



Processing Your Own Life Story

This "PASTOR'S GUIDE SHEET" was developed by Dr. Joe K. Taylor, Senior Pastor, South Reno Baptist Church, Reno, NV • jtaylor@southreno.com
Scriptures are printed verbatim with references noted but highlights and underlines are added. Quotes and all primary sources are footnoted.

Introduction—Quotes about the Suffering we all experience:

“Paul who wrote in Romans 11:33 that *How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out*... clearly understood the difference between God’s *promises* and His *processes*. He was absolutely content to rest in His *will* even though he knew he could never fathom His *ways*. He knew that *purposes* and *plans* were vastly different truths and that they operated in entirely different spheres ... Genuine faith is never intimidated by sight ... while always welcoming divine explanations, faith never stoops to the silliness of demanding them ... faith is never threatened by the unexplainable. It respects His sovereignty and delights in His mysteries. It gladly acknowledges that God cannot always be understood, but He can always be trusted.”

- Evangelist Junior Hill

“God is in the business of *sustaining* not *explaining*.”

- Pastor Paul Powell

“Remember, Christianity is not a vaccine that immunizes us to problems and difficulties in life. God never promised us there would never be ‘storms,’ He did promise that we would never be alone in the midst of them—our God will be with us!”

- Pastor Joe K. Taylor

¹ Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. ² From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

- Psalm 61:1-2 (NIV)

"Pain insists upon being attended to; God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

- C.S. Lewis

“The trials and difficulties we face in life should be a reminder to us all that ‘this world is not our home; we’re just a pass’n through.’ If life was too good here on Earth, we might have a thought of wanting to stay here and miss Heaven. Suffering is a witness that we left the Garden (of Eden). Suffering is the impetus for the believer to long for Heaven—not Earth.”

- Unknown

1. Suffering is a part of living in a “fallen” world.

A. Moral Evil (wicked people—NY on 9/11)

Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT) -⁹ *The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?*

Mark 7:21 (NIV) -²¹ *For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.*

B. Natural Evil (Accidents and disasters—Asian tsunami)

Romans 8:22 (NIV) -²² *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

2. Suffering is unrelated to our own "personal goodness".

Matthew 5:45 (TLB) – [It] rains on the just and the unjust.

Luke 13:1-5 (NCV) - ¹ At that time some people were there who told Jesus that Pilate had killed some people from Galilee while they were worshiping. He mixed their blood with the blood of the animals they were sacrificing to God. ² Jesus answered, "Do you think this happened to them because they were more sinful than all others from Galilee? ³No, I tell you ... ⁴What about those eighteen people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think they were more sinful than all the others who live in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you. But unless you change your hearts and lives, you will all be destroyed too!"

"In effect what Jesus was asking was this: 'You people are asking the wrong question. You should be asking me, 'why didn't the tower fall on MY head?'"

- R.C. Sproul (Christian theologian and writer)

3. Suffering amplifies God's message; we need a Savior—His name is Jesus!

Acts 17:29-31 (NIV) -²⁹ "Therefore ... we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

2 Peter 3:9-10 (MSG) - God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change. But when the Day of God's Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief.

Here is the point: We all will have difficult parts of our lives that we need to process and understand!



Processing Your Life Story

A. An Important Verse to Understand

Study Verse Section—Romans 8:28, NASB95 - ²⁸ **And we** as Christians **know** intuitively and can experience personally **that God causes** lit., "harmonizes" **all** ie., every single one--all **things to work** we get our English word "synergy" from this word **together for good** lit., "the good" **to those who** (1) **love God**, and (2) **to those who are called according to His** ie., eternal **purpose**.

1. There is always something **CONFIDENTIAL** about the storms in your life.

"And we know ... "

2. There is always something **COMPREHENSIVE** about the storms in your life.

"... that God causes all things ... "

3. There is always something **CONSTRUCTIVE** about the storms in your life.

"... that God causes all things to work together for good... "

4. There is always something **CONDITIONAL** about the storms in your life.

"... to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose ... "

D. Let's now process your Life Story

Very Important: *The events of your life are processed when you can answer four important questions well:*

Suggestion: Try formalizing the answer to these questions (See Appendix)

1. What "good" for me can I learn for my own life?
2. What "good" for me can I learn about my own God?
3. What "good" for me can I learn that I can give away to others?
4. Are there any "curse of words" I need to deal with in my own life?

James 3:9-10, NIV - ⁹ *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*

What is the "curse of words" in your life?

Break the "Curse of Words" by asking ...

- Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Father purposed when He created you?
- Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Son purposed when He died for you?
- Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Spirit purposes in you now?

Appendix

Actual MEMO to Jack (pseudonym), age 16

The following MEMO was written to a young man, age 16, about the terrible sexual abuse situation that was perpetrated on him during a school event. The offender in this case was an adult friend (now charged with being a pedophile) he met at a local church. We spent about 6 months “processing his life story” and specifically the specific storm he encountered during his senior year in high school.

I wrote this MEMO to him to help document our sessions together and the lessons we learned.

The facts and story lines in this MEMO are true but names, dates, and places have been changed to keep confidentiality at a maximum.

MEMO



A Friendly Church That Cares!

TO: Bro. Jack
FM: Pastor Joe
DT: Wednesday, May 17, 2004
RE: A Personal Letter of Encouragement

Dear Jack:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to minister to you in the past few months of your life. In the nearly 14 appointments we have had of late, we discussed an incident that happened in your life weeks ago. One verse that has motivated us throughout the entire storm is this, Romans 8:28 states "and we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and those who are called according to his purposes."

If you will remember, we learned four important truths about the storms in our lives. The first truth is confidential and we know "the Bible says only as believers can we truly understand and find good out of all bad." Second, "it's comprehensive." The Scriptures say God causes all things to work together for good. We have been steadfast in our efforts to find good in the midst of this difficult situation. Number three, it's constructive. I've stated to you that the events of your life are a process from which we can answer well four important questions. 1) What good for me can I learn about my life? 2) What good for me can I learn about my God? 3) What good for me can I learn for others? 4) Are there any curse words that I need to deal with? Our time together has been working towards answering those questions. A fourth truth about the storms in our lives is that it is conditional. The Bible says that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes. Jack, I sense that deep within your heart you do have a love for God, and I pray you will always keep your fire for God kindled and glowing for Him. Whether you end up moving this summer or staying here, the most important task before you is to keep your passion for God elevated.

I want to reflect on those four questions that we process in our life stories.

First, what good for me can I learn about my life? If you will remember I stated that you have to find some good in all of this. Some of the things we discussed are as follows;

- You now have a new sense of boundaries regarding relationships.
- You can now better identify what is wrong with those around you.
- You can now identify weird relationships and call them earlier rather than later.
- You have also discovered that you are not gay, you are a straight person, and I have applauded you for this.
- You have also discovered that God is going to be there for you in all the storms in your life. Jack, that truth alone can get you through any storm you face. But you will also need those loved ones around you to encourage you. And, that leads us to another point.
- You have learned the value of [Step Mom] in your life. She is a great lady and she prays for you and she loves you. Thank you for valuing her.
- Next, you value your parents' advice more. I say to people that if you flunk home, you'll flunk life. Jack, whatever you do, whether you move or not, make sure you are right with your [Dad] and [Mom].
- I think you have gained a more realistic view about the church. The church is still the bride of Christ and still that avenue that we learn about God. But the churches are made up of sheep and sometimes those sheep bite. You have gained a more realistic view about church. Don't give up on it; just realize it has its shortcomings as well.
- You have also learned about forgiveness, that forgiveness is for your benefit, not others. Sometimes we forgive people who may not be worthy of our forgiveness because of the value it will be in our lives.

What good for you can you learn about your life? Apart from those things listed above, my brother, just know that with every situation you face, you need to process your story by asking the question, "What good can I learn for me, that I can take with me from any situation?" Life is a good thing, learning about life is an awesome thing, and I pray that your ears will always be attuned to what God is doing in any and every situation in your life.

Big number two, what good for me can I learn about my God? You have already stated that you have a more realistic view about his bride – the Church. Other things we have learned and discussed during our time together is that God is there for you. Regardless of what situations you find yourself in Jack, God will always be there for you. And I don't want you to ever forget that. The question you had, "Do incidents like this happen and are they a test?" I don't believe that God causes all things, I believe the verse we have studied, that God causes all things to work together. I don't believe that God is the author of the tragedies in your life. I do believe that he is a God who brings good out of bad, that He has brought good out of this, it has been a growing process for you, and I pray that you will be strengthened in it. We have also learned that God will get you through anything if you allow Him to. Life's testing times allow us to learn this great truth about God.

You have learned to praise God in the midst of even bad situations. The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of His people, and whatever circumstances you find yourself in please find reason to pray to God, even in the midst of storms. Next, you have learned that God will get you through all things. This has been a tough moment of your life, but God has gotten you through it and I am thankful for that,

Probably the most important thing you have learned is that Christianity requires total commitment, 24/7, 365 days a year, you have learned this about God. Jack, I heard a quote one time that states, "Tolerance is the virtue of a man with no convictions." Jack, I want you to have a sense of conviction of what is right and what is wrong. You have been able to analyze this situation in your life and you realized what's wrong and you realized what is right. I am thankful for this. Please know this, that your God is an awesome God and He is an all powerful God, and if you will commit your life 100% to Him there is no storm in life that God cannot get you through.

Number Three, what good for me can I learn for others? A verse that motivates us is found in Corinthians and says, "The storms that we weather we will be able to learn lessons that we can give away to others." You can tell other people in the midst of storms what you learned through this. First, that God will be there for you, if you will only lean on Him. What a marvelous tool of encouragement you will have if you can get those around you to put their complete trust in God, because he will be there for you. Second, you have learned that you are not alone, that others will be there for you including me. When you encounter people in a crisis you will be able to tell them that God is there for them and that other people will be there for them; they need those others to enable them to weather the storms.

Number four, "Are there any curse words that I need to deal with?" James 3:9-10 says *"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness, out of the same mouth comes praise and cursings. My brothers this should not be."* I have defined the "curse of words" as this, anything that is said to you that you feel has now cursed you and your mind set towards you, others, and God. Some questions that we have kept before us to help break the curse of words are these: a) Is this curse in keeping with what God the Father purposed when He created you; b) Is this curse in keeping with what God the Son purposed when he died for you; c) Is this curse in keeping with what God the Holy Spirit purposes for you now. Though we have not defined any distinctive curse words in your life, we have during our discussion times discovered some truths about the Lord. One of those is this vengeance is Mine I shall repay. One curse of words in our lives in this has been that we have to demand justice in this. The reality is that we are the children of God and regardless of what the legal system does or does not do our God is a sovereign God and He will always come to the rescue of His children. He may not come on the time frame we prefer but He will be there. Let's not believe the curse that says anything to the contrary.

We have also learned that life is not fair. A curse of words can make us a victim in thinking that because our lives are not fair that somehow God does not love us, or that somehow Satan is against us. The reality is that Satan is against you but equally true is that God is always for you. God is trustworthy. But, though we live in a fallen world, and though we live in a world that is not fair, our God never promised us that our Christianity would be a vaccine that would immune us from problems and difficulties in life. His promise to us is not that we would not have problems; His promise is that we would never go through storms without His presence nearby.

Jack, in closing I want to express some concerns I have for you. I have kind of kidded you off and on during our time together about how handsome you are. You are aware that there are some issues that I feel that are probably unresolved at this time. Those issues basically surround how you feel about yourself and specifically your physical appearance. You are a handsome kid indeed. But I want to remind you that there will always be guys that are more handsome than you and there will always be guys less handsome than you. You are a great kid, but what draws women and people of integrity to people like you is not the size of their muscles and not the size of their bodies, but it is the glow in their hearts. I pray that you will focus your attention on the Lord, and become less obsessed with your physical appearance and more concerned with your spiritual health. I think this is good advice for you.

A second concern that I have is regarding your relationship with [Birth Father] and [Step Mom]. Though I feel that it has been worked out to a great degree, I want to make sure you hear me say this clearly; it is my conviction that if you flunk

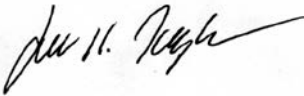
home, you flunk life, and before you move I want to make sure that you are 100% in a good relationship with them; that you will visit with them throughout your life. You may have some legal battles you share with them in this current situation, and you will need them there for you. I want to encourage you to always make sure that the authority figures in your life receive the utmost respect, they are worthy of that. Are they perfect? No. Have they ever sinned? Yes. Have they messed up? Sure they have. But, do they love you? Absolutely. Do they pray for you? I have no doubt. Value them; they are God's gift to you.

My prayer for any young man like you is for protection because I know that in a single moment you could give up your commitment to the Lord to pursue a woman or an activity or any thing that we might call sin. God has got great things for you Jack, I am convinced that if you keep your heart fully devoted to Him, God will use you in great and mighty ways of which you cannot even conceive. I want my relationship with you to be one of me being a voice of encouragement and my encouragement to you is...look to Jesus. What ever you do, in all of your life, look to Christ, find out where God is on mission and join Him in that. Purpose everyday when you get up that you will bring glory to God. Purpose everyday when you go throughout the tasks on that day that you will live your life in such a way that it will bring honor and glory to the Lord.

Jack you are a great guy, I have praised the Lord for the opportunity to know you during these last few months. I will continue to pray for you throughout your life time and want you to know that I will always be here for you. You will always be able to contact me here through SOUTH RENO BAPTIST CHURCH. If you are in a situation and want my prayers, my support or have questions for me, please feel free to contact me at anytime in the future. My number here at SOUTH RENO BAPTIST CHURCH is 775.827.3227. My email is jtaylor@southreno.com. Though these numbers may change you can always reach us at www.southreno.com. Please know that you have my heartfelt support, I wish you God's speed in the future, know that my prayers will be with you always. God bless you Jack.

Remember, I am proud of you!

Warmly,



Dr. Joe K. Taylor, Senior Pastor
South Reno Baptist Church

PS: As I have stated, I will be 100% available to you in your prosecution against [the bully]. Please have your attorney communicate with me all court and any further deposition dates. As we discussed, I will need a confidentiality release signed by you and your parents before I take the stand. This is a formality but it will be required by the court system. My secretary will provide this form to you. *"We'll get through all this!"* - JKT

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—Major Event(s)

Event:

Related Scriptures, quotes, or encouragement.	What "Good" for me can I learn for My Own Life?	What "Good" for me can I learn about My Own God?	What "Good" for me can I learn that I can give to Others?
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1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.

Instructions:

Using this sheet as a basic guide, organize your thoughts this way. (1) In a single phrase or sentence, describe the "event" to be processed and write it in the "event" box. (2) Then search the scripture to locate every scripture that can relate to this topic and/or event. Place this in column one. (3) In the corresponding column, write down the insights and wisdom you can derive for your own life. (4) In the corresponding column, write down the insights and wisdom you can learn about God. (5) In the corresponding column, write down the counsel you might give to others in a similar situation.

An unmarked copy of this page follows and can be duplicated for each major event in your life.

4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.	8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.	10.

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—"Curse of Words"

"Curse of Words":

Question for Consideration

Scripture / Insight / Discussion

Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Father purposed when He created me?

Is this "curse" in keeping with what the Son purposed when He came to earth?

Is this "curse" in keeping with what the Holy Spirit purposes in me now?

Instructions:

Using this sheet as a basic guide, organize your thoughts this way. (1) In a single phrase or sentence, write down the "curse" that someone has said to you that has caused you to stumble. (2) Using the corresponding questions, search the scriptures and identify what God really has in store for you. The Word of God—which is perfect—will counter any "curse" offered by an imperfect person.

Let's God's Word and His plan for you break
the curse of words in your life.

An unmarked copy of this page follows and can be duplicated for each "Curse of Words" in your life.

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—Major Life Questions

Major Life Questions	What does Scriptures say?	What do “wise” people say?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Instructions:

Using this sheet as a basic guide, organize your thoughts this way. The “major events” in our lives may leave us with some pretty major questions about life, what happened to us, what happened to others, etc. Having a scriptural affirmation about a topic(s) may help us “process” that event better.

It is okay to ask questions. It is okay to search the scriptures to see what they say about the questions we have. Unanswered questions may lead to doubt that may then lead to some injury to our faith. “Search the scripture” and see what they say.

An unmarked copy of this page follows and can be duplicated for each “Curse of Words” in your life.

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—Major Event(s)

Event:

Related Scriptures, quotes, or encouragement.	What "Good" for me can I learn for My Own Life?	What "Good" for me can I learn about My Own God?	What "Good" for me can I learn that I can give to Others?
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.	10.

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—"Curse of Words"

"Curse of Words":

Question for Consideration	Scripture / Insight / Discussion
<p>Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Father purposed when He created me?</p>	
<p>Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Son purposed when He died me?</p>	
<p>Is this "curse" in keeping with what God the Holy Spirit purposes in me now?</p>	

Processing Your Life Story Worksheet—Major Life Questions

Major Life Questions	What does Scriptures say?	What do “wise” people say?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		