

# RETREAT FOUR: LIFE MAPPING

**Objective:** The goal of the fourth retreat is for group members to capture their lives in a visual format, reflect on the most meaningful moments of their lives thus far, and begin to plan for opportunities in the future. The process will help to address the age-old question: “*Why has God put me on this earth?*” Moreover, it should help us to see our journey as a whole, both the way we got here and the way forward. The retreat also provides a terrific way for old and new members to get to know one another, and for individuals (and the group) to find ways to bring their talents into the world.

**Preparation:** Bring the following: a Bible (for readings), an aisle and flip-chart, large pieces of white paper for drawing, 4-5 color markers or crayons per participant, background music (for meditation), digital camera, computer and color printer (if possible), journals and writing implements for each member.

**Agenda:** The following 1.5 day agenda is provided for your inspiration. As with all our sessions, feel free to adapt and modify to the particular needs of your group. And, as always, we welcome you to our website at [www.faithbalance.com](http://www.faithbalance.com) to view sample prayers, Scriptural references, and to share your own ideas and experiences for other men’s faith groups.

## Day One: “Life Mapping”

**Opening Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for the giving this group of men the opportunity to have fellowship together, to examine the life that you have granted each of us, to consider the talents and gifts that you have blessed us with – and to look for ways to bring our talents and gifts individually and collectively back to the world. Remind us always that you have put us on this earth to fulfill a special purpose in your Kingdom. In your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.*

**Group Warm-up:** (10 min - purpose: get to know one another better) Leader suggests that each participant imagine that they are a character in the movie “The Incredibles”. Think of a creative super-hero that describes a talent, skill or personality trait that they are known for. (Examples might include: “Super-dad,” “Mr. Fix-It,” “Romantic Man,” or “Incredible Expanding Man.”) Best character, as voted on by your peers, gets a free pass on dinner.

**Leader begins:** the leader can welcome the group and go through the goals for the group’s time together:

- To learn more about our fellow members of the group & share fellowship
- To observe our current life path (through life maps)
- To better understand the unique talent/gifts God has given us
- To explore ways to give back to the community and
- To have fun!

**Opening Passage from Scripture:** **Ecclesiastes 3** [*A time for Everything*] *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...*

### **Group Discussion (10 min):**

- Leader asks group the following and takes 2-3 responses for each question: Ecclesiastes was written by a King in Jerusalem who was pondering the purpose of life. What did this passage remind you about life? How do the seasons in Ecclesiastes match up to the parts of your life? What season of life are you in right now?
- Leader-led “Childhood Memories” Meditation: (20 min., use soft background music) Many of us are so caught up in being adults in our day-to-day world, we forget what things made us truly happy as kids. Remember what we liked as a child? Remember the dreams that we had? Recall the emotions from simple things? [See Meditation – web content – Addendum A]

### **Written Exercise:**

- Diary entries (5 min) – Leader introduces the use of a Men’s diary that can be used for this retreat and for making notes after weekly get-togethers of the group in the future.
- (15 min) Diary Exercise: Leader: We’re going to take the next 15 minutes for each of us to write a free-form exercise we call “My Life.” In your diaries, write a description of your personal history – an overview of all those key moments in your life that you didn’t take time to jot down into a diary. Think of this as an autobiography – what events, people, decisions would you include? – have group write responses in their diaries.

### **Discussion & Group Meditation:**

- Leader asks: What did you notice about your life when writing out the details? Did anyone have trouble remembering parts of their lives? How did you feel as you recapped certain parts of your life?

### **Bio Break (10 min)**

#### **Group Exercise (90 min):** Leader continues:

- The rest of today will be spent creating something we call a “**Life Map**”.
- Leader continues: If we wanted to plan a trip our home, to the Grand Canyon, there are today some great tools available to help us get there. We can go onto the Internet and download Mapquest directions. Or, we can call AAA and request a personalized, printed/online TripTik. The results in either case map and direct our course. Wouldn’t planning out lives be simplified if we had the tools to emulate MapQuest. A “**Life Map**” is a tool that allows us to lay out our past, present and future in a visual way – and then fill in some of the “legends” to the map as they relate to our gifts and talents, etc.
- Each person should get 2 large pieces of drawing paper and a packet of color markers, crayons, or pencils. Send group members to different locations in the room where they can lay out the paper and draw with colors.
- Leader continues:
  - (first 10 min) Here are instructions for starting your life map: on this large piece of paper, draw your own life in the form of a **journey** – it may be a

map of a **river**, or a **road/highway**, or a **mountain expedition**. Leave space for the future, which we'll be covering tomorrow. For your past, divide your overall drawing into key "Markers" in your life and the path that led from one to the next. Add key places you lived. Add schools you went to. Add key jobs that you held.

- 10 min later, as people are drawing: Don't forget you can add key people you were with at any part of this life map. Add key learnings, experiences, events – good or bad.
- 10 min later, as people complete drawings: Have you missed any key times in your life that aren't on your map? Draw in connections between events, people or locations in your life, if there are any.
- 10 min later, as people are finishing: Mark spots on your Life Map where you noticed that God was with you – perhaps use a special color, figure or letter to represent God.
- 10 min later, as people are putting finishing touches, have everyone stop and listen: Now that you have begun mapping out the **history** of your life thus far, I'd like you to stop drawing for a moment and look at the **very end-point** of your map...the part that shows **today** and the **future**.
- Tomorrow's exercise will involve drawing what we call "Potential Futures" for ourselves – possible next routes in our magnificent lives. Allow your map to end on the edge of the page or go off in a specific direction, so that we can append a **second piece of paper** tomorrow that captures your future direction ideas.

**Closing Passage from Scripture: Deuteronomy 2:7** The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything...

**Closing Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for opening our eyes to the path of our lives. We thank you for being with us through all the legs of our journey. Help us to think more about our lives in the coming day and put in perspective all the precious gifts you have given us in every stage of our journey. Please help us to understand ourselves better so that we can do Your Will. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

#### **Dinner Break and/or break for liturgical service**

- A liturgical service or Catholic Mass – we recommend inviting a local priest, minister, or pastor, to lead this – can be very spiritually fulfilling exercise. Invite them to join you for afternoon discussion, so they can see what the group is working on; invite them to join you for dinner.
- For dinner, the group can share fellowship at a local restaurant or plan cooking a dinner together
- After dinner, the group can sing along to guitar songs (if someone in the group is musically inclined) or watch a related movie
- At some point, leader and others can post the Life Maps that participants have drawn and tape them to the walls for the morning discussion. If possible, take digital photo of each

drawing to share later with the group members. (For inspiration, see our website at [www.boysofbreakfast.com](http://www.boysofbreakfast.com). We encourage you to post your own photos so that other groups might be inspired and print on color paper using computer.)

- Recommended “life-mapping” movies are:
  - Mr. Holland’s Opus (1995) – Richard Dreyfus
  - Pay It Forward (2000) –Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt

## **Day Two: “Taking Your Faith Into the World”**

**Opening Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for the gift of these two days together for our group of men as we seek out knowledge of our true selves and seek to know you better in the process. Thank you for the insights you brought us yesterday on each of our lives thus far. We pray that today you will help us to understand how our historical life maps bring us to the future life maps might look like. Thank you being present with us today as we explore our own lives more fully. Amen.*

**Leader-led discussion:** the leader can recap the first day of activities and the purpose of these activities and ask the members of the group what insights they gained from the previous day’s work.

- The purpose of today is to think more about the maps we’ve created – where we’ve been and where we are going – we’re going to develop several future scenarios going forth from our Maps.
- Brief discussion of movie from previous night – What did you think of the movie? What was the life metaphor that the movie depicted? What was the main character come to realize about his life?

**Opening Passage from Scripture:** **Matthew 7:7-8** - *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

**Opening Exercise: Sharing Life Maps (20 min)** – Leader: We’re going to start today with an exercise that is designed to remind each of us of our greatest values and strengths.

- Leader arranges the group in a semi-circle of chairs, with one chair in the middle, and places the first group member into the middle with his Journal and writing implement
- Instructions given to group: We’re going to take 3-5 min per group member and allow each person to hear from others in the group what his greatest values and strengths are. As you listen to what others have to say, please write down the list in your journal of what you hear. For those of you calling out ideas – we are looking for positive characteristics, values, traits and encouraging facts about each group member. Take turns sharing (you can talk more than once if you like) and talk slowly so that the person can write down what is said.
- Let’s begin with a brief prayer: “God and Lord, we ask you to fill us with the Holy Spirit for this exercise and help us reveal the truth about each individual in our group. Amen”

- Have each group member take turns in the center chair, listening to input from others

**Passage from Scripture: [Matthew 7:7-8](#)** - *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

**Group Exercise: Sharing Life Maps (120-180 min)** – Leader: *In the first part of today’s gathering, we have had an extraordinary chance to get to know one another’s lives. We’ll have each group member stand up and describe their Life Map in detail, and then the group will assist that person in making notations on the Map, finding connections and anchors that help lead to ideas for our “Future Scenarios”.*

- (15-20 min) Have each group member stand in front of his Life Map for 15 minutes with several color markers or crayons in hand, and describe to the rest of the group the following things:
  - Describe how the Map unfolds – does it follow a windy path? straight path? Repeating episodes?
  - Point out key “markers” in life – key places lived; key moments in education, work, family, spiritual development, etc.
  - Where was their relationship with God at each of the (**place a colorful “G”** at the locations where God was most present)
  - What were key values that you learned in life at these key markers (**write the value learned in a different color**)
- (10 min) At the end of each member’s time, ask the person to tell the group some “**Future Scenarios**” that come to mind. Responses can be written on a Flip chart.
  - What are possible directions (list at least 3) that they think their life could take going forward on the Life Map?
  - What options might they have in their lives going forward?
  - What are the core values in their lives that they want to display more of and what are the types of activities they most
  - Remember the exercise of finding our True North. When considering where you want to direct your Life Map in the future, be aware of those people and actions that can help or hinder your journey. If possible mark them down alongside the road. Discuss these items with the other group members.
- Encourage the group to provide additional ideas that the participant may not have considered
- Each group member should write down in their journals ideas that the group helps them brainstorm for their “Future Scenarios”.

**Bio Break (10 min):** Take a Bio Break after half of the group has gone, and repeat for remainder of group

**Passage from Scripture: [1 Corinthians 12:1](#) [Spiritual Gifts]** *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit....*

### **Individual Writing Exercise (30 min)**

- Leader: On the first day of this retreat, we had the chance to draw out our life maps and today we focused those maps in a more meaningful way – identifying key markers in our lives and their significance in adding to our Core Values and key moments with God. And today, in our opening exercise, we wrote out some of the qualities about ourselves that others viewed in us – qualities which we no doubt would like to continue to develop upon in our future lives. It is now time to do some thinking about our Future path in our Life Maps.

**Small Team Exercise: Developing Future Scenarios (40 min)** – Leader breaks group into teams of two. Each team is sent off to walk together and discuss their possible future scenarios. Each person has 20 min to talk about the future scenario then receive some feedback from their partner. Some prompts for discussion are:

- What are the values that you most want to live out, and what
- What scenarios are you considering that would give something back to those around you, your community or your world?
- Which scenario gets you the most excited?

### **Individual Exercise: Completing your Life Map (30 min)**

- Leader has each group member take a second piece of large paper and append it on to the original life map – make the second
- Instructions to the Group: We are now going to work on filling out our Life Maps with the Future Scenarios that we've been thinking about

**Group Discussion: Taking Ones Faith into the World (40 min)** – Leader: The last part of our journey relates to how we'll take our faith into the world after this retreat. We have now sketched out ideas for our Futures – we may not know the exact way that this will manifest itself but we have a better idea of the general map to get there.

- **Group Discussion Questions (30 min)**
  - What are some common themes and elements that are coming up **across** group members?
  - In what way has God revealed that he'd like us to go out and share out Faith in the world?
- **Closing (30 min):** Leader closes the retreat by relating our plans for the future with the range of church, community and global service opportunities that the group has discussed (or will discuss) in some of the meetings associated with this theme.
  - Reflect on how some of these opportunities may actually support the road you hope to take in the future. Write down some of these ideas on your own Life Map for future reference.

- As time permits, encourage group members to choose an appropriate opportunity for group participation and begin to make plans around it as a group (there is also a unit on this in Section 4 of the book).

**Passage from Scripture:**        **2 Corinthians 9:6-11** [*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*]

**Closing Prayer:** *Lord, we thank you so very much for this time you have afforded us to be together, to consider ways that we can bring our Faith into the world. Thank you for revealing to us some directions that our lives might take, so that we may live our lives with your purpose in mind. Through the Holy Spirit you have allowed us to share our individual testimonies with each other, allowed us to lift each other spirits to a new level and helped us to focus ourselves as we prepare to bring out Faith out into the world. In the weeks to come, please give us the strength and Light to move our Life Maps forward for the good of those around us. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

#### **ADDENDUM A: Additional Resources**

- 1) The Purpose Driven Life – Rick Warren
- 2) Tony Robbins – My Extraordinary Life (website coming in 2008)

#### **ADDENDUM B: Meditation**

“Childhood” Meditation Process: (approximately 20 min if done slowly)

- (2 min) Get group relaxed by closing their eyes and going upwards through body from feet to top of head in small sections, focusing on tightening muscles then releasing.
- (5 min) Have group focus on breathing breath in and out through nose – feel cool air entering lungs, feel stomach and diaphragm expanding with each slow breath,
- (5 min) Take group back in time slowly – recall what you were doing last year, then recall where you were ten years ago (in 19xx), then recall your being in your twenties – where you lived & worked, then recall college years, then recall your high school years and think of a specific event/time in high school, then recall your grade school and a particular teacher and classroom you remember. Now take yourself all the way back to Kindergarten
- (5 min) Picture yourself in your 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and think about what you must have been like. Think about the kids you played with, think about the teacher, the surroundings, the overall building, the library, the lunchroom
- Recall a time in the classroom when you were sitting at your desk, or playing on the playfield outside or eating your lunch with others. What were the things that excited you? What did you want to be when you grew up? Why? How did you interact with others?
- (5 min) Picture going home and talking with one of your parents. Think about what you would say to them about the things that you really liked and the things that you wanted to do when you grew up
- (5 min) Following this, group is asked to leave this place, knowing that they can return anytime – have them visualize getting older and older and recap each time in their life as they move forward in time – high school, college, first home, children, etc. – returning all the way to the present
- Slowly open eyes
- Immediately upon returning, right down memories and impressions from the meditation into the diary