remember and include any reflections that come to mind. Afterwards, do your fact-checking and revisions.

Think about all the books in a library—are they all first drafts? Not likely!

As we move through the course and you gain more experience in writing, you can take the time to refine your stories. For now, the goal is to get started, one memory at a time.

Right now, your lifetime of stories might seem overwhelming to write, but remember that jigsaw puzzle I mentioned at the beginning? You don't complete it all at once. Every story you record adds another piece to the puzzle.

Action Items

1. Observe: As you go about your week, look for different memoirs and how they're shared (examples: magazine articles, books, blogs, podcasts, journals, scrapbooks, etc.).

2. Read: Read or listen to three or four short memoirs to see how others have shared their stories. Be prepared to tell what you liked and what you would consider doing with your memories. You can choose any memoirs you like, such as are found in a podcast or:

a. *Faith and Friends*¹

b. *Reader's Digest*²

3. Read: *Tips: How to Share Your Stories.*

4. Write: List your motivators in a mission statement.

I want to write my life stories because . . .

¹ <https://salvationist.ca/editorial/faith-and-friends/>

² <https://www.rd.com/real-life-stories/inspirational-stories/>

Tips: How to Share Your Stories

- Embrace your personality. Pour yourself into your story with your unique voice and style.
- Keep it simple. Write in a way that's easy for everyone to understand.
- Be authentic. Write naturally. For example, if humour is part of your personality, let it come through. If you love to cook, share your cooking stories and recipes. If you use certain expressions, use them in your writing.
- Write honestly and admit mistakes. Being vulnerable helps readers connect with your story. It's also a chance to say things like, "I shouldn't have done that."
- Express your feelings. Explain what the events meant to you and why. This adds warmth, depth, and a more powerful message.
- Be specific where you can; add authenticity to your story by using names, dates, and places.
- Focus on storytelling, not perfection. Think of your ancestors' stories—wouldn't you cherish them even if they had a spelling or grammatical error?
- Stay positive. Use your story to share your journey and insights, not as a tool for negativity or revenge.
- Relax and have fun. Stress kills creativity.
- Be kind to yourself. Avoid self-pity. Instead, focus on growth and strength of character.
- Take it slowly. Write about one event or

subject at a time.

- Just as with music or sports, writing will become easier with practice, so write often.
- Write as you speak. Share your story as if you're sitting at the kitchen table having a conversation with your readers.
- Paint a picture. Include action and sensory details. For example, instead of "bird," say what kind of bird. If it was a rainy day, say so.
- Read it aloud. Ensure the story flows well.
- Avoid jargon. Slang, regional sayings, code words, and so on might confuse future generations, unless you explain them.
- Avoid clichés. Phrases such as "cool as a cucumber," "like two peas in a pod," or "right as rain" may also be confusing.
- Acronyms need to be defined. If using them, be sure to explain what the letters stand for the first time they're used, and again if they're used several pages later.
- Since it's your story, it's entirely appropriate to use personal pronouns such as "I" often.
- Try other methods. If you find it easier to speak than write, record or make a video of your story.
- Let the story speak for itself. There's no need to preach or keep repeating your point. Tell your story clearly and honestly, and let your readers draw their own conclusions.

A Few Bible Verses About Sharing Your Stories

... Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.

~ Deuteronomy 4:9 (NLT)

Ask old people; find out what their ancestors learned, because we were only born yesterday and know nothing. Our days on earth are only a shadow. Those people will teach you and tell you and speak about what they know.

~ Job 8:8-10 (NCV)

Our children will also serve Him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything He has done.

~ Psalm 22:30-31 (NLT)

Tell your children about it in the years to come, and let your children tell their children. Pass the story down from generation to generation.

~ Joel 1:3 (NLT)

I will speak using stories; I will tell secret things from long ago. We have heard them

and known them by what our ancestors have told us. We will not keep them from our children; we will tell those who come later about the praises of the LORD. We will tell about His power and the miracles He has done.

~ Psalm 78:2-6 (NCV)

... we'll tell the next generation all about the praise due the LORD and His strength—the wondrous works God has done.

~ Psalm 78:4 (CEB)

Parents will tell their children what You have done. They will retell Your mighty acts, wonderful majesty, and glory. And I will think about Your miracles. They will tell about the amazing things You do, and I will tell how great You are. They will remember Your great goodness and will sing about Your fairness.

~ Psalm 145:4-7 (NCV)

... Each generation tells of Your faithfulness to the next.

~ Isaiah 38:19b (NLT)

... "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

~ Mark 5:19 (NIV)

Workshop 2:

The Time of Your Life

We've lived through one of the most eventful eras in history. Remember when we were in school—teachers used blackboards, and we solved math problems with paper and pencil? Today? We have calculators on our phones and even on our watches.

Baby Boomers witnessed the transition from party lines to social media, from unlocked doors to security cameras. I remember writing a 'fairy tale' in school about going to the moon, and not many years later, Neil Armstrong walked on it!

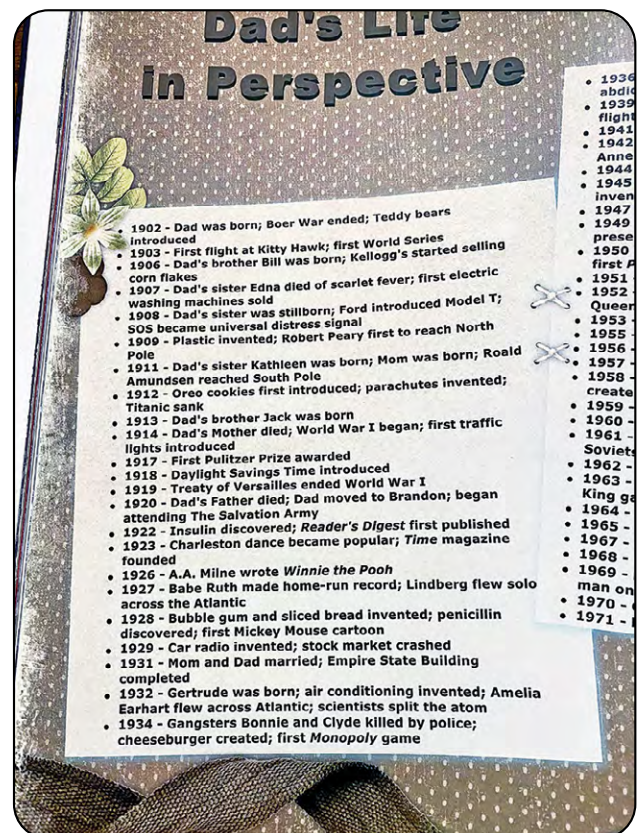
We've gone from driving across the province to flying around the world, from one black-and-white TV channel to hundreds of colour channels we control with a remote. Sundays used to be a quiet day when no businesses were open, but now they're just like any other day.

We've seen movement towards gender equality, and have learned about the treatment of First Nations people at residential schools. We've raised families through all these changes, and more. Now it's time to reflect. One of the best ways to do that is by creating a timeline.

Creating A Timeline

A timeline is an essential part of your memoir, providing a chronological overview of your life. It helps others to see how your experiences intersect with history as well as your age during important moments.

It can be placed at the beginning or end of your book. Here's a sample from my memoirs about my dad . . .



Today, you'll begin working on a timeline, but this is an ongoing project. Over the next few months, keep adding more milestones as you think of them.

This timeline will help your readers understand your life within the context of the times. These are more than dates on a chart—they're about the moments that have shaped you and the world around you.

What to Include

Your timeline should extend from your birth to the present, and you may also start earlier to include the birth of your parents and older siblings, if you wish. Summarize key moments using simple phrases.

This will also serve as a valuable family record, so be specific about names, dates, places, and events. Focus only on significant events, and feel free to add as many entries as needed for each year.

Here's a list of some things that you should consider:

- When you were born
- Starting school
- Changing schools
- Being an exchange student
- Graduation
- Moving
- Important birthdays
- Additions to the family (including pets)
- Starting music or art lessons, etc.
- Joining Brownies/Guides, Cubs/Scouts, 4-H, a sports team, etc.
- College/university; earning a degree
- Your first and subsequent jobs; major career changes
- Engagement and marriage
- Birth of children and grandchildren
- Marriage of your children
- Accidents, injuries, or severe illnesses
- Deaths in the family
- Promotions, commendations, awards
- Religious milestones such as accepting Christ as your Saviour, being baptized, and church membership
- Buying a house
- Buying your first car
- Voting for the first time
- Special anniversaries
- Special holidays
- Witnessing a significant historic event,

like 9/11, even if you just saw it on TV

- Participating in a protest
- Memorable trips or vacations, studying abroad, backpacking trips
- Major achievements
- Volunteer work
- Personal milestones such as overcoming a major challenge
- Meeting your idol
- Cultural events
- Getting your first computer or cellphone
- Paying off your mortgage
- Performing in a major event
- Becoming a citizen
- Significant legal battles
- Retirement

Choose either the past or the present tense, and stick to it throughout the entire timeline. Keep descriptions brief, since detailed information will be in your stories. This timeline will also serve as a 'memory jogger,' reminding you of stories you might want to include, although you're not obligated to write about all of them.

You may need to review old documents, letters, or photos to verify names and dates. And remember, you don't have to list something for every year. Just concentrate on the milestones that have shaped your life's journey.

You can prepare your timeline in writing or on your computer.

In Writing

- Draw a vertical line down the centre of your page and divide it equally into ten sections, one for each year. (Or, if you prefer, use a horizontal line.) Use a separate page for each decade of your life. For example, put the '40s on one page, the '50s on the next, and so on.

- On the right side, list events from your life; on the left, list historic events. See the example on the next page . . .

Building of Berlin Wall

Spiderman made his debut;
Beatles release first single

1960 – Started school; Alexis was born; broke my leg

1961 – Passed into grade 2; started piano lessons; won attendance award in Sunday school

1962

On the Computer

a. Create and save a table in Word or Excel with at least three columns across (you can add more as needed). Add rows as you remember events in your life. Title your columns as follows:

- i. Event
- ii. Date verified
- iii. My age

b. Start with your year of birth, or you may want to include your parents' information as well. Add a shaded background on the rows representing the years.

c. Add a row for each event you include for that year. If you know the exact date, include it.

d. If you have verified the date, add a checkmark or type 'Yes' in the second column.

Writing in the "Now"

Event	Date Verified	My Age - June 17
1963		
Apr. 3 - Dad passed away	Yes	18
Sept. - S.S. picnic; Started teaching S.S.; started business college		
Nov. 22 - JFK assassinated	Yes	19
1964		
Took leadership training course		19
Oct. 15 - Ring of Truth Crusade		20
Nov. 28 - Started working at Sears		
1965		
Mini skirt craze; Maple Leaf became Cdn. flag		20

When telling a story from childhood, try writing from the perspective of your younger self—what you saw, felt, and understood at that time. Also, imagine yourself as the narrator of a play, including glimpses of future insight with phrases like, "I would later discover . . ." or "Years later, I would understand . . ."

Try to stay away from using clichés, slang, and stereotypes like "In those days, everyone . . ." Some terms may be familiar to you now, but future generations may be confused by them. Consider terms like "beatnik," "goof off," and "that's a fine kettle of fish." What do they mean to today's generation?

If these are terms your parent frequently said to you, or perhaps you said yourself, it's okay to include them, and they can often add interest to your story, but they may need some explanation. You could do this by defining the term in your sentence or by explaining it in a footnote. These are simple ways of including readers from various age groups.

Ensure readers can picture when your story takes place. Were you a teenager, newly married, or preparing to retire? If you're describing a specific event—like the day a tornado hit your town or a life-changing accident—include the date, if possible. This helps clarify the setting, allowing your readers to visualize you at that particular time. They can also check it out on the internet and see pictures or explanations of the event, helping them to better understand what it might have been like for you.

When describing times long ago, remember that everyday details also matter. You can

include things like what clothing was like, popular TV programs, or what daily life looked like back then. Even saying you ‘dialled the phone’ might need some explanation—and sharing photos or drawings of such things can improve your memoir.

Weave in Historical Events

Blending your personal experiences with historical events can make your memoir more engaging and meaningful. For example, I took my granddaughter to see *Come From Away*, the musical about how the people of Gander, Newfoundland, came together to look after the thousands of stranded airline passengers. All flights were grounded after the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001. Although my granddaughter had been on a plane before, she never connected many of today’s security measures to the events of 9/11.

Including some historical context like this helps readers better grasp how large-scale events can affect an individual’s life and the world around them.

Maybe your parents lived through one or both World Wars and the Depression years. Sharing how those events shaped your upbringing gives readers a clearer picture of your personal journey. If an event, even a local one, directly relates to your story, include it in your memoirs.

And while historical context can add depth to your memoir, remember—this is your story. So, be sure to link the event to yourself.

Here’s another example, an extract from my grandfather’s memoirs about the start of World War I.

His was a musical family, and at that time, they were beginning to practice together to form a family orchestra. The oldest son, nicknamed Boots, had just come into the room after reading in the newspaper that war had been declared . . .

For a moment there was silence in the room; I felt as if a cold draught

had swept in the open window.

“What’s war, Papa?” asked Jimmie.

When supper was over we all gathered again in the parlor. The children were a subdued little group, not quite understanding what was happening in the world, but feeling the tenseness of it all from the shocked faces of their elders. Hester came in and went thoughtfully to the piano, and for a moment her fingers ran idly over the keys. Then, as if she had come to a decision, she turned and spoke.

“This is no time to lose our heads,” she said firmly. “The war is on the other side of the world. We shall have to help the Mother Country, of course, but you Will are too old, and Boots is too young to go on active duty. We can all help out here at home, there will be lots to do for all of us, as we shall find as time goes on. The world will be a sadder place, I’m afraid, but folks like us who can make music should do so, and use it to bring happiness to others. Now on with the practice, shall we? ‘In Wintertime’ isn’t quite right yet, shall we go through it again?”

There was a general move toward the piano. Jimmie tugged at my coat.

“But Papa, you didn’t tell me, what’s war?” he asked again.

“I’m afraid you wouldn’t understand if I did tell you, son. You see, I don’t quite understand it myself,” I said heavily.

Check Your Facts

Memory can become fuzzy sometimes, so it’s wise to double-check important details—particularly birth dates, marriage records, and death certificates. Usually you can find this kind of information in censuses, letters, diaries, photos, certificates, obituaries, and newspaper

articles. When you do, it's helpful to note your source: "According to Mom's journal . . ." or "As reported in the *Toronto Sun*, April 15, 1963 . . ."

If you're unsure about something important, say so—it's better to be honest than to risk sharing incorrect information.

Unfortunately, even newspapers sometimes get it wrong. One well-known newspaper printed that my grandfather had died, ten years before he actually did! He even read his obituary in the paper! That same report was cited many years later in another newspaper. In such cases, make sure to set the record straight for your family.

While many facts require verification, not all do. For example, recalling what clothes you wore for a specific occasion is probably irrelevant, but confirming the date of a major life event can be helpful.

Below you will find Tips: Finding Information. Don't let the list overwhelm you, especially if you're not writing for publication.

Action Items

1. Start your timeline: Over the weeks and months ahead, keep adding items as you think of them. Appendix 1 shows some historic dates you might want to include.

2. List story ideas: Begin listing potential story ideas—another ongoing task. In Appendix 2, you'll find a page to record your ideas.

3. Personal reflection: Bring one or two meaningful photos with you next week and be prepared to briefly share your related story. Note, this is not a writing exercise, just an opportunity for you to share a little about the photos and listen to the types of comments the others in the class mention and the questions they ask. They may even point out some things you never noticed before.

Tips: Finding Information

The memoir you're writing will probably remain in your family for a long time, so include specific and accurate facts. Full names, specific dates, places, ages, and relationships should be woven into your copy as much as possible. Or you may take a set of facts and weave your personal account through them (for example, the story of 9/11 and then how that event changed your life).

You will need to do more research if you are writing for a publication. You probably will not use everything you find, but it can help provide the context for your story.

- Libraries, historical societies, museums, and government bureaus such as provincial or national archives are best for checking documents and records. Explain that you're writing your memoirs and describe the kind of information you're looking for.

- Be careful when using the web; only use reputable sites.
- Read old newspapers, magazines, and books, about the year you were born or other years you want to learn about.
- Check with members of your family and extended family who may have copies of records or can lead you to where to find them.
- When browsing books, newspapers, websites, and so on, jot down the issue number, date, page number, URL, and any other information needed to find that page again later and provide citations in your memoirs as to where you obtained your information.
- Don't automatically assume that the information you find is accurate. For example, compiled lists were all re-typed from original documents and can

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therefore contain errors. Always try to see copies of the original documents.

- Keep a list of the books and documents you've looked at, even if you didn't find anything in them. That will save you from having to look at things twice. It can be just as valuable to know where the information isn't as to where it is.
- **Inflation calculator:** <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/>

[inflation-calculator/](#)

- **Medical research:** <http://www.cdc.gov>
- **Dictionary:** Oxford English Dictionary - <https://www.oed.com/discover/canadian-english>
- **Maps:**
 - o <http://www.mapquest.com>
 - o Google Earth – <https://earth.google.com/web/>

Workshop 3:

Picturing Your Life

In Old Testament times, the children of Israel were camped beside the Jordan River at the time of year when it was flooded, but God miraculously helped them get across. The people shouted, “This is amazing! We need a picture!” Sadly, cameras hadn’t been invented yet.

But God had a rock-solid plan to use instead. He had them build a memorial so every time they saw it, they would remember what had happened that day! (For the original story, see Joshua 3-4)

“...These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” (Joshua 4:7).

Words can tell a story—but graphics have a way of making it come alive. Photographs don’t just capture faces and places; they preserve moments and emotions. Now we don’t only have photos, but drawings, documents, newspaper clippings, maps and other memorabilia to remind us of important people and events in our lives. They’re a wonderful way to preserve cherished memories.

Today, we’ll look at how to use photos and other graphics as storytelling tools—how even the tiniest detail in a faded image might unlock a long-forgotten memory or help fill in the blanks of your family’s history.

Including stories with these items adds value for the person looking at them. If people look at your photo and don’t know who the person is, what they’re doing, why or when, then the picture isn’t very meaningful. Captions and stories bring photos to life, especially for those who may not remember the details.

When you enlarge your photos or use a magnifying glass, you might notice things you’ve

never seen before, which can trigger more memories or self-reflection.

While looking through some old family photos, I came across one of my Mom, my siblings, and me.



Although I’d seen this picture many times in my younger years, I noticed something new when I scanned and enlarged it. It looks like I (the baby) was wearing a dedication dress.

It made me wonder if this photo was taken the day I was dedicated. I wondered if Mom made my dress, and if it was one my older sisters wore when they were dedicated. I wondered why Dad wasn’t in the photo. I also wondered where it was taken because it doesn’t look like our house.

These were questions I planned to ask my Mom at her 95th birthday celebration, but she suddenly passed away shortly before we got together, and those questions never got answered. My oldest sister had passed away the year before, and my other siblings couldn’t remember. How I wish I had asked while Mom was still alive!

3. Picturing Your Life

When looking at your photos, be a detective and ask questions:

- Why did these people gather for this occasion?
- If your great-grandchild looked at them, what would they reveal about you or your family?
- What do you see in the photo that tells you about daily life or the environment?
- Are there missing or unexpected people in the photos, and if so, why?
- How do you feel about the photos, and what do they tell you about yourself?
- Why was this day important?
- Why did you keep this picture?
- What do you want to remember?
- What were you feeling at that moment?
- What do you want future generations to know about it?

One of my favourite ways to keep my stories and photos is in a storybook or scrapbook. If a whole book isn't your style, print a page for a scrapbook and then frame it, make a photo journal, or add them to an acid-free photo album with a description.

No matter how you decide to preserve your pictures, you'll be glad you did, and so will your family. They're much easier to share than when stored away in a box, on your camera, in the 'cloud,' or on a CD!

Preparing Photos and Documents Photos, Slides and Videos

My sister-in-law and her family visited us when we lived in the Maritimes. Soon after they left for their long journey home, their house burned to the ground. They lost everything, including their family photos. Fortunately, other family members had copies of most of them.

Fire, floods, dust, dirt, acids, and oils, can damage your pictures, or thieves may steal your phone or hack your Facebook account with all your precious photos.

Most of us have boxes, slide cases, CDs, memory cards, USB sticks, hard drives, cloud storage, or computer files full of pictures. Sorting and organizing them can feel overwhelming.

If you haven't yet organized your photos, you could start by listing them in groups and noting where they're stored, something like this . . .

YEAR	EVENT	LOCATION	TYPE
2005	Mom and Dad's 50th Anniversary	Shoebox in my closet	Envelope marked "50th Anniversary"
2004	Vacation in Cuba	Shoebox in my closet	USB stick #1
1976	Jim and Donna's wedding	Spare bedroom closet; box of slides	Slide tray #4

This will help you locate them when needed. Then, choose a group to continue sorting. Sort by location, year, theme, or chronologically—whatever suits you best.

It would help to back up your photos on two hard drives or on a hard drive plus cloud storage, storing them at different locations in case of fire.

Store photos on an external hard drive to save computer space. Choose a reputable brand and buy from a trusted source. An average family with 20 years of photos needs about one TB (terabyte) of storage; consider two TB if you have more pictures than most people.

Most importantly, be sure to take breaks, avoid getting overwhelmed, and enjoy the memories!

Print photos

Taking these steps will help preserve your precious memories for future generations:

- **Negatives:** Store these separately in a photo-safe container at a trusted relative's or friend's house for safekeeping.

- **Storage:** Protect photos and negatives from sunlight, heat, insects, water, and humidity. Avoid garages and attics.

- **Scanning:** Scan photos at a high quality—a minimum of 300 dots per inch (dpi). If the image is tiny or you want to enlarge just a portion of a photo, you should use 1200 dpi or higher.

Save photos as CMYK for printing and RGB for screens.¹ Use a photo program to convert format for screen, or consider professional services if needed.

When cropping a photo, leave in some of the background, if it's meaningful.

- **Organization:** Keep printed photos in photo-safe albums or durable boxes with labelled dividers.

- **Writing:** Avoid writing on the backs of photos with pens or markers. If needed, use a photosafe, non-lead pencil on the border.

- **Attachments:** Avoid using paper clips, pins, or regular glue to attach a caption to a photo. Use acid-free, lignin-free, bleed-resistant supplies.

- **Duplicates:** Ask family and friends for copies of photos you want. Keep duplicates to share.

- **Sorting:** Sort your photos by decades, weeding out dark or blurry ones. The exception might be if it's your only photo of something or someone significant to you. Technology and AI are advancing, and someday, you may be able to make enough adjustments to use your photo.

- **Fading:** Scan and use photo programs to restore faded colours.

- **Stuck photos:** To remove photos, use unwaxed dental floss, a low-heat hairdryer, or freeze your albums. Scan before attempting to remove them in case the photo gets damaged in the process.

Digital photos

- **Backup:** Again, store digital photos in at least two different locations, in case of disaster.

- **Online storage:** Choose reliable storage services that will keep your photos in the original size. Make sure it won't shut down a year or two down the road or require you to purchase a set amount of time. You could easily lose your photos if you forget to renew your subscription or if the site closes. Some sites may also make them available to AI or other photo services. Be sure to read the terms of agreement to protect your images.

- **Organization:** Most photo-saving programs sort files by the date you added the photo, which may not be when the photo was actually taken. I prefer to file mine with the year at the beginning of the file or folder name. Also be aware that some programs will gather all images on your computer and mix them together, including pictures for work, church, or other purposes, besides your personal photos.

- **Print copies:** Print important photos to ensure you always have a physical backup.

Naming and tagging photos

- **Batch naming:** Use your software's help menu to learn how to name photos in batches if they share the same topic.

- **Tagging:** To add a person, place, or event to your photo, use the help menu for the program you use and search for how to tag photos. You can also include comments, dates, etc., and remember to save your changes.

- **Searching:** To find tagged photos, select the folder(s) and use the search function with the relevant name, place, or year.

Documents and Memorabilia

Original documents like wills, letters, and certificates are irreplaceable. To protect them:

- Use plastic paper clips instead of staples, pins, or rubber bands.
- Avoid folding them to prevent cracking.
- Don't laminate items you want to preserve as it will actually hasten deterioration.
- Refrain from using glue or sticky tape.
- Flatten them carefully without heat, using clean paper and heavy books.
- Photocopy, scan, or take a photo of important papers to preserve the originals. This also gives you a record if the original deteriorates.
- Store them in acid-free folders, away from heat, sunlight, humidity, and insects.
- Use expert restoration services for seriously damaged documents. Libraries and universities can often help.

¹ CMYK refers to the colouring best used for print, and RGB refer to the colouring best used for screens.

3. Picturing Your Life

Including copies of memorabilia in your memoirs can enhance your story. Ask yourself if each item adds to the narrative you want to share with your family.

A few years ago, I was intrigued by the *Downton Abbey* movies. As I watched the shows, I tried to picture my parents' age at that time and what life might have been like for them during those years. I saw places and types of situations my grandparents might have experienced, and it helped me to see what life was like at that time.

Sometimes, when talking to my grandchildren about what life was like for me at their age, it was hard for them to picture me sitting at a school desk. While visiting a museum, I found desks that looked much like what I had when I first started school. So, I took a picture of them, and now I can add the photo to my memoirs along with a picture of my school.

Life changes quickly, and without our stories and pictures, future generations won't understand what our lives were like. So, how can we include them in our memoirs?

Using Photos and Graphics

- **Meaningful photos:** Include pictures of yourself at various stages of your life, doing regular activities. Also include special occasions, significant places, people, activities, or items. Include natural shots of people in action as well as still shots or scenery.

- **Colour or grayscale:** Colour photos usually look better but will raise your printing costs. One way to save money is to place all images together in the middle or at the end of the book, so the more expensive paper and ink are only used on those pages.

- **Captions:** Write detailed captions with full names, locations, dates, and events. If you're creating a photo journal instead of writing your memoirs, be sure to include even more details, such as your emotions at the time and why the photo is meaningful to you.

Using Photos from the Internet or Books

Before using an image you find online or in a

publication, see if it is copyrighted. The usage rights provided with an online image or at the front of a book will determine how you can use it.

- **Citations:** Always credit the source of photos that are not your own, including AI generated graphics. Sometimes guidelines on how to cite material are provided.

- **Purchased:** If you're willing to pay, you can find photos, video clips, and more from various sources such as Adobe Photos, Shutterstock, and iStock. They generally tell you how to cite their photos.

- **Free:** Use your computer's search engine to find free images by filtering for license options. Choose from one of those options.

- **Copyright:** When writing your memoir, you might want to include things like quotes, photos, or newspaper clippings, created by others. Appendix 3: *Copyright and Fair Dealing Checklist* explains how to do that legally and respectfully in Canada.

Citations could be added as a footnote on the page, or if there are several throughout your memoirs, you could add them all in an appendix at the end of your book.

Personal Drawings and Sketches

If you're an artist, be sure to include some of your own work in your memoirs as a lasting remembrance of you and your artistic skills. If you're not an artist, use drawings and sketches from others, but remember to give them proper credit for using them.

Action Items

Begin creating a photo/memorabilia box or accordion file, organized by chapter titles from this manual, or by decades, or places you lived—whichever works best for you. Use it to keep photos, documents, clippings and other memorabilia you plan to include in your memoirs or use as a resource for information.

This is an ongoing task, so please don't feel you need to finish it before the next class. Work at your own pace, but at least try to make a start.

Workshop 4:

Setting the Scene

Have you ever noticed in movies that the scene is often set before there's any action? Maybe it's a car driving along the coast or down a highway surrounded by trees in full autumn splendour. Or perhaps the vehicle is trying to navigate through heavy traffic in a bustling city, with horns and sirens blaring.

Or maybe it starts with a pot of water bubbling, then pans to a housewife steadily chopping onions while tears run down her face. Is it the onions or is there something on her mind?

Is there a wood-burning stove that takes us back a hundred years? Is the pot hanging above a fire in a sooty fireplace from a few hundred years ago, or is it in a fancy red-coloured pot sitting on the gas stove? What kind of clothes is the lady wearing—from the 1800s, 1900s, 1950s, 2000, or the present?

Setting the scene is one of the most crucial aspects of memoir writing. This is how we let our readers know where our story unfolds. There are two ways to do this: by telling or showing them.

Think about it this way: you go to the theatre to watch an adventure movie, and another theatre-goer sits beside you and tells you the story, including how it ends. Would that satisfy you, or would you rather watch the movie and feel like you're in the room, in the car, or strolling barefoot along the beach with the movie star? In memoir writing, you're not just telling a story, you're inviting your readers to use their imagination, to be active participants in the reading process, and to feel more involved in your story.

Look at John 2:14-16:

In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"

John could have said, "Jesus got mad because the people turned the holy temple into a marketplace." Instead, dialogue was used, "Get these out of here . . ." Sensory descriptions showed what Jesus did. John didn't just tell us what happened, he made us visualize and 'hear' what was going on, making us feel more engaged and connected to the story.

If you're familiar with writing courses or books on the art of writing, you've likely encountered the term 'Show, Don't Tell.' This is a great tool to inform and draw your readers into the story. It's not enough to tell them what happened—show them. Let them see what you saw, hear what you heard, smell what you smelled, touch what you touched, and taste what you tasted. By doing this, you're taking your readers to places they've likely never been and making them feel like they were there with you. Help them become more immersed in your story.

I think that rather than "Show, Don't Tell," you do both—show and tell. So, what do we mean by showing and telling, and how can we know when to show and when to tell?

Showing and Telling

What's the difference between telling and showing?¹

- **Telling** is when you state what to think instead of letting your readers think for themselves. **Showing** means you give enough information for them to draw their own conclusions.
- **Telling** reports events; **showing** helps the readers experience them.
- **Telling** is reading the newspaper report the day after. **Showing** is witnessing the event through your senses.
- **Telling** summarizes what happened; **showing** gives the readers specific details.
- **Telling** is abstract; **showing** gives a specific picture. "It was a beautiful day" vs. "The sun was shining, making the water look like diamonds were dancing on the waves. There wasn't so much as a cloud in the sky, which was the same blue as the ocean. I felt the sun's warmth, yet it wasn't so hot I couldn't enjoy walking barefoot in the sand."
- **Telling** gives general statements; **showing** gives scenes with action and sound effects. "The park was busy that day" vs "Walking through the park, I kept bumping into people at every turn. Above the din of their voices, I heard the muffled sound of an engine."
- **Telling** gives facts while **showing** evokes emotions.
- **Telling** is narration; **showing** is drama.
- **Telling** is from a distance while **showing** brings the readers into the scene.
- **Telling** robs the readers of the chance to discover things themselves.

How might you change these sentences from telling to showing?

a) The park was beautiful.

b) The dog attacked me.

How might you change these sentences from showing to telling?

a) I climbed the rickety stairs to the attic, where, through the cobwebs, I caught sight of the yellowed plastic bin. Sweeping off the dust with my bare hands, I quivered as I opened the lid. There it was! I slowly turned the pages in the photo album until I found the one of the house where I grew up.

b) I breathed into my hands, trying to warm my numb fingers.

When to Show and When to Tell²

- **Tell unimportant details but show important ones.** Think of it as a spotlight on a stage. You want the essential parts of your story to stand out. For example, your readers don't need a play-by-play description of each of your three trips to the grocery store that week.

If you bog them down with every detail, they'll lose interest. Instead of saying you grabbed the doorknob, turned it, and slowly pushed the door open, say you opened it. However, if you're building up to a climax,

¹ Gerth, Sandra. 2016. *Show, Don't Tell: How to write vivid descriptions, handle backstory, and describe your characters' emotions*. Germany: Ylva Publishing.

² Ibid, page 82

you might want to give the details, making the reader wonder what's on the other side of the door—and it better be something surprising, or you'll lose them.

- **Tell transitions.** If you give information between scenes, you don't need details. For example, you can say, "Three days later . . ." instead of going into tedious detail about those three days.
- **Use telling to summarize repeated events.** You can go into more detail on the event one time but then summarize the other times by saying something like, "As I had done several times over the years . . ." or "This is how it was done day after day for three years."
- **Use telling to give necessary information while moving the story quickly to the more exciting part.** For example, you can say, "I smiled at him," rather than, "My brow wrinkled as my lips turned into an ear-to-ear smile."
- **A little telling before a scene can provide context.** For example, "Every afternoon, I took my customary walk through the park, stopping by the old oak tree." This could set up the scene when your neighbour saw you and asked why you stopped there daily.
- **Use telling to build suspense.** "Monday mornings were a drag getting ready for work. But this Monday morning, something seemed different."

Writing Your First Draft

Before you start writing, take a moment to set the scene. Picture yourself right there, soaking up everything. What do you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch? Use all your senses. Maybe draw a rough sketch of your house, workplace, church, or park, for example, or check out some old photos or maps. If needed, scroll through Google Earth or Google Maps.

Search old maps in libraries or genealogical sites if your story is from long ago.

If some spots bring back painful memories, give yourself permission to revisit them later. Ask God for guidance on when and how to tackle those moments.

James Thurber, the American humourist and author, said, "Don't get it right, just get it written." This is good advice because writing engages both sides of your brains. The right side helps you visualize and imagine so you don't worry about using the perfect word, tense, spelling, or grammar at this stage. Just let the words flow.

Then, give yourself some time—at least 24 hours or more—before diving back into your draft. This is when you switch to the logical left side, checking words, facts, and sequencing and what needs to be shown, told, or cut. You may need several rounds of editing before you're satisfied. Generally it's best to leave lots of time between each revision.

Action Items

Share about 750 words (3-5 minutes) on one of your homes, a specific room, or the yard. Be sure to capture personal memories and emotions. Include sights, sounds, smells, and feelings in your story.

a. Read through the Memory Joggers and Tips.

b. Re-read the tips on page 15.

c. Write your initial thoughts without stressing about structure or grammar. Try to capture your emotions and vivid details.

d. After some time, revisit your draft to organize your thoughts, correct your grammar, and add clarity.

e. Be prepared to share your story at our next workshop. We'll take turns listening to each other, providing support, encouragement, and constructive suggestions so we can all share in a way that will connect with our readers.

Memory Joggers: Setting the Scene

These same questions could be asked about any place you lived, educational buildings, businesses, or workplaces. Don't feel you need to answer every question, especially in one story; just pick out the significant ones related to one or two significant memories.

- **Address:** What was your address? When inviting people over for the first time, did you use your address or a description of your place with directions? How did its location affect you?

- **Type of building:** Tell if it was a condo, apartment, or perhaps a split-level, etc. What was it made of? Brick? Stone? Wood? Cement?

- **Appearance:** What colour was it? Share how it looked like most other houses on your street, or how it was different. How did its appearance make you feel?

- **Interior details:** Describe carpeting, wood floors, wallpaper, and so on. How did these details contribute to the home's overall look and feel?

- **Age of the house:** How old was it? Describe any unique characteristics.

- **Repairs and renovations:** Were any extensive repairs or renovations done while you lived there? How did these changes impact your family's life?

- **Challenges and solutions:** Describe a big problem you faced in your home and how

it was solved. What did you learn from this experience?

- **Duration of residence:** How long did your family live there? What significant milestones or events took place there?

- **Security:** Tell whether the doors were generally locked or not and how old you were when you got your own key. How did that make you feel? Did it provide you with a greater sense of independence?

- **Returning home:** When you went away for several days or weeks, what feeling went through your mind when you came back and first caught sight of your home? Describe the thoughts you had.

- **Moving in and out:** What was it like the day you moved in? The day you moved out?

- **Memories of home:** What things do you see now that remind you of your childhood home? How do these reminders make you feel now?

- **Revisiting your home:** Describe going back to see your old home. (If you can't physically visit, search for it on Google Earth or view a satellite picture.) How did it make you feel when you saw another family living there? What does that home look like now, or is it torn down? What has replaced it? How do you feel about its current state?

Tips: Having the “Sense” to Show and Tell

When writing a memoir, think of it like setting a stage for a play. Without a good backdrop, you and others in your story might as well be standing on an empty stage. Your surroundings add those unforgettable sensory details that influenced you.

To bring your story to life, involve all your senses. Close your eyes and remember that day's sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes. What was the weather like? Is there a scent, taste or song that takes you back to that moment? What stands out the most in your memory?

Each segment of your story should include at least two senses:

1. **Sight** – Describe the scene as you would to someone who is blind. Share if it's pleasing to look at and what it reminds you of. Share what emotions you feel when you see it. Talk about the kinds of birds, flowers and animals? Let them know the colours, and what the animals are doing. Where was the spider crawling?

2. **Sound** – Is it loud or soft? Does it remind you of another sound? Is it alarming or comforting? Does the thunder make your heart pound? Is it a cricket or a coyote you hear? Is it a bass drum or a kettle drum? Did you beat the drum or tap it?

3. **Smell** – Is it pleasant or unpleasant and what does it remind you of?

4. **Touch** – Is it hard or soft, smooth or rough, comfortable or uncomfortable? Is it scratchy, chilly, warm? What does it remind you of?

5. **Taste** – Was it savoury to your taste buds

or make you spit it out? Perhaps you needed to gulp down a glass of water afterwards!

Describe memorable people, places, objects, and actions, but don't go overboard. Focus on the key parts of your memoir.

a) **Be specific.** Instead of saying something like, “I climbed a tree,” let them know it was an old giant maple tree in the park.

b) **Use comparisons and contrasts.** For example, “The light of the moon made her teeth shine like pearls.”

c) **Use dialogue.** Rather than saying he began to flirt with you, say something like, “Well, hello,” he drawled, “do you come here often?”

d) **Write in real time.** Instead of summing up what happened in the past, let it unfold with moment-to-moment action.

e) **Use dynamic verbs.** Instead of walking slowly, say you plodded along.

f) **Show your thoughts.** For instance, “Mom picked me up; *thank the Lord.*”

g) **Let your readers get to know people through their actions and reactions.** Instead of saying you were clumsy, describe how you knocked over your glass of milk—for the third time that week.

After writing your story, review it with coloured pencils and circle each sense with a different colour. This is a quick and easy way to see if you used a good variety of senses. Are you missing anything that could enhance your story? Are you over-using one sense?

Workshop 5:

You're Quite a Character

We're all one-of-a-kind individuals, each with a unique story! Our physical features might resemble those of our relatives, or they might not. We have activities we enjoy and others we prefer to avoid. We have all formed habits, favourite sayings, and even a particular way of laughing.

Our identity comes from a combination of our genes and lifestyle. How others perceive us and how we see ourselves also play a significant role in shaping who we are:

The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:1-2; 33).

*"Isn't this the carpenter's son?
Isn't his mother's name Mary,
and aren't his brothers James, Joseph,
Simon and Judas?
Aren't all his sisters with us?
Where then did this man
get all these things?"
And they took offense at him.
But Jesus said to them, "A prophet
is not without honor except in his
own town and in his own home"
(Matthew 13:55-57).*

Our characteristics can change throughout our lives. Here are a few examples:

- **Physical changes:** Straighter teeth may

make you smile more. A new hairstyle or colour can boost your confidence. Scars, burns, or the loss of a limb can make you feel more self-conscious. Hearing loss may cause you to stay home more, and declining vision might mean less driving and reading.

- **Environmental changes:** Moving from a city to the countryside (or the other way around), from a less desirable area into a friendlier one, from one country to another, experiencing a war, encountering negativity on social media, dealing with protesters, adapting to new laws, or adjusting to a different political party in power.

- **Family dynamics:** New family members, changes in a family member's behaviour, separation or divorce, illness, alcoholism, the loss of a loved one, or imprisonment.

- **Spiritual growth:** Becoming a person of faith, especially if you're the only one in the family, or changing denominations.

- **Maturing:** Developing as a person over time and taking on more responsibilities at home or work.

Personality Types

Our personality or temperament is the unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that sets us apart from others. While lifestyle changes can affect our personality, it generally remains relatively consistent throughout life.

The concept of the four temperaments originated with the Greek physician Hippocrates (around 400 BC). He observed that, although we are unique, we share certain traits. These later became known as the four temperaments:

5. You're Quite a Character

Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, and Melancholic.

Author Dr. Gary Smalley describes them as Lions, Otters, Golden Retrievers, and Beavers. Some people mainly have one personality type; others have a mix of two or three. The following descriptions are based on information from <https://kindredgrace.com/temperaments/>.

• **The Powerful Choleric Lion:** an *extrovert* who can intuitively size up a situation and delegate the tasks to get it done.

- Sets goals
- Believes in fairness
- Practical, hardworking, self-sufficient, multi-tasker
- Born leader, keen, capable of responsibility
- Will take a stand and stick to it
- Not influenced by what others think
- Doesn't want to waste time on trivial activity with no apparent results or converse with people who have nothing to say of any consequence
- Irritable and quick-tempered
- Powerful and productive
- Least sensitive or sympathizing temperament

• **The Popular Sanguine Otter:** an *extrovert* who loves to be the centre of attention.

- Warm, sincere and loving
- Enjoys life
- May come on too strong; cheerfulness may appear to be phony
- May speak before thinking
- Lives for the moment; goes with the flow
- Easily distracted
- Can tend to be selfish and irresponsible
- Has a craving for approval; wants to be loved

• **The Peaceful Phlegmatic Golden Retriever:** an *introvert* who loves peace and quiet.

- Avoids fights and arguments
- Natural dry humour
- Not easily ruffled
- Tends not to get too involved
- When interested, is a competent worker
- Gracious and kind to all
- Sensitive; blends into any situation
- Appreciates being noticed and respected once in a while
- Won't push themselves into conversations

• **The Perfect Melancholy Beaver:** an extreme *introvert* who would rather talk quietly with one or two people in-depth than banter with a group.

- Perfectionist; wants everything done correctly and in order
- Labours over details
- Prone to procrastination
- Constantly analyzing themselves and others
- Organized and self-disciplined
- Sensitive and easily hurt; prone to depression
- Dislikes group gatherings
- Faithful to their few friends; doesn't seek to make new friends
- Self-sacrifices
- Feels intense but doesn't always show it
- Thinker; philosopher
- Studious; would rather read or study than interact with others

Recently, psychiatrists have recognized a new personality type known as *otrovert*. "According to psychiatrist Dr. Rami Kaminski, an *otrovert* is a new personality type that is not defined by how much they love or avoid people, but by their originality, independence, and refusal to conform. *Otroverts* move fluidly between social and solitary spaces, guided not by labels but by authenticity."¹

¹ What Is an Otrovert? 5 Signs You Belong To This Rare Personality Type. *The Mind Journal*. <https://themindsjournal.com/what-is-an-otrovert-personality-type/> - accessed October 21, 2025

Action Items

1. **Take a personality test:** Choose a test, either online or in a book, and discover what type of personality you have. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- <https://michaelchristian.us/free-four-temperament-test/>
- <https://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/uploads/4/6/4/9/4649501/personality-test.pdf>

2. **Self-reflection through others:** List four or five people who have had significant inter-

actions with you and ask them about your habits, sayings, and notable traits.

3. **List your traits:** List these characteristics and brainstorm ways to weave them into your memoirs.

4. **Traits of others:** Consider how you can include the traits of others in your memoirs.

5. **Prepare to share:** With the information gained above, as well as in today's memory joggers, be prepared to share next time about your characteristics and habits. This does not need to be a written assignment.

Memory Joggers: Your Characteristics

Think of memory joggers as a menu at a restaurant. You won't want to choose everything on the menu, just the items that catch your interest this time. Another time, opt for something different from the 'menu.'

Personality and Habits

- Are you an introvert or an extrovert? When does this pose a challenge for you, and when do you find it enjoyable?
- When and how did you discover your personality type?
- Do you usually arrive early or late?
- Have you ever been addicted to anything?
- Do you doodle? What shapes or figures do you tend to draw?
- Do you like to make lists?
- When someone sneezes, do you say, "God bless you" or "*Gesundheit*?" Do you have other sayings that just naturally come out at times?
- Do you have a habit you'd like to break? How do you think you should go about it?
- Is there a habit you'd like to start?

Preferences and Routines

- What is the first thing you would turn to in the newspaper: news, sports, comics, or per-

haps the obituaries?

- Which magazine(s) or TV shows do you try not to miss?
- Do you make New Year's resolutions? What are some you have kept or broken?
- Do you have any superstitions? For example, do you knock on wood, throw salt over your shoulder, or avoid black cats? When and where did you learn these superstitions?
- Do you have certain days of the week when you do chores like laundry, mowing the lawn, or shopping?
- What was your routine when you came home from work? Do you still follow this same routine now? If not, how has it changed?
- Do you eat your meals at the same time every day?
- What's your most comfortable at-home outfit?
- Do you prefer music in the house or silence? Do you turn on the TV for company?
- Do you do crossword puzzles or sudoku? Do you prefer them from the newspaper or a book?
- Are you more comfortable talking or writing? Do you prefer talking on the phone or writing cards, letters, social media posts, etc.?

Tips: Adding Variety

Have you ever been to a restaurant where a bored waiter mumbled the different options for side dishes? You don't want your readers to feel the same way. Nobody enjoys a stiff, lifeless recounting of events.

Your readers and listeners want to get to know you—your personality, quirks, way of thinking, and writing. Don't bore them with 'just the facts.' At the same time, focus on the substance of your work; you don't want to tell joke after joke, for example, with no indication of how it relates to you and your story.

People crave variety. They want to be surprised, enlightened, and entertained. Here are some techniques you can use, but there's no need to use them all! Choose the ones that best reflect your personality and the essence of the episode you're writing about. For example, if it's a humorous story, make it funny!

Your memoirs should be clear, understandable, and engaging. Most importantly, they should reflect who you are as the author.

Here are more tips to add variety to your memoirs:

1. Use personal sayings: Share some of your own or others' unique sayings that bring back memories and show how you or someone else used to speak, or still do! These sayings might be your favourites, and they'll add a personal touch that connects with readers.

2. Include poetry, drawings, sketches, etc.: If they're your own work, all the more reason to include them. If using others' work, be sure to obtain permission and credit them.

3. Quote family letters: Share excerpts from family letters, including any grammatical or spelling errors, to reveal the writer's personality.

4. Include family recipes: Add recipes with stories about their significance, including who used to make them and why you wanted to include them.

5. Add a family tree and timeline: Place these at the beginning or end of your memoirs.

6. Share diverse memoirs: Mix in happy, sad, humorous, dramatic, and mysterious stories from different stages of your life.

Workshop 6:

Finding God's Fingerprints in Your Life

Holy moments can sneak up on you when you least expect them. Lenya Heitzig, the author of *Holy Moments*¹, tells an incredible story about the West Side Baptist Church in Beatrice, Nebraska. Every Wednesday at 7:20 p.m., the choir would gather in the loft for rehearsal. But on March 1, 1950, something unusual happened—everyone was running late. Marilyn Paul, the pianist, overslept. A high school student had too much homework. Someone else had car trouble. Amazingly, all twenty choir members and the conductor were delayed that night.

At 7:25 p.m., as the loft sat empty, a gas leak ignited in the basement. The furnace exploded, causing the walls to collapse and the roof to cave in. Not a single person was there because of a series of seemingly mundane delays—an ordinary night turned miraculous.

Supernatural events weren't just for Bible times—they can still happen today!

Our lives are filled with unique characters, unexpected twists and turns, tension, and deep meaning. No one else will ever live a life exactly like yours or mine, so we must discover the significance of what God has written in our life stories.

The more we recognize God's activity in our lives, the more stories we can share in everyday conversations. These stories are relatable and can inspire others to seek God's presence in their own lives.

We're meant to share our stories and listen to others share theirs. We should encourage others to tell, and listen to stories of God's work in their lives.

Detectives of Divinity²

While living in Nova Scotia, our family had the opportunity to tour a coal mine that extended out under the ocean. It was dark and claustrophobic, and at one point, the tour guide asked us all to turn off the lamps on our hardhats. I've never been in such a dark place. My little girl firmly grabbed my hand until we could turn our lamps back on. Then, we walked into a small area where pure white lilies grew. For me, it was a "God moment" to see that even in such a dark place, God could grow such beauty.

There are many ways God touches lives. In later workshops, we'll look at scripture, prayer, music, and worship, but in this lesson, let's look at other significant ways we see God at work:

- **Stories:** Jesus used many stories while teaching. Stories can teach empathy, reveal personal truths, and challenge prejudices.

- **Movies:** In the summer of 2024, our pastors delivered sermons illustrated by popular movies, highlighting their potential for inspiring spiritual insights. Similarly, TV shows such as *Godwink Tales* and *The Chosen* and stage productions offer powerful messages.

¹ Heitzig, Lenya. 2006. *Holy Moments: Recognizing God's Fingerprints in Your Life*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books

² Check out *Detectives of Divinity*, by Bryan Moyer Suderman, a Christian songwriter and performer

- **Poetry:** Note how the Apostle Paul cited Greek poets to connect with the Athenians (Acts 17:27-29).

- **Dreams and Visions:** Joseph understood Mary's pregnancy and fled to Egypt because of divine dreams. A few years ago, I helped to publish stories about international workers who had visions of certain events that surprisingly came true.

- **Nature:** Seeing the intricate details in God's creation is awe-inspiring.

- **Examples of Others:** God can speak through people and their acts of kindness. Our stories are intertwined with those who introduced us to faith, cared for us, and celebrated with us.

There's nothing God can't use to speak to us. He spoke to Job through a whirlwind, King David through a man who cursed him, and Balaam through a donkey. Moses even listened to Him from a burning bush.

*I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles
of long ago* (Psalm 77:11).

Alan Wright, in *God Moments*³, describes five types of divine encounters:

1. **Amazing Rescue:** Moments of divine protection or healing.

2. **Holy Attraction:** Guidance towards better paths and resisting temptation.

3. **Unearned Blessing:** Unexpected gifts and blessings.

4. **Revealed Truth:** Gaining insights through inner peace, scripture, or wise counsel.

5. **Valuable Adversity:** Moments when God sustained and strengthened you through trials.

Reflecting on these moments can help us see God's presence in our lives. Remembering past encounters with God can help us have victory in the present.

- Noah lugged heavy planks of cypress wood and hammered them in place de-

spite being tormented by others. He gathered animals when there wasn't a cloud in the sky because *he remembered* the day God spoke to him (Genesis 6:13-14).

- David took on Goliath because *he remembered* how God had strengthened him to fight off wild animals that were after his sheep (1 Samuel 17:36-37).
- Paul *never forgot* the blinding light or striking voice that spoke to him outside Damascus. He retold the story to others, including the king (Acts 26).
- Jesus was tempted in the desert but *remembered* the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11); prayed in the garden but *remembered* the reason for His coming (Matthew 26:36-45); and as He hung on the cross He *was reminded* that His task was finished (John 19:30).

The Spiritual Discipline of Noticing

*I went past the field of a sluggard,
past the vineyard of someone
who has no sense;
thorns had come up everywhere,
the ground was covered with weeds,
and the stone wall was in ruins.
I applied my heart to what I observed
and learned a lesson from what I saw:
A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
and poverty will come on you like a thief
and scarcity like an armed man.
(Proverbs 24:30-34)*

Would you like to become more mindful of God's presence in your life? The prayer of examen, developed by Saint Ignatius for the Jesuits, is a great way to begin. It gently guides you to recognize God's presence in everyday moments through a simple, three-step process.

³ Alan D. Wright, *God Moments: Recognizing and Remembering God's Presence in Your Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 1999).

1. Gratitude: Take a few minutes to reflect on the last 24 hours and recognize the blessings you've received. Be sure to thank God for all the good things in your life.

2. Review: Reflect on your day once more, this time focusing on God's presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where and how God has been working in your life.

3. Examination: Review your day again, asking the Holy Spirit where you fell short in responding to God or living your Christian calling. Remember, God's love persists, and He continues to work in your life. This awareness encourages repentance and motivates you to follow Him out of gratitude, not guilt.

God created us to exist within both the natural and spiritual realms. However, due to our brokenness, we often overlook the spiritual. A spiritual discipline is an activity we practice until it becomes a habitual, integral part of who we are. As we practice other spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, worship, study, meditation, service, and celebration, we also develop the discipline of noticing.

As you think about your life, especially during each lesson in this course, take a moment to notice, feel, and listen to the little wonders of God around you.

Action Items

Write about 750 words on one of the following:

a. Someone who got you started thinking about faith: Who first raised questions for you? How did they do so? In what ways did they support you in taking the next steps in your faith journey? How were you introduced to Christ?

b. Someone who modelled faith for you: Tell about someone who guided, supported, and loved you along your spiritual journey. In what ways? With what results? How have you grown?

c. A specific time God made Himself known to you: Use one of the examples in the notes, or perhaps there was another way. (Note: we will look at hymns, Bible verses and stories, prayer and worship later in the course.)

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Finding God's Fingerprints

- Share your experience of a spiritually inspiring trip, like visiting the Holy Land, Turkey, or the Sight and Sound Theatre, and tell how it touched or transformed you.
- Describe a special spiritual event like a dedication, baptism, mission trip, or group activity. Share how you felt during that time and how it has influenced your life since then.
- Tell how you came to faith in Christ and what it has meant to you.
- Share the story of a personal crisis that led you to faith.
- Describe your preparation for becoming a church member and what it has meant to you.
- Tell how you started to attend church. Did

a friend invite you, or was there a series of events that guided you? What does going to church mean to you?

- How has your cultural heritage and society shaped your ideas about spirituality and faith?
- Share about a time God used something ordinary to speak to you spiritually.
- Give a tribute to someone who has been spiritually influential in your life.
- Record a time when you saw God had His angels watching over you, such as a near-miss accident or a stranger's kindness.
- Share a story of overcoming a severe illness and how it strengthened your faith.
- Describe a time you were awed by nature.

Workshop 7:

Your Heritage and Culture

Understanding Your Heritage

When we read the Bible, we often skim over the “begat” verses, including those about Jesus. Yet these genealogies were written to affirm His claim as the Messiah. Like us, He had ancestors—some admirable, others less so—and He embraced His Jewish heritage.

In the same way, exploring the lives of our own ancestors helps us better understand ourselves. Every family has kind-hearted members, and those who are sometimes called the “black sheep of the family.” As we learn more about their stories, we see reflections of them in our own character. Even if your background doesn’t include a Christian heritage, you can still see how God has been at work, shaping you into who you are today.

From my own experience, researching family history brought our family closer together and gave me new insights into my parents and the traits I inherited from my ancestors.

The Importance of Genealogy

Today, more and more people are exploring their family history as a way to connect with the past. They want to learn valuable lessons and gain insights into the deeper meanings of life, faith, and their sense of identity. By learning about our ancestry, we can develop a greater appreciation for who we are and how traditions, culture, challenges, and experiences of our ancestors have helped to shape us.

Though we may have never met these people, their stories still speak to us. Research from Emory University¹ shows that adolescents who learn more about their family’s history tend to have better emotional well-being, a stronger sense of identity, and greater resilience. This suggests that sharing family memories isn’t just about preservation—it’s also a form of personal growth.

Understanding our ancestors’ lives can help us appreciate the simple things we often take for granted. It also helps us to learn from their mistakes and benefit from their wisdom.

As Deuteronomy 5:9-10 reminds us, while sin’s consequences can last for generations, God graciously blesses the descendants of those who love and follow Him.

Dr. James Dobson, from Focus on the Family, stated in his June 22, 2000 broadcast: “Continuity from generation to generation depends on taking the best from the past and passing it along to our children.”²

That’s the essence of genealogy—continuity, connection, and meaning.

Including Stories of Your Ancestors

A family tree provides a helpful starting point, but names alone are not enough. Finding stories about these people brings those names to life. Although detailed research is beyond the scope of these workshops, you can begin with what you already know or can easily find

¹ Puterbaugh, Shenley. Studies and Research that Prove the Benefits of Family History. https://www.inspirefamilyhistory.com/blog/studies-that-prove-family-history-is-amazing?utm_source=copilot.com – accessed April 4, 2026.

² Lightle, Cheryl and Anderson, Rhonda. 2002. *The Creative Memories Way*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, p. 55

7. Your Heritage and Culture

out. Even small bits of family history can add meaningful detail to your memoirs.

*. . . you have given me the heritage
of those who fear your name
(Psalm 61:5).*

*"Inquire, please, of past generations,
And consider and apply yourself to the
things searched out by their fathers.*

*"For we are only of yesterday
and know nothing,*

*Because our days on earth
are [like] a shadow
[just a breath or a vapor].*

*"Will they (the fathers) not teach
you and tell you,
And utter words from their hearts
[the deepest part of their nature?
(Job 8:8-10, AMP)*

*... I'll let you in on the sweet old truths,
Stories we heard from our fathers,
counsel we learned at
our mother's knee.*

*We're not keeping this to ourselves,
we're passing it along to the next
generation—*

*GOD's fame and fortune,
the marvelous things he has done.
(Psalm 78:2-4, MSG)*

Of course, not everyone has strong ties to their heritage. Some may have been adopted or come from broken homes. But memoir-writing offers a way to explore identity through chosen families and meaningful traditions. Remember, your story matters—it's about your life's journey and the discoveries you've made along the way. This can be a great opportunity

to define what heritage means to you, in your own unique way.

Action Items

a) Listen to Captain Colleen Gleadall's message about finding our roots - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o8Qb7gi0o4>

b) Read the memoir from Faith and Friends - Play It Again, Shirley - <https://salvationist.ca/editorial/faith-and-friends/play-it-again-shirley/>

c) Read the Memory Joggers and Tips.

d) For the next workshop, write about 750 words on one of these topics:

i) **Your maternal or paternal grandparents.** Share their stories, memories, and important events that shaped their lives and, in turn, influenced yours. Consider their character traits, interests, and challenges they faced, and how their experiences and core values impacted your life.

ii) **If you never knew your grandparents, what do you wish you could have learned or experienced with them?** Imagine the connections and memories you might have had. What stories do you wish you could have heard? What wisdom do you think they would have passed down? How might knowing more about them have enriched your understanding of your heritage?

iii) **Describe any (Scottish, Irish, Polish, etc.) cultural traditions you still practice and how they have shaped your life.** Share a tradition passed down through your family, such as a family recipe, holiday celebration, music, or any other meaningful tradition. Explain how this tradition has influenced your life, shaped your values, and connected you to your heritage.

iv) **Any other related topic.**

Memory Joggers: Your Heritage and Culture

Family History and Origins

- How far back can you trace your family history, and what insights have you gained?
- In what countries did your ancestors live, and what were their living conditions like?
- When did your ancestors first arrive in North America? Why and how did they come? Describe their first few years here. How were they treated as immigrants?
- Tell of any major events in their lives and in the world at the time.
- If your ancestors were part of a native tribe, what do you know or wish you knew about their history.

Occupations and Daily Life

- What were their occupations? Have you chosen the same career path as any of them?
- Describe what life was like for them during the war years.
- How did the Depression years affect them?

- Tell about any war(s) in which they served their country.
- If they had a bomb shelter, how did they supply it, and did they ever need to use it?
- Did they ever have the Spanish Flu or other serious illness, and how did they fare through it?

Personal Traits and Memories

- Share what you know about who your grandparents or parents were named after?
- What character traits do you see in them that you share?
- What do you wish you knew about your ancestors?
- What advice or warnings have you learned from your grandparents?
- What kinds of things touched them deeply?
- Describe some of their life's turning points.
- Tell about their goal in life and how they met it, or why they weren't able to.

Tips: Making People in Your Memoirs Feel Real

How can you help your readers see people who impacted you, as living, breathing, and real? One way is to read good memoirs and see how other memoirists have done it.

Providing details helps your audience to feel like they're right there with you. Imagine sitting on a bench and sharing your story with a stranger who knows nothing about your life. When introducing someone in your story, explain who they are, how they're related to you, or the event you're writing about. While your children might know your cousin Annie, your great-grandchildren, decades later, won't have a clue.

Stick to using the same name for people throughout your stories to keep things clear; for example, does he go by Rob, Bob, or Robert? Here are a few other suggestions.

1. Description: While you don't need to describe them from head to toe, you should tell one or two details, especially those related to your story. For example, were they tall, short, or built like a football player? Did she always wear an apron at home, or her hair tied back in a bun? Did he have a wide smile or a gruff voice? If it's relevant, you could state the age, or at least approximate age, such as, "She was the smartest seven-year-old I'd ever met."

2. Personality and habits: What were their hopes and dreams? Did they have any unique habits or sayings? What kind of work did they do? What were they passionate about? Tell about their faith and love for others.

What was it like to be in their presence? For example, "Curtis was a monster. Get him angry enough, and he'd tear you apart." "She was always joyful, and I loved being with her."

3. Dialogue: Have them speak for themselves, especially using favourite sayings. If they spoke another language, use a few words they might have used, but don't over

do it. Give an explanation of those words, if you use them.

4. Activities: What did they do that made an impact on you? Recall times they made you laugh or feel warm and comfortable. Share anecdotes that describe their wisdom, skill, and experience and how they influenced you. Mention times they made you proud or disappointed you, or when you made them proud or disappointed.

5. News: Describe your feelings when you heard distressing or jubilant news about them and how it affected you.

Workshop 8:

Your Family and Traditions

As we've seen, our life journeys are rooted in the lives of those who came before us and those who live among us. Our story is connected with theirs: their struggles, triumphs, shame, power, love, loss, addictions, heartaches, secrets, and family myths. Today, we focus on our parents or guardians, as well as our siblings, and how their influence shaped who we are.

Our parents didn't just tell us things; they showed us through their actions, whether good or bad. Their behaviour taught us about love, feelings, right and wrong, and the values we uphold in our family, social, and spiritual lives. The way we were brought up at home played a significant role in shaping who we are.

Some of us may have grown up in homes where core values were neither modelled nor discussed. Others may feel they grew up in a fishbowl, especially pastors' kids or the children of church leaders, who were expected to be perfect. Many of us grew up in homes where "I love you!" was never spoken and hugs were never given, yet for many, love was expressed in other ways.

Others were taught that 'men don't cry' or that yelling and screaming were normal. Many parents were stricter than others, while some led different lives inside the home than outside. How our parents handled life influenced how we managed our own, whether by copying their style or striving to improve.

Ever since the first family, none of us have been handed a perfect heritage. We learned a mix of good and bad, often focusing more on the negative while overlooking the positive. As we matured, we tried to understand and build

upon what we learned, recognizing the good while sorting out and replacing the bad.

Being an only child or having siblings had an impact on our lives. With siblings, we learned to practice sharing, caring, and sometimes fighting, often through laughter and pain.

What stories define who we were and are as a family? What family values do we live by?

Parents often took pictures of our big moments, like our first bike ride, prom, or graduation, but they might have overlooked ordinary days that truly shaped our lives. How do we paint a picture of those times for the next generation? How do we help our children and grandchildren grasp what life was like when we were growing up?

The everyday moments worth sharing are often the simplest ones—family dinners, weekend chores, playing in the yard, the smell of fresh laundry, or the sound of an old record playing. These snippets of daily life are worth writing about, giving future generations a window into our world:

- Resolving an argument with a sibling;
- Helping your mom bake a cake or cookies (and licking out the bowl);
- Wearing a new dress your mother made;
- Watching the one channel on your black and white TV with 'rabbit ears', and no remote;
- Having just one phone (on the wall)
- Having one bathroom for the entire family;
- Washing dishes after each meal because dishwashers weren't invented yet;
- Living without slow cookers, microwaves, or air fryers;

8. Your Family and Traditions

- Plugging in the car and dealing with square tires on a frigid winter day;
- Seeing Jack Frost's unique designs on the bedroom window;
- What you did every day after school;
- Eating home-cooked meals;
- Going for an ice-cream cone or other treats since there were no fast-food places;
- Eating your first piece of pizza in the '60s or '70s;
- Wearing homemade Halloween masks and costumes while getting apples for treats;
- Having handmade quilts and embroidered pillowcases on your bed;
- Setting the table with a nice tablecloth and good china used for special occasions;
- Seeing pictures of yourself in everyday clothes;
- Dealing with measles, chickenpox, or mumps that were passed among siblings, and maybe even your parents;
- Listening to the stories your parents read to you and the songs they sang;
- Sharing a bedroom, and perhaps a bed with a sibling or two;
- Having a bedtime story and kneeling by your bed to pray;
- Walking everywhere or perhaps riding the bus because your dad took the only car to work;
- Snapping beans from the garden and freezing them for the winter;
- Canning jams and jellies;
- Making Christmas crafts and homemade fudge, and decorating cookies;
- Wearing hand-me-down clothes;
- Making and wearing a Christmas corsage;
- Sharing knock-knock jokes and playing tricks on each other;
- Your parents' fashions and hairstyles;
- Learning life lessons from your parents;
- Shopping with your mom or dad;
- Going fishing or camping;
- And so much more!

Action Items

Read through the Memory Joggers, and write about 750 words on one of these:

a. A tribute: Introduce your mother, father, or both and describe what they mean to you.

b. A memorable family tradition: Describe a tradition that holds special meaning for you. Why is it significant? Share specific memories associated with it and how it impacted you. How do you continue to keep that tradition as part of your life now, or what do you differently?

c. Everyday life: Choose any topic from the points in this lesson and tell your story, showing how it relates to your family.

d. Any related topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Family and Traditions

Parents/Guardians

- What were the names of your parents, including your mom's maiden name?
- Where were they born and what caused them to be in the place where you were born?
- What did your dad do for a living? If your mother worked outside the home, what did she do?
- What was their relationship like? Warm? Formal? Loving? Stern? Demonstrative? Were

they stereotypically male/female, or not?

- What kinds of stories did they tell you?
- Did they have any special talents?
- What do you recall about their death and funeral? Where are they buried?
- Describe what it's like for you now if your parent(s) are still living.
- What traditions did they pass down to you?
- What do you know about their childhood?
- How did war affect you and your family?

- What was it like for them living through the Depression?
- When you reflect on your parents now, what do you realize about their lives that you didn't understand when you were growing up?
- What are your mother's and father's favourite sayings? Do you sometimes find *their* words coming out of *your* mouth?
- How did your parents expect you and your siblings to behave? How well did you meet their expectations? How were you disciplined?
- What were they passionate about?
- How did they volunteer in the church or community?
- What's a common interest you share with one or both parents?
- What did you most and least enjoy doing with either or both of your parents?
- If your parents were separated or divorced, how did that impact you and your siblings?
- Did you ever wish you had a celebrity for a parent? Or did you? What was that like?
- If you were adopted, what do you know about your birth parents? What was it like trying to find your biological family? If you've never found out who they are, how has that impacted your life?

Siblings

- If you did not have siblings, how did that affect you?
- Was your family particularly proud of you or one of your siblings, and why?
- Did you and your siblings ever keep secrets from your parents, and why?
- What was your favourite activity with your siblings and why?
- Was there a "black sheep" in the family, and why was that person given that label?
- If you and your siblings were latchkey kids, how did that affect you?
- Describe playing a trick on a sibling as well as the outcome. Is it still something your family remembers?

- What pictures come to mind when you think about playing together?
- How did you cope when a sibling passed away? What have you missed about them?
- How did it feel growing up in a blended family? Did you always feel this way, and what is it like now?
- Are you a twin? Triplet? What was that like growing up?
- Share about times you had to babysit your sibling(s) or they babysat you.

Family Life

Summer Vacations

- What did your family do for fun during the summer months?
- Describe going on family picnics.
- Describe some of your favourite summer vacations.

Daily Life

- Describe your typical family meals; how were Sunday dinners different from them.
- What was communication like at home?
- In what ways was family life chaotic, peaceful, boring, and enjoyable?
- Describe the personalities of individual family members and how you related with each of them.
- What activities did your family enjoy each season, such as picking apples in the fall or skiing in the winter?
- Describe a challenge your family faced in the home and how it was solved.
- What kinds of parties did you have at your house? What did you like and dislike about them?
- Describe life with the family pet.
- What was it like to receive a letter or postcard in the mail?

Household Details

- How many phones did you have and what were they like? What was it like to have a party line or to make a collect long-distance call?

- What do you recall about getting and reading magazines and newspapers?
- Would you have been considered rich, poor, or middle class?
- What kinds of chores did you do?
- How much was your allowance and what did you do with it?

Special Occasions

Christmas

- What do you recall about getting a tree and decorating it?
- What Christmas decorations did you put up every year? Did you ever make them as a family? String popcorn, etc?
- Describe a Christmas away from home.
- What did you generally do on Christmas Eve?
- What were your Christmas dinners like?
- Describe any unique Christmas traditions.
- What was the best and worst Christmas you remember?

New Year's

- How did your family celebrate New Year's Eve? New Year's Day?
- Did your family usually watch the Rose Bowl Parade and game? What did you most enjoy about it?

Easter

- Describe an Easter sunrise service or other church traditions.
- Describe what you did for Lent.
- Did you get a new Easter outfit every year? Did your mother or grandparent make them? What are some that you remember?
- When you were a child, how did you decorate Easter eggs or make any other decorations?
- Describe Easter egg hunts you had.

Mother's and Father's Day

- What did you do to celebrate? Did you participate in any programs for them?
- When you got older, what was it like phoning long distance to your mom or dad?

Thanksgiving

- What was your favourite thing about your family Thanksgivings?
- Where did you usually spend Thanksgiving? Describe a favourite dish your family always made (and the recipe, if possible).
- Describe your home décor for Thanksgiving.
- What was the décor usually like at church most Thanksgivings?

Halloween

- Describe Halloween celebrations.
- Describe choosing, cleaning, and cutting out a jack-o-lantern. Was the pulp used to make pies?
- Did you have homemade costumes or bought? What are some that you remember?
- What kinds of things did your family usually hand out and what kinds of things did you collect when you went out?

Other

- What other relatives, friends, or boarders lived in your home and what kind of an impact did that make on your family?
- How often did you move, and what was that like for you?
- What family traditions did you keep when raising your own family?
- How do you feel now when you watch old home movies of yourself growing up?
- Describe what it was like for your family during a local flood, tornado, hurricane, or heavy snowfall.
- Describe what your family did for a local event such as a special anniversary or visit of royalty.

Workshop 9:

It Takes a Village

An old saying is, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In this lesson, we will look at the ‘village’ itself and the people who were part of our upbringing. The lessons we learn can apply to every place we’ve lived and all the people who have impacted our lives along our life’s journey.

The Village

Every ‘village’ has unique characteristics and culture, whether in a different country, province, or region, whether on a remote farm, in a quaint village, a sleepy town, or a sprawling metropolis. Some ‘villages’ are by the ocean, some in the mountains, and others on the prairies. Some are more welcoming than others, while some neighbourhoods are mainly for a particular ethnic or cultural group.

Some ‘villages’ are mainly law-abiding and compassionate, while others have faced many challenges. The people in some places may be in the same financial situation, while other places may have a clear divide between the ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ sides of town. Some areas may be rich in natural resources and others less fortunate. Healthcare access and quality may also have differed greatly.

Our involvement in community events may have been active or inconsistent. The demographics likely varied, with some having mainly seniors in their population, and others with mostly university students or young families. Educational systems, social systems, businesses, and leaders all played a role in shaping our lives.

Impactful People in Your Life

When writing a memoir, introduce people outside your family who also played a significant role in shaping you into who you are today. Some may have been there throughout your lifetime, while others may have been for a much shorter time. Who are these influential figures—neighbours, friends, mentors, teachers, music teachers, coaches, librarians, Guide or Scout leaders?

People are interested in others, and we need to include those who have impacted us. Part of how you learned about self-worth, love, hope, laughter, sacrifice and perseverance came from the actions of others. Focusing on their positive qualities will again inspire you to try living up to those standards.

Do you remember the words to “Wind Beneath My Wings?”¹

... *Did you ever know that you’re my hero?
You’re everything I wish I could be . . .*

Of all the people you’ve encountered during your lifetime, who has meant a great deal to you? Why not pay tribute to them by giving them credit for what they contributed to your life? Include their stories in your memoirs. And if they are still alive, why not make a special photo album, card, or letter to let them know the impact they had on your life?

¹ Larry Henley and Jeff Silbar, *Wind Beneath My Wings*, performed by Bette Midler, Atlantic Records, 1988.

Action Items

Read through the Memory Joggers, and write about 750 words on one of these:

a. A community where you lived and how it influenced your life. Was it through a particular place such as a library, school, arena, or community centre? Was it because of the community events? Was it neighbours

helping neighbours?

b. How a person significantly impacted your life. Was this person a teacher, neighbour, sports coach, music teacher or someone else? Was it their words, actions, or both? Did you want to be like that person, and if so, in what way?

c. Any other related story.

Memory Joggers: It Takes a Village

Community

General

- What city do you consider your hometown, and why?
- Share a major relocation in your life—what prompted it, and how did your new surroundings differ from the old?
- What made your neighbourhood special or challenging? Have you returned to visit, and how often?
- Was this the town where you were born? How many years did you live there?
- Did it attract tourists and why? How was life different when they were around?
- Describe any event, such as a wildfire, cyclone, train derailment, or plane crash that affected your entire town or city.

Landscape

- In which country and part of the country did you live?
- Would you describe your community as rural, suburban, or urban?
- Were there any mountains, lakes, or rivers near your home?

Atmosphere

- Did you feel safe there? Why or why not?
- Was there a rich side and poor side of town? Did you spend much time in one or the other?
- Were there any community events that interested you, and in what way?
- Which domestic problems were there,

such as homelessness or racial prejudice?

- What did your neighbourhood look like at night and during different seasons?
- Were there any distinct smells, such as pine trees, the ocean, an industry, or a farm?
- What can you share about the customs, etiquette, and gender issues?

Activities

- Did you have a favourite short-cut? Why did you use it?
- What special news events do you recall while you lived there?
- Was your name ever in the newspaper? Why, and how did you feel about it?
- Describe a time you had an interaction with a first responder: police, EMT (emergency medical technician), or firefighter.
- Did you take an interest in civic matters?
- What did you like best about the parks, tourist attractions, farmers' markets, or fairs?
- What games did you enjoy on the playgrounds, streets, or in the fields, arenas, or pools?
- Describe your community's sports team and what it meant to you.

Transportation

- Describe any major highways, airports, or public transportation in your town.
- How far was it to the nearest big city? How often would you go there and why?
- If you lived in a big city, how often would you visit the country and why?

Buildings

(Note: We'll look at schools and churches in separate workshops.)

- What did you like about the library, municipal pool, community centre, YMCA, or sports field?
- What parts of the community have changed the most over the years?
- What was downtown like? Did you prefer to shop there, or at a local mall? Have most of the shops now moved to malls or closed down?
- Was your community known for a particular industry and what did you learn about it?
- What were the neighbourhood landmarks?

People**Extended Family**

- Describe extended family who played a significant role in your life.
- Did your family ever have a reunion? Did you meet any relatives there you had heard much about but didn't know?
- Do you have loved ones still living in the

community or are buried there? How often do you visit the cemetery? How does that make you feel?

Neighbours

- Did most people know each other or hardly anyone? How did that make you feel?
- What do you remember about moving into your community? Was it hard to make friends?
- Describe neighbours who had immigrated to your community. What did you learn about their culture?
- Were there neighbours who looked out for you, or friends who stood by you during challenging times?

Influential People

- Who from the community made the most significant impact on your life? How did they help or hurt you?
- Did anyone from your community become famous? Did you know them personally? How do you feel about their fame?

Writing Tip: Avoiding "Very"

The word 'very' can be vague! It can mean different things to different people and should be avoided in your writing. A more detailed vocabulary makes what you have to say more dynamic and easier to understand.

Here are a few synonyms for the word "very" when it's used as an adjective, according to

[Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com/):

- actual
- appropriate
- authentic
- bare
- correct
- ideal
- mere
- perfect
- plain

- pure
- right
- sheer
- simple
- special
- true
- undoubted
- unqualified
- unquestionable

When it's used as an adverb, "very" can be replaced with one of these synonyms:

- absolutely
- astonishingly
- awfully
- certainly
- considerably

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- dearly
- decidedly
- deeply
- emphatically
- exaggeratedly
- exceedingly
- excessively
- extensively
- extraordinarily
- extremely
- greatly
- highly
- incredibly
- largely
- notably
- noticeably
- particularly
- positively
- powerfully
- pressingly
- pretty
- profoundly
- remarkably
- substantially
- surprisingly
- terribly
- truly
- uncommonly
- unusually
- vastly
- wonderfully

Let's look at examples of better ways to say what we mean without using the word "very."

Instead of very big, use

Instead of very small, use

Instead of very happy, use

Instead of very sad, use

Instead of very hungry, use

Instead of very thirsty, use

Workshop 10:

Your Birth and Childhood

Many of us belong to the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1945 and 1966. In Canada, after the Depression and war years, the country experienced a significant baby boom, averaging nearly 412,000 births each year.¹ This increase in population led to the need for new schools and reshaped communities across the nation.

As cars became more affordable, they quickly became a staple of everyday life. Families moved from bustling cities to the suburbs, often into larger homes and with newer household appliances. At the same time, many families were still coping with the lingering effects of war—mourning loved ones who never returned, or adjusting to family members who came home changed by their experiences.

Entertainment options expanded through movies, television, and records. More mothers entered the workforce, resulting in some children becoming latchkey kids.

Faith and community played a key role. Sunday shopping was uncommon, and most families dressed up for church. Christians generally enjoyed a good reputation, and the growing population meant Sunday schools were well attended, with numerous activities for children both in church and in the broader community.

Childhood is a time of learning about life and relationships. It's when we learn to read, write, and express ourselves. We begin to understand our emotions and the difference between right and wrong. Imaginary play and real friendships filled our days.

Looking back, it's clear how much the culture of the times shaped our experiences. Today, the Internet allows us to revisit those years—reminding us of the toys, fashions, music, movies, TV shows, and books from our childhood.

We all have stories worth sharing. Imagine being that child again and share your experiences. Write about what you learned, what you wish had been different, and how faith, friendships, discoveries, disappointments, joys, and fears shaped you.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Your childhood in general: Consider including significant events, relationships, and moments that shaped who you are today. Think about the emotions, challenges, and joys you experienced.

b. Your childhood experiences in church: Tell about your time in Sunday school, junior choir, Christmas programs, and other church-related events. How did those experiences influence your beliefs, values, and personal growth?

c. Memories of elementary school: Describe your school days in general, or perhaps you could share a particular incident that stands out in your memory.

d. Your birth: Share what you learned about your birth and infancy.

e. Any other related topic.

¹ 1950s Canadian Culture - <https://infogram.com/1950s-canadian-culture-1gdx3pwx84r42gr>, Nov. 28, 2023

Memory Joggers: Your Birth and Childhood

Birth

- When and where were you born? Share about any unusual circumstances surrounding your birth.

- You can use a perpetual calendar to find out more about that day.¹

- Is there a humorous story or anecdote related to your birth?

- What was your birth weight?

- Did your parents keep a baby book for you? What was it like looking through it?

- Describe what it was like being a twin, triplet, or quadruplet.

- How did your parents choose your name? How do you feel about your name, and did it ever cause you any issues?

Adoption

- What did your parents tell you about the first time they met you? What made them realize you were the child they wanted to adopt?

- Have you learned about or met your birth parents? Share what you know about them. If not, what do you wish you could learn about them?

- How old were you when you were adopted? If you were old enough, what do you remember about the time before your adoption?

- Did your adoptive parents keep your name or rename you? Why was your name chosen, and what is its significance?

- Tell about adjustments your parents faced that they weren't prepared for.

Childhood

- How do your parents and relatives remember you as a child?

- What are your most vivid recollections of these early years?

- What was bedtime like? Did you ever feel

abandoned when you had to go to bed, perhaps before everyone else?

- What was your greatest fear as a child? Was it linked to a person, place, or thing? How did you cope with it?

- How were you rewarded when you were especially good? How were you disciplined when you misbehaved?

- What was your favourite and least favourite food as a child?

- Did you have a nickname? How did you get it, and did you like it? Does anyone still call you by it?

- Tell what you wanted to be when you grew up?

- Describe some of your babysitters.

- What would people be surprised to know about your childhood?

- Describe the type of clothes you wore.

- Did you feel awkward as a child? Were you tall, short, skinny, chubby, or athletic? Were you shy? How did those traits affect you?

- What was it like having measles, mumps, or chicken pox?

- What changes today make the world better than when you were a child? What makes it a more challenging time for kids today?

Activities and Experiences

- Describe your favourite blanket, toy, teddy bear, or security object.

- Describe your imaginary friend(s) and what you liked to do together.

- What do you recall about nursery school?

- Write about your childhood friend(s) and your experiences together. Are you still friends? If you lost touch, how did that happen?

- Tell about your friendship with a pen pal.

- Describe a time you felt bullied and how you dealt with it.

¹ <https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/generate.html>

- Did boys and girls play together or separately? Describe the kinds of indoor and outdoor games you played. What was your favourite game and why?
- Describe your treehouse, clubhouse, or playhouse. What was it like, and how did you play in it?
- What did you enjoy about playing house, school, store, church, or other pretend games?
- What did you do in the summer when there was no school?
- What stories did your parents read to you? Describe your favourite bedtime story. What kinds of books or comics did you like to read yourself? Were you ever caught reading at night when you were supposed to be asleep?
- Did you go to the library (school or public), and what kinds of books did you borrow? What appealed to you about them?
- Describe the chores you were expected to do and how you felt about doing them.
- Tell about special trips or outings and what you enjoyed or disliked about them.
- What was it like when your family got a TV set. What were some of your favourite shows and why?
- Tell about any exciting or important visitors to your home when you were a child.
- What did you do that got you in the most trouble, and how did your parents handle it?
- What did you receive in the mail that particularly excited you?
- Describe what it was like losing your baby teeth or when you got braces.
- What do you remember about getting a special new pair of shoes? Shopping for back-to-school clothes or an Easter outfit?
- Describe what it was like looking through catalogues. What things did you order and what was it like receiving them?
- Describe your shopping experiences as a child. Compare the stores and prices of your early years with those of today.
- Share how you felt when you heard an ice cream truck coming down your street.

- Did you belong to any clubs or groups like 4-H Club, Pioneer Club, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Brownies/Cubs? Describe what you enjoyed about it, badges you worked on, camps attended or fundraisers you participated in.
- Describe any collections you had, such as baseball cards, marbles, stamps, coins or figurines. Do you still have any of those items?
- What do you recall about the first time you saw an airplane or train, or rode on one?
- What stories can you share about Halloween, Valentine's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas?
- Share about watching sports on TV or in person, playing sports, or participating in track and field.
- What was your greatest fear and how did you overcome it?
- When you were especially good, did your parents do anything special for you, like taking you out for an ice cream cone or swimming?
- Who influenced you the most when you were a child? Who was your hero, and why?
- Did you ever get lost? Tell how you felt and what you did.
- Describe a time you wanted to run away from home.
- Did you go to summer camp? What kind? Share about the other kids and counsellors. What activities did you like best and least? Did you get homesick?
- Describe getting your first bike and learning to ride it. What did you enjoy or dislike about riding it over the years.
- Describe a hobby you had and what you enjoyed about it, such as crafts or doing magic.
- Describe a special hideout and how you felt when you were there.
- Did you keep any scrapbooks, journals, diaries, or autograph books? What kinds of things were written in them?
- Describe your experience learning to play a musical instrument. What did you enjoy about it and what type of music did you play? Did you play solos or with a group? Are

you still proficient at it? Did you play in any recitals or music festivals? Did you ever win an award for your talent?

- Were you good at art? Describe the kinds of things you liked to draw or doodle. Did your parents hang them on the wall or the fridge?
- What did you like to listen to on the radio or records? Describe a memory that always comes back when you hear a specific song.
- Tell about an award you won and how it made you feel.
- Tell about your lemonade stand or other fundraising ventures. What were you raising money for and why?
- Were you healthy or did you have health issues, broken bones, or injuries? Were you ever in the hospital? How do you think being ill affected who you are as an adult?

Special Occasions

- What was your favourite holiday and why?
- What birthday do you remember the most and why? Describe any parties you had.
- Describe a Christmas present that sticks out in your mind.
- What did Christmas morning feel like as a child? Was it hard getting to sleep on Christmas Eve? Did you believe in Santa? When did you stop believing?
- What was Halloween like? Did you wear bought or homemade costumes? Did you go out alone or with friends?
- Did you ever make a jack-o-lantern and what did it look like? How did you feel about cleaning out the pumpkin?

Church Youth Events

- Share any stories from your christening or dedication.
- Describe what Sunday school and church were like for you throughout your childhood.
- What was your favourite Bible story, song, and chorus and what did it mean to you?
- Describe other youth events you attended at church.

- Describe special Christmas events at church and any part you played in them.
- Share about a special event for missions, or a special guest speaker. Was there a time you thought about becoming a missionary?
- Who had the most influence on your spiritual life as a child?
- Did you accept the Lord as your Saviour when you were a child? What were the circumstances?

Elementary School

Your School(s)

- Describe what you remember about your school(s). How far did you have to go and how did you get there?
- If you had to change schools, describe what it was like for you.

Early School Memories

- Did you attend kindergarten, and what do you remember about it or hearing your parents tell you about it?
- What were your first impressions as you started school? Was it a happy beginning, or were you fearful and homesick?

Daily School Routine

- Describe a typical school day; for example, an opening routine, such as singing the national anthem.
- Describe your school assemblies.
- Describe what lunchtime was like.
- Were the girls allowed to wear pants?
- Did you wear a school uniform, and what was it like?

Teachers and Courses

- Share what you remember about your teachers and how you felt about them. How did any of them particularly influence you as a child.
- What was your favourite subject and why? Your least favourite? Why?
- Did you have to do math problems on the

blackboard in front of the class? How did that make you feel?

- Share about having to stand in front of the class to give a speech, read a paper, or a story. What was it about, and how did you feel?

- Describe your art or music classes.

- Did you have any 'show and tell' days? What did you take?

- What do you recall about spelling bees?

- Describe your Phys Ed (physical education) classes and how you felt about them.

- Were you ever afraid to bring home your report card? Why?

- Describe a time you struggled understanding a particular subject or lesson. How did you finally get the concept and how did it make you feel?

Social Interactions and Extracurricular Activities

- Describe how you got along with others in your class. What kinds of things did you enjoy doing together and what did you dislike about social interactions?

- If you took a school bus, do you recall anything that happened out of the ordinary? How far did you have to go? Did you usually sit alone or with a special friend?

- Describe the playground and games you played before and after school or at recess.

- Describe the tables or desks you used and where you generally sat in class.

- What was it like having to go to summer school?

- What did you think of the older kids at school? What kinds of things did they do that you wanted to learn?

- Tell about friends who went with you from elementary to high school.

- Tell of any children you went to elementary school with who later became famous. Are some still your friends?

Special School Days

- Describe some of your fun days, such as silly hair days, wearing your clothes backwards, or wearing your pyjamas.

- What do you remember about any unique visitors coming to your school?

- Describe a field trip your class took and how you felt about it.

- Did you look forward to summer vacation, or did you miss going to school?

- Did you exchange Valentines in school? Did you make the ones you gave? Did you keep what you received in a decorated box?

- Describe how you celebrated Halloween at school.

- What was it like on picture day? How do you feel now, looking back at your elementary school pictures?

- Tell what it was like having to walk to school in the rain or on a cold winter day.

School Discipline

- What kinds of things did you daydream about in class? Did you ever get in trouble because you did not pay attention in class?

- What kind of things did you do that got you into trouble? How were you punished?

- Did your mom or dad ever have to go to the school? How did that make you feel?

- Tell about a time you played hooky.

- Describe having to stand in the corner or hallway, getting the strap, or having to stay after school. Was there another punishment you were given?

Special Memories and Achievements

- Did you have a grade eight graduation? What was it like?

- Describe how you felt going back for a new school year. How did you prepare?

- Did you buy your textbooks or get used ones? If your books were loaned each year, did you have to wrap them in brown wrapping paper to keep them clean?

- Describe a time you were recognized for

10. Your Birth and Childhood

any special interests or achievements.

- Describe an historic event that happened when you were in school and how you felt about it at the time. How do you see it now?

- Describe having to see the school nurse.
- Describe any school plays or programs in which you participated in some way.

Workshop 11:

Your Teen Years

Teen years were challenging yet transformative, as we transitioned from childhood to adulthood with bodies undergoing puberty and emotions overwhelming us—especially when a pimple appeared just before a first date! Peer pressure and friendships filled our days, while feelings of embarrassment towards parents and siblings may have increased.

High school was not just a period of personal growth but a time of new challenges and adventures—and extra homework. In many schools, the curriculum was gender-specific: girls learned homemaking skills, while boys studied carpentry and car maintenance. Dress codes required girls to wear skirts or dresses. Lunchtimes in the cafeteria were a social hub for extroverts but could be intimidating for introverts. The pressure of exams, the anticipation of report cards, and the excitement of prom dates and graduation added to the emotional rollercoaster of those years.

The excitement and nervousness of learning to drive, along with thinking about future career paths, added to the mix, all against the backdrop of changing times.

For many, prosperity led to more material possessions, sometimes resulting in overindulgence and a weakening of morals. Cars, record players, and portable transistor radios were common and sales of 45 rpm records soared.

Teens watched TV—with *The Ed Sullivan Show* and Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. Stars were introduced, like Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Bee Gees, Led Zeppelin, Sonny and Cher, Tina Turner, and Stevie Wonder. You may have listened to cassettes and learned to

“twist again like we did last summer,” and danced the Loco-Motion, Watusi, and Mashed Potato in tie-dyes, miniskirts, bell-bottoms, capris (aka peddle-pushers), polyester, and go-go boots. Baseball games were thrilling when Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle played. Pierced earlobes (numbed with an ice cube), beatniks, diners, juke-boxes, roller skates, guys fixing cars, banana bikes, arcades, shopping malls, and jellied salads were all part of the times.

Unforgettable moments included Neil Armstrong's “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,” and Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech. You may have enjoyed the special effects in *Mary Poppins* and singing along with the von Trapps in *The Sound of Music*. In 1970, Canadians aged 18 and older gained the right to vote, and five years later, seat belts were legalized, making the roads safer for everyone.

The Salvation Army had youth groups, youth councils, and a leadership program known as corps cadets. In some smaller corps, girls were welcomed to join the senior band. Joy Webb's music was popular. Uniforms started to change, with bonnets being replaced by hats, and in 1969, Gowans' and Larrison's *Take Over Bid* was introduced in Canada. It was a time when many teens volunteered to teach a Sunday school class or participated in outreach programs in their church.

For most teens, these were unforgettable days. Reflect on your teen years and share what it was like. Tell about the life lessons you learned, the parts you wish were different, your joys, and fears.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. General activities during your teen years: What were your routines, hobbies, and interests? Reflect on your friendships and how those relationships shaped your teen years, including how your family influenced your growth and development.

b. Challenges and achievements: Share any significant challenges you faced and how you managed to overcome them. What were some of your proudest accomplishments?

c. Your teen experiences in church: De-

scribe your experiences in Sunday school, youth group, and other activities. What lessons stood out to you? How did your faith develop during those years? Did you participate in any special events, trips, or projects? How did church fellowship influence your life? Did you face any challenges in keeping your faith, and when and how did you overcome them?

d. Memories of high school: Describe your school days in general, or share one or two memorable incidents that stand out in your memory.

e. Any other relevant topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Teen Years

Personal Life

- Describe the trends in fashion, including clothing and hairstyles. What was the most embarrassing thing you ever wore?
- Who were your idols in sports, movies, music, or your neighbourhood?
- Describe some of the cultural influences you experienced, such as music, including your favourites and why you liked them.
- How did TV influence your teen years?
- Describe learning to drive a car or motorcycle and your driver's test.
- Share a frustrating experience you had with a car or other motor vehicle.
- Share the talents you were beginning to develop in music, drama, sports, or other similar areas.
- Describe any organizations or clubs you participated in and your thoughts about them.
- Describe your favourite time of year as a teenager.
- What were your favourite indoor and outdoor activities?
- What was your favourite place to visit and with whom?
- Share something about those years that would surprise others.

- Describe any personality changes you went through as you became a teenager.
- For the guys, describe how you felt when your voice changed and if you experienced any embarrassing moments because of it.
- Describe the moment you discovered your first chin (or leg) hair and how you learned to shave.
- Describe any hardships or unusual obstacles you had to overcome.
- Who or what had the greatest impact on you during your teen years?
- What were your most significant and proudest accomplishments during your teen years?
- Share your dreams and goals for the future, and how you achieved them or not.
- What was the biggest trouble you faced at home, school, or with your friends?
- Were you punished, and if so, how? Did you think the punishment was fair?
- Describe where you went if you wanted to be alone and what activities you usually did there.
- Which world events affected you the most, and in what ways?
- Describe one of your vacations as a teen.

Who decided on the destination? What did you enjoy, or not?

Home

- Describe your daily routine in the mornings, after school, evenings, and weekends.
- Which household chores did you enjoy the most and least? Were homemaking skills taught to you by your parents, school, both, or someone else?
- At what age did you start doing the laundry, and what were your experiences? Have you ever ruined a favourite piece of clothing?
- Did you have to share your room? Did you keep your room clean or messy?
- What types of games did you play? Which one was your favourite and why?
- Were you proud of your home or ashamed to invite friends over, and why?
- What types of foods did you like the most?
- What kinds of things were you afraid of? How did you overcome those fears, or do you still have them?
- What kinds of activities did you enjoy doing on your own?
- Did you ever run away and why? What was the outcome?
- Would you say your teen years were your most challenging or your most enjoyable?
- What are some ways you used for “finding yourself”?

Parents and Siblings

- Describe your relationship with your parents during your teen years.
- Were you a rebel? What kinds of things did you try to hide from your parents? What would happen if you got caught?
- How did you get along with your siblings? Did you have to babysit the younger ones? How did that make you feel?
- Did you get an allowance and what did you do with it?
- Did your parents separate or divorce while you were a teenager? How did it affect you?

• If you were a stepchild, describe your step-parent. When did they come into your life and how did they change it? Did you have any half-brothers or sisters and how did you get along?

• Were you a foster child? Describe that experience and how it influenced your life.

Friends

- Describe your social life.
- Describe going to the movies. What was the price of admission? What kind of movies did you enjoy?
- What were your favourite sports and hobbies? What did you excel at?
- Share how you celebrated turning ‘Sweet Sixteen.’
- What were Hallowe’en parties like as a teen? Did your family ever host one?
- Did you enjoy dancing and what style did you like best? Who taught you?
- Were you popular? In what way? If not, how did that make you feel at the time? And now?
- Where did you and your friends like to hang out?
- Write about your best friend and your experiences with them. What has happened to that friendship?
- Who were the biggest crushes in your life? Did you go steady? What was your boyfriend or girlfriend like? Did your parents approve of them? Did you think it was going to last? Who broke whose heart?
- Did anyone make your teen years miserable, and what did they do to make it so tough? How did you cope with it?
- Did you have pen pals? Where did they live? What kinds of things did you write about? Do you still stay in touch?

Working

- Describe any part-time or summer jobs you had. Did any of them lead to something more significant for you?

- What do you recall about babysitting? Who did you look after, and how old were they?

Spiritual Life

- What was your religion, if any, while you were growing up? How did your religion, or lack of it, influence your life and family?
- How often did you attend church? What did you like and dislike about it?
- Did you attend Sunday school? What did you enjoy most about it? What did you dislike?
- What was your experience like in youth group?
- What other activities did you participate in at church and what did you enjoy or dislike about them?
- Describe church outings or special events you remember, such as Sunday school picnics, Christmas programs, and plays.
- Have your feelings about religion shifted since then?
- Did you accept Christ as your Saviour when you were a teen? Who brought you to the Lord?
- What were your thoughts about God?
- Reflecting on your life, where do you notice God's fingerprints during your teenage years?
- Tell about family or personal devotional times.

High School

Your High School(s)

- Describe your high school, including the grounds, number of students, and the overall look, feel, and sounds, especially on your first day. What was your high school mascot, and do you remember any of the cheers?
- Describe what it was like to be home-schooled, at a boarding school, or at a private school.
- Did you have a class ring? What was it like and how did you feel wearing it?

School Routine

- Describe a typical school day.

- Were you a diligent student, or did you adopt a more casual approach?

- Tell of a time you skipped school.
- Did you ever get disciplined at school? Why? What was your punishment?
- Describe your high school assemblies.

Teachers and Courses

- Share which subjects you liked the most and the least, and explain why.
- Describe the teachers who had the greatest impact on you.
- What skills did you learn in high school that prepared you for life?
- What did you learn about yourself in high school?
- Describe the kind of homework you had, and how and when you did it.
- Share your experience of learning a foreign language and how it has helped you during vacations, at work, or within your community.
- Share what you remember about any long reports you wrote, speeches you delivered, debates you took part in, or any special projects.
- Share your experience in a science lab or at a science fair.
- Describe school trips you went on for fun, cultural learning, or outside the province or country.

Social Life and Extracurricular Activities

- Describe how you typically commuted to school and back. Did anything significant ever happen on your commute?
- Describe your experience with any bullies at your school.
- Share your experience with extracurricular activities.
- Describe what popular kids were like and what set the unpopular kids apart. How did that affect you?
- Describe the fashions worn at your school and some that you have worn.

- Tell about your lunch breaks, the kinds of things you ate, who you ate with, and where. Did you feel comfortable or lonely?

- Describe your prom, your date, what you wore, the theme, and how you felt about it.

Special Memories

- Describe your most memorable experience in high school.

- Describe your graduation and how you felt that day. How did your parents feel about it? Describe any special gifts you received.

- Share any awards you've received and how winning made you feel.

- Share a story about going to school with someone who later became famous.

- Describe your high school reunion.

- Would you rather be in high school back when you were, or today, and why?

- If you never finished high school, share why and how you feel about it now.

- Reflecting on your high school years, what would you like to have done differently?

Workshop 12:

College and Careers

Transitioning from teenage years into adulthood involved making many important decisions—about higher education, independence, dating, finances, jobs, and careers.

By the mid-1960s, over half of Canada's 20 million people were under 25 years old. This younger generation started entering the workforce in large numbers, with many well-paying jobs and a labour shortage. Many decided to leave school early to find work; often, their ambitions clashed with their parents' expectations. Unlike previous generations, they were less likely to respect authority and they wanted careers with financial stability, rather than settling for just any job.

Many university students chose degrees in education, social sciences, engineering, and health sciences. Teaching was a popular choice, but by the mid-1970s, there was less demand for teachers. Canada faced rising unemployment after 1974, making career planning feel uncertain. According to Statistics Canada, graduates often faced challenges in finding work in their field, sometimes leading to underemployment or career changes¹.

The demand for additional post-secondary institutions and a wider variety of courses increased. Many students were the first in their families to pursue higher education, often without their parents' support. However, most were committed to their studies, participated in campus activities, and earned good grades.

*May the favor of the Lord our God
rest on us; establish the work of our
hands for us—yes, establish the
work of our hands.* (Psalm 90:17)

Expo '67 in Montreal gave young adults a glimpse at the technological progress that was opening up new career possibilities. Their future was filled with new opportunities and could be quite different from that of their parents.

As those opportunities expanded, discerning God's calling became more challenging. Parents and mentors often found it difficult to guide the younger generation in the new technological age. The idea of a lifelong career began to fade, and for women, it often meant getting married and starting a family later in life.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers, and in about 750 words, share your story on one of these topics:

- a. Your journey through higher education.** Share your experiences, challenges, and achievements.
- b. Your calling.** Share the story of how God called you, including your discernment process and how you accepted this calling.
- c. Joys and challenges of your career(s).** Describe the pleasures and difficulties you encountered and lessons learned from them.
- d. Any other related topic.**

¹ Statistics Canada, "University Graduates and Jobs: Changes during the 1970s; A Comparison of the Occupations and Industrial Sectors Entered by University Graduates in 1971 and 1978," Canadian Book Review Annual Online, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://cbra.library.utoronto.ca/items/show/37850>.

Memory Joggers: College and Careers

College/University

Chosen Institution

- Describe where you pursued higher education and why you selected that institution.
- Describe your accommodations.
- Did you switch schools partway? What led you to change your mind?

Classes

- Describe the courses you enrolled in.
- Describe your graduation and the degree or certificate you earned. If you didn't graduate, explain why.
- What was your major and why did you choose it? Did you switch to a different field?
- Describe a class that inspired you and why.
- Tell about a course you found most challenging.
- Describe your study habits.
- Share about a professor who had a significant impact on your life, whether positive or negative.
- What is the highest degree you obtained?
- Share if you believe it was worth the time, money, and effort. Is there anything you wish you had done differently?

Extra-Curricular Activities

- Describe your involvement in campus politics or any committees. How did you manage that with your studies?
- Describe your involvement with the sports team(s) as a player, cheerleader, or fan.
- Share your experience of joining a sorority or fraternity.
- Who were your closest friends in those days? How did you meet, and what activities did you enjoy together? Did you stay friends?
- Did you go on many dates? Did it impact your studies in any way?
- Did you receive any special honours?
- Do you still have your yearbook, and how do you feel looking at it now?

Home Life

- Describe what it was like to go home for the holidays.
- Did your friends at home who didn't go to college treat you differently when you came home? How did that make you feel?

Misc.

- How did you spend your summer breaks?
- Did you call your parents, or was communication through writing letters?
- Did you have your own phone, or did you have to use a public telephone in a phone booth on the street or on campus?
- Were you excited to be away from home, or did you start feeling homesick? Do you remember any letters you sent or received? How did you try to hide your feelings?
- Describe the tuition costs at that time and how you managed to pay them.
- Share what inspired you to pursue higher education. Were you the first in your family to achieve this?
- Do you think you could have achieved the same in life without your higher education?
- In what ways were you the same after college, and in what ways did you change?
- Which do you remember more fondly—high school or college—and why?
- Tell of any part-time job(s) you had while attending college, including during summer breaks.
- Share your overall thoughts about the importance of higher education. What would you say to encourage or discourage your descendants?

Career

- Share how you obtained your first job and how long it took.
- Tell how you began your journey that led to your career, including any role you believe God played in it. Did a mentor guide you, and

if so, how? Do you have any regrets about your decision?

Your Work

- What was your first job? What did you learn from it? How long did you stay? What made you decide to move on?
- What work accomplishments are you most proud of? Did you receive any special honours, raises, or promotions?
- Describe where you worked, what your role involved, and what you enjoyed most about your career.
- Describe some of the most difficult problems you encountered and how you addressed them.
- Did your work lead you to meet anyone famous? If so, what was that experience like for you?
- If you often travelled for work, how did that affect you?
- What did you learn about holding a managerial position? What would you change if you were a manager today?
- Describe your career in military service or another form of service to your country or community.
- What was it like to belong to a union? Did you ever go on strike, and if so, why? How did that impact things around the worksite?
- Describe any promotions you received and how you felt about them.
- Describe being passed over for a position you believed you deserved.
- Describe how you felt when people asked you about your job.
- What advice would you give someone about starting their own business, and why?
- Describe any coworkers who stand out in your memory.
- Share what it was like to have a secretary or assistant.
- Tell what it was like to be a secretary or assistant.
- Describe the atmosphere at your work-

place and explain why you felt that way.

- Describe your coffee and lunch breaks.
- Did you work regular hours or on shift? If you did shift work, what was that like for you and your family?
- Describe occasions when you had to work extra hours and how that affected your life.
- What's it like to be a mentor to someone?
- What qualities do you possess that made you a strong worker?
- Describe going through some challenging times at your workplace. Was your company sold or taken over? Did you ever have to go without pay?
- Do you feel you had a career or just a job?
- Describe any staff retreats or parties related to work.
- Did you feel that your profession was respected in your community, and why?
- If you worked from home, what blessings and challenges did you encounter?
- If you owned your own business, what major changes were needed in order to grow (such as relocating, hiring help, etc.)? What steps did you take to start your business and become more effective?

Misc.

- How did your family support or not support you in your work?
- How did you manage the demands of your job and home?
- Describe what it was like to be fired or laid off.
- Did your career path take any unexpected turns, and how did that impact you?
- Is there a business person you particularly look up to, and why?
- Describe your commute.
- How did you feel on Monday mornings? Friday afternoons?
- How have your past jobs or business experiences stretched and challenged you?
- Tell how the Lord uniquely equipped or still equips you for your work.

Workshop 13:

Single or Married Life

Single Life

Being single isn't inherently good or bad, but it does bring its own opportunities and challenges¹. Perhaps you enjoyed the freedom to come and go as you pleased. You may have thrived on independence, deciding where you wanted to live and how to spend your money. You might have had more time to focus on relationships, personal goals, hobbies, education, travel, and fitness. You may also have experienced less drama in your life with fewer conflicts to deal with.

It may, in turn, have often meant feeling lonely, especially during significant moments in your life. For some, it might have brought judgment and labels like being too picky or hearing comments such as "What's wrong with you that no one wants to marry you?"

It also meant being responsible for all household chores and facing life's challenges without a partner's support. You may have felt the load of having all expenses fall on you. Watching your peers marry and start families might have made you feel left behind.

Those who chose this lifestyle may have thrived in it, while others viewed it as either a stepping stone towards marriage or saw themselves as having missed out on an important aspect of life.

Marriage

Marriage, on the other hand, also has its benefits and challenges. It may have brought com-

panionship and financial stability, as well as shared responsibilities.

We grew up with fairy tales and Aesop's fables, where young girls dreamed of "Prince Charming" sweeping them off their feet and living happily ever after. Songs on the radio were sentimental, such as the Beatles singing "Love is All You Need," as we searched for someone to complete us. For many, that dream became a reality, and despite life's challenges, they worked together to build a successful marriage.

Or perhaps you came from a broken home or an environment filled with conflict, motivating you to have a better marriage than your parents.

Perhaps you thought your spouse would change after marriage. Cultural, racial, or religious differences, along with past baggage, may have added extra challenges. For some, it may have led to divorce.

Marriage taught us that no relationship is perfect, but it's about working together and moving forward through different stages of life—being married without children, raising a family, experiencing an empty nest, facing mid-life crises, and enjoying retirement.

Some may have become widowed at an early age or later in life. For many, it may have meant remarriage, with the joys and challenges that can bring.

Parenting/Children in Your Life

You may have experienced the joy of having children with straightforward pregnancies while

¹ *An Honest Look at the Ten Pros and Cons of Being Single.* <https://www.elitedaily.com/dating/best-worst-single/1227518> accessed December 8, 2025

13. Single or Married Life

others faced significant challenges. The pain of childbirth was followed by the happiness of holding your baby for the first time. There may have been the fear of not being a good parent or the determination to be better than your own. Most parents did their best, but the journey was often difficult and different from what was expected.

For some, parenting was not part of their plans, and they were content with their decision. Others might have wanted a family but faced difficulties conceiving for various reasons. Seeing friends and relatives enjoy family life could have been hard, especially when asked about starting their own family. Some turned to adoption, while others endured the pain of miscarriages or the loss of a stillborn or young infant.

Expectations at home may have changed. Resources may have been limited, so you or your spouse may have taken on extra work while trying to manage household chores.

You may have faced the challenge of being a single parent—managing finances on a single income, limited support systems, increased responsibilities, juggling home and work duties, finding reliable childcare, coping with loneliness, dealing with social stigma, and the stress on your health.

Perhaps there were other challenges you faced with each family member having unique emotional needs, communication styles, and resources for coping. Maybe you raised children with special needs. Living in a blended family would have impacted the children, emotionally, academically, and socially. As parents, you may have watched them struggle through a divorce,

whether it was theirs, yours, or your parents’.

It may have been a challenge with each child having a variety of interests and facing their own challenges in school, arts, sports, and friendships. You may have struggled to support your children while also caring for aging parents with health issues or dementia.

Perhaps you were left to raise the children of a loved one who died young, or you may have been a foster parent to a child until the courts could find appropriate guardians.

Parents were challenged to be good role models for the next generation. For Christians, this meant to “Train them up in the way they should go”² Some became Christians while their children were growing up or after they left the family home.

Whether single, married, a parent, or single again, we all have our own stories.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. The joys and challenges of married life: Share how you met your spouse and knew they were ‘the one.’ Describe your wedding day, the first year of marriage adjustments, and the joys and challenges you’ve met together.

b. The joys and challenges of parenting: Reflect on your experiences as a parent, highlighting both the rewards and difficult aspects of raising your family.

c. Life as a single person: Describe your life, including the unique experiences, opportunities, and challenges you faced.

d. Any other related topic.

² See Proverbs 22:6

Memory Joggers: Single or Married Life

Single

- Describe the advantages and disadvantages you have felt as a single person.
- If you had to do it all over again, would you still want to stay single, and why?
- Share your experience living with a roommate.
- Share things you enjoyed doing with your friends that you might not have been able to do if you were married.
- If you have been a foster parent or adopted a child, what motivated your decision? What were your joys and challenges as a single parent?

Single Again

- Describe what it was like to lose your spouse and become single again. How did you cope with the loss? How did you manage the household on your own? What did you do in your loneliness?

Dating and Proposal

- Tell about when and how you met your spouse, and any special dates you recall.
- Describe how you and your spouse were compatible and how your differences and similarities influenced your relationship.
- How and where did the proposal happen? How did you (or your spouse) select the ring? What did you like about it?
- Were you hit by a thunderbolt, or did love creep up on you slowly? How did you know your spouse would be your life partner? Did your spouse realize it at the same time?
- Describe your parents' and siblings' reactions to your engagement.

Wedding and Honeymoon

- Tell of any bridal showers and the type of gifts received.
- Describe your wedding day, your preparations for it, and how you felt during that day.

Did you write your wedding vows? What did you say to each other?

- Tell who was in your bridal party and why they were chosen.
- Where did you go on your honeymoon, and how long did you stay?

Married Life

- Describe what was most challenging about adjusting to married life.
- Did you make time for regular date nights with your spouse, and what kinds of activities did you do?
 - How do you get along with your in-laws?
 - What do you like most about your spouse?
 - What were the most difficult moments in your marriage?
- Everybody has bad habits. What annoyed you the most about your spouse? How did you cope with it?
 - What qualities would you select in a partner now if you were to do it all over again?
- Show your favourite picture of you and your spouse together and tell what you like about it.
- Describe going on a second honeymoon.
- Describe what you believe has brought you and your spouse closer together.
- Tell how you complement each other.
- How did you celebrate your 1st, 10th, 25th, 40th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries?
 - What challenges did you face in your relationship, and how did you overcome them?
 - What do you hope the future holds for both of you?
- What do you want for your children and grandchildren as they search for a partner? What are some of the thoughts about marriage that you'd like to pass on? What ingredients are most important for success in marriage?

Divorce / Remarriage

- How did divorce or remarriage change your life and family? What lessons did you learn from this experience?
- How did it affect your relationships with friends?

Children

- Describe your feelings when you learned you were going to have a child.
- Tell about complications in your pregnancies.
- If your child was not born in a hospital, tell where the delivery took place and why.
- Describe your emotions when you were first handed your baby.
- Share what it was like bringing your baby home from the hospital.
- Explain why you chose your children's names as you did.
- What health concerns did you have with your children and how did you manage them?
- Share some of your joys and challenges in raising your family.
- What do you think you did well as a parent? What would you have done differently?
- What do you remember about your first Mother's (Father's) Day?
- Describe a meaningful gift your child(ren) gave you and what it meant to you.
- Describe your child(ren). How have your hopes and dreams been fulfilled in them?
- Describe how losing a child through miscarriage or stillbirth, whether as an infant, a child, teen, or adult, affected you and your family.
- Describe how it felt to give up a child for adoption. Share your thoughts on trying to locate them later in life.
- How has not having children affected your life? What do you think your life would have been like with children?
- What do you now understand about parenting that you didn't before becoming a parent? What was the situation that changed

your perspective?

- Describe times when you had to carpool.
- What was it like trying to teach your child(ren) to drive?
- Share your reasons for sending your kids to camp. Was it difficult to have them away, or did you see it as a welcome break?
- Describe occasions when your child(ren) had sleepovers at your home. What was it like the first time they slept over at someone else's house?
- Share a memorable thing your child said that surprised, amused, or impressed you.
- Describe how your child(ren) completed their homework and projects you helped with.
- What was it like volunteering in the PTA (Parent/Teacher Association)?
- Tell about a field trip you attended with your child's class.
- What activities did you do together as a family, such as playing games, sports, camping, etc.?
- Who usually babysat your child(ren), and why were they chosen? What was the going rate at the time?
- What were your children like as teens?
- How did you cope with them in college?
- How has life changed since your children 'left the nest'?
- Describe your feelings at your child(ren)'s wedding(s)?
- Tell how your stepchildren impacted your family.
- Describe your foster children and the ways they have influenced your family.
- Describe the circumstances surrounding the adoption of your child(ren) and how and when they learned they were adopted. Share your thoughts on their desire to learn about their biological family.
- Were your children usually tidy or messy, and how did that make you feel?
- What kind of snacks did you keep on hand?
- What were the house rules, and how did

you discipline your child(ren)?

- Also, review the memory joggers from your childhood, teen and college years and use them about your children instead of yourself.

Home Life

- Describe what your house was like. What was your favourite part, and why?

- When you had the house to yourself, what did you enjoy doing?

- Describe where you would go for a break from the family.

- Describe your relationships with your neighbours.

- Explain why you chose your home and mention some of the furniture and items you had to purchase for it.

- Describe any significant repairs or renovations you have carried out in your home.

- Describe a problem faced at home and how it was resolved.

- How were your children and spouse helpful at home?

- Did you have boarders or family members stay with you? Describe the experience.

- Describe how your yard looked in different seasons.

- Was there any place in your home that scared your child(ren), such as the basement or attic?

- Which household chores did you and your child(ren) enjoy the most or the least?

- Describe what it was like doing laundry.

- Describe appliances you used that are no longer in use or have changed significantly.

- Describe the décor of your home(s).

- Describe a move that you consider to be significant.

- What things do you see now that remind you of home?

- Describe life with your pet(s).

- What family traditions do or did you have? Were they passed down from your parents? If they began with you and your family, tell how they came into being.

- Was anyone in your family good at doing handiwork, needlework, woodwork, mechanics, etc.? What did that mean for your family?

- Describe meal times at your house, including special occasions. When would you use your good china and cutlery?

- Share what you remember about asking the blessing or having family devotions.

- Who managed the finances in your home? Were you seen as wealthy, struggling, or middle-income? How did you get by when money was scarce?

- Describe taking your child(ren) one at a time for a mom or dad date?

- How did you celebrate special occasions like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, birthdays, and anniversaries?

- Describe what it was like the day you moved into your family home and the day you moved out.

- How do you feel about seeing another family now living in your family home? Or, if it was demolished, how do you feel about it no longer being there?

- Describe any natural disasters your family experienced.

Workshop 14:

Life as a Senior

Boomers have experienced life in eight decades, two centuries, and two different millennia of transformation.

We sat as a family to play checkers or work on a puzzle. We played with marbles, balls, hula hoops, skipping ropes, and we hop-scotched on sidewalks, knowing that when the streetlights came on, it was time to go home.

We handwrote our notes, carefully copied from the chalkboard. If we made a mistake, we used erasers, not a 'delete' button. We did research by flipping through encyclopedias or a stack of books from the library. Sometimes, we got to watch a black-and-white National Film Board production. We didn't have smartphones, streaming video, and we didn't do internet searches on screens that would fit in our pockets.

We've gone from using an operator for long-distance calls to video calls anywhere in the world. We would wait weeks for a reply to our handwritten letters sent through the mail.

We've gone from listening to stories on the radio to black-and-white TV, colour TV, then 3D HD TV, and now podcasts. We've moved from manual typewriters to the first personal computers, and from floppy disks to megabytes on our smartphones.

We remember eating vegetables picked from the garden, and most of us managed to avoid meningitis, polio, tuberculosis, swine flu, and COVID-19.

Many of those in the Silent Generation (1928-1945) who are still alive today lived through all that and more: the Great Depression and the World Wars. Most lived and worked within a

small geographic area throughout their lives.

As we enter our senior years, it's natural to reflect on our life's journey. We revisit our past, cherishing the good times and acknowledging the challenging ones. When we see our own reflection in the mirror, we wonder how the person staring back got so many gray hairs and wrinkles seemingly overnight.

As we've noticed in our workshops, no two life journeys are alike. That remains true in our senior years. Some of us may still live in the house where we raised our children, surrounded by familiarity and cherished memories. Others find comfort and community in seniors' residences, and many now live in long-term care homes and nursing facilities. Wherever we are, this chapter of our lives is unique to each of us.

Many seniors today are far from slowing down. They actively contribute to their families and communities through volunteering, continued work, and caring for others. Many are among the happiest people, with their mortgages paid off and the freedom to do what brings them joy, such as spending more time with loved ones, learning a new language, writing, travelling, and picking up a new hobby.

Of course, aging brings changes. Our bodies may not move as quickly as they once did, and everyday tasks can become more difficult. Many of us stay active by walking, swimming, or practising gentle yoga. Senior centres and groups offer activities, friendship, and laughter. Hearing loss or slower response times can be frustrating, and technology can seem to be moving faster than we are. Still, we continue to adapt and persevere.

Safety becomes a priority. It's a time to install grab bars, remove tripping hazards, improve lighting, and perhaps add a call button. We may choose to stay home after dark. It's also a time to explore home care options, prepare for medical appointments, and, at times, have difficult conversations about end-of-life care.

Some of us may need help with groceries, cooking, managing medications, transportation, or healthcare. Living on a fixed income can be challenging, and during these times, family, church, and community can be vital sources of support.

While many seniors enjoy walking on beaches, others struggle to walk hospital corridors. Some welcome grandchildren and great-grandchildren into their families, listening to their laughter and watching them grow, while others mourn the loss of loved ones, longing for familiar voices that will never be heard again this side of Heaven. While some gaze at nature's wonders, others have only memories of it.

The Bible reminds us that God will be with us in every season of life. He loves, respects, and honours older people, and we should do the same. It's time to reflect on what life has taught us—and to pass that wisdom on.

*And when you are old,
I will still be there, carrying you.
When your limbs grow tired,
your eyes are weak,
and your hair a silvery gray,
I will carry you as I always have.
I will carry you and save you.
(Isaiah 46:4 VOICE)*

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

- **The joys and challenges you face as a senior.** Reread the notes above and see what applies to you and how it affects your life.

- **Things you have appreciated learning about from seniors.** If you are not yet a senior or just entering retirement, what have you learned from others that you would apply to your own life?

- **What you wish younger generations knew about life as a senior.** As you reflect on your senior years, what do you feel younger generations should know about helping seniors through challenges or understanding and supporting them in other ways?

- **Choose any topic related to life as a senior or caring for seniors.** For example, share your experience visiting seniors, or suggest how your church family could better support seniors in your church or community.

Memory Joggers: Life as a Senior

Accomplishments

- Describe a field of endeavour where you gained expertise. How did you become interested and what contributions did you make to it? Did you win any awards or recognition for your work? Have you been consulted on it?
- Share a challenge you have overcome or how you have learned to live with it. Have you helped others overcome a similar challenge?

Home Life

- Describe changes in household chores, furnishings, décor, and appliances over the years.
- How did family celebrations change when your children moved out or when you retired?
- What advice, stories, or traditions, would you like to pass on to your descendants, or you had passed on to you?
- What heirlooms have you possessed that are important to you, and why? What do you hope to do with them?
- Tell how meals have changed for you in your retirement years.
- Share the adjustments you've had to make since your spouse's passing.

Social Life

- Describe how you enjoy socializing in your senior years, and the activities you enjoy doing with others. Or, for those who are younger, how do you enjoy socializing with seniors?
- Share how you met your closest friends and some of the experiences you've shared.
- Tell about new friends you've made since retiring. For those who are younger, tell about seniors who have become your friends.
- When do you feel the loneliest?
- Share your thoughts on social media, such as how it has changed daily life and your concerns about keeping up with technology.
- Describe how your church life remains the same and how it has changed since you became a senior.

Descendants

- Describe how raising a family today differs from when you raised yours. How has it changed since you were a child?
- If you don't have children, reflect on your feelings about it at this stage of life.
- Describe your reaction when you first held your grandchild and any special gift you gave.
- Tell how you felt when your grandchild first called you grandma, nana, or whatever you're known by?
- If you're raising your grandchild(ren), tell what it's like at this stage of your life.
- Does a grandchild look like your child did at that age? Do they share similar temperaments? Do you ever miss the days when you had your own babies?
- Describe what activities you enjoy doing with your grandchildren, or wish you could do, as well as your hopes and dreams for them.
- Do you bake something special when your grandchildren visit? Do you prepare their favourite meal? In what ways do they lend a hand?
- Describe communicating with your grandchildren. Are they communicative, or can you hardly coax the words out of them?
- Tell about TV shows, movies, or performances you watch or attend together. Have you taken them to a play, circus, or fair? Do you go to sporting events with them? Have you attended any of their school plays, music recitals, or gym competitions?
- Recall one especially memorable thing each of your grandchildren has said and why it stands out in your mind.
- Tell about artwork or anything else your grandchildren have made for you.
- What is the best part of being a grandparent? And what is the most challenging?
- Which do you think is better—being a parent or a grandparent? Why?

Retirement

- Share how you decided it was time to retire and if you could, would you still do it again.
- Share your retirement plans and what you've achieved. What remains unfulfilled, and do you still intend to achieve those goals? Have you set any new goals and dreams that you hope to pursue?
- Share about your retirement from work, including a celebration, gift, and who or what you miss now that you're retired.
- Have you continued doing part-time or occasional work? Is it the same type of work as your career, or have you taken on a new type of job? Why, and what do you enjoy about it?
- Describe a typical day for you in retirement.
- What advice would you give your family and friends about preparing for retirement?
- What major changes have you noticed in your spending?

Misc.

- Do you feel that younger people are interested in having you mentor them in their work or relationships, or do they think that you're behind the times? Do you agree?
- What hobbies have you continued in your retirement? What new hobbies have you taken up since retiring?
- Tell about some things you once con-

sidered important that are no longer as significant as you thought.

- If you immigrated, tell about your homeland as it is now. Are you glad you made the move or wish you could return?
- Looking back over your life, what changes in the world surprise you? Do you feel life is easier or more difficult today than when your parents were your age?
- What are your fears as you grow older?
- Do you enjoy a slower pace, or are you just as busy as ever? If so, in what way?
- If age has slowed you down, what activities do you miss? What new activities do you take on now that you didn't do while working?
- What are your personal thoughts on life and its purpose? Have your values and beliefs shifted over the years, and if so, in what ways?
- When your parents were your age, did you think they were 'old'? What age feels 'old' to you now?
- What had you noticed in your parents as they aged that you would like to emulate? What would you prefer to do differently?
- Share your experience caring for your elderly parent(s).
- Share your experience visiting elderly people.

Workshop 15:

The Arts and Sciences

Arts

Music has the power to stir our emotions. For instance, imagine the movie *Jaws* without its iconic two notes, which instantly trigger a sense of fear. Music provides the emotional background to every movie we watch, setting the tone, whether it's joyful, suspenseful, romantic, or sombre.

Music has always been part of our lives. Our parents sang lullabies, and as we grew a little older, we sang songs that we could still finish today because somehow, music helps us to remember things. Even those with dementia, who may struggle to recognize their surroundings or loved ones, often respond to familiar tunes from their past, singing or humming along. Educators and scientists are still learning all the benefits that music brings to our lives.

Not everyone is musically inclined, but everyone can appreciate some form of art – whether in cooking, baking, design, sketching, painting, animation, photography, woodworking, pottery, metalwork, or other crafts. Being made in the image of God, we all possess some creative ability, even if we haven't yet discovered it.

Sciences

Many of us have a natural curiosity about the sciences. For some, that means appreciating the beauty and amazing ways that nature functions

and how we can use science to improve our lives, especially in fields like medicine, biology, or chemistry. For others, it's the joy of taking things apart to see how they work, learning coding and other technological skills, exploring electricity, or testing the soil to see if it can support the 50-storey building designed for a specific site.

God entrusted us with the stewardship of nature, which He found good. While we've made significant progress in science, challenges like global warming remind us of our duty to care for our planet.

Tell how the arts and sciences fit into your life.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these topics:

a. Your involvement in, or appreciation of some form of art: Explain what it means to you and how it has influenced your life. What challenges have you faced in pursuing your interest, and how did you overcome them? Do you have any future aspirations related to this art? Note: We will be looking at Christian music in another workshop.

b. Your enjoyment of, or work in a scientific field: When and how did you first discover your passion, and why has it become important to you? How has it influenced your perspective on life?

c. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: The Arts and Sciences

Arts

- Who were your favourite musicians growing up and during the different stages of your life? What did you enjoy about their performances?
- What do you enjoy about musicals? What was it like seeing or participating in any?
- Share what you love about music, which instruments you play or have played, and groups, recitals, or competitions you performed in.
- Share your favourite genre of music, excluding Christian music, which we'll discuss later. What would you choose for a playlist to enjoy all day? Has your taste in music changed over the years, and if so, how? What prompted the change?
- If you could pick a theme song (other than Christian), what would it be and why?
- Tell about the style of music someone else in your family liked but you didn't, and why you didn't like it.
- Besides music, share about a form of artistic expression that has influenced your life, such as drama, dance, or similar art.
- Have you ever seen a favourite performer in concert, and if so, what was that experience like?
- Tell about your love for, and perhaps your experiences as, an entertainer, performer, or actor.
- Share about your love of art, your favourite artist and why. What is your favourite art gallery and why?
- Describe any artwork you have created, whether drawn, painted, or sculpted.
- Are you a member of any cultural organization? Why did you decide to get involved?
- Share your love of needlework, like sewing, knitting, crocheting, or embroidery. What types of items have you created, and what did you do with them?
- Share what you enjoy about cooking, baking, or cake and cookie decorating. When and how did you develop your skills, and what would you still like to learn?

- What do you enjoy about working with your hands in pottery, woodworking, metal-work, and similar crafts? What kinds of things have you made, and what did you do with them?
- What is your favourite writing genre, and why? Who is your favourite author, and why?
- Share the type of writing you have pursued in the past. If you've ever been published, what was that process like for you? What have readers said about your writing?
- If you were to write a poem or a book, what kind of topic would you choose and why? Do you have any thoughts on seriously pursuing this passion?
- What do you enjoy about photography? What kind of camera do you use, and what have you learned about settings and related technology?
- Have you ever developed your photos your-self, and what was that experience like for you?
- Have any of your photos appeared in a publication or gallery and how did you feel about it?
- What do you enjoy about scrapbooking or cardmaking?
- Tell about any form of art you entered in a competition, and awards you have won.

Sciences

- What branch of science do you enjoy most, for example, biology, chemistry, medicine, astronomy, and why? Have you pursued this in your career or as a hobby?
- Tell of what you enjoy most about nature.
- In biology class at school, did you ever dissect an animal? What was that like for you?
- Describe what it was like looking through a telescope or going to a planetarium.
- If you could look through a microscope to see the tiniest things, what would you want to explore and why?
- What do you enjoy or dislike about various weather patterns? Tell what it was like going through a windstorm, tornado, or hurricane.

- What are your concerns about global warming, and what are you doing to slow this trend?
- When you look at the stars, flora or fauna, snowflakes, fields of grain, mountains or rivers, what are your thoughts about God and creation?

- Share your thoughts about watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon,
- Tell about your more recent experience of watching the Artemis II, hearing the crew's stories, and seeing the photos from the other side of the moon.

Workshop 16:

Your Favourite Hymns, Songs, and Choruses

Hymns in Biblical Times

We don't know when singing hymns began or what the melody sounded like. However, we do read about its significance to the Israelites. King David composed many of the hymns, and there were temple musicians playing timbrels, harps, and lyres. These hymns expressed a wide range of emotions—praise, lament, trust, and prayer.

Many Psalms were hymns sung during the time of Jesus, and He likely joined in singing with the crowds on their pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple. While we can only guess at what those hymns meant to Him as He faced death, Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 indicate that He and His disciples sang a hymn before leaving the Upper Room for the Mount of Olives. This hymn was probably one of the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118), which Jews typically sang at the end of Passover. It was common to sing it in two parts, with the leader reciting lines and the followers responding with, "Praise the Lord." Those words would have encouraged Jesus as He remembered His Father was with Him through it all.

The Early Church came into being during times of great persecution and profound faith. Their leaders used every available tool to inspire the people to be brave, including hymns—words and melodies they could hum or sing as they went about their daily tasks. They found comfort and strength through the words. The Apostle Paul encouraged the early believers to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:18–20; Colossians 3:16–17). These were songs inspired by the Holy

The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." (2 Chronicles 5:13)

Spirit and deeply rooted in Scripture, theology, and worship.

Hymns Today

Most of us grew up singing words written by Fanny Crosby, Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, Sidney Cox, and John Newton, to name a few. We love the spiritual depth and theology found in their hymns. Their melodies and words have stayed with us over the years, and it's touching to see older folks, who may no longer remember even their own families, still mouthing the words of hymns they learned in their youth. These hymns come in various tempos, from reflective meditations to stirring tunes that prepare us to face whatever comes our way.

Hearing songs like *Just As I Am* often brings to mind George Beverley Shea and the Billy Graham Crusades. Similarly, Ethel Waters' rendition of *His Eye Is on the Sparrow* is unforgettable. We grew up singing beloved songs such as *Jesus Loves Me*, *Amazing Grace*, *I Come to the Garden Alone*, and many more. Then, for several years, the music of Bill and Gloria Gaither stirred our hearts.

The Salvation Army has been blessed with music from William Booth, Albert Orsborn, John Lawley, Joy Webb, and Gowans and Larrison. We recall songs of praise, commitment, holiness, and encouragement that supported us through our spiritual battles. As culture and musical styles evolved, new songs were added to our songbooks and displayed on our screens. Today, many youth are composing new material inspired by God to reach their generation.

Worship Songs

Contemporary music began in the 1970s and 1980s, with lyrics that remind us to “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.” Graham Kendrick’s *Shine, Jesus, Shine* features a joyful chorus that invites the Holy Spirit’s presence to brighten our lives. There are also theological insights in Stuart Townend and Keith Getty’s *In Christ Alone*. Other popular worship songs include *Goodness of God*, *Here I Am to Worship*, and Hillsong Worship’s *What a Beautiful Name*.

Exploring the stories behind our hymns can be both interesting and inspiring. Whether traditional or contemporary, these hymns and worship songs help us express our faith, adoration, and devotion to God. Knowing the context in which these words were written can make them even more meaningful.

Today, more than ever, we need songs that encourage us to keep our faith, stir us to action, and help us worship God when our own words fail us. By teaching our children and grandchildren our favourite hymns, spiritual songs, and choruses and sharing what they mean

to us, we can pass down the same spiritual heritage that was given to us.

Here are some resources you might want to check:

- *Sunday Song Book*: <https://saoshawa.ca/category/song-book-sunday/>
- *Salvation Army Music Index*: <https://samusicindex.com/>

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. What Christian music means to you: Describe your emotional connection to the words and music. Share any meaningful memories related to Christian music, such as concerts, worship services, or personal moments of reflection.

b. Your favourite piece of Christian music and what it means to you: Share what you know about how it came to be written. Explain why it is one of your favourites. Analyze the lyrics and share how it inspires, comforts, or challenges you in any way?

c. If you were to write a Christian song or chorus, what would it be about and why? What would be the theme of your music—God’s love, grace, salvation, holiness, or another aspect of your faith? Share your inspiration for writing such a song. Describe the musical style, whether slow and meditative or more of an upbeat, inspiring tempo. What would you hope to achieve with your music?

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Hymns, Songs, and Choruses

Personal Experience

- Share how Christian music has influenced your faith journey.
- Share what it was like to be part of a Christian band, choir, or worship team.
- Describe some of your favourite band or choir pieces.
- Reflect on the songs and choruses you sang in the church choir or Sunday school.
- Tell about Christian music you performed as a soloist, in a group, or in a musical.
- Share your experience participating in a Salvation Army march or open-air event.
- Share your experiences performing Christian music at a seniors' residence, hospital, or similar setting.
- Tell about your experience playing the tambourine.
- What hymns did you learn from your parents or grandparents? Why were they meaningful, and how have they blessed you?
- Share an experience where Christian music had a profound impact on you.
- Describe your experience singing in a

Billy Graham Crusade choir, or some other special musical presentation.

Musical Preferences

- Tell about your favourite Christmas carol or Easter hymn.
- Who is your favourite composer, and why? What are some of the pieces written by this person that stand out to you?
- Is there specific music you would like sung or played at your funeral, and if so, why?
- What pieces would be on your Christian playlist, and why would you choose them?

Other

- Share what inspired you to write a hymn, worship song, chorus, or other piece of music.
- Share your thoughts on how Christian music has evolved and what changes you've observed.
- What advice would you offer to someone wanting to get involved in Christian music ministry?

Workshop 17:

Your Favourite Bible Verses, Stories, and Characters

Today, we're going to look at how the Bible has touched our lives in meaningful ways. Many people think of it as a set of rules, while others see it as the wonderful story of God's love and His relationship with us.

The Bible is filled with stories, hymns, parables, promises, prayers, and so much more. It was written a long time ago, so by studying the culture and language of that time, we can learn a lot more and see how it is still relevant today. In the Old Testament, we see God's plan for salvation, and in the New Testament, we see that plan fulfilled through Christ.

As we grow in our faith, verses that once seemed insignificant suddenly stand out, giving us wisdom, guidance, and hope.

We see that,

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful
for teaching, rebuking, correcting
and training in righteousness,
so that the servant of God
may be thoroughly equipped
for every good work
(2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

In his book, *Sparkling Gems*, Rick Renner uses an analogy to illustrate the term "thoroughly furnished."¹ It's a story about his father, a fisherman, who started with a small motorboat and two wooden oars as backup. As his love for fishing grew, he upgraded to a fully equipped boat with a powerful motor, depth finder, and fish locator. The Greek word *exartidz*, translated as

"thoroughly furnished," means to fully supply or deck out completely, much like a ship upgraded with new equipment, ready to sail anywhere.

When we first become Christians, we are like a small motorboat. We're unprepared to face the storms of life and need to apply the Bible's teachings to equip us fully.

*Do not merely listen to the word,
and so deceive yourselves.*

Do what it says.

*Anyone who listens to the word
but does not do what it says
is like someone who looks at his face
in a mirror and, after looking at himself,
goes away and immediately forgets
what he looks like
(James 1:22-24).*

*Do your best to present yourself to God
as one approved, a worker who does not
need to be ashamed and who correctly
handles the word of truth
(2 Timothy 2:15).*

Reflecting on your spiritual journey, in what ways has the Bible impacted your life?

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Tell about a specific scripture story or verse that suddenly came to you when you needed it. Describe the situation at the time,

¹ Renner, Rick. 2003. *Sparkling Gems from the Greek, Volume 1*. Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers, p. 657

the story or verse, and how it related to your life.

b. Tell about one of your favourite Bible characters. What have you learned from that person and their story?

c. Explain how God's promises have influenced your faith. What are some of your favourite promises and why? How did they

provide comfort or guidance during challenging times, or impact you in some other way?

d. Any other related topic.

Note: Check out Appendix 5: Topical Bible Verses on page 143, if you would like to include scripture in your memoirs.

Memory Joggers: Favourite Bible Verses/Stories

Learning

- Share a Bible story or verse you learned as a child and how its meaning has deepened as you've matured.
- Describe various ways you learned scripture (such as Sunday school, corps cadets, individual or group Bible study).
- Share about your experience attending a Bible college or taking online courses.
- Describe your approach to studying the Bible and what it has meant to you.
- Reflect on the differences between biblical teachings from your youth and those taught in various Christian circles today. How does this affect you?
- Do you underline, highlight, or make notes in your Bible? What stands out to you now when you look back at these markings?
- Have you attended an Alpha course, watched *The Chosen*, or seen other Bible-related media? What did you learn, and how did it affect your faith?
- Discuss methods you use to memorize scripture. Did you ever win an award for your memory work?

Cultural and Historical Insights

- Reflect on a visit to the Holy Land and how it influenced your understanding of the scriptures.
- Describe a tour of a place that models Bible history (e.g., Noah's Ark, the Bible Experience in Orlando).
- Share what has made a difference in your

understanding as you studied Hebrew or Greek words as they relate to the Scriptures.

- Tell what has influenced your study of the Bible as you learned the manners and customs of Bible times.

Inspirational Moments

- Share an experience of a Bible movie or play that impacted you.
- Recall participating in a "Sword Drill" in Sunday school or elsewhere and what you learned from it.
- Describe your routine for daily devotions and what they mean to you. What do you like to meditate on?

Personal Insights and Applications

- Share how the Bible answered some of your deep questions about life.
- What are your 'go-to' verses, and in what situations do you use them?
- Despite being written centuries ago, how does the Bible still relate to your life today?
- Share about your life verse, why you chose it, and how it has impacted you.
- Psalm 119 speaks extensively about the Word of God. Explain what this psalm means to you.
- Share one of your favourite parables told by Jesus and what you have learned from it.
- What have you learned about the Early Church and how it applies to church life today?

Workshop 18:

Your Travels and Visits

Travelling

When many of us were growing up, travel wasn't as common or convenient as it is today. Our earliest adventures often took place in the family car or on a bus along winding roads. Trains, with their clickety-clack along the rails, some with dome cars and sleepers, were also a common way to get around. Flying was a luxury until it gradually became more accessible, and now jets take us to places we had never heard of when we were young. Cruise ships also became part of the scene, and now, with space tourism on the horizon, who knows what destinations the next generation will explore?

Travel is a wonderful way to see new places and experience different ways of thinking and living. It allows us to experience various cultures and lifestyles, even within our own country. We have the joy of seeing the diversity of God's creation—from majestic mountains and peaceful valleys to sandy beaches and bustling city streets. We often gain a much different perspective on the places we visit and a deeper appreciation for the lives and stories of the local people.

Every trip provides us with stories to share. Maybe you missed a flight, lost your luggage, or took a wrong turn that led to an unexpected adventure. Perhaps you tried strange foods, mispronounced foreign words, or realized you said something hilariously different from what you intended!

Did you travel alone, with family, or in a tour group? Was there a tour guide or fellow traveller who made a lasting impression? Or maybe you strapped on a backpack and explored forests

and trails that only a few other adventurers have seen.

Describing the scenery offers a chance to experience all five senses. Let your readers hear the crash of waves on the beach or the blaring horns in city traffic. Let them smell the spices or the salty ocean air and feel the warmth of the sand, or the uneven cobblestone path. Whether you share a sweeping panoramic view or focus on a single moment, your words can help others feel they're right there with you.

Whether you used an old map or a modern GPS, your travels are reflections of your inner journey. Share how each place made you feel, what you learned, and how it impacted you.

So, flip through your photo albums and revisit those moments. Include pictures in your memoirs to bring your journeys to life. Introduce your children and grandchildren to the incredible places you've seen and the lessons you've learned. You might even spark their curiosity to explore cultures and landscapes far beyond their own.

Visiting

Whether you travel near or far, many of your travels likely include visiting family or friends. It could be a spontaneous drop-in, a scheduled stopover for a few days, or a family reunion planned around the time of a wedding, anniversary or some other special event.

Arriving at your destination may bring warm hugs, the familiar aroma of your favourite meal or a grandfather's cologne, introductions to the newest members of the family, and com-

ments on how the children have grown—or how well you’ve aged. It could be a return to your childhood home in the city or to your grandparents’ farm.

Perhaps it’s during the Christmas season or another special time of the year when traditions are brought to the fore, like playing games, telling stories around a campfire, sharing meals, laughing, and reminiscing. Conversations may last into the wee morning hours, or begin quietly over morning coffee on the patio.

Family reunions can be a time to flip through old photo albums, relive shared memories, and pass down stories, wisdom, and traditions. They may be filled with laughter and moments of quiet reflection. They can also be occasions to meet family members you’ve never met before.

For the hosts, it often means extra cleaning, grocery shopping, more laundry, chauffeuring guests, and juggling responsibilities—all while trying to savour every moment together.

And then, before you realize it, it’s time to

say goodbye, possibly with tears in your eyes and the hope you’ll meet again. For some, especially older adults or those who live far away, that farewell may be tinged with uncertainty: *Will this be the last time?*

The thoughts that remain with us are the stories that matter.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and Tips, then share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Describe one of your favourite travels: What motivated you to take the trip? Where did you go, what did you see and do? How did this trip make an impact on you?

b. Tell about a trip you would like to take. Where would you like to go and why?

c. Tell of a time you visited family or friends or hosted their visit. Was this visit planned in advance? What kinds of things were said or done that impressed you?

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Travels and Visits

Travelling

Reasons to Travel

- How often do you usually travel? Was it for work, leisure, or visiting family? Would you rather travel more or less, and why?
- Share about a mission trip you participated in and what motivated you to go.
- Describe exploring your family’s history while travelling.
- Explain why you prefer relaxing by the water or visiting tourist attractions.
- Explain why you dislike travelling.

How You Travel(led)

- Share the experience of your first time on an airplane or helicopter.
- Describe how airplanes and airports have changed over the years.
- Share your experience as a pilot or your

view from the flight deck.

- Describe the largest or smallest plane you’ve been on.
- Have you ever been on a cruise? Where did you go and for how long? What did you like or dislike? What activities did you do on the ship? What tours did you take?
- Have you ever owned or rented a boat? What was your favourite thing about it and where did you enjoy going with it?
- Share your adventures on a motorcycle or bicycle.
- Tell about your train trip(s). What did you like or dislike?
- Share your adventure of riding a camel, elephant, donkey, ostrich, or other animal.
- Share your experience on a dog sled, ski-doo, or sea-doo.
- Share your experiences of vacationing

with your adult children and/or grandchildren.

- How did you entertain your children on a long journey? How crazy did they drive you, asking, “Are we there yet?”
- Share your camping adventures.
- Describe going alone on a long, adventurous journey.
- Share any misadventures from your trip(s).
- Tell why you prefer to travel with or without an itinerary.
- Describe a walking tour you’ve been on.

Where You Travelled

- Tell how vacations changed for you over the years.
- Tell about your favourite vacation overseas.
- What place would you like to visit again, and why?
- Tell about the most exotic place(s) you’ve ever been.
- Share your adventures with various foreign foods, animals, and people.
- Tell how you prepared for one of your travels and how the trip met or did not meet your expectations.
- Tell about the landscape, people, and culture you most enjoyed.
- What places are on your bucket list, and why?

When You Travelled

- Is there a particular time of year when you always go on trips, like Arizona in December or Florida in March? What do you enjoy about these trips?
- How long do you usually go on vacation at a time?

Memories of Your Travels

- Share stories about your travelling companions and the key to getting along.
- Have you and your spouse always agreed on how to spend leisure time? If not, how did you reach a compromise?

- When you were away for several days or weeks, what feelings went through your mind when you returned and first saw your home?
- Are you usually ready to go home, or do you wish your trip could last longer?
- Share stories about other travellers you met who became close friends.
- Share your experience learning about the culture of the place(s) you visited.
- What’s your favourite travel or packing hack?
- Tell about your favourite souvenirs or historic places you’ve visited.
- Share how you feel when revisiting places through your photos.
- Describe a breathtaking landscape.
- Share a time when you got lost but ended up doing or seeing things you enjoyed.

Visiting

- Reflect on your anticipation before a visit, whether it was a long-planned reunion or a spontaneous drop-in.
- Describe any family traditions you participated in.
- Describe your arrival and the greetings exchanged with family members or friends.
- Describe things that surprised you—changes in the home, new additions to the family, or even how someone had grown or aged.
- Tell how the visit impacted you and how it changed your relationship(s) or perspective. Share a piece of wisdom or memory that stuck with you.
- Was saying goodbye usually bittersweet, emotional, or just a promise to return soon?
- Describe something new you discovered about your ancestors or culture on your visit.
- Recall meaningful talks—catching up on life, sharing advice, or hearing stories from the past. Were these late-night talks with one or two, or was everyone involved?
- Share a time when you just needed to get away for some alone time.

• Describe a funny or chaotic time, like a power outage, burnt meals, or funny misunderstandings. • Share photos, letters, or mementos from your visit(s). • Share your insights on the significance of staying connected. Hosting • Describe some steps you took to prepare	for your guests, such as meal-planning and sleeping arrangements. • Share your excitement, nervousness, or overwhelming feelings in anticipating the visit. • Which routines changed while your visitors were there? Did you discover anything new about each other by sharing the space? • What did hosting teach you about patience, or the joy of welcoming others into your home?
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Tips: Sharing About Your Travels

1. When describing your travels, choose one, two, or three highlights and focus on these. Highlighting the most memorable parts of a trip lets you be more informative, interesting, and inspiring. Remember, it's not just about the places you visited or the activities you did; it's about the personal growth you experienced on the journey. 2. When describing the setting, make it uniquely yours and avoid copying from a brochure. Include things like what surprised you, challenged you, delighted you, or changed	your perspective. 3. Because your readers might not have been places you have, use sensory details to describe the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes you experienced. 4. Include a description of what transportation was like during your trip, especially from long ago, so present-day readers can better understand your experience. 5. You might want to add some dialogue that includes common sayings and accents from your destination.
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Workshop 19:

Hobbies, Keepsakes, and Things You Enjoy

Whether you liked the musical or not, you likely recall Maria von Trapp singing about her favourite things—“raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles and warm woollen mittens . . .”¹

Sharing about your favourite things can help you connect with others who share your passions. It also allows people to get to know you better by learning what makes you happy. Some of the things you love might surprise others, and sharing your enjoyment can help them relate to you more personally.

Spending leisure time playing games as a family or working together on a jigsaw puzzle may bring pleasure to some. Many people find sharing family stories and researching family history to be addictive. Hobbies like woodworking, scrapbooking, and photography can be fulfilling. The possibilities are endless.

Some people like to try new recipes, while others prefer to enjoy meals prepared by a chef. Many enjoy movies, dances, book clubs and other social gatherings, while some prefer to spend a quiet evening at home in front of the TV. Discussing politics is enjoyable to some, while others avoid it at all costs.

Sports enthusiasts show up for practice in the wee hours of the morning when it's -30 C outside. Why? They love the challenge, camaraderie, thrill of the game, and the joy of winning. Others may prefer hanging out at the gym or doing yoga at home. Some enjoy a

brisk walk in any weather, while others prefer hiking through the woods in the winter, jogging, or training for a marathon.

Perhaps you're more into science experiments, peering through a microscope or telescope, or maybe you're more into trying to spot wildlife during hunting season. Or perhaps you prefer doing a photo shoot.

One way to get to know someone is to find out what they enjoy. Reflect on your enjoyments in life and share about your favourite things.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

- a. Family activities you look forward to.** Explain why they are important to you. Share specific examples and describe the emotions and connections these activities foster.
- b. Social activities you participate in regularly.** Discuss what you find enjoyable about them, such as a sense of community, meeting new people, or sharing your interest.
- c. Activities you enjoy doing alone.** Why are they meaningful to you, such as allowing time for self-reflection or learning a new skill?
- d. Show and Tell:** Bring one of your favourite things and share its significance. Or, create a collage of things you enjoy and explain what each item represents to you.
- e. Any other related topic.**

¹ Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *My Favorite Things*, performed by Julie Andrews, Thoroughly Modern Julie: The Best of Julie Andrews, produced by Neely Plumb, lyrics available at Genius, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://genius.com/Julie-andrews-my-favorite-things-lyrics>

Memory Joggers: Things You Enjoy

Entertainment

- Tell about your favourite radio program growing up and what your radio looked like.
- Tell about getting your first TV, the shows you liked to watch, and what has changed over the years.
- What do you remember about Ed Sullivan, Red Skelton, Lucille Ball, Johnny Carson, or any other celebrity?
- What is your favourite Broadway or movie musical and how do you feel when watching it?
- Who is your favourite entertainer and why?
- Tell about the various types of home entertainment technology you have owned, such as VCR, CD player, 8-track, cassettes, home movies.
- Tell about being in the audience or being a contestant of a game show.
- Tell what you like about your favourite movies or what you enjoy about a 3-D movie.
- Have your tastes in entertainment been fairly mainstream, or have you gone for more unusual music or cinema? Do you like jazz? Foreign films? Do you go to poetry readings?
- Do you enjoy ballet or another type of dance? Do you participate or watch?
- Have you ever wanted to be an entertainer? Describe a time you appeared, or lost an audition, in a local theatre.
- Have your kids ever liked an entertainer you hated? Did your parents ever dislike any of your favourite entertainers?
- Do you and your spouse enjoy the same entertainment? Do you have a different set of friends with whom you attend performances?
- Do you often go to the theatre, concerts, or museum? Are you a patron of any cultural organization and why?
- Describe your idol. Have you ever written a fan letter or been in a fan club? Do you follow this person online?

- Where do you like to go to meet people?

Food

- Tell what you enjoy about cooking or baking.
- What is or was your favourite kind of dessert and what makes it so special to you?
- Tell about your favourite restaurant.

Hobbies

- What are your hobbies? When and how did you get into them? What do you particularly enjoy about them? What new friends have you made because of them?
- How did you develop your knowledge in this hobby? Did you join a club? Did it require special training? Have you subscribed to publications about it? Have you ever written an article about it? Have you ever been asked to speak about it before a group?
- Describe exhibiting your hobby and any awards you won or articles written about it.
- Tell how your hobby blossomed into a career.
- Share why you think your descendants should consider taking up this hobby.

Nature

- What's your favourite season? Why?
 - Do you like watching the sunrise, sunset, stars, or clouds? What do you think about seeing nature in this way?
 - Have you ever camped? Was this as a group, with family, or on your own? Where did (do) you camp? What do you enjoy about it? What do you enjoy about campfires?
 - Tell of your love of gardening or bird-watching.
- Tell of a time you gazed at the stars and felt close to God

Workshop 20:

Your Health and Well-Being

*Dear friend, I pray
that you may enjoy good health
and that all may go well with you,
even as your soul is getting along well.*
(3 John 2)

God's perfect plan for humans is to be whole in every way—physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually—by taking good care of our bodies, minds, and spirits. His intention is for us to be strong, energetic, and free from illness. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and by caring for our bodies, we honour God's creation and the Holy Spirit within us.

However, Satan will do all he can to stop us from serving the Lord. That's why we are all now susceptible to bacteria, viruses, stress, and sometimes poor nutrition. As we get older, our bodies naturally become weaker, making it harder to fight off illnesses like we used to.

Our environment also plays a big role in our health. Pollutants have contaminated the air we breathe, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how quickly viruses can spread.

Just as toxins in the air can enter our bodies, emotional toxins such as negative comments, criticism, and rejection can also harm us. For instance, you may have heard the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me," but many of us have come to realize that words can sometimes cause more lasting pain than a broken bone.

*Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet
to the soul and healing to the bones*
(Proverbs 16:24)

Many families face the prevalence of certain genetic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Some accidents can result in amputations or serious injuries that significantly affect lives. Facing these kinds of diagnoses can be overwhelming.

Many primary care physicians find that a significant number of their patients suffer from stress-related disorders. In any given year, one in five Canadians experiences a mental illness¹.

"According to the *2025 Financial Stress Index*, a national survey conducted on behalf of FP Canada, money remains the top source of stress (49%). Over two-thirds (64%) say grocery prices is the top external factor that's directly impacting their finance-related stress, and over half (54%) say the same of inflation."²

*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a
crushed spirit dries up the bones.*
(Proverbs 17:22)

Thankfully, we can pray to God in any of these situations, sharing our fears and anxieties, knowing He cares deeply for us. We can ask for His guidance, for peace, and for strength.

¹ Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics | CAMH

² FP Canada™ 2025 Financial Stress Index. <https://www.fpcanada.ca/2025-financial-stress-index>, accessed September 20, 2025.

Sometimes, God uses others to bring about our healing, and at times, He uses our illness for His glory, miraculously healing us in answer to prayer. For others, healing may not come this side of Heaven.

*Is anyone among you sick?
Let them call the elders of the church
to pray over them and anoint them with oil
in the name of the Lord.
And the prayer offered in faith
will make the sick person well;
the Lord will raise them up.
If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.
(James 5:14-15)*

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Describe how a physical, emotional, or psychological illness affected you or someone close to you: For example, tell how a

loved one's fight with cancer or dementia impacted your family, or how dealing with anxiety or depression influenced your daily life, relationships, and overall well-being. Include any coping strategies that were helpful during this period.

b. An answer to prayer for healing: This could be a miraculous recovery from a serious illness or even a gradual improvement in health. Describe the situation, the prayers offered, and the outcome, emphasizing the hope and faith that accompanied the prayers. Share how it strengthened your faith.

c. A time God did not heal as you had hoped: Describe how this impacted your faith. Looking back at it now, do you see things from a different perspective?

d. Lifestyle choices you make to keep physically, emotionally, and psychologically strong: What habits and routines do you follow to support your overall well-being?

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Health and Well-Being

Medical Treatments/Experiences

- Tell of some communicable diseases or serious illnesses, broken bones, etc. you had.
- Share about the types of medicines and other cures you have used through the years, such as hot water bottles, mustard plasters, or herbal teas.
- Tell about your surgeries, including time in the hospital and your recovery.
- Have you inherited any genetic diseases, and how do you feel about knowing that they are in your family's genes?
- What is the best medical advice you received from your doctor, other healthcare provider, or family member?

Lifestyle and Well-Being

- Tell about your exercise routine over the

years, what you have enjoyed (and disliked) about it and your motivation.

- How do you manage your emotional health, and why did you choose that method? What has been the result?
- What kind of books do you read to support your emotional or mental health, and how have they helped you?
- How has deteriorating health affected your senior years?
- Have you or anyone in your family had physical, emotional, or mental disabilities? How has that impacted your life?

Addictions and Habits

- Share about any addictions you had and the outcome, such as smoking, drinking, over- or under-eating, over-spending, etc.

Appearance and Self-Perception

- Has your appearance played an essential role in your life? Has it been beneficial or detrimental, and in what way? What do you consider your best and worst features?

- Were you upset when you first noticed signs of aging? When did this happen, and how did you deal with it?

- Describe any birthmarks or scars that differentiate your looks from others and how they make you feel.

- Tell about any tattoos you have and why you chose them.

- Share about getting your ears, or other body parts pierced.

Dental/Orthodontic Experiences

- Share your experience wearing braces.

- Tell of your desire for braces, and how you felt about not being able to get them.

- Did you ever have your mouth wired shut? For how long, and what was that like?

- Share what it was like having your wisdom teeth removed, or wishing you had.

- Tell of your experience with other dental surgery.

Supporting Others

- Share your experience helping a friend or family member through an illness or supporting them on their death bed.

- Tell about a time you, or a family member, had a medical scare, and how you responded.

- Tell of your experience during COVID-19. How did this affect you personally, your family, your friends or neighbours?

Workshop 21:

Your Praise and Prayers

Praise

The Psalms express worship in various ways, including praise, prayer, confession, and thanksgiving. Through them, we learn a great deal about God's character and greatness. The prophets warn against superficial worship, such as rituals that mean nothing to us, insincere words, or putting others or material possessions ahead of God in our lives.

In John 4:4-26, Jesus talks about the heart of true worship. It's where we replenish our souls, strengthen our faith, renew our spirit, and find peace, hope, and joy. Worship involves respect, adoration, and recognizing God as highly exalted. Many beautiful worship songs, both old and new, help us express our thoughts and feelings.

God responds to our worship, whether it's a formal, elaborate act, such as the dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 5:12-14), or a simple, spontaneous moment, like in your home (Acts 2:46-47). Worship can happen while kneeling by a bedside or gazing at the stars. We are encouraged to worship God in ways appropriate for the occasion.

Psalm 100:4 invites us to *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."* Ultimately, it's not so much the setting but the attitude of the heart that matters most (John 4:23-24).

How have prayer and worship become integral parts of your life?

Prayer

The hymn writer James Montgomery wrote, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed . . ."¹ Simply put, prayer is our way of communicating with God—whether publicly or privately, silently or aloud, spontaneously or with careful thought. Even when we struggle to find the right words, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf.

The Bible illustrates various forms of prayer²:

- intercession: intervening on behalf of someone else (Numbers 21:7),
- entreaty: earnest requests (Exodus 32:11),
- confession: acknowledging sin, expressing repentance, and asking for God's forgiveness (Ezra 10:1),
- supplication: earnestly asking, begging (1 Kings 8:30),
- calling for help (Genesis 32:9-11),
- requesting (30:22),
- thanksgiving (Deuteronomy 26:10-11),
- praise (Psalm 103),
- protection and deliverance (2 Chronicles 32:20),
- judgment (1 Kings 17:1-2);
- healing (Isaiah 38:1-5), and
- cleansing (2 Chronicles 30:18-20).

¹ James Montgomery, *Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire*, Timeless Truths, accessed July 24, 2024, https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Prayer_Is_the_Souls_Sincere_Desire

² Campbell, Don; Johnston, Wendell, Walvoord, John; Witmer, John. 2004. *So That's What It Means!* Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., page 236

Jesus taught His followers how to pray and showed its importance through His own prayers. He prays for us (John 17; Hebrews 4:24-25). Seeing the importance He placed on prayer and its role in the growth of the Early Church, we should value it as well.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. How God answered a specific prayer for you or someone you know: Describe the situation, the prayer, and the outcome. Explain how this impacted your faith.

b. A time when God did not answer your prayer as you had hoped. Share your

feelings through this time, how you dealt with your disappointment, and what you learned about faith, trust, and God's plan through the experience.

c. What you've learned about God through nature. Describe different experiences that have revealed God's character, creativity, wisdom, and power. How has this influenced your faith?

d. What your faith has meant to you over the years. Tell of significant moments, challenges, and growth in your spiritual life. How has your faith shaped your decisions, values, and outlook on life?

e. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Praise and Prayer

Praise

Worship and Devotion

- Recall a particularly moving sermon.
- When have you felt most blessed while worshipping God in private or corporately?
 - Share what style of music you like best—organ, piano, keyboard, accordion, guitar, band, choir, or soloist—whether it's worship songs or old hymns. Are there specific times when you prefer one over the other, and why?
 - In Revelation 4-5, John describes the angels and the redeemed worshipping God. In chapter 21, he tells of the new heaven and new earth. How does that make you feel about your current worship and what it will be like when you get to heaven?
 - Tell what the sacraments mean to you.
 - Describe a revelation that strengthened your faith during a time of worship.

Spiritual Journey

- Share your testimony about how you came to know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and what that meant for you.
- Share your decision to join a church and

explain why you selected that specific church.

- Share the time(s) you switched religions or denominations and how it affected you.
- Name the person who most influenced your beliefs and explain how they did so.
- Share how your daily devotions have contributed to your spiritual growth.

Church and Community

- In the past, was the church a centre of your activity, or did you visit only on holidays and important occasions?
 - Describe what you appreciate about the people with whom you worship.
 - Describe the different types of worship services you've attended and the impression they left on you (e.g., various cultures, deaf/mute, campfire, evangelistic).
 - Have you ever participated in an evangelistic crusade, such as with Billy Graham, and what was that experience like?

Acts of Service

- Share about a mission trip or trips in which you participated.

Prayer

Personal Experiences

- When did God particularly move you during prayer?
- Tell how the Lord has provided for your needs or answered a specific prayer.
- Share your experience of using a portion of Scripture and praying it.
- Tell of your experience with fasting and prayer.
- Share about a Bible study on prayer that you led or attended, including what you learned and how it influenced you.
- Share your experience of hearing the call to prayer in a Muslim country, or seeing the people in prayer.

The Practice of Prayer

- What are some of your favourite prayers recorded in the Bible, and why?
- What does it mean to you to know that the Holy Spirit can take your groanings and speak to God on your behalf, and that Jesus prays for you?
- Share your experiences of going on a prayer walk around your church building or community.
- Describe visiting a church, temple, or cathedral with prayer stations set up.
- Many people wear prayer shawls. Have you considered this, and what are your thoughts about it?
- Describe any prayer 'tools' you have used as a prayer reminder.

Workshop 22:

Your Spiritual Fruit and Gifts

Fruit of the Spirit

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul tells us “. . . *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*” These qualities come from God, and we see Him at work when we observe them in ourselves or others.

- **Love**, as used here, is the Greek word *agape*, which describes the love of God. It comes without strings attached and is shown through actions and deeds. As 2 John 4:7-12 says, God is love, and where this *agape* is shown, God is present. When someone makes *agape* they're main motivation, they will be your most loyal, caring, and reliable friend.

- **Joy** is a deep inner, delightful feeling that is rooted in hope. Happiness can fluctuate based on circumstances, but true joy comes from God. As Paul often reminds us, it's especially present during difficult times. For instance, see 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

- **Peace**, here, means a sense of inner calm unaffected by outward circumstances.

- **Forbearance**, often called patience or long-suffering, is about restraining your anger. You can make a conscious choice to 'put it on', just like you would choose clothes from your closet.

- **Kindness** originates from a Greek word that means compassionate, considerate, caring, and adaptable to the need of others. It's the same word Paul used to describe God's kindness in passages like Romans 11:22, Ephesians 2:7, and Titus 3:4.

- **Goodness** is about being generous and caring for others' basic needs. God wants us to be selfless, using our resources to make a positive difference in the lives of those who need it most.

- **Faithfulness** shows how dependable someone is; it's someone you can rely on. The Bible emphasizes God's faithfulness (1 Corinthians 1:9), and as the Holy Spirit works within us, He helps us become like Him. We should expect faithfulness to grow in our lives.

- **Gentleness** or meekness describes people with strong will who remain calm and have self-control even when faced with insults. It's not a sign of weakness but a form of controlled strength, guided by the Holy Spirit.

- **Self-control** is the ability to control your impulses for self-gratification, such as limiting your eating, drinking, worrying, and working. It's key to prevent burnout by helping you take better care of yourself.

Spiritual Gifts

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren tells us we are shaped to serve God. Our unique personalities, gifts, and talents are purposefully designed for specific ministries. He adds, "You are a custom-designed, one-of-a-kind, original masterpiece."¹

God gives every believer spiritual gifts to serve Him (see 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 12:11). We don't choose these gifts, nor can they be earned. They are divine

¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 235.

gifts given to us to help us fulfill our unique purpose. While no one receives all the spiritual gifts, each believer is blessed with at least one, and often more, to support them in their spiritual journey.

An unopened gift doesn't help anyone, nor should God's gifts be taken lightly. They are given to us for the benefit of others, and theirs will benefit us. We all benefit when we use our spiritual gifts, so God wants us to discover and use what He has given us.

God doesn't want us to feel envious of the gifts He has blessed others with. Everyone has their own unique passions, and not everyone will share the same enthusiasm for what we care about.

What are the gifts?

- **Administration:** Planning, organizing, and supervising so that others work together well; setting guidelines, schedules, and policies; and delegating to get the work done.

- **Apostleship:** Preaching, teaching the Word of God, establishing new churches.

- **Discernment:** Having the wisdom to tell the difference between what is true and what isn't, by carefully evaluating whether actions or teachings are from God or an ungodly source.

- **Evangelism:** Successfully communicating the plan of salvation to unbelievers.

- **Exhortation:** Comforting, consoling, encouraging, and supporting others to be all God wants them to be.

- **Faith:** Having tremendous confidence in God's power and promises.

- **Giving:** Being willing and able to freely share your resources without needing to get something in return.

- **Healing:** Restoring others physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

- **Helps:** Assisting members of the body of Christ so they can effectively use their gifts to serve others.

- **Hospitality:** Welcoming anyone into your home or church to disciple or serve them.

- **Knowledge:** Actively studying God's Word.

- **Leadership:** Standing confidently in front of others, guiding them carefully and inspiring them to achieve the church's goals.

- **Mercy:** Being naturally drawn to hurting people, offering compassion, encouragement, and providing practical help.

- **Prophecy:** Understanding future events or visions of what is to come and uncovering true motives.

- **Serving:** Recognizing what needs to be done and using available resources to get it done.

- **Speaking in Tongues:** Having a supernatural ability to speak a language that has not been consciously learned.

- **Teaching:** Skillfully guiding others to understand the Bible by communicating effectively to support their spiritual growth.

- **Wisdom:** Discerning information to decide what actions need to be done for an individual, the church or the organization.

Each gift can be used in meaningful ways. Your mentors, friends, and church leaders can help you determine the best ways to use your unique gifts and talents. As we get older, gain more wisdom, experience new things, and grow spiritually, our spiritual gifts can also change to better suit where we are on our spiritual journey.

Action Items

1. **Complete a spiritual gift test** and share what you learned about yourself. There are several free tests available online, such as:

- a. Spiritual Gifts Test - Find Your Spiritual Gifts²

- b. Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire³

- c. Spiritual Gifts | FREE Spiritual Gifts Survey | Assessment, Analysis, Test⁴

² https://www.biblesprout.com/articles/god/holy-spirit/spiritual-gifts-test/#google_vignette

³ <https://spiritualgiftsproject.org/spiritual-gifts-questionnaire/>

⁴ <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>

2. Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of the following:

a. Someone in your life who demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit. Provide specific examples of how they displayed the virtue. Share how this influenced your life and spiritual growth.

b. A time you were surprised at seeing the fruit of the Spirit displayed in your life. Describe the situation and the specific virtue

you showed. How did you feel during and after this experience? What did you learn about yourself?

c. Tell about a time you used your spiritual gift(s). What were the circumstances, what was the spiritual gift, and what were your thoughts at the time? As you reflect on it, what are your thoughts about it now?

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Your Spiritual Fruit and Gifts

- Share a moment when you faced a significant challenge or received distressing news, yet you found a profound sense of peace within.
- Tell how a person you know showed *agape* love, joy, peace, patience, or any other fruit of the Spirit.
- Tell about a time you had to exercise self-

control.

- Share when you first discovered your spiritual gift(s) and what you thought of them.
- How do you see others in the congregation using their spiritual gifts?
- If you got to choose your spiritual gift, what would it be and why?

Workshop 23:

Justice and Compassion

In their book, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*¹, D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe explore how Jesus' teachings reshaped history. They remind us that before His birth, practices such as child sacrifice, the mistreatment of women, abandonment of the elderly, slavery, and even cannibalism were common in many cultures. Human life was often undervalued, and cruelty was accepted as normal.

The arrival of Christ brought a radical shift, challenging societies to see the vulnerable not as burdens but as beloved children of God. Yet even today, in places where His teachings are ignored, we still see injustice and disregard for human life.

As Christians, we're called on to respond differently.

*Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow
(Isaiah 1:17).*

*Administer true justice;
show mercy and compassion to one another
(Zechariah 7:9).*

Jesus identifies Himself with those in need:

*For I was hungry
and you gave me something to eat,*

*I was thirsty
and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited me in,
I needed clothes and you clothed me,
I was sick and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you
came to visit me'. . .
'Truly I tell you, whatever you did
for one of the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine,
you did for me'
(Matthew 25:35-36, 40).*

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that all believers, regardless of their abilities, are the hands and feet of Christ. We are called to bring justice and compassion into the world—especially to those made vulnerable by poverty, disaster, or oppression. Even the smallest act, like offering a cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42), can be significant.

Christ works through pastors, professionals, and ordinary people alike. Helping one person or one family can have a ripple effect, shaping communities and even future generations. But justice is more than just being kind. It means seeing the overlooked, speaking up for them, and standing up for them against influential individuals, organizations, and governments.

William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, was passionate in declaring and living out his declaration:

¹ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994).

*While women weep, as they do now,
I'll fight!*

*While little children go hungry,
as they do now, I'll fight!*

*While men go to prison, in and out,
in and out, as they do now, I'll fight!*

While there is a drunkard left,

While there is a poor lost girl upon the streets,

*While there remains one dark soul
without the light of God,*

I'll fight—I'll fight to the very end!²

Like Booth, we are invited to help others in tangible ways:

- Visit nursing homes, hospitals, and shut-ins.
- Listen to those in need and ask how we can help.
- Offer transportation to appointments.
- Speak up on behalf of the vulnerable.
- Tell them of hope in Jesus Christ.
- Simply be present.
- Donate money or practical items.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Describe a justice or compassion act that you have been part of. What was your motivation, and how did it impact you and others?

b. Describe a justice or compassion act that you would like to consider, why, and what kind of an impact you would like to make.

c. Describe a justice or compassion act someone else did. Tell the story of someone you know who showed justice and mercy to others, and tell how that has impacted your life.

e. Interview a social worker or someone else who works in a field dedicated to justice and compassion. Describe their experiences, challenges, and insights on making a difference and how this interview affected you.

f. Any other topic about justice and compassion.

² Booth, William. "I'll Fight!" Speech at the Salvation Army Congress, London, 1910.

***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any
trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.***
(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Memory Joggers: Justice and Compassion

Here are a few types of justice and compassion interests (there are certainly many more):

- Animal cruelty
- Any kind of abuse
- Accessibility
- ADHD, etc.
- Alcohol and drugs
- Child labour
- Clothing drives, thrift stores, toy drives
- Courts: prison ministries, halfway houses
- Disasters of any kind
- Foodbanks, soup kitchens
- Global warming
- Grief-stricken
- Health/dental-related, hospitals, medical research, Ronald McDonald Houses
- Homelessness
- Missions: education, building/repair
- Refugees, immigrants

- Safe houses
- Seniors: activities, safety, long-term care
- Trafficking
- Truth and Reconciliation

• Describe your involvement with a charitable organization. Why was the charity you chose important to you?

• How has a wound from your past motivated you to help others?

• What moves you deeply? Is God calling you to do something about it? What do you see as an opportunity to fulfill this calling?

• Describe your experience sponsoring a child, specific mission, Christian camp, or a church project.

• Tell of a time you spoke up because of an injustice done to someone else.

• If you had the resources to start a new charitable venture, what would it be and why?

Workshop 24:

Turning Points

Have you ever thought about the story of Saul and how his life was transformed after meeting Jesus? He later became the Apostle Paul because of that encounter. Many other Bible characters, such as Peter, Zacchaeus, and Mary Magdalene, also experienced amazing changes after meeting Christ. I also think about Joseph in the Old Testament, whose life took a different turn when his brothers betrayed him.

Just like the prodigal son starving in the pig pen, turning points can prompt us to reassess our current path and what lies ahead. Losing a job might be the nudge needed to find a more fulfilling career. Choosing to attend a youth group could open the door to a new friendship. For our family, one of the most significant turning points was the unexpected loss of my father while I was at a school play—it was a moment that deeply affected us all.

You might remember other stories of transformation, like the von Trapp family's journey out of Austria, or how Helen Keller's life was changed under Anne Sullivan's guidance. I think of my cousin Jim, who attended a family reunion with about two hundred people, and he realized he was related to them but didn't know how. From there, he started researching our family history and gained a wealth of knowledge about our ancestry.

Significant decisions often serve as turning points. I remember when my sister faced a sudden tragedy: her husband died unexpectedly while they were preparing to move. During her grief, she had to decide whether to go ahead with selling their house and buying their new home. She also had a plane

ticket for a trip to Guatemala in three weeks with her pregnant daughter, and she had to decide whether to still go, as her daughter might not be able to make the journey again for many years. Going through with the sale proved to be a good thing and the trip turned out to be significant for both mother and daughter.

Turning points can challenge us in ways that help us grow stronger and learn to adapt. They encourage us to overcome obstacles, learn from our mistakes, and remind us to focus on what truly matters.

Significant life changes can also trigger fear, anxiety, sadness, or anger. Going through a divorce, losing a job, grieving the death of a loved one, or dealing with poor health can be draining, leading to self-doubt and affecting our mental and physical well-being. Relocating or changing jobs may cause the loss of social connections and feelings of loneliness, while also straining our financial resources.

Turning points can also influence entire communities, churches, families, nations, or the world at large. Consider how the Depression, war years, the Spanish flu, 9/11, social media, the COVID-19 pandemic, and global tariffs have changed lives and perspectives.

Think about your favourite stories or movies. Basically, they show how and why life changes. They begin with things being pretty much 'normal,' only to be disrupted by an unexpected event that screenwriters call the 'inciting incident.' Then the story moves on to how the characters 'turned the corner,' and life took on a new 'normal.'

Over the coming week, reflect on the pivotal

moments that have transformed and influenced your life, and consider how you responded to them.

Action Items

Read the Memory Joggers and share about 750 words on one of these:

a. Describe how a specific encounter or event made a significant impact on your life. Where and when did it happen? What was life like beforehand? What caused the turning point, and how did you initially react? What options were available, and how did you decide what to do? How did this event alter your life?

b. Write about a critical decision you had to make related to education, career, relationships, health, or personal growth. What

led up to making this decision, and what were your options? How did you make the decision, and how did this impact your life? Was this the outcome you expected? How did it change your approach to making further decisions?

c. Share an experience that transformed you as a person. When and where did it happen? What was life like before this time? How did this experience unfold, and who else was involved? How did it change your beliefs, values, or behaviour? What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them? Why do you think this experience transformed you? What insights have you gained from the experience?

d. Any other related topic.

Memory Joggers: Turning Points

Personal Challenges and Changes

- Recall a challenge you faced, such as a serious financial setback, losing your job, or losing your belongings in a fire or other disaster. What steps did you take to recover? At what point did you feel the challenge was too much to handle?
- Describe how you managed a lengthy legal battle and what impact it had on your life.
- Share how you or someone close to you was victimized and the impact on you.
- Describe how you felt after falling out with someone close to you.
- Have you or someone close to you faced a serious illness or accident that became a turning point in your life? What happened, and how did you change because of it?
- Share how the loss of someone close to you has significantly affected your life and how you have managed to cope.
- Share your experience going through a midlife crisis.
- Have you ever been hit by lightning, and if so, how did it affect you?
- Did you or a family member ever serve in

the military, undertake a mission, or provide aid in a dangerous area? How did that affect you?

- Describe your experience as a juror and how it influenced you.
- Describe how receiving an inheritance or something you value has affected your life.
- Have you ever gone on vacation or a business trip and decided to stay in that place? Why did you make that choice, and are you glad you did or wish you hadn't?
- Share how switching your career or moving to a new place changed you.
- Testify about how Christ changed you when you accepted Him as your Lord and Saviour.
- Tell how marriage became a turning point for you.
- Share how changing churches, denominations, or religions has impacted you.
- How has becoming a foster parent or raising a niece, nephew, or other family member(s) impacted you?
- Share how divorce or remarriage affected you?

- How has your parents' or grandparents' divorce or remarriage affected your life?

Personal Growth and Realizations

- Share a specific moment or event that suddenly revealed an important quality about yourself or someone close to you, such as becoming a parent, attending university, witnessing or assisting at an accident, or seeing your child as an adult for the first time.
- Share how a new hobby, computer program, or another learning experience has impacted your life.
- Tell about getting over a fear or phobia. What caused it, and how has life changed

since you conquered the fear?

- Have you ever experienced something you can't forget? A daring act? Violence? A surprise in the dark? Natural landscapes? What happened, and how did it change you?
- Share how a recurring dream or a dream come true has impacted you.
- Have you ever experienced an 'aha' moment? If so, what triggered it, and how did you feel afterward?
- Have you ever gone on a mission trip and come back with a new perspective? How have you been affected?
- Reflect on those who may have caused you pain or hardship. How did these experiences shape your character and resilience?

Workshop 25:

Skeletons in the Closet

*The hand of the LORD was on me,
and he brought me out by the Spirit of the
LORD and set me in the middle of a valley;
it was full of bones.*

*He led me back and forth among them,
and I saw a great many bones on the floor
of the valley, bones that were very dry.*

*He asked me, "Son of man,
can these bones live?"
I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know."
(Ezekiel 37:1-3)*

It's easy to write about joyful moments in our lives, especially when we see God's fingerprints all over them. But what about those difficult times that we've tried to bury, those stories we'd rather leave untold?

Many of us grew up with family secrets that were never talked about. We were raised to keep quiet, to protect the family image. Weren't we taught not to *tell on* someone? It's a tactic often used by abusers to keep us silent. Over time we learn to bury our pain but it keeps resurfacing like that proverbial elephant in the room. Often this goes on for years.

Maybe someone had an abortion, or became pregnant and was sent away to have the baby, and then put the baby up for adoption. Perhaps someone in your family struggled with addiction, alcoholism, abuse, or was gaslighting others. Maybe someone had an affair, or spent time in jail or a mental health facility. Perhaps that person was you.

Trauma affects each of us differently. Two sisters can lose their father in a car accident—one grieves losing a kind parent, while the other

is relieved to be free from an abusive one.

The Bible doesn't hide messy stories. It tells of dysfunctional families—drunkenness, incest, murder, hatred, shame. Another heartbreaking passage is found in Psalm 55:12–14, where David grieves betrayal by a close friend:

*If an enemy were insulting me,
I could endure it;
if a foe were rising against me,
I could hide.*

*But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,
with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship
at the house of God,
as we walked about
among the worshipers.*

Jesus warned us about "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15), reminding us that not even everyone in a church is safe. Many people sitting in pews carry shame, fear, or guilt—whether from what they've done or what was done to them.

No one wants to dredge up the past, and writing about shame, loss, guilt, and heartbreak can be terrifying because it makes the pain feel more real. However, reality is where God shows up. Did you notice in the opening Scripture verses that Ezekiel didn't walk into the valley alone. It was God's hand that led him there.

God didn't lead him to the valley just to leave him there. He led Ezekiel to the place of hope and healing.

When you write honestly, you're not digging up the bones to relive the past, you're opening

up a place where God can breathe new life. You're allowing Him to show you what He can redeem and repurpose.

I love that God can change the direction of our lives. Take Rahab, for example. In Joshua chapters 2 and 6, she's known as a prostitute. In Matthew 1, we find that she became a direct ancestor of Christ. God changes labels; He rewrites stories.

We might have allowed the words and actions of others to define us by dwelling on them and not letting go. The Bible has several references that tell us we need to take our thoughts captive and renew our minds—to stop listening to the devil's torments about being stupid, too evil, unloved, and no good.

God breathed new life into the dry bones, and they became a vast army. Whatever skeletons are in your closet may appear to be a stinking mess in your life right now, but when you allow God to take them, reshape them, and breathe into them, they can become a force that will breathe new life into you.

Action Items

There is no written project this week. However, whenever God reveals to you the hidden parts of your past, take the opportunity to clear away any decay and find new hope in Him.

a. Review the writing tips for this lesson; let them guide you on your journey.

b. Offer to support others: If you know someone struggling with this part of their story, listen, and if appropriate, share your experience or guide them to where they can receive help.

c. Look for Bible verses, quotes, memes, and stories that God can use to speak to you or someone you're supporting.

d. Pray for yourself and anyone else who played a role in this part of your journey.

e. Listen to and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Next week, please bring your list of stories you still want to write.

Dear Jesus, when I face the hidden parts of my past, help me to know what to do. Help me understand that I am responsible for confronting them, turning them over to You, and letting You breathe new life into them. Then, guide me in deciding whether to share my story in my memoirs and, if so, how to do it. If there is another way You want me to share this part of my story, please reveal it to me. Amen!

Tips: Skeletons in the Closet

Everything in your life has shaped who you are today—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Writing about difficult times is just as important as writing about joyful experiences. Healing can come when we write out our stories—on a scrap of paper we later burn, in an unmailed letter, or in a private journal.

When deciding whether to include trauma in your memoirs, ask yourself:

- How significant is this event in my life?
- Has it altered the course of my life?
- Is it something my family should know to understand me better?
- Does it provide a valuable lesson?

When sharing about sensitive topics, remember the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated. Avoid taking out revenge, hurting or embarrassing anyone. You don't need to name names or share all the graphic details. Many writers will use a pseudonym or alter specific information so they can share their story without causing further pain to others.

Here are a few tips to guide you:

1. Remember your purpose. Why are you sharing this painful experience? Write down your motivation and keep it handy to remind yourself of why you're doing it.

- a. To tell your family how you handled a tragedy?
- b. To help others find a way to cope with their tragedies?
- c. Because once you face the things that control you, they lose their power.

2. Use a vivid description.

- a. What was life like before this tragedy?
- b. What obstacles did you encounter and how did you overcome them?
- d. What didn't work? How did you come to terms with it?
- e. What finally worked?

3. Give yourself time to grieve. If it's a re-

cent trauma, you may want to wait a while before trying to share it.

4. Prepare yourself for ongoing grief.

Understand that grief may persist as you reflect on this time. Have a close friend or counsellor available to talk to.

5. Look forward to learning. Appreciate the lessons gained through this process.

6. Take breaks when necessary. Step back for a bit if it gets too tough to keep going, but don't quit.

7. Reward yourself. Keep things that make you happy nearby—music, coffee, chocolate, candies, candles, flowers, books, a pet, nature, etc. When you need a boost of energy, please take it. Take time to celebrate each milestone on your journey.

8. Get rid of distractions. Write when you're alone; ask your family not to interrupt. Clear away any distractions around you.

9. Reach out for support. Let your family or friends know you're going through a tough time and would appreciate their understanding, support, and prayers. Choose a trustworthy person you can confide in. Check in with them, even briefly, so you know you're not alone during this process.

10. Use reminders like photos, letters, and journals to help you recall the past. When you're finished writing, put them away or discard them.

11. Be patient with yourself. Don't compare your progress with someone else. Be kind to yourself as you work through this challenging process. This may take weeks, months, or even years.

12. Pray about whether or not you should share your story. Seek guidance from the Lord about who to share it with and when. Allow Him to use your story for His purpose, in whatever way He deems best.

Workshop 26:

Putting It All Together, Part I

Over the past few months, you've compiled about twenty life stories. No doubt you have many more stories to share, and I encourage you to continue developing them with the same type of focus and memory joggers we've been using over the past few months.

However, as we near the end of our classes, we need to think about the next steps. What additional items should we include in our memoirs? How can we improve the presentation, making it unique yet still true to ourselves?

Theme and Order

As you reflect on your stories, perhaps you've noticed a theme developing. Identifying a theme can help pull your stories into a cohesive order. This theme will be unique to you, but you can get ideas from other memoirs.

Consider what compels you to write. What is your overarching message? For example, perhaps in looking at your spiritual gifts, you saw how you've been using them all along, and you want your family to recognize this. Or maybe your calling as a pastor, teacher, nurse, or another role has been a recurring theme. Maybe because of your passion for sports, many of your stories relate to teamwork, listening to your coach, giving it your best effort, experiencing wins and losses, etc.

Sometimes, a significant life event can define your theme. For example, my grand-father was an architect, who later followed his wife's dream and became a musician. His life theme transitioned from architecture to arpeggios.

Here are a couple of personal examples:

1. I wrote a book on my memories of my dad, a railroad engineer. Using the title "*On Track*," I was able to organize my various stories into one of these categories: his early years, how he started getting his life on track, then being on track with his family, being on track with his career, and being on track with his Lord.

2. My oldest sister was an artist, and I felt the title "*Drawn to the Arts*" fit her life well. Because she had been drawn to the arts throughout her lifetime, I broke my sections down into the various places she lived. Within those places, I endeavored to show how she used multiple arts in her family life and career.

If your life can be easily divided into segments—such as the places you've lived, the jobs you've done, or periods before and after significant events like an illness or accident—you'll find it easier to organize your various stories within those segments. Then, it's a matter of tying all your segments into the overall theme of your life.

When deciding how to structure your memoirs, remember that the main thing is to create an outline that effectively tells your story.

1. Chronological: Start at a specific point and proceed with what happens next, then next, and so on. Remember to reinforce the chronological nature of the events using phrases like "as soon as," "before long," "meanwhile," and "several years later..."

2. Semi-Chronological: Use flashbacks to move from one point to the next. For example, you might start by telling a story about teaching your class and then flash back to when you decided to be a teacher as a child. If you move

back and forth in time, keep your audience informed about where you are and when in that particular part of your story.

3. Thematic: Similar to writing an argumentative paper in school, you introduce your theme, then develop it by showing various ways to prove your point, and finally, you provide a summary with an appropriate conclusion of what you've been sharing.

4. Episodic: Each story has its beginning, middle, and end, but they all build to your main story's climax. Think of it like a TV series—each episode is self-contained but ties into the overall story. Each episode can end with a cliffhanger to draw your reader into the next part of your story. Cliffhangers could include events like an accident, illness, family death, job loss, divorce, etc.

And that's a seque into...

Transitions

Remember in our very first lesson when we discussed how our stories are like pieces of a puzzle? Think of transitions as the small nobs that connect one piece to another. They're like bridges that link thoughts, paragraphs, and sometimes entire chapters or sections of your story. They help you smoothly show the relationship between what you've already shared and what you're about to share next.

Use transition words like “furthermore,” “however,” “in contrast,” and so on to make your paragraphs or stories flow.

Transitions are where the writer pauses to:

- interpret something - “At the time, I didn't understand why this mattered.”
- reflect on it - “Only later did I realize this was the turning point.”
- connect the dots - “That moment became the thread that tied the rest of my story together.”

Title

The following exercise will help refine your focus and generate ideas for your book's title, which will serve as the thread that ties your stories together. For instance, in my book, *“Rebuild, Restore, Renew,”* I included devotionals on various tools and workers related to rebuilding and renovations.

Just as the titles of your stories should match their topic and style, the overall title of your book should also reflect its tone and theme. Choose a straightforward title if you and most of your stories are serious. If humour plays a significant role in your life and most of your stories are fun-loving, you might want to opt for a funny title.

One exercise to help narrow down the focus of your life is to write your memoir in six words...

The Six-Word Memoir

Write a six-word description of yourself that captures the essence of who you are. Those six words might become your title or subtitle or inspire ideas for them. Remember, there's no right or wrong way to do this, but here are some things to consider:

1. Core values: Christian and family values, how you value relationships, and your philosophy in life.

2. Key roles: For example, are you a parent, a labourer, teacher, lawyer, artist, etc.?

3. Unique traits: Do you have a particular talent? What is your perspective on life? Have you had a unique life experience?

4. Impact on others: Are you a healer, listener, leader, follower, a person who brings calmness out of chaos, warm and friendly, introvert, or extravert?

5. Passions and interests: What brings you joy? What are your goals in life?

6. Challenges you overcame: How you did it.

7. Legacy: How you want to be remembered.

8. Strong adjectives: Use meaningful words like resilient, passionate, visionary, tenacious, empathetic, courageous, and adventurous.

Combine your thoughts and mix and match words in ways that flow smoothly and truly represent who you are. Try several different keywords until you find something that sounds most like you.

Here are a few samples:

- The key is laughing at yourself.
- They said: "It's impossible." It wasn't.
- Broken pieces make up beautiful mosaics.
- That's the thing about hitting bottom...

Learn more at <https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/>.

Introduction

Your introduction can be written as a personal letter in one or two short paragraphs or expanded over one or more pages. It's meant to lead your readers into your memoirs. End it with your name, and consider signing each copy personally, adding the date of completion.

Here are some things you might want to include, as well as some things to avoid:

• **Explain why you decided to write your memoirs, such as.**

- To help your family understand what living in a different time or place was like.
- To fill in some of the gaps they may not be familiar with.
- To share the good and challenging times as best you remember them.
- To highlight the significant moments and influences in your life.
- To express your hope that they will enjoy reading it as much as you've enjoyed writing it.
- If you wish to dedicate it to someone, explain why.

• **Tell how you gathered your material and how you went about writing your book.**

- Acknowledge those who helped with material, stories, writing, editing, printing, etc.
- Explain your title if necessary.
- Keep it positive: Avoid making any apologies for your life.

Samples:

- To my Mother and Father,

How can I ever thank you for your love, sacrifice, understanding, guidance, patience, and always helpful hand, all of which seemed to flow without end?

- *Drawn to the Arts*¹

About two years ago, Vern asked if I would write Gertie's story. Despite how busy I was, without hesitation, I said, "Yes!"

I'm thankful to him for providing me with much of her life's story through her files, photos, and paintings. I also gained many insights from his own memoirs and scrapbooks. Mom, too, left behind stories that recently became accessible to me. Then there was the fun of sharing memories with other family members. Thanks for your stories and photos. Special thanks to my sister, Lillian, who also went the extra mile to help me put this book together. And to Valerie for arranging the print production.

Mom taught us to try to walk a mile in the other person's shoes. In writing this book, I've tried to do that with Gertie. There are many things about her that we will never know or understand, because we can *only* walk a mile in her shoes.

As you read about my oldest sister's life and see the many graphics used, I hope you'll see what a fun-loving, creative, caring person she was. I've added a small paintbrush or pencil to indicate her artwork used throughout these pages.

So, sit back, take off your shoes, and slip into Gertie's shoes for a while.

Gladys Thompson

July 2023

¹ Thompson, Gladys. 2023. *Drawn to the Arts*. Kingdon Communications Inc.

Conclusion

Your ending doesn't need to be lengthy but should come from the heart. It might include:

- How you sum up your life.
- The personal beliefs and values you want to pass on.
- How you perceive your generation.
- Your hopes and goals for the future.

Sample:

• *On Track*²

Everyone has their story. This has been a glimpse into my Dad's. His life is proof it doesn't matter how difficult your past may or may not have been, you can still get on track with good values and right living. . .

I'm thankful for the memories Uncle Bill left for us and the things Mom shared about Dad because he rarely talked about himself. I'm thankful for my brother and sisters who also shared family memories with me to pass on to you.

I've learned a lot from putting together this story. I've learned a little about my own grandparents. Before writing this book I always referred to them as Dad's mom or dad, or simply my grandparents. But in telling their story, I was brought a little closer to them, calling them "Grandma" and "Grandpa," probably for the first time.

In learning about Dad's past I can appreciate him more; I can understand better the lessons in life he tried to teach us and why it was so important to him. I see him as a man who was able to find a balance between hard work and fun; a man who sacrificed a lot for the family he loved.

Some people called him "George;" some called him "Army;" some called him "Elliott" or "Mr. Armstrong;" a few got to call him "Grandpa," but I called

him "Dad." The Bible says to honour your father, and I'm honoured to have his DNA as a part of who I am. And it's part of you too!

Citations

When writing your memoirs, you might want to include a Scripture reference, quote, poem, or song lyrics somewhere in your memoirs or at the beginning of each story. When you do so, remember to give credit where credit is due, including AI. The format will depend on the type of material. Here are some guidelines:

- Author(s), editor(s), or institution which is responsible for the material
- Title of the article, book, report, etc., generally in italics or quotation marks
- Publication date
- Publisher
- Where it was published
- Page numbers
- URL where the document can be found and the date you accessed the information
- For government documents, include the agency's name, title, publication date, and retrieval information.
- There are various citation styles—such as APA, Chicago, Canadian, etc. Choose one and use it consistently.
- For Scripture verses, check the front of the print Bible you're using or go to an online Bible site, such as biblegateway.com, which provides you with the citation to use for the particular reference you're using. Also, note the year, as some versions have been updated. For example:

John 3:16 (NIV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

² Thompson, Gladys. 2011. *On Track*. Self-published.

Copyright

Every country protects the rights of creators of text, photos, music, and other works. When writing memoirs for your family, you should understand the concept of fair dealing, which permits using copyrighted material under certain conditions. If using material from another country, check out that country's laws. You can find information about Canada's laws in Appendix 3 and Fair Dealing in Canada - Myths and Facts³.

Disclaimer

Disclaimers can be included in two ways:

- **Within the text:** For example, "When I asked Mom, she said something like this...." Or "The man I met – I'll call him John Smith – was charming at first..."

- **As a blanket disclaimer at the front of your book:** For instance, "These stories of my life are as I remember them. Some names have been changed or characters combined, but the significance of each story is true."

Ultimately, you're presenting your version of the truth, which can be subjective. Your understanding of your family may differ from that of your siblings. Opinions may vary. It's best to verify which version is likely accurate than assume you're correct.

If there's a difference in views, you may want to present both, with reasons, and let the reader decide. Alternatively, include a disclaimer stating this is your story as you see it.

Action Items

Next week, bring any samples of completed family memoirs you may have access to.

Choose two or more of the following to share in class next week:

1. **4-5 different six-word memoirs.**
2. **A draft *Introduction* to your memoirs.**
3. **A draft *Conclusion* to your memoirs.**
4. **Decide on your memoir's theme and explain why it fits your story.**

³ <https://www.eclibrary.ca/library/sites/default/files/Fiar%20Dealing%20in%20Canada%20-%20Myths%20and%20Facts.pdf>

Workshop 27:

Putting It All Together, Part II

Today we continue looking at items to consider adding to your memoirs.

Family Tree

Since your memoirs serve as a historical document for your family, you may want to include a simple list of your ancestors—the names, birthdates, marriage dates, and death dates of your parents and grandparents, as well as earlier generations, if you have the information. If you know some details about your ancestors, you might include a few sentences of introduction.

Timeline

In our second lesson, we discussed how to prepare the “Time of Your Life,” which includes a brief phrase listing significant life events in chronological order by year. This should also include noteworthy events from world, national, or local history to give your readers a sense of what was happening in the world during your lifetime and at what stage of life you were in at the time. If you wish, you could add small graphics of the event.

This can be formatted in various ways:

- **As a vertical or horizontal line** with the dates and information scaled along the line as mentioned in the second workshop.
- **As text**, something like this:

1965

- Started grade 9 at John Wiggins High School
- Maple Leaf became Canada’s national flag

- *The Sound of Music* premiered
- Helped organize Timbuktu’s Santa Claus Parade

1966

- Started grade 10
- Had a “Sweet 16” birthday party
- Obtained my driver’s license
- Started teaching Sunday school

Appendices

There may be other text you want to include, but you feel it could detract from the main story. For example, you might mention a specific organization that isn’t well known, but you’d like your readers to learn more about it. However, including that information within the story would be distracting. That’s a time you might want to consider adding that extra detail in an appendix, especially if it’s too much to explain in a footnote. When referencing it in your story, you could include brackets or a footnote that says, “See Appendix 1 for more details.”

If you’re not including visuals in your stories, you might want to add them as appendices, such as:

- maps,
- letters,
- family recipes, especially if they’re award-winning
- the titles of books you’ve written, with the publishing information
- the music to a song you’ve written,
- a collection of poems you’ve authored,
- diagrams of the blueprints for a house

- you built,
- your graduation program,
- a list of addresses where you've lived,
- clarifications for topics that may be too complex to include in your story,
- explanations of your traditions,
- newspaper clippings,
- relevant memories of relatives or friends,
- mini-biographies of extended family or friends,
- family contacts,
- your DNA results,
- and the list could go on and on.

Editing

Remember when I encouraged you to start writing without worrying about perfection? Now is the time to go back and correct any spelling and grammar errors and work on strengthening your writing. Editing takes time, so be methodical and don't rush. You may need to review your story several times, focusing on different aspects each time.

After you've placed your stories in the order you want, make sure the overall story flows well. You may need to add transitions here and there, or it might flow better if you move a sentence, phrase, paragraph, or even a whole section to one of your other stories.

When reviewing your stories, read them out loud, at least once. Consider rewriting if something doesn't sound right or is challenging to say.

There are several tools available to help with your editing. At least do a basic check to avoid common mistakes that could turn your readers off. If publishing your memoirs, you should use a professional editor.

- **Proofing Language:** If using Microsoft Word, set your proofing language to Canadian English: "Review – Language – Proofing Language – English (Canada)."

- **Spelling and grammar check:** Use this feature under the "Review" tab in Microsoft Word, but don't rely solely on the spell checker!

- **Avoid acronyms, abbreviations, and sayings:** If you do want to use them, provide explanations, as they may not be familiar to future generations.

- **Check for repeated words:** For the most part, avoid repeating words in the same paragraph. Use synonyms where possible.

- **Be specific:** For example, instead of a tree, specify the type of tree, if you can. Instead of "I got in my car," say, "I got in my Corvette," but only if it's true!

- **Watch for adjectives ending in 'ly:'** For example, instead of "ran quickly," try, "dashed," "sprinted," "sped," or "raced." Instead of "walked slowly," you could use "dawdled," "strolled," "sauntered," or another synonym.

- **Avoid unnecessary words:** For example, say, "I sat on the chair" instead of "I sat down on the chair," unless you mean you were sitting up straight. Instead of "Johnny climbed up the tree," say "Johnny climbed the tree."

- **Use period-specific statistics:** Use statistics from the time period you're writing or talking about, such as the population of your birthplace at that time.

- **Ask a friend for feedback:** They may see things you missed.

For additional help, you can use websites like GrammarCheck¹. They have blogs, infographics and tools to help with writing and editing. Be cautious using AI (artificial intelligence) that may not fully understand your intent.

For more information on grammar, visit The Most Confusing Grammar Rules in English². If you're wondering about capitalization in titles, check out the Title Capitalization Tool³.

See Appendix 4 for more information.

¹ <https://www.grammarcheck.net/>

² <https://www.rd.com/list/most-confusing-grammar-rules/?fbclid=iwar2jdjv7bh6p6zkvy1fna38puoa6jowxyeqpdp5lkyhzohke6ndkuznv3my&trkid=soc-rd-facebook>

³ <https://capitalizemytitle.com/style/Chicago/>

Formatting

Your formatting will depend on the size of the book you plan to create. Common sizes (in inches) include 8x8, 10x10, 12x12, 6x9, 7x10, 8½ x 11. Whatever size you choose, use consistent formatting styles throughout. Look through various books to see what formatting you like.

- **Fonts:** Use easy-to-read fonts in an appropriate size. It's best to use a different font and size for the title, subtitles, quotes, footnotes, etc. Be consistent throughout the book and choose a font that relates to the overall theme of the book. For example, if you're writing for children, you would use a different font and style than if you were writing for adults. A funny book would use a different style than a more serious one. If you're a calligrapher, you may want to consider hand-printing the title of the book, or the chapter titles.
- **Margins:** Leave extra room for the binding and about 3/4" white space around the other three sides of the page
- **Story placement:** You may want to begin each story on the right side (odd-numbered pages).
- **Titles and subtitles**
- **Page numbers**

Some other things you may want to include and which should also have a consistent look throughout the book are:

- **Headers:** not on the chapter's title page
- **Footers**
- **Pull Quotes**
- **Drop Caps:** on the first paragraph of each of your stories
- **Graphics:** Include maps, photos, drawings, letters, certificates, etc. Use short captions to indicate the people, places, events, and years. If you don't know, use "circa ____" or "possibly at my cousin's wedding."
- **Quotes:** From different authors or celebrities, or add a line or two of poetry, or

some sports quotes, etc.

- **Scripture Verses:** include the name of the book, chapter, and verse(s) as well as the translation used.

Index

An index is not necessary. However, you might want to consider including one if you mention several people, places, or events throughout your stories. It can help your readers easily find specific information if they want to refer back to it later. You might especially want to include the names of your family and close friends. For example:

Education: 12-18, 30-34, 77

Green, John: 3, 14, 66-68, 74, 121

Green, Kathryn: 3, 20, 66-68, 88, 143

Hamilton, Ontario: 42-44

Health Concerns: 14, 44-47, 99, 122

Table of Contents

Once you have all your pages arranged as you want them, create a Table of Contents. This should include the title of each story and the page number where it begins. If you have sections in your book, include those as well.

Proofreading

Once your memoirs are in proper order, edited, and formatted, it's time to double-check everything, preferably from a print copy:

- Are all your pages numbered correctly?
- If using headers and footers, are they all listed correctly?
- Is all your formatting consistent?
- Is your spelling consistent on family names, places, etc.? Is your use of capital lettering consistent?
- If you manually prepared the Table of Contents and Index, make sure the page numbers are accurate.

Covers

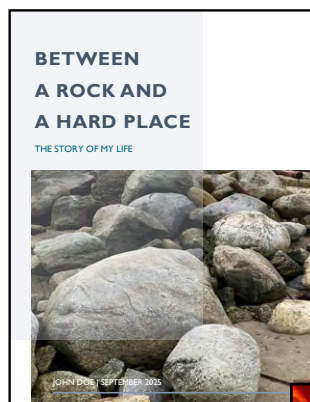
If you're creating the cover for your book or booklet, you have many attractive options to consider. How you've formatted your memoirs will determine the size and shape. You'll also likely want the front and back covers made of a sturdier cover stock. For a simple cover, you can choose a colour and add your title, subtitle (if you have one), and your name as the author.

You might opt for a white cover stock and design your cover using Microsoft Word, Publisher, PowerPoint, Canva, or a similar computer program.

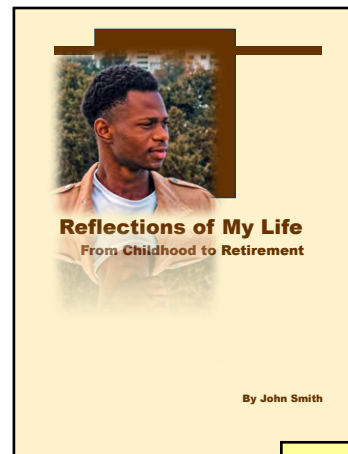
In these two, report cover templates in Microsoft Word were used. For the first one, the photo was changed and in the second, the original photo was kept.

By using the various fonts, point sizes,

colours, shapes, "Smart Art," "Word Art," "Layout," and "Design" features, you can quickly design a cover to complement your memoirs.

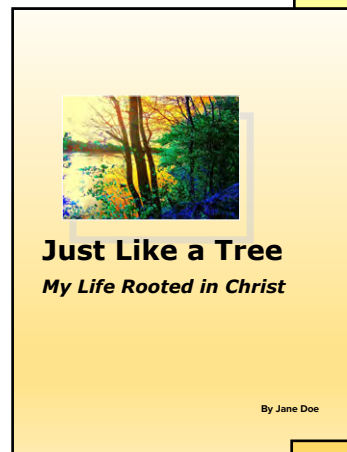
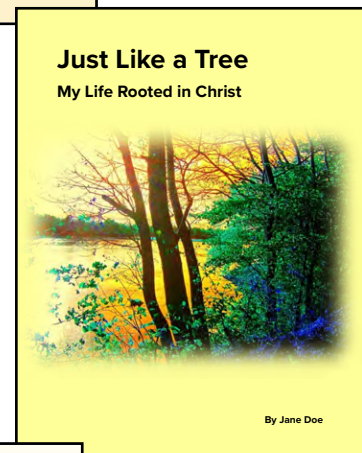


This layout is an 8" square. The photo was added with a frame. The background was done with "Design—Page Color—Fill Effects" along with a page border

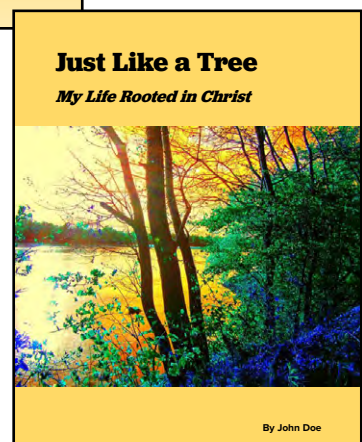


Here, the background and photo were done as in the *Jane Doe* book, with added rectangles filled with complimentary colours.

"PictureFormat—Effects—Soft Edges" was used for the photo on this cover.

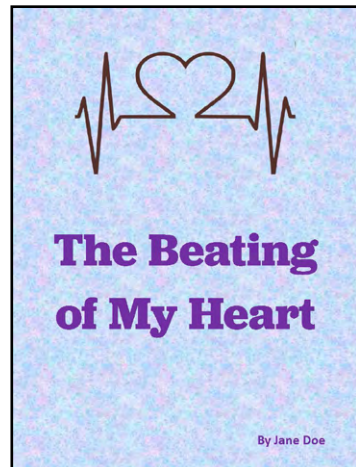


This photo effect was done by adding a border onto an inserted unfilled shape behind the picture.



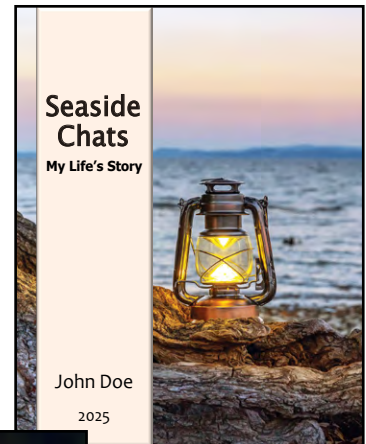
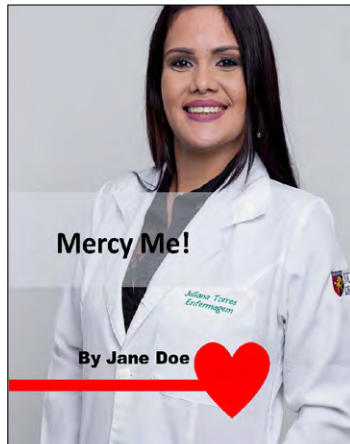
No extra effects were added for this sample.

This heart graphic was treated as if it were a photo. “Design—Page Color—Fill Effects—Texture” was used for the background.



The following samples could be designed in Word, but I found them easier to create on slides in PowerPoint using the “Instagram vertical for invitations and holidays” template.

Again, you can use photos that relate to the title, including a picture of yourself in an activity that represents the overall theme of your book.



Paper Selection

Talk to your printer or copy centre about the paper quality. Spending a few cents extra on a higher grade can make a difference, as you want to avoid having the print show through on the other side. The paper should be bright enough to give you good contrast but not so bright that it causes eye strain.

Bindings

You can place your memoir pages in a three-ring binder with a cover page on the front.

You also have a variety of binding methods available at various price points. Check your bookshelves for examples of bindings, how well they stand on the shelf, or if they need to lie flat. Consider the pros and cons of each to decide which you prefer.

Some bindings are easy to undo, add more pages, or revised pages and redo, while others



are not. Some you can assemble yourself, some can be done at a local quick print shop, and others must be done at a bindery.

- **Comb and spiral bindings** are among the cheaper methods. You'll need a proper hole punch and then thread the wire binding through the holes. Some business offices have this tool, or you could take your pages to a place like Staples or fast printing shops.

While quick and easy, the pages tend to fall out more easily and are prone to tearing. Sometimes, the coils also work their way out of the holes. They also don't stand up well on a shelf unless it is a thick book.

- **Staples in the centrefold** can be used if your book is not too thick. You'll want to be sure the staples are well closed to avoid possible injury.

- **Saddle stitch binding** involves stacking the pages and stapling or sewing the spine. It is generally done through a print shop, and the strength depends on the type of staples or thread used.

- **Perfect binding** is done through a printing house bindery. The pages are printed two-up, then folded in half and bound using strong glue. This binding is generally used when publishing several copies (50+).

- **Case binding** is the most secure and protective method. It's used mainly for expensive hardcover books with the pages glued to the spine.

Depending on your budget, you might want to consider using a publisher such as

- **Blacks**⁴
- **Forever**⁵
- **Lulu**⁶
- **Photobook Canada**⁷
- **Walmart**⁸

If you want to make your own binding, you may want to check out

- **Amazon** – search for books on the topic
- **DIY Saddle Stitch Bookbinding Tutorial**⁹
- **DIY Spiral Bookbinding Tutorial**¹⁰

Repurposing Your Stories

You have life stories that are uniquely yours, yet are similar to the experiences of other people. Those stories can inspire and help them overcome their own challenges, and grow in wisdom and grace.

Knowing your audience is key, and there are many ways to share your stories, depending on the audience you want to reach. Here are some options you might want to consider:

- Include fitting stories into general conversations.
- Use cards, letters, emails, and social media, to tell people who blessed you what it meant to you.
- The story behind an item you're leaving in your will.
- When scrapbooking family events, share what those moments meant to you.
- Write about your childhood in a children's style book for your younger grandkids.
- Share your testimony in church, during a worship service or in one of the programs they offer, like men's or women's fellowships, church retreats, or seniors' groups.
- Find podcasts related to what you want to share and learn how to get interviewed.
- Share your story on your church's or on a related YouTube channel.
- Through newspaper and magazine articles or blogs, share your life experiences and what you learned from them.

⁴ <https://www.blacks.ca/en/products/photobooks/>

⁵ <https://www.forever.com/create-and-print/photo-books>

⁶ <https://www.lulu.com/create>

⁷ <https://www.photobookcanada.com/photobooks>

⁸ <https://www.walmartphotocentre.ca/en/photo-books/-c-8>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWHkY5jOoqM>

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_W99DY-iHcc&t=117s

- By including it in a devotional message or book, or in a sermon.
- Write a chapter in a book such as the *Chicken Soup* series.
- Ask others in your church to join you in publishing their stories in a book. Our church did this with 25 testimonies written by members of the congregation¹¹.
- Consider a radio, podcast, or television interview, such as *100 Huntley Street*.
- Join a storytelling group.
- Write in a journal.
- Share stories in your photo album.
- Make a video recording for your family.

Publishing Your Story

In reviewing your stories, consider which ones could help others. Choose a niche—something you're passionate about or have experienced yourself. For example, it could be a common event viewed from a different angle. Then, look for publications that print articles on that topic, whether related to your career, hobbies, sports, music, etc. Don't forget about Christian magazines, newspapers, and blogs.

Check out their websites to see what kinds of articles they're looking for and how to submit

your story. Find out what kind of people read their publications so you can tailor your story for that particular audience. You can even repurpose one of your stories in a variety of ways for different audiences.

When submitting something for publication, remember to use Canadian spelling for a Canadian publication and American spelling for an American publication. Be patient; the process takes time, and you may not hear back from them for a while. If you haven't heard back after 3-4 weeks, you could consider sending a polite reminder. If you've prayed about it and feel God wants you to write it, trust in His timing.

Here are a few Christian and general publications you might want to check out:

- *70 Christian Publishers that Pay Writers*¹²
- *Chicken Soup for the Soul*¹³
- *Christian Writing Jobs*¹⁴
- *Christianity Today*¹⁵
- *Faith Today*¹⁶
- *Faith and Friends*¹⁷
- *Guideposts*¹⁸
- *Publications on religion and spirituality*¹⁹
- *Reader's Digest*²⁰
- *Salvationist.ca*²¹
- *The Upper Room*²²
- *Today's Christian Living*²³

¹¹ saoshawa.ca/book

¹² <https://www.freedomwithwriting.com/freedom/uncategorized/70-christian-publishers-that-pay-writers/>

¹³ <https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/possible-book-topics/>

¹⁴ <https://makealivingwriting.com/christian-writing-jobs/>

¹⁵ <https://help.christianitytoday.com/hc/en-us/articles/360047411253-How-do-I-write-for-CT>

¹⁶ <https://www.faithtoday.ca/About-us/Faith-Today-Writer-Guidelines>

¹⁷ [https://salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/Magazines/Writers_Guidelines_2023/Writers_Guidelines_-_Salvationist_and_Salvationist.ca%20\(2023-08\).pdf](https://salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/Magazines/Writers_Guidelines_2023/Writers_Guidelines_-_Salvationist_and_Salvationist.ca%20(2023-08).pdf)

¹⁸ <https://guideposts.org/writers-guidelines/>

¹⁹ <https://thewritelife.com/faith-based-publications-that-pay/>

²⁰ <https://www.rd.com/freelancesubmissions/>

²¹ <https://salvationist.ca/editorial/writer-s-guidelines/>

²² <https://submissions.upperroom.org/guidelines#upperroom>

²³ <https://todayschristianliving.org/writers-guidelines/>

Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the times of reflection as I've been sharing my story.
I'm grateful for every milestone celebrated, every challenge overcome,
and Your constant presence in my life.
I pray that every chapter of my story will testify to Your grace.
May my words reflect Your enduring love, faithfulness, patience, and mercy.
May my stories of trials and triumphs inspire and encourage others.
May my memoirs not only recount my past but also serve as a testimony of
Your eternal love. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen!*

In Conclusion, Let Me Add...

We've reached the end of this course, but definitely not the end of your storytelling journey. Throughout these lessons, you've gathered memories, sorted through emotions, explored turning points in your life, and paused to reflect on moments that have made you who you are. You've probably noticed that even the smallest moments—a shared meal, a long walk, a quiet prayer—can hold enormous meaning. Take a deep breath and celebrate the work you've done.

By now, you've likely begun to see how the pieces of your life fit together, much like the jigsaw puzzle we talked about in the first class. You've recognized times you were carried through moments you thought you wouldn't survive, and how joy, hope, and peace found you in the most unexpected places. These are holy moments, often hidden within ordinary days. So, revisit your stories often. Add to them, revise them, and share them in whatever ways feel right. And most importantly, keep looking for God's fingerprints in your life.

New insights will keep popping up, often when you least expect them—while in the shower, trying to fall asleep, or standing in the grocery store when the sight of green beans suddenly takes you right back to your grandmother's kitchen. Memory works in surprising ways at times!

And remember that your stories matter; they connect you to others. When you share your life stories, you help them recognize their own. Your stories might even become the bridge that leads someone toward the hope they can find in Jesus.

So keep writing. Keep reflecting. Keep smiling at those moments you once thought were disasters, but now make excellent writing material. Trust that God can use your story as a blessing to those who read it.

A Final Note

Three years ago, I felt a calling to help others share their life stories. Throughout those years, I've facilitated Christian memoir workshops. Several women in our congregation participated, and we all gained a deeper understanding of ourselves and saw God at work in ways we may not have realized before. We learned that we're not alone in our struggles and found strength in sharing with one another. We laughed, cried, and prayed together, learning to be woven into a tapestry of love, as the Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:2 (MSG).

Those lesson notes and helpful suggestions from those who attended the workshops make up this manual, along with the facilitator's guide.

I also want to express my thanks to Lillian Howell for her feedback, and helping with editing and proofreading. I also truly appreciate Major Patricia Kennedy for getting me started and Captains Justin and Colleen Gleadall for their encouragement and support through this entire project.

These workshops are part of the *Connecting Through Life Stories* initiative to encourage members of our congregation to share their personal "God-moments"—those times when His presence and guidance are evident. We've found this to be a positive experience and

In Conclusion, Let Me Add...

wanted to make these lessons available to a broader audience, whether within The Salvation Army or any other Christian denomination. Perhaps you'd now like to facilitate a small group of Christian friends in these workshops.

If you'd like to learn more about our church or the *Connecting Through Life Stories* initiative, we invite you to visit us in person or follow us on social media:

- Website: www.saoshawa.ca
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/

saoshawa

- YouTube: www.youtube.com/saoshawa
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/saoshawa
- Learn more about the *Connecting Through Life Stories* initiative: www.saoshawa.ca/life-stories

Gladys Thompson
The Salvation Army Oshawa Temple
Volunteer Life Stories Coordinator

Appendix 1:

Historic Dates for Your Timeline

Here are some samples of historic items you might want to include in your timeline. Note, you don't have to include everything in this list, nor do you need something for every year.

- 1939-1945 – World War II
- 1939 – Lou Gehrig diagnosed with ALS; Wizard of Oz premiered
- 1941 – Mount Rushmore completed
- 1942 – Casablanca premiered
- 1945 – United Nations began
- 1946 – Canadian Army founded
- 1947 – Transistor invented
- 1949 – 45 RPM records introduced; Newfoundland joined Canada
- 1950 – Development of hydrogen bomb
- 1950-1953 – Korean War
- 1951 – *I Love Lucy* premiered on TV
- 1952 – Queen Elizabeth II crowned; Canada's first TV station
- 1953 – Polio vaccine developed
- 1954 – Frozen dinners introduced
- 1955 – Mickey Mouse Club premiered; McDonald's restaurants started
- 1956 – Elvis Presley became a hit
- 1958 – Microchip invented; NASA created; hula hoop created
- 1959 – St. Lawrence Seaway completed; Barbie Doll created
- 1961 – Building of the Berlin Wall began
- 1962 – Spiderman made his debut; Beatles released their first single
- 1963 – JF Kennedy assassinated; Martin Luther King Jr. gave famous speech
- 1965 – Mini skirt became a craze; Maple Leaf became official flag of Canada
- 1966 – First *Star Trek* episode; Canada Pension Plan introduced
- 1967 – First heart transplant; first portable calculator; Expo in Montreal; Canada turned 100
- 1968 – Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated
- 1969 – Armstrong and Aldrin walked on moon; *Sesame Street* began
- 1970 – First jumbo-jet debuted
- 1975 – Vietnam War ends; Jaws in theatres; Microsoft created; Canada switched to metric
- 1976 – CN Tower completed; Montreal hosted Olympic games
- 1977 – First MRI
- 1979 – Walkman introduced
- 1980 – John Lennon killed; Pac-Man released; Terry Fox Marathon of Hope
- 1981 – Prince Charles and Lady Diana married; AIDS virus identified
- 1982 – First CD players; Canadian Rights and Freedoms
- 1983 – Microsoft introduced Word
- 1984 – Gandhi assassinated; Garneau first Canadian in space
- 1986 – Chernobyl reactor exploded; Space Shuttle Challenger disaster
- 1987 – \$1 Looney introduced
- 1988 – Winter Olympics in Calgary
- 1989 – Berlin Wall torn down; Nintendo Game Boy portable released
- 1991 – Internet became available for unrestricted commercial use; Operation Desert Storm began; GST began
- 1994 – Rwanda genocide

Appendix 1: Historic Dates for Your Timeline

- 1995 – Ebay founded
- 1997 – First *Harry Potter* book published; Dolly first cloned sheep; \$2 Toonie introduced
- 1998 – Google founded
- 1999 – Euro debut
- 2000 – Sony released Play Station 2; Mad Cow Disease; Y2K passed
- 2001 – Wikipedia goes online; Apple released iPod; 9/11 terrorists
- 2002-2011 – Canadian troops deployed to Afghanistan
- 2003 – Final Concorde flight; war on Iraq; SARS; iTunes launched
- 2004 – Facebook was launched
- 2005 – Hurricane Katrina; YouTube founded; ice storms; Avian bird flu
- 2007 – First iPhone
- 2009 – Michael Jackson died
- 2010 – Winter Olympics in Vancouver
- 2011 – Marriage of Kate Middleton and Prince William
- 2017 – Canada celebrated 150th birthday
- 2018 – Marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle; Sears declared bankruptcy; tornado in Ottawa
- 2019 – Fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris
- 2020 – COVID declared a pandemic; NASA Rover landed on Mars; Alex Trebek passed away
- 2021 – Mass vaccinations for COVID; burial sites of residential school children found; B.C. wildfires and flood
- 2022 – War in Ukraine; Queen Elizabeth died
- 2023 – Launch of Taylor Swift’s Era Tour; King Charles III crowned; Twitter rebranded; warmest summer on record; Israel-Hamas war began
- 2024 – Total solar eclipse; astronauts stuck in space; Paris Olympics
- 2025 – Donald Trump elected U.S. president; USA’s Dept. of government efficiency (DOGE) makes major cuts; Pope Leo XIV becomes first American Pope; Trump’s tariffs; Mark Carney elected prime minister; Blue Jays play in the World Series

Appendix 2:

Story Ideas Form

Make as many blank copies of the following page as needed, or design your own template, and include them in your binder. Continue adding to the list as ideas come to you throughout the course.

Appendix 2: Story Ideas Form

[illegible]

Appendix 3:

Copyright and Fair Dealing Checklist

Here is a quick checklist¹ for using material that is not your own.

Photos & Images

- ☐ I took the photo myself, or I have permission from the person who did.
- ☐ I credited the source if the photo came from an archive or online collection.
- ☐ I avoided using copyrighted images found online unless they're public domain or Creative Commons.

Quotes & Text

- ☐ I used only short excerpts (a few lines) from books, articles, or websites
- ☐ I clearly cited the author and source.

Newspaper Clippings and Articles

- ☐ I included only brief excerpts, not full articles.
- ☐ I credited the publication and date.
- ☐ I'm using the material in a private, non-commercial memoir.

Archival Materials

- ☐ I credited the archive (e.g., Library and Archives Canada).
- ☐ I included reference numbers or descriptions when available.
- ☐ I respected any usage guidelines provided by the archive.

What to Avoid

- ☐ I didn't copy entire works (books, songs, articles).
- ☐ I'm not selling or widely distributing the memoir.
- ☐ I avoided using copyrighted material without permission unless fair dealing applies.

Final Reminder

If you're ever unsure, ask: "Is this respectful, limited, and clearly credited?" If yes, you're likely safe to use it.

¹ Check out these resources:

<https://www.fairdealingdecisiontool.ca/DecisionTool/>
<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/guide-copyright>
<https://creativecommons.org>

Appendix 4:

Suggestions for Self-Editing

The amount of editing you decide to do may depend on whether you're handwriting (or printing) it yourself, typing it, or having someone else type it for you. If you're handwriting, you might choose not to go back and make corrections, and that's okay! Your family will treasure your story, even if your spelling or grammar isn't perfect.

Now that you've completed your writing, it's time to look at it with fresh eyes.

Start by stepping back to look at the bigger picture. By this point, you likely have a sense of your overall theme and at least a working title. It's usually easier to approach the next stage one task at a time rather than trying to fix everything at once—taking it step by step keeps the process manageable, and more enjoyable.

Creative Mindset

As you move into the self-editing stage, begin by arranging your stories in the order that best supports your goals.

Then, take time with each individual piece and ask yourself:

1. Does this story flow well? Read it aloud and listen for clarity and any parts that are challenging or awkward to say.
2. Have I said everything I want to about this part of my life? Do I have any new insights, memories, or a clearer way of expressing something?
3. Is anything included that doesn't belong? Do I go off on distracting tangents?
4. Does it make sense? Does the se-

quence of events make it easy to follow?

5. Is the point of view consistent? For example, if you're writing about your childhood, are you consistently speaking from your perspective at the time or did you unexpectedly change to telling your story from today?

6. Does it sound like me? Are my characteristics and expressions coming through?

7. Do my graphics support the story? Are better captions needed?

8. Do these stories have my intended readers in mind? The stories read in class may have been directed more to the participants rather than to your intended readers—your children and grandchildren.

9. Do I need transitions? Is a bridge needed between this story and the ones before or after it?

Once you're satisfied with the story itself, shift into a more detail-oriented mindset, looking for consistency and accuracy.

Clerical Mindset

1. Confirm consistent naming. Make sure each person is referred to consistently throughout. For example, if someone is known by a nickname, introduce their full name the first time: "My Aunt Betty, who was better known as Bubby..."

2. Verify all factual details in footnotes, citations, timelines, and family history references.

3. Prepare your Table of Contents and Index (if using them) and check page numbers.

4. Use the following checklist ...

Appendix 4: Suggestions for Self-Editing

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Alignment - left or right justified | ☐ Footnotes |
| ☐ Audience - your text is for the chosen audience | ☐ Formatting - consistent throughout |
| ☐ Bibliography - if necessary for your book | ☐ Grammar |
| ☐ Bullet and numerical lists are consistent | ☐ Pull-quote formatting is consistent |
| ☐ Capitalization - caps are used as they should be | ☐ Punctuation is consistent |
| ☐ Captions - have a consistent formatting; clearly define the graphic | ☐ Quotation marks are consistent |
| ☐ Citations are used as needed | ☐ Redundancies are removed |
| ☐ Copyright notation added, if needed | ☐ Sentences are of varying sizes with no run-on sentences |
| ☐ Fact-checking | ☐ Spelling - not relying on Spellchecker; consistent throughout - e.g. Canadian or American |

Appendix 5:

Topical Bible Verses

Note this list is not exhaustive. Please consult your own concordance, Biblegateway.com, or another reliable Bible resource for additional topics and references. When choosing a verse or verses, check them out in various translations and use the one that most resonates with you.

Adoption

- Esther 2:7
- Ephesians 1:5

Adversity

- Psalm 30:11
- Psalm 46:1
- Psalm 147:3
- Isaiah 61:3
- John 14:1
- John 14:18
- John 16:33
- Romans 12:12
- Philippians 4:6, 7
- 1 Peter 5:7-11

Animals, Fish

- Genesis 120-22
- Genesis 1:24-25
- Psalm 8:6-9
- Psalm 34:10
- Psalm 36:5-6
- Psalm 50:10
- Psalm 150:6
- Jeremiah 27:5
- Ezekiel 38:20

Birth

- Genesis 35:17
- Job 10:8
- Psalm 22:9
- Psalm 139:14-16

- Ecclesiastes 11:5
- Isaiah 44:24
- Luke 1:66
- Luke 2:10
- John 16:21

Blessings

- 1 Chronicles 4:10
- Psalm 90:17
- Proverbs 3:13
- 1 Corinthians 2:9-10
- Ephesians 2:8

Celebrations

- Numbers 6:24-26
- Nehemiah 12:27
- Job 8:21
- Psalm 9:1
- Psalm 126:2-3
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Philippians 4:4

Children/Youth

- Genesis 33:5
- Numbers 6:24-26
- Deuteronomy 14:1
- Psalm 8:2
- Psalm 78:4
- Psalm 100:3
- Psalm 115:14
- Psalm 127:3
- Proverbs 10:5

- Proverbs 14:26
- Proverbs 15:20
- Proverbs 20:7
- Proverbs 20:11
- Proverbs 22:6
- Proverbs 23:24
- Ecclesiastes 12:1
- Isaiah 40:11
- Isaiah 44:3
- Isaiah 54:13
- Isaiah 59:21
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Mark 10:14
- 1 Timothy 4:12
- 2 Peter 3:18
- 3 John 1:4

Christmas

- Isaiah 9:6
- Luke 2:10
- Luke 2:11
- Luke 2:14
- John 1:1,14
- Hebrews 1:6

Clothes

- 2 Chronicles 6:41
- Proverbs 31: 22
- Proverbs 31:25
- Isaiah 61:10
- Romans 13:12
- Romans 13:14

- Galatians 3: 26-28
- Colossians 3:12
- 1 Peter 5:5b

Courage

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Joshua 1:9
- 2 Samuel 22:2b-3
- 2 Samuel 22:31 T
- 2 Samuel 22:35 T
- 2 Chronicles 15:7
- Psalm 10:17
- Psalm 27:14
- Psalm 35:2
- Daniel 10:19
- Matthew 14:27
- Acts 27:25
- Romans 15:4
- Romans 15:5
- 1 Corinthians 16:13
- Galatians 6:9-10
- Ephesians 6:10
- Ephesians 6:11
- Ephesians 6:13
- 1 Timothy 1:18, 19
- 2 Timothy 2:3
- 2 Timothy 4:7

Creation

- 1 Chronicles 16:31-33
- Job 37:14
- Job 38:4b
- Psalm 19:1-2
- Psalm 23:1-2
- Psalm 36:5-6
- Psalm 42:1
- Psalm 57:5
- Psalm 65: 5-13
- Psalm 95:4-5
- Psalm 98:7-9
- Psalm 104:10
- Psalm 104:24
- Psalm 118:24
- Psalm 121:1-2
- Psalm 146:6
- Ecclesiastes 1:7

- Isaiah 44:23
- Isaiah 55:12
- Jeremiah 5:22
- Hebrews 11:3
- Psalm 148

Death

- Psalm 23:6
- Psalm 147:3
- Ecclesiastes 12: 6, 7
- Isaiah 57:1-2
- 1 Corinthians 1:8
- 2 Corinthians 5:1
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Decisions

- Psalm 119:165
- Proverbs 21:3
- Proverbs 22:1 T
- Matthew 5: 10-12 T

Easter

- Matthew 28:5-6
- Romans 8:11
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
- Ephesians 5:2 T

Education/Wisdom

- Psalm 16:7
- Proverbs 1:2
- Proverbs 1:5
- Psalm 136:1-9
- Proverbs 2:6
- Proverbs 2:10-11
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Proverbs 3:13
- Proverbs 3:17
- Proverbs 4:7
- Proverbs 6:20-23
- Proverbs 9:9
- Proverbs 9:10
- Proverbs 9:11
- Proverbs 18:15
- Proverbs 19:20
- Proverbs 23:12

Encouragement

- Romans 12:6-8
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14
- 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
- Hebrews 3:13
- Hebrews 10:25

Faith and Faithfulness

- Joshua 24:14
- 1 Samuel 26:23
- Nehemiah 12:27
- Psalm 36:5
- Psalm 86:15
- Psalm 89:1
- Psalm 89:8
- Psalm 100:5
- Psalm 108:4
- Psalm 117:2
- Psalm 119:90
- Psalm 145:13
- Proverbs 3:3
- Lamentations 3:22-23
- Romans 4:5
- Galatians 5:22-23
- Galatians 6:9
- Hebrews 11:1

Family

- Joshua 24:15
- Job 41:17
- Psalm 133:1
- Proverbs 22:1
- Ecclesiastes 9:17
- Romans 12:5

Fathers

- Psalm 103:13
- Proverbs 1:8
- Proverbs 4:1
- Proverbs 23:24
- Proverbs 10:1
- Proverbs 13:1
- Proverbs 15:5
- Proverbs 15:20

- Proverbs 23:24
- Proverbs 29:3
- Isaiah 64:8
- Ephesians 6:1-3
- Hebrews 12:10
- 2 John 1:4

Friends

- Psalm 16:3
- Proverbs 4:18
- Proverbs 13:20
- Proverbs 17:17
- Proverbs 18:24
- Proverbs 22: 24-25
- Ecclesiastes 4:12
- John 15:12-13
- Romans 12:10
- Romans 12:16
- 1 John 1:7
- 1 John 4:11
- Jude 1:20

Future Plans

- 2 Chronicles 16:9
- Psalm 16:7-8
- Psalm 20:4
- Psalm 37:37
- Proverbs 16:3
- Proverbs 19: 21
- Proverbs 23:17-18
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Romans 12:12
- Romans 15: 13
- 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Giving

- Ecclesiastes 11:1
- Proverbs 19:17
- James 1:17

Growing

- Job 17:9
- Psalm 92:12
- Isaiah 66:14
- Luke 2:40

Hair

- Leviticus 10:6
- Leviticus 13:40
- Proverbs 16:31
- Proverbs 20:29
- Isaiah 46:4
- Matthew 10:29-31
- Luke 12:7
- 1 Peter 3:3

Hands/Handiwork

- Genesis 31:42
- Exodus 9:29
- Exodus 15:17
- Deuteronomy 24:19
- Deuteronomy 33:11
- Judges 7:11
- Joshua 9:25
- 2 Samuel 2:7
- Ezra 5:8
- Nehemiah 2:18
- Psalm 90:17
- Ecclesiastes 9:10

Health/Healing

- Psalm 30:2
- Psalm 147:3
- Proverbs 18:14
- Isaiah 40:28-31
- Jeremiah 30:17

Heritage

- Deuteronomy 4:9
- Joshua 24:27
- 1 Chronicles 16:11-12
- 1 Chronicles 28:9
- Psalm 22:4
- Psalm 22:30-31
- Psalm 34:11
- Psalm 44:1
- Psalm 77:11
- Psalm 103:17
- Psalm 107:43
- Psalm 127:3
- Psalm 78:2-6
- Psalm 145:4-7

- Proverbs 13:22
- Proverbs 20:7
- Isaiah 38:19

Home/Land

- Deuteronomy 26:11
- Joshua 24:15
- 1 Chronicles 4:10
- Psalm 16:6
- Psalm 127:1
- Proverbs 24:3

Joy

- Nehemiah 8:10
- Psalm 5:11
- Psalm 19:8
- Psalm 20:5
- Psalm 28:7
- Psalm 33:1
- Psalm 47:1
- Psalm 51:10-12
- Psalm 68:3
- Psalm 92:4
- Psalm 94:19
- Proverbs 15:30
- Proverbs 25:25
- Ecclesiastes 11:9
- Isaiah 55:12
- Luke 6:23
- John 15:10-12
- Romans 12:12
- Romans 15:13
- Galatians 5:22
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
- Hebrews 1:9
- James 1:2-4
- 1 John 1:4
- 3 John 1:4

Life's Journey

- 2 Samuel 22:34
- 2 Samuel 22:37
- 2 Chronicles 16:9
- Psalm 17:5
- Psalm 37:23
- Psalm 37:34

- Psalm 66:9
- Psalm 119:105
- Psalm 121:3
- Psalm 139:3
- Psalm 139:16
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Proverbs 4:26
- Ecclesiastes 3:1
- Isaiah 30:21
- Isaiah 48:17
- Jeremiah 29:11-13

Love

- Song of Solomon 1:2
- Song of Solomon 2:10. 16
- Song of Solomon 3:4
- Romans 12:10
- Romans 13:8
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- 1 Corinthians 13:13
- Galatians 5:22-23
- 1 John 4:7

Marriage/Anniversary

- Genesis 2:18
- Genesis 2:24
- Psalm 126:3
- Psalm 128:3
- Proverbs 5:18
- Proverbs 12:4
- Proverbs 18:22
- Proverbs 19:14
- Song of Solomon 3:11
- Malachi 2:15
- Matthew 19:6
- 1 Corinthians 13:13
- Ephesians 5:28
- Ephesians 5:31
- Hebrews 13:4a

Memoirs/Testimony

- Deuteronomy 4:9
- Joshua 24:27
- 1 Chronicles 16:11-12
- 1 Chronicles 16:23-24
- 1 Chronicles 28:9

- Job 8:8-10
- Job 19:23
- Psalm 10:14, 18
- Psalm 22:30-31
- Psalm 40:5
- Psalm 77:11
- Psalm 78:2-6
- Psalm 113:9
- Psalm 145:4-7
- Proverbs 13:22
- Isaiah 38:19
- Isaiah 46:9
- Joel 1:3
- Malachi 3:16
- Acts 26:1-29
- 1 John 1:4

Mothers

- Proverbs 23:25
- Proverbs 31:28, 31
- Isaiah 66:13
- Ezekiel 5:1

Music

- 2 Chronicles 5:13
- Job 21:11
- Psalm 30:11
- Psalm 98:4
- Psalm 105:2-3
- Psalm 149:11
- Psalm 150:3-6
- Song of Solomon 2:12
- Isaiah 55:12
- 1 Corinthians 14:15
- Ephesians 5:19

Name

- Proverbs 22:1
- Ecclesiastes 7:1

New Year

- Psalm 65:11

Night

- Psalm 8:3-9
- Psalm 104:19

- Psalm 147:4
- Psalm 148:3-4
- Ecclesiastes 1:5

Parents

- Exodus 20:12
- Proverbs 17: 6
- Proverbs 23:25
- Malachi 4:6
- Colossians 3:20

Patriotism

- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Psalm 147:14
- John 8:36

Plants and Trees

- Genesis 2:9
- Proverbs 13:2
- Isaiah 58:11
- 1 Corinthians 3:6
- 1 Timothy 6:8

Praise and Worship

- Genesis 24:48
- Psalm 9:11
- Psalm 13:6
- Psalm 18:46
- Psalm 26:8
- Psalm 26:12
- Psalm 27:4
- Psalm 40:3
- Psalm 66:1-2
- Psalm 84:1
- Psalm 100:2
- Psalm 103:1
- Psalm 119:11
- Psalm 122:1
- Psalm 149:3
- Psalm 150:3-6
- Proverbs 30:5
- Ephesians 5:19-20
- Philippians 2:9-11
- Revelation 5:13

Prayer

- 1 Chronicles 4:10b
- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Ezra 8:23
- Psalm 20:5
- Psalm 37:4-5
- Psalm 138:3
- Jeremiah 33:3
- Romans 8:26 N
- Ephesians 6:18
- James 5:16

Protection

- 1 Samuel 14:45
- 2 Samuel 22:2-3
- 2 Samuel 22:31
- Psalm 16:1
- Psalm 16:8
- Psalm 20:7
- Psalm 34:7
- Psalm 34:15
- Psalm 37:3
- Psalm 91
- Psalm 121:1-2
- Isaiah 43:1-2
- Isaiah 64:4
- Matthew 10:29-31

Provisions

- Deuteronomy 26:11
- Psalm 34:9-10
- Psalm 34:10-11
- Psalm 40:5
- Psalm 127: 2
- 1 Corinthians 2:9

Salvation/Baptism

- Psalms 40:2
- Psalm 51:7
- John 3:16-17
- John 6:47
- John 8:12
- Acts 2:38
- Romans 3:22
- Romans 6:4
- Romans 8:1

- Romans 10:9
- Ephesians 4:5
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 1 John 1:9

Seasons

- Job 37:5- 6
- Job 37: 10
- Psalm 74:17
- Psalm 147:8
- Psalm 147:16
- Psalm. 147:18
- Proverbs 31:21
- Song of Solomon 2:12
- Ecclesiastes 3:1
- Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Isaiah 55:10
- Ezekiel 34:26
- Habakkuk 3:3b

Seniors

- Psalm 37:25
- Psalm 92:14
- Psalm 128:6
- Proverbs 17:6
- Proverbs 20:29

Serving

- Psalm 41:1
- Psalm 67:3
- Psalm 146:7
- Proverbs 22:9
- Proverbs 31:20
- Isaiah 52:7
- Isaiah 61:1
- Matthew 4:19
- Matthew 28:19-20
- Romans 12:13
- Romans 12:14

Sleep

- Psalm 3:5
- Psalm 4:8
- Psalm 29:11
- Psalm 37:7
- Psalm 119:165

- Psalm 127:2b
- Proverbs 3:24
- Proverbs 6:10 , 20-22
- Proverbs 14:30
- Ecclesiastes 5:12a
- Isaiah 26:3
- Jeremiah 31:26

Sorrow

- Psalm 30:5
- Matthew 5:4
- 2 Corinthians 1:7
- 2 Corinthians 7:10
- 2 Timothy 2:3
- Revelation 21:4

Sports

- Psalm 31:24
- 1 Corinthians 6:19
- 1 Corinthians 9:23-25
- Philippians 3:14
- Philippians 4:13
- 2 Timothy 4:7
- James 1:2-4

Standing/Walking

- 2 Samuel 22:37
- Psalm 128:1
- Proverbs 20:7
- Isaiah 40:31
- 1 Corinthians 16:13
- 1 John 1:7
- 3 John 1:4

Thankfulness

- 1 Chronicles 16:34
- Psalm 34:1
- Psalm 34:8
- Psalm 59:17
- Psalm 65:11
- Psalm 78:4
- Psalm 96:4
- Psalm 136:1
- 2 Corinthians 9:15
- Ephesians 5:20

Appendix 5: Topical Bible Verses

Travel

- Joshua 1:9
- Psalm 18:10
- Psalm 55:6
- Psalm 107:23
- Isaiah 60:8

Trust

- Psalm 37:3-9
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Isaiah 41:10

Work/Purpose

- 1 Chronicles 28:20
- Psalm 37:23
- Psalm 90:17
- Proverbs 10:4
- Proverbs 10:5 T
- Proverbs 10:16
- Proverbs 16:3
- Proverbs 31:26
- Proverbs 31:30-31
- Ecclesiastes 3:1

- Ecclesiastes 9:10a
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Matthew 5:15-16
- Romans 12:11
- Ephesians 2:10
- Ephesians 6:7
- 2 Timothy 1:14
- 2 Timothy 3:16

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Every life has a story. Too many go untold.

Many people find themselves saying, “One day I’ll write my story,” but life tends to get in the way. This course is here to provide you with the support, community, and motivation you need to turn that dream into a reality.

Yes, it will take time out of your busy schedule, but along the way, you’ll see how God has been working behind the scenes, drawing you closer to Him. You’ll find yourself connecting with others, laughing and crying together, and discovering things about yourself you hadn’t expected. Their stories will bring back your own memories, and together, you’ll deepen your friendships, making the whole experience even more meaningful and special.

This manual offers practical writing tips, memory joggers, useful resources, and lessons to help you explore the different stages of life, special moments, and favourite things that have shaped who you are today. You’ll learn how to share your stories meaningfully—whether through memoirs, short articles, letters to family and friends, or other creative formats.

Gladys Thompson’s passion for memoirs—including extensive reading on the subject, attending workshops, and writing several books about family members and ancestors—led her to launch *Connecting Through Life Stories* in 2023, a project designed to inspire members of The Salvation Army in Oshawa to share how God has worked in their lives.



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Get more information at
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