

SESSIONS 3 & 4: Our Theological Autobiographies

Session: In groups of 6: Three participants take 15 minutes each to tell their theological autobiography from the prepared worksheet. Other participants are assigned to ask a specific style of question for each presentation. Feedback will take 10 minutes for each Storyteller. Over the course of the two sessions, every participant will do six things: Tell his/her story (once), practice each listening skill or ask each style of question of another participant (four times), and offer a summary impression of one story (once). *If you only have groups of 5, one question style is omitted from the tasks.*

OUTLINE OF SCHEDULE:

10 min: Gathering Words and Processing Homework

25 min: Theological Autobiography & Follow-up

15 min= Story

10 min= Responses by the group

25 min: Next Theological Autobiography & Follow-up

25 min: Next Theological Autobiography & Follow-up

05 min: Assignment and Closing Words

COPIES THAT NEED TO BE MADE:

1 copy per group

Group chart grid [3 are on Master Sheet]

Directions for Storytelling (1 pg)

1 copy per participant

Assignment Chart (1 pg)

Gathering and Closing Words (1 pg)

Homework: The Art of Careful Description (1 pg)

2 copies per participant

Notes and Impressions (1 pg for each session)

SPECIAL NOTE:

Gathering and Closing Words are the lyrics to *Bring Many Names* by Brian Wren. It is always preferable to sing a song! The song appears in these hymnals:

- Chalice Hymnal, #10
- Church Hymnary (4th ed.) #134
- Common Praise (1998) #395
- Community of Christ Sings #5
- Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal #760
- Hymns of Light and Truth #6
- Sing the Faith #2047
- Singing the Living Tradition #23
- The Faith We Sing #2047
- The New Century Hymnal #11
- Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book II #182
- Voices United: The Hymn and Worship Book of The United Church of Canada #268

The music can be purchased for \$1.99 at www.hymnary.org if you don't own one of these hymnals.

A piano recording that's easy to sing with is available at

http://www.stafaband.info/download/mp3/lagu_bring_many_names/

SESSIONS 3 & 4: INSTRUCTOR'S CONTENT

- (1) Assign groups.
- (2) If your full group is small enough for it to be feasible, it will save time if you fill out the assignments on the group chart before the meeting.
- (3) Have participants transfer assignments to their individual charts so they can focus on their tasks for each person.
- (4) Offer Gathering Words and Instructions, distribute Directions and Notes & Impressions Worksheets
- (5) Set groups off to work. Circulate in the room in case someone needs help. You are the timekeeper

SAMPLE GROUP CHART: ONE PER GROUP						
(1) GROUP MEMBER NAMES	(2) STORY- TELLER	Read assignments across from storyteller				
		RESTATE	TARGET	BROADEN	EMPATHIZE	SUMMARIZE
Alex	Alex	Bob	Carol	Don	Ed	Fran
Bob	Bob	Carol	Don	Ed	Fran	Alex
Carol	Carol	Don	Ed	Fran	Alex	Bob
Don	Don	Ed	Fran	Alex	Bob	Carol
Ed	Ed	Fran	Alex	Bob	Carol	Don
Fran	Fran	Alex	Bob	Carol	Don	Ed

SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL CHART: EACH PARTICIPANT				
<i>(3) This sample chart belongs to Alex</i>				
Directions: Blah, blah , blah...				
RESTATE	TARGET	BROADEN	EMPATHIZE	SUMMARIZE
Fran	Ed	Don	Carol	Bob

After the first Theological Autobiography, call time and congratulate the brave participants who went first! Then remind the group of these points:

- We are looking at ideas today not personal experiences. We are sharing what we have distilled from our experiences rather than the stories themselves. However, these are still very personal stories so remember to listen to each other with great care.
- Each story takes no more than 15 minutes and the responses take 10 minutes pooled together.

GATHERING & CLOSING WORDS

GATHERING WORDS: Bring Many Names (vss. 1-3)

Bring many names, beautiful and good,
celebrate, in parable and story,
holiness in glory, living, loving God.
Hail and hosanna! Bring many names!

Strong mother God, working night and day,
planning all the wonders of creation,
setting each equation, genius at play:
Hail and hosanna, strong mother God!

Warm father God, hugging every child,
feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving till we're reconciled:
Hail and hosanna, warm father God!

CLOSING WORDS: Bring Many Names (vss. 4-6)

Old, aching God, grey with endless care,
calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises, wiser than despair:
Hail and hosanna, old aching God!

Young, growing God, eager, on the move,
saying no to falsehood and unkindness,
crying out for justice, giving all you have:
Hail and hosanna, young, growing God!

Great, living God, never fully known,
joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home:
Hail and hosanna, great, living God!

BRING MANY NAMES

Words: Brian Wren

Words © 1989, revised 1994 by Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188.

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Music: Westchase, Waterdown

Meter: 9 10 11 9

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NOTES & IMPRESSIONS

<i>NAME</i>	HUMANITY	
	DIVINITY	
	SPIRITUAL CONCEPTS	
	MENTAL MODELS	
	COMMUNITY	
	TWEAKINGS	
<i>NAME</i>	HUMANITY	
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	COMMUNITY	
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GROUP MEMBER NAMES	STORY-TELLER	RESTATE	TARGET	BROADEN	EMPATHIZE	SUMMARIZE

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ASSIGNMENT CHART

**This activity will stretch over 2 sessions. Each member in the group will be the Storyteller once and a Listener five times.
 You will do a different task each time you are the Listener.**

Before you begin, assign tasks to group members.

**On this chart, write the name of each Storyteller below the task you are assigned to for them.
 The Notes & Impressions worksheet is for makes annotations while the others are storytelling.**

RESTATE	CLARIFY WITH TARGETED QUESTION	CLARIFY WITH BROADENING QUESTION	EMPATHIZE	SUMMARIZE
NAME	NAME	NAME	NAME	NAME

DIRECTIONS FOR STORYTELLING & GROUP PROCESS

1) You will do each task one time over the period of the next two sessions. In this session, you will hear three stories. As quickly as possible, begin filling in your assignment chart so you know which task you will be doing for each group member. In this process each one of you will have the opportunity to do every task and respond to all other group members. However, you will be focused on just one task at a time.

2) After your chart is filled in and you're clear on your duties let one group member be the first Storyteller. Use the handout Notes & Impressions to keep track of your thoughts as the storyteller speaks. The Storyteller may take up to 15 minutes to tell his or her story.

When you are the Storyteller, make every attempt to work down the entire list of questions on your preparation sheet so that your listeners will have a sense of your theological framework. Although 15 minutes will only allow you to offer an outline of your framework, if you omit any of the categories that outline will be seriously deficient.

3) When the Storyteller is finished, formulate the response with which you have been tasked and write it on your assignment chart. The group of Listeners has just 10 minutes to respond. It does not matter in which order the tasks are done only that each member of the group speaks in every conversation.

Please remember that Theology is both a framework for understanding Reality and the work of constructing that framework. This means that you are listening to a very personal story even if it does not recount a lot of detail about events and people in the Storyteller's life. You can be sure that other members in your group are just as invested in their framework of meaning as you are in yours!

4) Be sure to appreciate the stories that you are privileged to hear. While each task is essential to the process and you want to do it as well as possible, this is not a competitive activity. So do not be afraid to help each other hone your questions or responses to full clarity. This is an opportunity both to be listened to deeply and to practice your listening skills. As much as possible, enjoy the moment!

You should expect to be tired when the session is complete because, as we have noted, listening is hard work. Nevertheless, at the end of two sessions (or six stories) you should have a sense of each other's theology as well as each other's listening skills. This process with its intense focus and your hard work will be key in the foundation of a mentoring community.

HOMWORK SESSIONS 3 & 4

Bring to class with you for Session 5.

Be prepared to describe what you *learned*—not the details of the log or conversation.

Choose and complete ONE of the following:

- ❖ **At lunchtime every day** stop and describe the physical sensations in your body, your affective state, and the environment where you are. Record these in a notebook/journal.
- ❖ **Keep a list** in two columns:
 - One- all the idioms, metaphors, and references you use in the week.
 - Two- all the new images you create in the week.
- ❖ **Keep a list** in two columns:
 - One- all the insights you have and don't act on this week.
 - Two- all the insights others claim and don't act on this week.
- ❖ **Cartoon** in six panels/boxes the Theological Reflection conversation your group had tonight. Be prepared to share it with the large group.
- ❖ **Ask someone close to you** to describe an experience/event in detail and write it down. Guide them to spell out their sense perceptions and answer the journalist's questions. **Or** ask them to describe their feeling state in detail and write it down. Guide them to describe their physical sensations, their affective nuances, and how their environment influences both.

Ask for feedback on how hard it is to describe without judging or interpreting.

NB: Focus only on the skill of description. Do not do the whole conversational process.