**Our Story: Knowing Where God Has Brought Us**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31 |Bob Wade**

**Introduction**: Last week you explored and reflected on how God, through his abiding and empowering of the Holy Spirit, has gifted you for the building up of the church and the mission of God. This week we want you to reflect upon your own story and, specifically, the path God has led you down to get you to this point. God uses key events, influences, and people (both positive and negative) to prepare you to be effective in the work to which he has called you.

**Commentary**

You will have an opportunity to share in your small group a brief summary of the key events, influences, and people God has orchestrated to bring you to where you are today. Know that you won’t be able to share all that you can due to the nature of a small group, so take the time here, with this document, to reflect on God’s work in your life. To give you an example, take a look at the apostle Paul’s story, and then reflect on your own life.

PAUL’S EARLY LIFE

***Key Events, Influences, and People***

* Birth and Heritage: Born in Tarsus, a Roman citizen by birth, from the tribe of Benjamin(Acts 22:3, 22:25–29, Phil. 3:5). Hebrew upbringing and Pharisee training: Educated under Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee teacher (Acts 22:3, 26:4–5, Phil. 3:5).
* Zealous persecutor of the Church: Approved of Stephen's stoning and persecuted Christians with extreme zeal (Acts 7:58–8:3,9:1–2, Gal. 1:13, Phil. 3:6).

PAUL’S CONVERSION

***Key Events, Influences, and People***

* Dramatic encounter with Jesus: Blinded by a light, hears Jesus’ voice, and is transformed (Acts 9:3–9; 22:6–11; 26:12–18).
* Baptized by Ananias: Receives sight and is baptized (Acts 9:10–18; 22:12–16).
* Called to preach to Gentiles: Receives a divine commission (Acts 9:15–16, Gal. 1:15–16).Goes to Arabia, then Damascus: Withdraws before beginning ministry (Gal. 1:17). Returns to Jerusalem after 3 years: Meets Peter and James (Gal. 1:18–19).
* Rejected and distrusted by early believers: Barnabas speaks on his behalf (Acts 9:26–27).

PAUL’S LIFE IN CHRIST

***Key Events, Influences, and People***

Serving/Mission Opportunities (Acts 13–14; 15:36–18:22; 18:23–21:14)

* Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Goes to Europe (Acts 16:9–10) Preaches in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (Mars Hill), Corinth (Acts 17–18).
* Ephesus ministry, major miracles, riot breaks out (Acts 19).

PAUL’S DIFFICULTIES/STRUGGLES/PAIN

* Falsely accused and arrested (Acts 21:27–36). Defends himself before Sanhedrin, then before Felix, Festus, Agrippa (Acts 22–26). Appeals to Caesar as Roman citizen m(Acts 25:10–12). Shipwrecked, bitten by viper on Malta, Under house arrest (Acts 26-28)
* Persistent struggle - possibly physical or spiritual (2 Cor. 12:7–10). Deserted by others, but God stood with him (2 Tim. 4:16–17). Likely executed in Rome under Nero, around AD 64–67 (implied, not detailed in NT).

**Personal Reflection:**

EARLY LIFE - ***Key Events, Influences, and People***

1. Preparation happens in both ordinary days and in intentional ways. Make a list of your key life experiences. Write down what strengths, skills, and character came about from each experience. Look at your list, are there any themes that stand out to you?
2. What skills, talents, lessons, personality, and perspectives did God develop in me, and how might God use them for ministry?

CONVERSION - ***Key Events, Influences, and People***

1. What thing/people did God use to bring you to faith in Christ?
2. How often do you reflect upon that time? Why/why not?

LIFE IN CHRIST - ***Key Events, Influences, and People***

1. What was different about the season of life you were in when you trusted in Christ for salvation? How would you describe your current season? (i.e., what’s the same, what’s changed, etc.).
2. What is your current “spiritual pulse” (fervency, love, depth, sensitivity) for Christ? (ConsiderRev. 2:4-5.)

DIFFICULTIES/STRUGGLES/PAIN - ***Key Events, Influences, and People***

1. What places have you traveled to or seen that broke your heart? This might be an indication of how/where God wants to use you.
2. What have you learned specifically about yourself, your family/friendship circles, and the Lord from the difficult times in your life? Be honest.