



Spirited

Facilitator Guide

Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

Approximately 75 minutes

Purpose: Capitalizing on hindsight, this robust journaling exercise helps writers recognize God's grace at work in their lives through their successes and failures. By recognizing God's faithfulness, this exercise builds writers' confidence in God's provision through coming struggles.

Timeline:

Introduction: Approximately 10 minutes

Author warm-up exercise: 10 minutes

Small group sharing: 10 minutes

Timeline introduction: 2 minutes

Timeline activity: 10 minutes

Writing activity introduction and prayer: 3 minutes

Writing activity: 10 minutes

Small group sharing: 10 minutes

Large group sharing: 10 minutes

Wrap-up/closing prayer: 3 minutes



Military Council of Catholic Women – Worldwide, Inc.

SPIRITUALITY, LEADERSHIP, SERVICE



As we begin this exercise, together, let us ask for the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, patroness of MCCW.

Let us pray. Lord of heavenly wisdom, Who has given us your own Mother Mary to be our guide and Counselor in this our lives, Grant that in all things we may have the grace to seek maternal instruction and to profit by it in humility and love. O Mother of Good Counsel, Patroness of the Military Council of Catholic Women, help us to understand and fulfill the mind and will of your Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

Under the blessing of the Father, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we be responsible and intelligent daughters of the Church. May we labor in the spirit of renewal to realize more perfectly the Kingdom of God here below, as the only true preparation for our share in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

[Plato stated](#), “An unexamined life is not worth living.” We should not flit around from activity to activity, mindlessly accomplishing things on auto-pilot: that would make us similar to robots! God has created us as persons with a union of soul and body. Reflection and recreation are essential for our spiritual growth.

It is easier to look back and see God’s grace at work in our lives than it is to see it at work in the moment. It is important that we take the time to learn from our mistakes and our successes in the past.

One of the ways we can do this and begin to train ourselves to see God’s grace at work in our lives is by writing a spiritual autobiography. This can sound a bit intimidating. Listen, we’re not expecting you to take after 20th century Finnish novelist, [Kalle Päätalo](#) (*Kah-le Paataalo*), and write a 17,000 page, 26-volume reflection on your life! Think of your spiritual autobiography as a robust journaling exercise.



In the book *To be Told*, author Dan Allendar writes,

Once we begin to read our life, then we are called by God to do more: we are called to *mess* with our story [*emphasis added*.] We are called to write our destiny and edit our writing in community with others for the sake of an even better and truer story.

When we start to reflect intentionally on where we have come from and where God has worked in our lives, we have the ability to work God to write the next chapters and to work with those around us to do even more for God’s kingdom!

Think of this journaling exercise as an expression of your artistic ability, an opportunity to create as God creates. Since you are made in the image and likeness of God, the Creator, you have within you the aptitude to create!

Are you thinking to yourself, “but I am not an artist!”? John Paul II wrote in his “[Letter to Artists](#).” “Not all are called to be artists in the specific sense of the term. Yet, as Genesis has it, all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece (paragraph 2).”

Before we start broadly reflecting on how God has helped us to sketch out the masterpiece of our lives thus far, let’s try a writing warm up. This exercise will get you thinking a little more introspectively about yourself and start you digging a little deeper into who you are. There are thirteen questions. Don’t spend too long dwelling on each question, you have more time to write later in this workshop. Try to answer each prompt from your gut, whatever swells up first. I will give you ten minutes to complete this exercise. Afterwards, spend ten minutes sharing the highlights of your prompts at your table.

[Hand out “The Author” sheets.]

Just like a normal autobiography, a spiritual autobiography could focus on many different aspects of our life and spiritual journey. You could take any one of the prompts in your “Author” activity and turn that into an autobiography.

For our purpose today, we are focused on where we have seen God’s grace at work in our lives. One of the ways to start identifying those spots is by making a timeline.



[Hand out the “Timeline” worksheet]

Write down major events in your lives on the timeline—the positive things on one side and the negative on the other. Remember, God works in both types of events. As St. Paul states in [Romans, Chapter 8, Verse 28](#): “We know that all things work for good for those who love God,* who are called according to his purpose.”

Take 10 minutes to work on your timelines.

[After six minutes, ask participants to circle the events where they can clearly see God’s grace at work.]

Now we will start the writing process. I will give you ten minutes to start drawing these threads together—your God-given attributes and your timeline events. Then, I’ll ask you to share your story within your group. Group members, please give feedback to your fellow writers! Please listen to their stories and let questions bubble up inside you will help these writers develop their stories. Finally, if you are comfortable, please share your story with the entire group.

Before we begin, I’d like us to pray this Writer’s Prayer together. After we pray, you’ll have ten minutes or so to work on your story and then we will take some time to share our stories within our groups.

Prayer of a Writer

Lord of all things, whose wondrous gifts to man
Include the shining symbols known as words
Grant that I may use their mighty power only for good.
Help me to pass on
Small fragments of Your wisdom, truth, and love.
Teach me to touch the unseen, lonely heart
With laughter, or the quick release of tears.
Let me portray to courage that endures,
Defiant in the face of pain or death;
The kindness and the gentleness of those
Who fight against the anger of the world;
The beauty hidden in the smallest things;



The mystery, the wonder of it all....
Open my ears, my eyes, unlock my heart.
Speak through me Lord, if it be Your will.
Amen.

[Give the participants ten minutes to write. Ask them to come back together and share as they wish within their group for approximately ten minutes and then ask a few to share with the larger group for another ten minutes.]

What wonderful moments of God's grace you all shared today. I thank you for your openness and honesty. I hope that if this exercise touched you, you will continue writing at home and putting together your spiritual autobiography. Writing is like any muscle—as you do it, you will become stronger at it and the more you explore your journey with God and His grace, the more clearly you will be able to see His grace at work in your lives.

[Choose someone to be the leader of this prayer and inform all that they are invited to pray the last paragraph]

Closing Prayer: “[The Spirit of God is Always with Us at This Time, in This Place.](#)”

Leader:

We awaken in our time to a Universe which is holy,
to creation which is not an event in the past, but a living event of the present.
We enter a new mode of human presence where we are not merely observers,
but where each of us is a participant in this moment of evolution.

Like all other creatures, we carry with us Wisdom and Values, the dynamics of the Universe.
But unlike other creatures, we must choose whether and how we will live in harmony
within this sacred web of creation.



May we be open to the Source of All Being, Our God within and among us!

We have the capacity to wonder,

and to celebrate this great mystery of existence within such a magnificent Universe!

In us the Universe enters into a great celebration of itself.

We are part of the Dance, the Great Work, the Great liturgy which is the Universe unfolding.

Glory to You, O God, Source of All Being!

This great Liturgy finds expression at this moment in us,

gathered here in a posture of prayerful openness, with listening hearts, loving spirits and a holy wonder.

May the sacred web that unites us with each other, our God and all creation,

ignite communities of light and hope throughout the Earth.

May we be open to the Source of All Being, Our God within and among us!

Together We Pray:

O Gracious, gentle Spirit of Love,

Your energy permeates the Universe,

Igniting Earth with

Your Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

Open our minds and hearts

To a deeper awareness



Military Council of Catholic Women – Worldwide, Inc.

SPIRITUALITY, LEADERSHIP, SERVICE

Of our interconnectedness with You,

Each other and all creation.

May we experience

Your unique presence

Within the sacred web of creation.