

# UNKNOTTING YOUR OWN STORY

A MEMOIR JOURNAL



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DEAR LOVED OF GOD,

You are, you know. *Loved of God*, I mean. Sometimes our lives look like such a knotted mess, we can't comprehend how God finds anything at all in the jumble to love. The reality is, he understands what's at the heart of each knot far better than we do.

We may feel like our plans and dreams have been interrupted too many times to make any sense, but nothing can interrupt the love of God in Christ Jesus. None of us who place our faith in Jesus have a dead-end story. We've been swept up in the glorious redemption narrative God created the heavens and earth to display. In Jesus' story, all of ours are redeemed.

I love Eugene Peterson's rendition of the psalmist's words:

—*L*—  
I don't take God for granted.  
Every day I review the ways he works . . .  
I feel put back together,  
and I'm watching my step.  
GOD rewrote the text of my life  
when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes.

P S A L M 1 8 : 2 1 - 2 4 , M S G

—*L*—  
My prayer is that the notes you jot in this small journal might be used by God to make an enormous point to you: your life makes more sense than you know. In Christ, every tangled knot in your rope represents a meaningful dot on your time line.

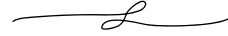
May God unknot enough of them through these pages to cause you to trust him with the ones that await the sight of his beautiful face.

With love,

*Beth*



## PARTNER WITH GOD



GOD, investigate my life;  
get all the facts firsthand.  
I'm an open book to you;  
even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.  
You know when I leave and when I get back;  
I'm never out of your sight.  
You know everything I'm going to say  
before I start the first sentence.  
I look behind me and you're there,  
then up ahead and you're there, too—  
your reassuring presence, coming and going.  
This is too much, too wonderful—  
I can't take it all in!

PSALM 139:1-6, MSG



Fully engage with the one who knows you best of all and longs to shine light on your story, not trap you in despair and darkness. Though parts of our stories are inevitably difficult to recount, when God is at the helm of our reflections, the hard parts are never detached from hope.

Write a brief prayer in the space provided, inviting God to escort you through this reflection of your life and to help you see and appreciate your own story.

## PERUSE YOUR HISTORY

Reflect on the events and experiences that have shaped your life most. Life being what it is, these will inevitably be a mix of positives and negatives. A relocation, an illness, an accident, a learning disability, a church, a school, a loss, a gain, a divorce, a remarriage, poverty, and wealth can all be life shaping. Likewise, an unexpected opportunity or the influence of a teacher or a leader can alter the trajectory of a life. List these experiences on the next several pages, and then do your best to prioritize the top ten or so.







•  
*Birth*

...  
*present  
Day*

### *Plot Your Time Line*

Go back through your list and star the events that are so crucial to your life story that you'd be a different person apart from them (for better or worse). For example, I would have been a different person had I not been sexually abused or had I not come to know Jesus in childhood. Now take those you starred, mark them with a dot on the time line above, and label them succinctly. (I've provided you with two time lines—a practice one above and another on the pages that follow—in case you need a second shot at it for the sake of neatness and readability.)





•  
*Birth*

...  
*present  
Day*



## PEN THE NAMES

Now that you've prioritized your most life-shaping events, it's time to think in terms of the people who most profoundly shaped you. Who were the major influencers in your life, whether their impact was positive, negative, or a combination of both? If it helps, you can think of it this way: if your life were captured in a two-hour movie, who would comprise the supporting cast? What individuals would be crucial to the plot? Place these people on your time line.





## PONDER THE REDEMPTION

The fact that you're holding this journal in your hands suggests you instinctively suspect your story holds value. You may have scars, but you are not destroyed. My guess is that God has done some providential, purposeful things in your life that were lifesaving, mind-saving, health-saving, heart-saving, family-saving, friend-saving, or soul-saving. List several ways you were saved from complete destruction.



## PICK YOUR CHAPTERS

Return to your time line and consider your dots as potential chapters in your story line. Select up to six (no more!) to comprise the primary content—what we'll call chapters—of your story. As long as your story is authentic to who you are, you have the right to keep the most intimate parts of your story written on your heart, read by you and God alone. No one ever needs to see these pages but you.

Remember, this exercise is about unknotting your story, primarily for yourself, through the eyes of your Creator—“the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2, KJV) who loves you immeasurably and unconditionally. That said, keep in mind that anything written down can accidentally get read. I would suggest sticking with generalities, and I strongly recommend working through traumatic events with the help of a trusted licensed trauma therapist before you articulate them in detail on paper.

## PROPOSE YOUR CHAPTERS

The next part of your journal has been divided into 6 four-page sections. First, give each section a working chapter title based on a significant event or influence in your life. Don't stress about coming up with something catchy—these can be reworded at any point. Begin making notes about the stories, people, and memories that best capture that season or chapter of your life. You can continue adding to them in the days and weeks to come.

This process doesn't need to be arduous; don't get bogged down in details. These are simply notes of remembrance that become paths—even if in fits and starts—to divine redemption.

If you're having trouble getting started, you might try to focus on stories you could tell an attentive friend in one afternoon.



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*(Chapter Title)*

*L*



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*(Chapter Title)*

*L*



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*(Chapter Title)*

*L*





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*(Chapter Title)*

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*(Chapter Title)*

*L*



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*(Chapter Title)*

*L*



## PRESENT YOUR INSIGHTS

Take some time to record any insights you've gained from your reflections in this journal. Think of these as a summary of sorts, recording what you've learned about yourself, others, and God.



## PRAYER FOR YOUR DAYS AHEAD

Conclude with a prayer expressing your hopes and dreams for the future. Present to God your fear, trepidation, or dread. Let him reassure and comfort you. Thank him for never leaving you and for his unchanging promise, even when you see no outward evidence, that he “causes everything to work together for the good of those who love [him] and are called according to his purpose for them” (Romans 8:28, NLT).

And remember, as long as you have breath in your lungs, your story is still being written. And it is a *good* story, my friend—pocked by the miraculous and the momentous, the painful and the mundane, and shaped by many interesting characters. Yours is a very good story because ours is a very good God.







And be sure of this:  
I am with you always...  
MATTHEW 28:20, NLT

