
Authentic Storytelling

Session One Handout

3 CORE QUESTIONS

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3 CORE QUESTIONS

inform and influence all the true-to-us stories we tell.

1. The first question is about HOME. Our experience and response (and prayerful desires) around this core question points to our current emotional gauge. Either we are settled in this area, or rather restless.
2. The second question is about VOCATION. Our level of satisfaction in this area goes a long way to making our ego strong and generous towards others, or fragile and defensive.
3. The third question that comes through (loud and clear to our listeners) in the stories we tell is about the RELATIONSHIPS that help us find our place in the world; make us feel we *belong* in a profound and even existential way.

Whether we respond in the affirmative to these questions about life, work, friendship and other matters of the heart, mind and spirit, or in the tentative or negative, our stories are part of who we are. They are important. And deserve to be heard.

Our stories are also part of where we're going.

Our stories, like us, are dynamic. And, therefore, well worth exploring. Because the journey is not over. It's ongoing. And along the way, we set up markers along the path. These markers are the times we pause, to tell our story. Or to hear someone else's story. Or go deeper into our own story, quietly, with God, on our own. Each time we come to terms with, and share, our stories, we grow into them. We own them. We make peace with each piece of the puzzle. We become AUTHENTIC STORYTELLERS.

The following WRITING PROMPTS are meant to help you explore the three core questions embedded in our stories. Whether you take a formal, casual, point-form, narrative or poetic approach to the prompts, I trust you will make them your own. And respond in a way authentic to you!

Blessings on your time spent, exploring!

WRITING PROMPTS to EXPLORE 3 CORE QUESTIONS

1. *HOME*. It's a word that evokes different feelings for each one of us. Was it a safe place: somewhere you could be yourself? Feel heard? Grow strong? Learn to take risks and know there would be someone there to catch you if you fell? Was Home a good landing place? And what is it now? How has this changed, for you, over the years? What feelings does the word Home evoke for you? Are there objects or experiences that might encapsulate these feelings for you? Metaphors that might serve to tell the story in a relatable way?

Are you aware how this core question colours the stories you tell? It's either the source and foundation of a solid, trustworthy, healthy emotional place from which you speak, or it's a place that still might need some mending, some tender loving care, some time away alone with you and the Lord to sort out, pray through, heal up. Which is it for you?

What emotions does the very-powerful, always evocative word Home bring to the surface for you, as a child, and as an adult? Where do you come from; and where are you now?

Can you speak from your core on this subject with a sense of peace? Or do you need to find a friend to your soul to help you find the words?

MAKE IT YOUR OWN BY RESPONDING TO THESE QUESTIONS AROUND HOME

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2. *VOCATION*. This is a concept more than a job-description. It's meant to be broad and yet provoke a sense of calling within you. This is a question of how you have been able (or unable) to pursue the passion, profession or projects that speak to you, beyond the boundaries we call home. This is about putting your hand (or mind or heart...) to the proverbial plough; your spiritual vocation is your gift to the world, your offering to God through practical means.

Either you are doing this with regularity and finding satisfaction in this, your life's work. Or you are not.

Whereas Home is the place we are grounded emotionally (or are still looking for, in our wanderings), Vocation is about being grounded in our ego, in our sense of having something of worth to give—and giving it. It's a verb. It's about doing. Not holding back. Moving forward, advancing, gaining through giving. If you're strong in this area and feel satisfied, write about that. Remember the people who helped you find your way. Include them as part of your story.

If this is an area you find yourself striving in, questioning, or pursuing without fruitfulness, then pause. Back up. Go over lost ground, including lost opportunities or lost time. Recover what you can, take back anything that was stolen (or squandered) in terms of your worth, your talents, your purpose, your calling, your Vocation. Take it back. Dust it off and put it to work. It will serve. Write about what you would like to do. Pursue it here, now. On paper. Through words.

Don't let any dream die that still lives within you. Our stories are part of us; they are dynamic. And they wish to live, to the extent we make room, take time, put our hand to whatever type of work we feel called.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN BY RESPONDING TO THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT VOCATION

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3. *RELATIONSHIPS*. Are they robust? Or are they raw? Do they give us a sense of peace and our place in the world, and beyond? Or do they leave us wanting, feeling mostly alone, perhaps even existentially untethered?

This is an important question, very much a part of our core, these relationships or lack thereof. That doesn't make it any easier to respond to, though. It simply means it's worth our time and effort to flesh out what the people in our life mean to us, and why. Each person is unique, meaning each relationship is distinct and every combination of people is the source of endless reflection and observation... So, where to start when it comes to writing about our relationships?

Begin with the person or people you are closest to; this may or may not be someone who feels like a soul mate, or your twin or other half, but simply someone you trust. Someone you turn to, who brings out the best in you. Someone you share life with. Describe how this relationship affects your perspective on life, in general. Does their touch or voice soften how you view others? Does their love for you, expand the love in your own heart? Does their goodness give you faith in a good God, a faithful Creator?

In other words, how does this person expand your horizons? Help you see more clearly? Believe more deeply?

And if your relationship scan finds you coming up empty, or feeling lonelier than when you began, or face-to-face with someone who is more toxic than tender towards you, pause. Sit back. Close your eyes and remember, God is near. We are never truly alone, although without a friend in the world, this can be hard to grasp in our core. This is an existential question to wrestle with.

If you need a friend, I pray you would find one and be one. And in the interim, write about the rawness. The missing piece of the puzzle. The one that got away. It is okay to mourn, to cry out. To search for the one who would be found. Because you are their missing piece, too.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN BY EXPLORING THE NATURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

This is not end. Simply grab a journal and a cup of coffee... and keep the conversation going. Consider sharing your thoughts and prayers with someone you trust. They are real treasures.

Taken together, these three core questions form the backbone of the stories we tell and retell. This an excellent place to start, to sit with these questions, to use these writing prompts to explore the real needs that the Lord would meet, in His Way, in His Time.

Because, beginning, middle and end, we are His.