

The Journey

With this form, you are beginning a journey. This journey will require some effort and time on your part, but like anything, the more you give to it, the more you will get. This journey is not a complex one but requires a bit of dedication. This is a journey many have taken and if you follow the steps laid out for you, we guarantee you'll arrive at the destination: understanding more on how God has uniquely created you, by identifying your strengths and determining how you can honor Him by using your talents and gifts. Let's get started!

Here are the steps:

1. Say a prayer to ask God to help you through this process identifying ways in which he has created you and given you your gifts and strengths.
2. Generate a list of 12 (or more) stories in your life (in a sentence or two) that have the following criteria:
 - you believed you did well
 - you enjoyed doing and/or provided you with a sense of personal satisfaction or achievement.
3. Select the 8 of the stories above and write a page expanding and elaborating on the details being sure to answer the following questions:
 - How did you get involved?
 - What are the details of what you actually did and how you went about doing it?
 - What about the activity was particularly enjoyable and/or satisfying to you?
4. Sit down with a trained interviewer to discuss your stories in more detail. The interviewer will help to draw out portions.
5. After the interview, you and the interviewer will discuss themes that occur within your stories, generate a "best fit" job description and discuss ways for you to utilize your newly identified strengths.

Expectations

Although not difficult, the steps above can take a bit of time. On average, it takes up to 10 hours to do them. You are unique, so it may take more for you and that is okay. It's fun discovering who you already are and if you trust the process, we believe the experience and the knowledge gained will be invaluable. We also believe that if you stick with it, you'll gain insight into who you are, how God has made you, and how that will affect your career, your family, your church and pretty much every other aspect of your life.

We believe this process is powerful and we believe, if done right, will change how you think about your life. We also think that it will be for the better. However, we can only be responsible for giving you the information about the process of determining your uniqueness. What you choose to do with it and the resulting choices you make, are your responsibility.

Story Generation

Stories can come from any aspect of your life: childhood, school, work, or hobbies. Ideally, you'll have stories from all stages of life. The important thing to remember is that should be something **you** felt you did well and **you** felt it was satisfying/enjoyable. Don't pick activities that others might think you did well. We want to know your perspective on your life. Try to remember specific instances that meet these criteria, instead of broad general ones.

The following are good examples of Sweet Spot Stories.

- "Putting on plays for neighborhood children with costumes, props, etc. The most successful project was transforming a shed in back of our house into a fairyland with lighting effects, decorations, princesses."
- "I built and mastered the tallest pair of stilts in my neighborhood. I started a stilt craze among my friends."
- "I established an evening routine of a quiet time of sharing and reading with our children which made bedtime an enjoyable end to the day."
- "Moved from Minnesota to Nebraska to begin my career. I had to leave all of my family and friends behind and go to a place where I knew no one."
- "Organized and ran a company-sponsored national conference with about 100 participants. Conference was a resounding success."
- "Won the support of my employees over a period of years by building strong relationships. Took an interest in developing careers, always sent cards on birthdays, Christmas and special events."

Notice that these activities are:

- Activities, not experiences.
 - Not: "I toured Europe with my wife and the Alps were beautiful."
 - But: "Spent 6 months planning a two week tour through Europe; everything was mapped out and budgeted. We even returned with some extra money."
- Specific activities, not milestone achievements.
 - Not: "Got my PhD" or "Survived Childbirth" or "Became Operations Manager."
 - But: "Made original discoveries in science labs" or "Coached my wife during childbirth" or "Worked with employees to improve their skills; improved output by 25%."
- Activities you can support with examples.
 - Not: "I'm good at troubleshooting."
 - But: "Caught a design problem during prototype testing and saved the company over \$100,000."

Everyone has stories. Yes, even you. If you are having trouble coming up with ideas, think through different stages of your life. The following are some areas to think through when generating a list of stories. This is not meant to be exhaustive, just a springboard to getting you thinking about stories you might have.

- Early childhood
- Grade school
- Middle school
- High school
- College
- Work
- Church involvement
- Other organizations you were involved with
- Extracurricular activities/hobbies
- Family or school trips

Use the following page to make a list of your stories.

Sweet Spot Story List

Please list the stories from your life you felt you did well and gave you satisfaction. Please list at least 12, adding more if possible. The more you list, the easier it will be to find the themes within.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

Story Selection and Expansion

Now that you have a list of stories, it's time to delve into some of them and flush out some of the details. Go to the list that you generated on the previous page and star 8 of them that are the most important to you and you want to expand on the details. Page 6 gives you a template to use for each story.

Tips for Success

- Take enough time to complete the form. On the average, it takes between 2 and 6 hours. There is no time limit to complete the form. It is not a test! Enjoy yourself! There are no right or wrong answers.
- Pen is more legible than pencil - you are welcome to use a computer.
- Don't worry about whether or not you can recall impressive childhood achievements. Select any activity you can remember enjoying and doing well. Don't reject it because it seems silly, trivial or unimportant.
- Write what was important to you, not what was important to your family or to your friends. If some honor or recognition left you cold, leave it out.
- Don't be limited to just narrow time frames. If you have enjoyed achievement activities that have occurred over a stretch of years, list it. Any activity, which has brought you enjoyment or satisfaction, is worth documenting.
- If you want more space, take it! Add pages if necessary.
- If your activities occurred in a group setting where you were doing the same things as everyone else, describe what all of you did.
- When you recall something you did and believe you did well, write it down. Don't try to analyze or evaluate it. We're looking for your history, not your evaluation. The analysis is our job.
- Don't be modest. You are the key actor in every event; the things you enjoy doing are the things that engage your natural motivations.

The following page is an example of a completed story expansion.

Sweet Spot Story Expansion Example

Name: Jane Doe

Story Number: 1

Story summary statement (from page 3):

Purchased and renovated a run down, 2 family house; doubled its value; made it a nice place to live.

How did you get involved?

Read a book that said the best way to buy property was to selectively buy run down multi-family housing and renovate.

What are the details of what you actually did and how you went about doing it?

Read the book mentioned above; set out to find a house that met the requirements. Found it and negotiated a good price. I then gave the upstairs tenants notice to leave and started to rebuild the porches, paint the house and clean up the yard. Meanwhile, I reassured the downstairs tenants that they would not have to move.

When the upstairs tenants were gone, I proceeded to renovate the upstairs apartment. Partly with my own labor, partly with contractors.

The goal was to create a pleasant place for me and my family to live with rental income to offset some of the cost. In addition, I wanted to get personal experience doing this kind of work both myself and through contractors and to end up with a property that had increased equity to fund future investments.

What about the activity was particularly enjoyable and/or satisfying to you?

I accomplished the goal as planned.

Sweet Spot Story Expansion

Name: _____ **Story Number:** _____

Story summary statement (from page 3):

How did you get involved?

What are the details of what you actually did and how you went about doing it?

What about the activity was particularly enjoyable and/or satisfying to you?

Interview

Congrats! You're well on your way if you've got this far. You've spent some time thinking through your stories, now it's time to talk to someone who can help you piece together the themes throughout your stories.

Is this necessary? Yes, for good reasons. As you've expanded on your stories, you've no doubt noticed themes running throughout. The interviewer is trained to help you pull as much as possible out of these stories and help you better identify those themes and develop an ideal job description. They will help to draw out particulars that you may have skipped over or felt were "obvious".

The interview takes about 2 hours to fully complete. For the most part they will be asking more questions about what you've written. All you have to do is bring your stories and be willing to discuss them in more detail.

Hopefully, by the end, the interviewer will give you a better idea of your strengths. So, if you're ready for the next step, please send your Story List and Story Expansions to the interviewers, at **nlc-masterpiece@umich.edu**. We'll try to set up a time with you to go over your stories and help you find the themes.

Acknowledgements

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