

Finding Your Story

Session 1, Sunday, March 7, 2021

We will use the techniques we learn in this class to remember who we are and whose we are. We'll spend our time learning about our personal lives and finding our memories while reflecting on our own stories. Most people think that they have forgotten events, people, and places in their past. The exercises we will use will help you find those memories. Most people who engage in these exercises find memories that they think were lost. Uncovering past memories may reveal dangerous and damaging hidden remembrances. If you ever begin to feel uncomfortable while doing anything in this class, please treat yourself with care and seek assistance if necessary. Don't push yourself if you feel uncomfortable.

Using handouts available on the FCC website, we'll learn mapping exercises, use checklists, and engage in techniques to make our memories into memoirs. We'll learn how to access memories of our lives and of people, places, and events we may not have previously remembered. Once you've begun, you'll have the material to write your own memoir.

An optional exercise using the techniques we'll learn today is available to use next week when we will not meet together. It's an exercise designed to help you envision Jesus in the wilderness. Click on Lent Exercise to access it. It will also help you practice the mapping we'll learn today and you may come back to it to use the techniques we learn later,

All materials will be posted on the church website. You may also use these techniques and handouts to interview and talk with relatives and friends to assist them in preserving memories for future generations. You will need to bring blank pieces of paper both lined and unlined and a pen or pencil to our Zoom sessions. You don't need new paper. Sometimes, using discarded paper is freeing.

If you want to learn more, *Writing Life Stories: How to Make Memories into Memoirs, Ideas Into Essays, and Life Into Literature* by Bill Roorbach is an excellent guide.

Mapping Memories

“All my stories have been written with material that was gathered — no, God save us! not gathered but absorbed — before I was fifteen years

— Willa Cather

- Make a map of the earliest neighborhood you can remember. Include as much detail as you can. Who lived where? What were the secret places? Where did your friends live? Where did your siblings hang out? What places were off-limits or prohibited to you?
- Make your map any way you wish. The drawing isn't important. Finding memories is the goal.
- Recall things you can see in your mind's eye and draw them on your map. Some examples are fallout shelters, places hoboes supposedly lived, a lamplighter and gas lamps, shortcuts, a big tree you climbed, a swing set, a garden, places everyone played, delivery people (the milkman, the Omar bread man, the morning paper boy, the afternoon paperboy, the mailman who came twice a day, the egg lady).
- Write a map story. Tell a story of something that happened in a place depicted on your map. Don't edit. Keep writing. Tell everything. You can delete and edit later. If you get stuck, don't worry. We'll learn exercises to help you find words later.
- Flannery O'Connor wrote, "If nothing happens, it's not a story." Tell something that happened in the place you've drawn. Don't describe, you can add that later. Tell something that you or someone else did.
- Later, you may want to draw a map of your childhood home and draw the objects in your room or the room where you spent most of your time with your family. You could draw a map of your grandparents' houses and recall memories of meals or gatherings there. You could draw a map of your first church and what you did there. Don't be surprised if these maps include odd or annoying relatives, neighbors, or church folk that you'd forgotten.
- Keep drawing maps. Draw them quickly. Put them aside to use when you need to find memories.