**Life Inventory**

**Introduction**

“Life Inventory” will help you identify your personal characteristics in various categories. Thinking about the aspects of your life and then writing them on paper takes time and energy, but you’ll get out of the experience as much as you put into it.

You’ll analyze your earthly identity first. Your earthly identity involves things that both unbelievers and believers share, such as roles, gender, temperament, and heritage. Next you’ll look at your personal values as you transition into thinking about your heavenly identity. Your heavenly identity is who you are as a result of having trusted in Christ.

You’ll do the “Life Inventory” exercises on your own, outside your group meetings. Then you’ll share with your group the highlights of what you’ve learned. You don’t have to share anything you don’t want to. However, you’ll find that sharing your findings with your group will strengthen your friendships with each other.

**Roles**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Review the sample chart that follows. Then, in the empty chart, record the roles you currently hold. These may include your role as an employee, husband or wife, father or mother, church member, citizen, participant in a sport, and so on. Adjacent to your list of roles, describe the responsibilities that you hold in that role. For example, as a citizen of the United States, you are responsible to obey the laws, participate in voting for representatives in government, and serve on a jury when called. This exercise is simply an inventory of your life regarding your roles and their corresponding responsibilities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Roles** | **Responsibilities** |
| Husband | Remain faithful to my wife, provide protection for her, provide companionship for her |
| Father | Protect and provide financially for my kids, train them to be responsible and loving |
| School Teacher | Clearly teach my subject, maintain an orderly classroom, motivate students by personal interaction and respect, give assignments, prepare exercises, grade homework, fill out paperwork, meet with parents |
| Little League Coach | Prepare drills for practice, attend practices, maintain equipment, motivate team members to do their best, teach teamwork and skills, coach games |
| Canadian Citizen | Prepare tax forms, pay taxes, be an informed voter, know and obey laws, stay informed of current events, go to jury duty when called |
| **Roles** | **Responsibilities** |
| Son/Daughter |  |
| Brother/Sister |  |
| Student at ND |  |
| Catholic |  |
|  |  |

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE EXERCISE — SIMPLICITY

Simplicity has been widely recognized in the Christian tradition as a discipline. The “Roles” exercise provides an ideal opportunity to ask yourself, *Is my life adequately simplified?*Take some time to pray and reflect on the roles and responsibilities you currently hold. Seek wisdom from your time of prayer and from trusted believers. Do you have roles that you are convinced God is guiding you to perform but that require you to simplify other areas of life in order for you to fulfill these roles well? Are there roles that you hold but do not feel guided by God to perform? Are there too many distractions in your life that hinder you from giving your full attention to your roles? Make a list below of steps you will take to simplify your life.

GENDER

This exercise will help you discover where some of your perspectives about gender have come from in the context of your earthly identity. In other words, how and from whom did you learn what masculinity and femininity are?

Respond to the following questions as objectively as you can. Both men and women should answer every question.

1. Would you describe your dad as having been primarily present or absent during your childhood? Explain.

2. What did your dad’s life teach you about what it means to be a man?

3. How did your dad relate to your mom?

4. Was there ever a time when your dad acknowledged that you had become a man or a woman? If yes, how did he do so? What criteria did he use (to your knowledge)?

5. Would you describe your mom as empowering or controlling? Explain.

6. How much time did you spend with your mom?

7. What did your mom’s life teach you about what it means to be a woman?

8. How did your mom relate to your dad?

9. Was there ever a time when your mom acknowledged that you had become a man or a woman? If yes, how did she do so? What criteria did she use (to your knowledge)?

10. From infancy through your teen years, were most of the adults you spent significant time with men or women? (Think of relatives, parents’ friends, teachers, and coaches.)

11. How did these adults’ views on masculinity and femininity compare with your parents’ views?

12. When you were a child, were your friends mainly male or female? What about when you were a teen?

13. During your childhood, how did you distinguish between boys and girls?

14. What did your peers understand about masculinity and femininity?

15. What are the main things you learned about gender during your childhood and early adult life?

**Temperament**

Although there are many personality assessment approaches, we will use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, in their book *Please Understand Me*, provide summary charts of MBTI’s four categories of human personality. The charts on the following pages are based on charts and descriptions from *Please Understand*M*e*. Carefully read through the charts and consider which characteristics are generally accurate for you.

Paul Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger, in their book *Do What You Are*, warn not to “worry too much about the terms used to describe the four dimensions (for example, ‘Sensing’ versus ‘Intuition’). In some sense, these terms don’t mean exactly what you think they do. Although they are words you know, they mean something different in this context.” The goal of this exercise is to begin to notice some basic characteristics of your personality that are consistent patterns in your behavior. The process will help you see that other people have different tendencies to how they respond to certain circumstances, just as much as you do. An awareness of that can be extremely helpful in our endeavor as followers of Christ to love others well.

Check or circle the descriptions that you think fit your personality, and make any applicable notes in the margins for your own reference. Then, write down answers to the questions that follow each chart. Keirsey and Bates encourage us to remember that you are looking for the predominant response in your life—the tendency. “The question always arises, ‘Does not an extravert also have an introverted side and does not an introvert also have an extraverted side?’ Yes, of course. But the preferred attitude, whether it be extraversion or introversion, will have the most potency and the other will be the ‘suppressed minority.’”

We need to stress that this exercise and its use of these charts will not by itself verify your personality type. This exercise merely gives you a chance to consider what your type may be and to think about how knowing your type can help you live out your faith.

EXTRAVERTS/INTROVERTS

1. Circle the traits that best describe you:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Extraverts** | **Introverts** |
| Energized by social settings | Drained by social settings |
| Concern for external world and others | Concern for internal condition or reaction |
| Quantity of relationships | Quality of relationships |
| Prefer breadth | Prefer depth |
| Lonely when isolated from people | Lonely when surrounded by strangers |
| Drained by private time and space | Energized by private time and space |
| Prefer group interaction | Prefer focused concentration |
| Many friends | Limited friends |
|  |  |

2. How do the characteristics you circled challenge your ability to be loving toward others?

3. How do they contribute positively toward your ability to be loving toward others?

4. How do they affect (both positively and negatively) your endeavor to live in a godly manner?

5. How do they affect your relationship with God?

SENSORS/INTUITIVES

6. Circle the traits that best describe you:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sensors** | **Intuitives** |
| Rely on experience | Rely on hunches |
| Realistic | Speculative |
| Actual | Possible |
| What is | What if? |
| Down-to-earth | Head-in-clouds |
| Sensible | Imaginative |
| Trust facts | Suspicious of facts |
| Gathers facts | Considers options |
| Remembers facts | Seeks to overcome facts |
| Concern with past | Concern with future |
| Patterns | Change |
|  |  |

7. How do the characteristics you circled challenge your ability to be loving toward others?

8. How do they contribute positively toward your ability to be loving toward others?

9. How do they affect (both positively and negatively) your endeavor to live in a godly manner?

10. How do they affect your relationship with God?

THINKERS/FEELERS

11. Circle the traits that best describe you:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Thinkers** | **Feelers** |
| Objective | Subjective |
| Principles | Values |
| Policy | Social values |
| Laws | Extenuating circumstances |
| Impersonal | Personal |
| Analysis | Sympathy |
| Justice | Humane |
| Hard-headed | Soft-hearted |
| Embarrassed to show emotion | Show emotion naturally |
| Persuaded by “rightness” | Persuaded by effect on others |
|  |  |

12. How do the characteristics you circled challenge your ability to be loving toward others?

13. How do they contribute positively toward your ability to be loving toward others?

14. How do they affect (both positively and negatively) your endeavor to live in a godly manner?

15. How do they affect your relationship with God?

JUDGERS/PERCEIVERS

16. Circle the traits that best describe you:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Judgers** | **Perceivers** |
| Decided | Gather more data |
| Fixed | Flexible |
| Plan ahead | Adapt as they go |
| Run one’s life | Let life happen |
| Decision making | Treasure hunting |
| Planned | Open-ended |
| Wrap it up | Something will turn up |
| Deadline! | What deadline? |
| Make lists | Just wing it |
| Get the show on the road | Let’s wait and see |
|  |  |

17. How do the characteristics you circled challenge your ability to be loving toward others?

18. How do they contribute positively toward your ability to be loving toward others?

19. How do they affect (both positively and negatively) your endeavor to live in a godly manner?

20. How do they affect your relationship with God?