

I. FAMILY STORIES

Our understanding of who we are begins with the stories the family tells to us and tells about us.

1. How was the concept good person defined in your home? Bad person? What stories were told to illustrate?
2. What stories do you know about your father and mother before they were married? Before they had children? Do they provide any clues to your character?
3. What are your favorite family stories?
4. What are your favorite stories about yourself as a child? Which do you dislike the most? Why? Which do you yourself tell?
5. Which family stories do you think helped shape who you are today—how you see the world, how you see yourself, what your values are, how you relate to others?
6. Which family stories do you embrace and celebrate? Which do you now see as unhealthy and distorted?

II. SCHOOL STORIES

Our individual lives and conceptions are significantly shaped by the stories we hear and embrace in the classroom.

1. What is the earliest story you remember hearing in school?
2. What stories made a strong, immediate impression, perhaps changing the way you thought or felt?
3. Which of your teachers were the best storytellers? What kind of stories did they tell? What specific stories do you remember? What impact did these teachers have on you?
4. What school stories influenced your behavior? Your view of yourself or your possibilities in life? Your values?
5. What kinds of things did you read on your own during the school years? Do you now see any significance to the stories you chose on your own as compared with the stories you were assigned for school?
6. Which schoolmates or teachers were important characters in your school years? What influence did they have on you, for good or for bad? Can you think of specific stories that illustrate that influence?

III. RELIGIOUS STORIES

The great majority of people in the world have grown up with some degree of religious influence. The church, the synagogue, the mosque, the shrine, and the temple tell the most powerful stories of all.

1. What were your childhood response to stories of the miraculous and supernatural?
2. What were your favorite stories from the Bible (or other sacred scripture) at various times in your life? Why do you think you liked these best?
3. What was your early image of God? What stories—from the Bible, church, or family—contributed to that image?
4. What are some of your own stories of religious experience? How have these experiences and stories shaped your life? What is your present attitude toward them?

IV. CULTURE STORIES

Stories flow from the television, radio, DVDs, movies, and even from the Internet. All of them advocate something, an attitude, an outlook, a value, a fact, a product, an experience.

1. What are you favorite novels or short stories; your favorite myths, folktales, and children's stories? Why do you like them? Have any of them changed the way you

- think about yourself or life? What characters have you closely identified with and why?
2. What television shows, single or a series, has had an impact on you? What was powerful about them? Who were the memorable characters? How did they affect you and why?
 3. What stories do advertisers tell us? About our bodies? About our values? About what we want and what we need? About what constitutes success or happiness?
 4. How have your political, economic, and social views been influenced by stories? What relevant stories did you hear growing up; what stories from popular culture and the media? What stories do you now tell to support your views? What stories from your own life experience are relevant here? Who are your heroes in these areas? What choices did they make that you admire? Who are your villains?

V. LIFE-DEFINING STORIES

1. Can you identify some of the large-scale, defining stories in your life? (Think about some of the preceding categories: family, education, religious, politics, popular culture, and so on.)
2. What qualities do you want the story of your life to have? What qualities does it currently have?
3. How would you like your story to end? What would you like to be said of your life by those who live after you? What can you do to make that more likely?
4. How would you describe yourself as a character in your own story? What choices have you made in the past that have contributed to your story being what it now is? What choices can you make to have it be what you want it to be in the future?
5. Who are other important characters in your story? What role do they play? Have they enhanced or diminished your story?
6. What healthy and healing stories are available to you that you might want to make part of your own?

***Adapted from *Tell Me a Story* by Daniel Taylor**