

Overview

How do you make sense of your life story so far, all that has happened to you and all that you have chosen to do? In what ways do you see yourself as being on a journey and what might the next stage of it open up for you and others? Here is an opportunity to reflect on our story and how we have been shaped to be the people we are today. We will also consider how our relationship with God has been part of our story. This will open up for us the possibility to consider who we might yet become in God.

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions

Facilitator

Group members will need to have completed the Life Line exercise – see the separate ‘Exercise : Life Line’ sheet and distribute beforehand. Offer a quick overview of this session. You may be doing this session as a one off topic as part of an exploration of vocation or exploration of discipleship. It is a great way for a group to get to know one another although it can bring up some hard and sad memories as well as joyful.

Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members

Facilitator

Invite the group members to share their lifeline story uninterrupted for at least 5 minutes whilst everyone listens. It is important to have a way to ration time. A large visible egg timer that lasts 5 minutes can be useful and individuals can manage themselves. Make sure everyone shares. It is not essential for the facilitator to share unless they feel the need to do so. Ask for a volunteer to start and let members of the group decide the order in which they want to share.

There is no need to comment at the end of an individual’s story unless something needs to be said. It might be worth exploring a little how individuals see the relationship between life events and their encounter with God. Thank each member for sharing their story.

Activity

‘Life must be lived forward, but can only be understood backward’

Soren Kierkegaard, Danish Philosopher and Theologian (1813-1845)

Share your stories from the Lifeline Exercise in turn

Facilitator

At the end of the sharing exercise, ask the group to comment on what they found helpful about listening to each others stories and hearing their own. Has anyone developed any new insights into themselves from listening to the experience of others?

Discussion

What have we valued from listening to each others stories?

Facilitator

Summarise any significant points from the discussion – don’t labour it.

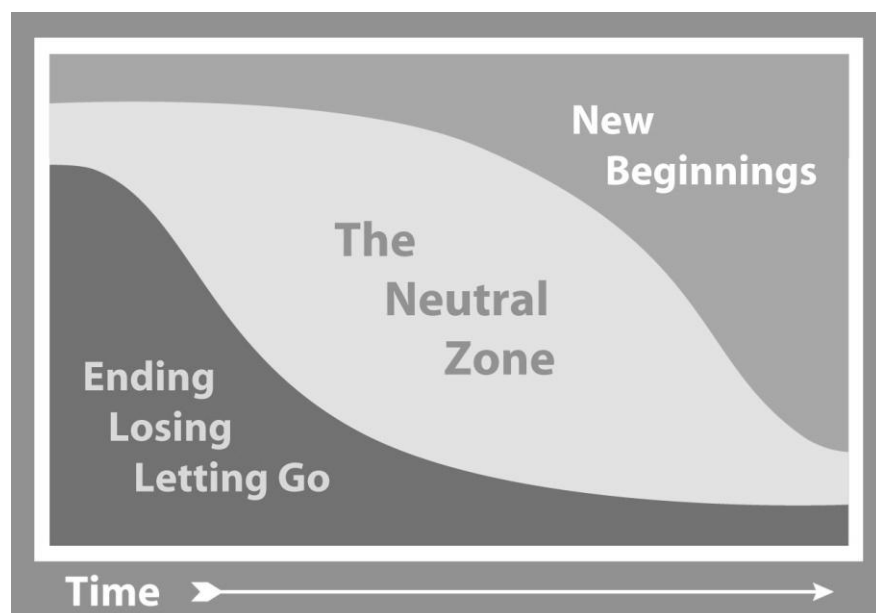
Facilitator

Introduce the perspective ‘Transitions’ briefly to the group as a way of exploring where people are now in their own journeys, and to what extent they feel that they are in stage of transition. We also address the subject of Transitions in ‘Signposts to New Beginnings’ (Topic VOC6)

Perspective

Transitions

Our whole life can be considered to be a series of transitions from one stage to another and transitions never come to end. Even death opens up yet another stage in our journey of faith. There are some obvious major transitions that mark the key stages of our lives. Then there are the transitions that come upon us like the loss of a job or a relationship or an event that hits us out of the blue. There are transitions that affect us because others are going through their own changes like the impact of children starting school or leaving home etc. Most transitions have a predictable pattern but because they are about how we feel and react, they are unique to each of us individually and no one is experiencing the process of change in quite the same way. Here is a model that suggests the broad structure of transitions. There are three phases.



Model taken from 'Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change' by William Bridges, (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009)

The Structure of Transitions

Transition is the process of letting go of the way things used to be and taking hold of the way they will become.

In between letting go and taking hold again, there is a chaotic but potentially creative 'neutral zone' when things aren't the old way, but aren't really a new way either yet.

Ending / Letting Go

To enable us to move on to new beginning there invariably have to be some endings. In the ending phase we lose or let go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old attitudes, even our self-image. We may resist this ending for a while. We may try to talk ourselves out of what we are feeling and then we give in, we may be swept by feelings of sadness and anger.

Neutral Zone

The neutral zone can either be a period of disorientation or a highly creative period of new possibilities. We can feel caught between old and new and can end up immobilised. Dangers of the neutral zone are that anxiety rises and motivation falls, we doubt ourselves, energy is drained into coping tactics and our effectiveness falls. This is also however a time ripe for creative opportunity.

Beginning Again

Finally, we take hold of and identify with some new outlook and some new reality as well as new attitudes and a new self-image. When we have done this, we feel that we are finally starting a new chapter in our lives. No matter how impossible it was to imagine a future earlier, life now feels as though it is back on its track again. We have a new sense of ourselves, a new outlook, a new sense of purpose and possibility.

Facilitator

Having briefly explained the model of transitions, ask the members of the group to comment about where they are now in the process of transition –are they coming into a transition in the middle, exploring options, starting new beginnings or not in any transition at all?

Discussion

Are you currently in a process of transition? If so, what stage are you at?

Facilitator

Encourage group members to state where they think that they are now. If you are doing this session as part of a process of exploring vocation, you might like to ask people what they hope to get out of this process of exploring vocation. You may have done that in an earlier session. Asking at this stage might also help people to clarify their aims in the light of this discussion on transitions

Question

What would you hope to get out of exploring your vocation at this time?

Facilitator

During the week you might like to reflect on:



Facilitator

Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session and ask them to share quickly 1 or 2 points.

Ponder

What did you learn from this session?



Facilitator

The group should read Psalm 23 as a closing prayer

Prayer

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
Your rod and your staff — they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Psalm 23 (NRSV)