

Story: Look Back to Look Forward Reflection

Find a quiet place, carve out some time to settle in and spend some time in reflection and noticing.

Imagine yourself walking down a long hallway. On the walls are paintings that reflect those life-shaping moments in your life. On one side are portraits of experiences that brought you excitement, achievement, and fulfillment. On the other side hang pictures of experiences that caused pain, frustration, and remorse. Walking slowly down the hallway, looking carefully at each painting, is an important step toward understanding who God created you to be. And discovering your Kingdom purpose he has set aside just for you.

SHAPE: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life, Erik Reese

- Take note of those key experiences that come to mind.
- Invite God to help you notice what's most important.
- Invite him to be with you in the celebrations, the challenges, and the hurt.
- Once you've identified those key experiences, take some time to focus on the blessings.

Blessings: What do you notice?

As you imagine walking the hallway with Jesus by your side reflect on each stage of life from childhood until now.

- What moments and seasons of blessing do you notice?
- What meaning does it have for you now?

Take some time to notice what comes to mind and the feelings attached to those memories. These are important pieces of your story.

- Consider the threads of God's blessing, where he has been uniquely present, those seasons of closeness, how he has led you at various points of your life.
- Then consider the brokenness – those places of hurt, disappointment, discouragement, and unmet expectations.

Brokenness: What do you notice?

Imagine walking the hallway with Jesus by your side. Reflect on each stage of life from childhood until now.

As much as we value our strengths, it is often in our brokenness that we discover the ways that Jesus will use us most profoundly

- How has Jesus met me in my challenges pain?
- How might Jesus use my pain for his purpose?
- How might He use my brokenness to help someone else?

Take note of your memories, thoughts and insights as you recall these experiences.

- Allow God's grace to meet you in the blessings and the brokenness.
- Invite his healing presence to those places that still hurt.

As you hold your memories open before God, look over your notes and ask yourself:

- What themes are repeated most often?
- Which memories sparked the most emotion?
- How can your story continue to be written in your church?
- How can your story continue to be written in your community?

Take time to talk to God about your answers as well as your continuing questions about your own story.

We have to trust that our stories deserve to be told. We may discover that the better we tell our stories the better we will want to live them

Henri Nouwen