

Connection Church

DESIGN - E - Experiences

OPENING

- Recap: Roadmap to our DESIGN — We are seeking God for a ministry **destination** that is based on HIS calling, and along the way we want our **Spiritual Gifts** to sharpen for the task, and our **experiences** to find their place in God's story.
- NMM February 19th Handout
 - Beautiful reminder: our experiences aren't wasted, our story is still being written, and God's grace is big enough to give purpose to it all!

BIG IDEA: Our experiences need to find their place in God's story.

Ask each question, and pause to give sufficient time to answer.

Biology versus Biography

- What was your relationship like with your parents?
- What were your parents like?
- How many siblings did you have?
 - What number sibling are you?
- What was middle school like for you?
- What was high school like for you?
- What is the scariest thing you have ever experienced?
- Did you have a recurring dream as a kid?
- Growing up, did you feel:
 - Like you were special and destined for something great
 - Like you'd never make it out of your hometown
 - Content with the life your parents provided for you
- What's the earliest memory you have of your childhood?
- What's the earliest memory you have of God?
- What easily stresses you out? Or makes you anxious?

Nature versus Nurture

- Why did you choose the career field you picked?
- How did you get the job that you have now?

- What's something about yourself that you wish you could change?
- Who has been your biggest influence?
- Do you find people come to you for advice, or do you go to people to give advice?
- What are you the most proud of?
- What is normally “bubbling under the surface” for you that most people don’t know about?
 - Positive Examples: joy, humor, love, excitement
 - Negative Examples: condemnation, anger
- What is your greatest achievement?
 - How would you say you achieved it?
- What is your biggest regret?
- Do you consider yourself easy to love or hard to love?
 - Why?
- What are the top 5 moments that have shaped who you are and how you got to where you are today?

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

- Your boss calls you and says they need you to come back to work. There’s a big opportunity to make a big impression with a valued client/constituent. It’s Thursday, and the meeting is Monday, but the boss needs you now. It’s well into the evening.
 - Do you go?
 - What’s your primary motivation for your answer?

Turning Experience to Ministry

When it comes to our experiences, I believe there are 3 aspects:

1. Things we need to let go of and move on from
 - a. Past hurt, preferences, lies we’ve believed
2. Things we need to embrace and accept
 - a. How we’re wired, our limitations, where we’re at in life
3. Things we need to pursue and aspire to
 - a. Character, the image of Christ, the good of the local church, the mission of God

- What is something you've had a hard time moving on from? What memory do you revisit often and it still hurts?
- What is a way that you're wired or designed that you have always wanted to change? Is that desire a Godly one, or one that you came up with?
- What do you aspire to do? Or what position do you aspire to have?
 - What does that aspiration benefit? (Yourself, your family, your church, the Kingdom, God's glory?)

NOW: Rewrite your *How You Got Here* story. Write it with confidence. See if you can eliminate all the BS portions and see if God's hand is more visible throughout it.

HOMEWORK: take someone from class to lunch/coffee. Share your story and invite them to call out the BS!

How to write your “How did I get here?” Story

As you look back over your life, these questions may help get you started and guide you through writing your *How did I get here* story:

Looking Back to Go Forward

- What is that thing, or things, that if you could “just get over it”, would make your life exponentially better?
- What person, place, or thing in your life seems to haunt you?
- What from your past seems to still have control over your life today?
- What from your past causes you to feel, or even live in, a sense of condemnation?

If You Aren’t First, You’re Last (The Ricky Bobby Syndrome)

- How important is success to you? Explain.
- How important is it to you to be the best at what you do? Explain.
- How competitive are you? Explain.
- What stresses you the most? Explain.
- How important is winning to you? What happens when you feel like you aren’t winning? Explain.
- Do you live with an internal scorecard? Do you keep score with God, yourself, and/or others? In other words, do you work to do enough good things to earn God’s approval, make yourself feel good enough, and seem acceptable to, or even better than, others?

Who’s Watching?

- If you are honest with yourself, how much does the acceptance of others drive your decisions? Explain.
- How much does the fear of man hinder you from being yourself? Explain.
- How self-conscious are you about things like appearance, your weight, your reputation, what you drive, where you live, how nice your house is (Especially compared to the houses of those in your friend group.), etc. Explain.
- What causes you to feel unlovable? With God, yourself, and/or others?



FEBRUARY 19

When hardship comes your way, will you tell yourself it's a tool of God's grace and a sign of his love, or will you give in to doubting his goodness?

If you are not on God's redemptive agenda page, you will end up doubting his goodness. One of the most important questions you could ask is: "What is God doing in the here and now?" The follow-up question is also important: "How should I respond to it?" It is nearly impossible to think about life properly and to live appropriately if you are fundamentally confused about what God is doing. If someone were to ask you the first of those two questions, how would you respond? Are you tracking with God's agenda? Are you after what God's after? Are you living in a way that is consistent with what God is doing? Do you struggle with questions of God's love, faithfulness, wisdom, and goodness? Do you ever envy the life of another? Do you sometimes feel alone? Do you fall into thinking that no one understands what you're going through? Are you ever plagued by doubts as to whether Christianity is true after all? If you aren't struggling with these things, are you near someone who is?

Here's the bottom line. Right here, right now, God isn't so much working to deliver to you your personal definition of happiness. He's not committed to give you a predictable schedule, happy relationships, or comfortable surroundings. He hasn't promised you a successful career, a nice place to live, and a community of people who appreciate you. What he has promised you is *himself*, and what he brings to you is the zeal of his transforming grace. No, he's not first working on your happiness; he's committed to your holiness. That doesn't mean he is offering you less than you've hoped for, but much, much more. In grace, he is intent on delivering you from your greatest, deepest, and most long-term problem: sin. He offers you gifts of grace that transcend the moment, that literally are of eternal value. He has not unleashed his power in your life only to deliver to you things that quickly pass away and that have no capacity at all to satisfy your heart.

This means that often when you are tempted to think that God is loving you less because your life is hard, he is actually loving you more. The hardships that you are facing are the tool of his exposing, forgiving, liberating, and transforming grace. These hard moments aren't in your life because God is distant and uncaring, but rather because he loves you so fully. These moments become moments of faith and not doubt when by grace you begin to value what God says is truly valuable. Do you value what God values?

For further study and encouragement: James 1:12-18