

SESSION 5 · FACILITATOR GUIDE

Me, the Co-Author & Protagonist of My Story

The Journey So Far

Deck Session_5_CoAuthor_and_Protagonist_r11 · 28 slides · Guide r10 · 90 minutes · Participant Guide r8 · 20 pages

Session at a Glance

This morning is reconnaissance. Sessions 1–4 destabilized the identity a man carried in — the losses, the messy middle, the marriage retirement lands in. Session 5 hands him the instrument for reading what is left: his own story. Three movements: twenty-five minutes of frame (the claim, the two truths, why it matters now, and the posture that lets engineers pick up a pen), fifty-five minutes of the men working — Map · Mine · Tell — and ten minutes of bridge into Charter §1.1 and a two-layer homework that lands, read aloud, at Session 6.

THE SENTENCE THAT MUST LAND

You are not a man who has a story. You are the story you tell. Everything else this morning — the map, the markers, the genre, the writing — is what a man does once he believes that. If the room remembers one sentence, make it McAdams'. If it remembers two, the second is Allender's: God has been the Author all along, and He is a better novelist than we are.

Three outputs leave the room: a Life Map with chapter titles on it, one marker chosen and spoken aloud to a witness, and the two-layer assignment understood — private raw writing in three sittings, then a 200–300-word Charter draft that every man reads aloud next week. The fourth output is quieter: the Step Three God sentence named from the front, so that a session called Co-Author does not send men home to write a story with no author in it.

This is not therapy, and the men need to hear you say so before the first exercise. Adler's phrase is the one that works in this room: we are prototyping your story, not exposing your soul.

Before You Begin · Setup

Cards and tools this session: H1 comes back in the opening round (one thing heard at the Kitchen Table; one moment with Her day first). No card comes out. Bring a few spares of E1 and H1.

The hookup	HDMI from the PC to the TV. Test with slide 13 (the genre cards — three columns of small text) and slide 20 (the three-sittings table). Confirm slide 11 (dark Life Map) reads as intentional, not a dead input.
The notebook	The course is on paper. Hand out the Session 5 Participant Guide at the door, hole-punched, to file behind Session 4 — the Life Map page and the chapter-title page are used in-room. The Harvest Charter is the last section of the notebook.
Drawing morning	This is a drawing morning: a landscape drawn by hand beats one typed. Pens at every seat, and blank paper for anyone who wants more room to draw.
Charters	Every man brings his Harvest Charter with §1.1 Step One — the Three Markers — written. Nobody collects them; slide 12 puts them to work.
Reference in hand	The one recommended reading is Why We Write Our Story (WhyzMen, 3 pages; Session 5 · Recommended Readings) — have copies. The Allender reference, McAdams, Adler, Pennebaker and the Life Story Interview are Going Deeper this week: on the shelf, not assigned.
Remote men	Optional per session: Teams or Zoom, deck shared. A remote man does the Life Map on paper at home and pairs by phone for the Witness Pair — assign his partner before you start.
Time discipline	The Witness Pair and What Surfaced will happily eat the morning. Twelve and ten, hard. If you run long, cut from the frame slides — never from the Map, the Witness Pair, or the two-layer homework.

The 90 Minutes · Run of Show

Cumulative starts; ends at 1:30. Protected blocks are marked ★ — they are never the place you save time. Revision r4 added seven slides the old guide lacked (now 6, 17, 22–25 and 27). The minutes came from the Arc, Claim, Two Truths, Why Now, Genre (to the slide's three), Pennebaker, and the Three Sittings; the check-in grows to the slide's ten. Slides 24–25 are held in reserve. The arc slide says 25 / 55 / 10; this table is the operating truth behind the round numbers.

#	BLOCK	MIN	START	
1	Cover — doors open, markers out on tables	1	0:00	
2	Opening Check-In — markers, kitchen table, Rule, readings, Practice, the movie	10	0:01	★
3	This Morning's Arc — three movements	1	0:11	
4	The Claim — McAdams	2	0:12	

#	BLOCK	MIN	START	
5	Two Truths — Protagonist & Co-Author	2	0:14	
6	The Grammar of Both — middle voice	2	0:16	
7	Why This Matters Now — losing the protagonist	2	0:18	
8	Reconnaissance, Not Therapy	3	0:20	★
9	Map It · Mine It · Tell It	1	0:23	
10	Map It · Step One — chapter titles (writing)	8	0:24	★
11	Map It · Step Two — the Life Map (drawing)	10	0:32	★
12	Mine It — read your markers back; circle two moments	8	0:42	
13	Mine It — the genre (one word)	3	0:50	
14	Why We Write It Down — Pennebaker	2	0:53	
15	Tell It — the Witness Pair	12	0:55	★
16	Tell It — What Surfaced (whole room)	10	1:07	★
17	Callback · Which Chapters Go in the Knapsack? (NEW)	2	1:17	
18	Into the Harvest Charter — Steps Two and Three	3	1:19	
19	This Week's Work — two layers	2	1:22	★
20	The Three Sitzings	1	1:24	
21	Homework — three tiers	1	1:25	
22– 23	Readings · Practice of the Week — Ask for a story (NEW)	1	1:26	
26	Next · Session 6 — what happens to what you write	1	1:27	
27	What to Bring — paper morning	1	1:28	
28	Benediction — Jeremiah 29:11 · Ephesians 2:10	1	1:29	
24– 25	In reserve — Writing Transforms You · Heard into Becoming	—	—	

#	BLOCK	MIN	START	
—	Buffer · closing prayer runs long here	—	1:30	

IF YOU ARE RUNNING LONG — CUT HERE, IN THIS ORDER

1. Slide 7 (Why Now) — one sentence, not three. 2. Slide 14 (Pennebaker) — point at the word list in the guide; the homework pages carry the rest. 3. Slide 13 (Genre) — name the three, skip the discussion, the guide has the cards. 4. What Surfaced — three men instead of four. Never the check-in markers, never the Map, never the Witness Pair, never the two-layer homework.

Movement 1 · The Frame (0:00 – 0:24)

The design principle carries over: review is re-entry, not recap. The men talk before they are taught — and this morning the first thing they talk about is the markers they have carried since Session 3. Then four teaching slides that must do one job each and get out of the way of the paper.

SLIDE 1 · Cover · 1 min · 0:00

Up as the doors open. Walk the tables and say one thing to each man: “markers out.” Not a collection — a signal that this morning they matter.

SLIDE 2 · Opening Check-In · 10 min · 0:01 ★

Five questions at tables, in this order. Markers first — it is the softest on-ramp to the morning and it tells you, in the first four minutes, who is stuck. Ask which was hardest, not what it says; nobody reads a marker aloud until slide 15, and then only to one man. Then Session 4’s homework, one short line each. The Kitchen Table: one thing each man heard at the Kitchen Table Conversation (Session 4 assigned it with card H1; this is its only debrief, so do ask it). His marriage practice: he reads his one line. Practice of the Week: one moment with Her day first (below). The movie question is for levity — and it surfaces genre without the vocabulary. Write down who answers Clint Eastwood. (The McAdams and Allender readings and the Shared Vision worksheet are no longer Session 4 homework; do not ask about them.)

SAY “Which of the three was hardest to write? Not what it says — which one made you put the pen down.”

EXPECT A man with no markers. No shame at the table. He writes them at slide 12 — three sentences each — and you check in privately this week. Almost always, “didn’t” means the valley.

GUARDRAIL Ten minutes, hard — the slide says ten. The kitchen-table question can take the morning on its own; one sentence a man — the Couples Conversation had its morning at Session 4.

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK The fourth line on the slide checks Session 4’s practice. Go round once:

SAY “Tell us one moment with this week’s practice: Her day first.”

One moment per man, no commentary. A man who forgot passes — no shame; the new practice comes at slide 23.

SLIDE 3 · This Morning’s Arc · 1 min · 0:11

Three movements, once. The middle one is the morning: fifty-five minutes of the men working, on paper and in pairs. Say the destination out loud — everything made this morning goes home as raw material for Charter §1.1. Men finish work whose destination they can see.

SLIDE 4 · The Claim · 2 min · 0:12

Let it land before you explain it. McAdams, forty years at Northwestern: identity is the story we construct, not the résumé we carry. These men will trust data — give them one sentence of it and move on. Do not argue the claim; the exercises will make it true faster than you can.

SAY “You are not a man who has a story. You are the story you tell. Change the story, and you change what you do next.”

SLIDE 5 · Two Truths in the Title · 2 min · 0:14

Protagonist first, and honor it: forty years of agency is a strength, not a pathology — a room of men who built things does not need to be told their building was a symptom. Then the co-author. Allender’s move is not that God overrode their agency but that He wove it. Poima (Ephesians 2:10) is the root of “poem”: a work being written, not a problem being solved.

GUARDRAIL Co-author is not quietism. If a man hears “God wrote it” as “so my choices didn’t matter,” restate: He is weaving your choices, not replacing them. The Charter’s Three Misreadings page says it well; point there if pressed.

SLIDE 6 · The Grammar of Both — middle voice · 2 min · 0:16

Taught here, straight after the two truths, because it is their resolution. Its speaker notes carry this entry.

Three boxes. Active voice: I do the thing — my agency, my choice, my responsibility. Passive voice: the thing is done to me — God’s agency; I receive. Middle voice: I do the thing for myself, and I am transformed by it — both at once, the actor and the acted-upon. It dissolves the false choice between “I do everything” and “I am a passenger.” No activity; teaching only.

SAY “I’m the writer and the written. That’s how the second half actually works.”

ACCURACY The Greek middle voice marks a subject acting with involvement in, or effect on, himself; “active plus passive” is a teaching simplification. If a man who reads Greek objects, agree and keep the image.

SLIDE 7 · Why This Matters Now · 2 min · 0:18

Ties to Session 2. When the career story reaches its final chapter, the character exits the stage — the five losses are one loss. Say it plainly, then pivot in one breath: this morning is not about replacing the role; it is about reading the story well enough to see who the character was always becoming. First cut if you are behind.

SLIDE 8 · Reconnaissance, Not Therapy · 3 min · 0:20 ★

Best slide of the morning for this room, and the one that decides whether the engineers pick up the pen. Read all three rows. Say the third one twice: curiosity over judgment — “huh, look at that” rather than “what’s wrong with me.” Then the promise that governs everything after it: you share only what you choose to share.

SAY “We are not here to talk about feelings. We are here to read a text — yours — the way an engineer reads a system or a scout reads terrain. We are prototyping your story, not exposing your soul.”

SLIDE 9 · Map It · Mine It · Tell It · 1 min · 0:23

The three moves are the next fifty minutes, in this order. One sentence each. Then: guides open, pens up.

Movement 2 · Map · Mine · Tell (0:24 – 1:19)

Shoulder-to-shoulder before face-to-face. Two writing blocks, quiet, on paper — psychologically safer than being asked to speak, and it gives every man something concrete to hold when he is finally asked to. Walk the room during both; read over shoulders lightly; say nothing unless a man is stuck.

SLIDE 10 · Map It · Step One — Chapter Titles · 8 min · 0:24 ★

Four to seven chapters, by feel and theme, not by dates. The instead/try examples on the slide do the teaching — “The Years I Proved Myself” tells a man exactly what kind of title is wanted. The guide has seven numbered lines. A man who titles a chapter “Surviving What I Didn’t Choose” has already started this morning’s work; notice him for What Surfaced.

IF STUCK Tell him to start with the chapter he is in now and work backwards. Or: what would your wife call the chapters? That question alone usually produces three.

WATCH-FOR The résumé. “Engineering, 1978–2005” is a date range, not a chapter. Ask: what was the weather of those years?

SLIDE 11 · Map It · Step Two — The Life Map · 10 min · 0:32 ★

Dark slide; the room goes quiet with it. A landscape, not a line — peaks and valleys, career and life. Label each rise and fall with a chapter title. Then the new step: mark the people who show up in more than one chapter. That is the communion thread — McAdams’ second master theme, and the one most of these men have under-narrated after forty years of agency. It feeds §3.2 (My Rule & My Triad — who disciplined me, and brotherhood) later; this morning it just goes on the map as initials.

SAY “Peaks and valleys, not a straight line. And nobody reads this but you.”

PASTORAL The valleys drawn this morning are real. A man who draws one and stops — pen down, staring — is not stuck. Give him the room. Check in at the break, not at the table.

SLIDE 12 · Mine It — Read Your Markers Back · 8 min · 0:42

Do not re-assign the markers. They wrote them the week of Session 3 and the S3 guide told them so; a room that hears “write your three moments” this morning hears that we lost their homework. Instead: read them back, slowly; tick the one that still has heat in it — that is the one for the Witness Pair; then circle two moments on the map, most defining and most surprising, one sentence each in the guide.

EXPECT Men who say all three have heat. Ask which one they would least want read aloud. That is the one.

CHARTER Say once where the markers go: peak feeds §1.3 Strengths; valley feeds §1.0 Threshold and §1.4 Faith Foundation; turning point feeds the Caring Shift line in §1.3 and the arc they are about to write. Nothing written here is spent once.

SLIDE 13 · Mine It — The Genre · 3 min · 0:50

Allender’s three arcs, adapted from the classical genres. Name all three with compassion — no shaming the Tragedy or Comedy men; half the room is living one of them and knows it. The line under each card is the invitation, not the diagnosis — say that, because the Comedy card is the one men misread. Then one word in the guide: not the arc he aspires to, the arc he recognizes.

SAY “Our job this morning is not to force a different ending. It is to read honestly enough to see which arc we’ve been living — and then ask whether that is the arc God is writing.”

GUARDRAIL Romance is the quest narrative in the classical sense. Say “classical, not sentimental” before someone smirks. And do not let Romance become triumphalism — it includes the wounds; it reads them as preparation.

SLIDE 14 · Why We Write It Down — Pennebaker · 2 min · 0:53

James Pennebaker, UT Austin, more than 200 studies. Say people, not men — the samples were mostly college students of both sexes. The finding that matters: venting does nothing

lasting; the writers who improved were the ones whose language turned toward cause and meaning. Point at the two word lists and move on; the homework pages carry the rest, including the third-person permission and the dip.

ACCURACY “Improved” means measured gains in well-being and, in several studies, physical health markers. Don’t promise more than that, and don’t name immune function from the front unless asked.

SLIDE 24 · The Writing Transforms You — in reserve · not in the 90 minutes

Restates slide 14 as three panels: Thinking loops · Writing externalizes and stabilizes · Recognizing sees the whole and finds the meaning already there. Not in the ninety-minute budget; its notes repeat slide 14’s. Use it in place of slide 14 if the room needs the picture; otherwise click past it. The PG carries it as a box beside the word lists. Anchor line: “The pen does what the looping mind cannot.”

SLIDE 15 · Tell It — The Witness Pair · 12 min · 0:55 ★

The heart of the morning, and where McAdams says the transformation actually happens — in the telling to someone who is listening, not solving. Pair men from the same table where you can. Teller, four minutes: one chapter title, the marker with heat, the arc he thinks he has been living. Witness, listen only, one job — reflect it back: “What I heard you say was...” Switch. Then three minutes together on the question that matters: what did you hear in his story that he didn’t hear himself?

SAY “No advice. No ‘me too.’ You have one job — tell him what you heard.”

GUARDRAIL Walk the room; be present, not intrusive. A witness who starts fixing gets a hand on the shoulder and the sentence again. Sixty-second warning before each switch.

EXPECT Odd numbers. A three works — two witnesses, teller gets five minutes. The remote man pairs by phone; assign it before the block.

SLIDE 25 · Heard into Becoming — in reserve · not in the 90 minutes

Four steps: you speak it aloud (and hear yourself) · the witness listens — not to fix, not to agree · he reflects it back, “What I heard you say was...” · you recognize yourself, and in being heard become more fully who you were already becoming. The middle voice again: speaking, you act; heard, you are changed. Not in the budget and it has no notes; if you use it, take thirty seconds before the pairs start. The PG prints it after What Surfaced.

SLIDE 16 · Tell It — What Surfaced · 10 min · 1:07 ★

Whole room. Three or four men, one thing each — an insight, a surprise, a moment of recognition. Not their whole story. Four lenses on the slide; you will not get through all four, and you should not try. Your job here is what Allender calls reading with them: when a man

cannot see the redemptive thread in his own story, reflect it back. Not rushed, not forced — offered.

SAY “Not your story. One thing that surfaced.”

THE THEOLOGICAL LENS The Author question — where in a valley do you see the hand of something larger — is the last one and the lightest touch. Offer it as a lens, never as a test. A man who says “nowhere yet” has answered honestly, and honest is what Session 6 works with.

WATCH-FOR The man who tells his whole story at What Surfaced. Let him have ninety seconds, then: “Hold that — it is exactly what Session 6 is for.” The room will thank you.

SLIDE 17 · Which Chapters Go in the Knapsack? · 2 min · 1:17

Callback · the Knapsack. After “What surfaced?”, before Into the Harvest Charter. The notes budget three minutes; two is what the morning has.

SAY “You just mapped and mined forty years. Here is the Knapsack question again: which of these chapters go with you into the second half, and which stay at Basecamp?”

The answer is not “all of it” and not “start fresh.” It is the middle: carry the wisdom of the first half, not the weight of it. First half — proving, struggle, victories, defeats; second half — redemption, wisdom, witness, presence. You are the protagonist, and the Author is not finished.

CLOSE “Your Charter is not your whole story. It is the chapters you choose to carry. That’s what §1.1 is: curation, not autobiography.” That sentence hands you straight into slide 18.

Movement 3 · The Hand-off (1:19 – 1:30)

Eleven minutes, nine slides, one job: send men home knowing exactly what to write, how long it is, who reads it, and what happens to it. The men who write this week are the men who could see the destination this morning.

SLIDE 18 · Into the Harvest Charter · 3 min · 1:19

Everything made this morning is raw material for §1.1. Charter v12 has three steps. Step One, the Three Markers, is already written. Step Two is the story in two paragraphs, Origins and Building Years. Step Three is the God sentence — including the stretches where He seemed absent. The last box no longer says What's Next; it points to Session 6, where two witnesses hear Steps Two and Three.

GUARDRAIL The God sentence is the whole point of a session called Co-Author. It dropped off an earlier draft of this deck; do not let it drop off your delivery. Read Step Three aloud.

SLIDE 19 · This Week's Work — Two Layers · 2 min · 1:22 ★

Say it plainly, because without it the men will write three pages and be told to read two paragraphs — or write two paragraphs and feel they skipped the assignment. Layer one is private: three sittings of twenty minutes, two to three pages, nobody reads it, ever — that is the condition his method depends on. Layer two is shared: the §1.1 draft distilled from the raw pages, 200–300 words, and that is what gets read aloud at Session 6. Two layers keeps both promises true, including slide 8's: you share only what you choose.

SAY “About two hours and twenty minutes this week, all told — a milestone week, longer on purpose. Three sittings at twenty, then the two paragraphs. Nobody reads the raw pages. Everybody hears the two paragraphs — and you choose what goes in them.”

SLIDE 20 · The Three Sittings · 1 min · 1:24

Point at the table; the guide has it in full with the prompts. What · Who · Why in three sittings, then the Author — the read-back that becomes the §1.1 draft (about 40 minutes). Say the dip out loud: a heaviness after the first two sittings is normal and lifts by the third. No man should mistake the second sitting for a verdict. The man who stops after the second sitting is the one you call midweek.

SLIDE 21 · Homework — Before Session 6 (Monday December 14) · 1 min · 1:25

The slide is the one closing list, with honest minutes. DO: three sittings of twenty minutes (60) and the §1.1 My Story draft, 200–300 words built from the Three Markers, printed with the Life Map (40). READ: Why We Write Our Story — WhyzMen, three pages (10). SURVEY: VIA Character Strengths, free at viacharacter.org (25); the men bring their top 5 to Session 7 — it has moved here from the Christmas window so that break is for the Compass essays.

PRACTICE: Ask for a story, 2 · Ask (5). Total: about 140 minutes this week — say “a milestone week, longer on purpose.” **GOING DEEPER** — say “optional” out loud: Narrative Identity (McAdams), the Allender reference, the Adler reference, Pennebaker’s Healing Benefits of Writing, the Life Story Interview. Not counted. Name the three permissions from the front, especially the recorder: for some men in this room it is access, not a concession.

CliftonStrengths stays later in the program.

KEEP SEPARATE The raw writing (private, three sittings) and the Charter draft (shared, Session 6). Don’t let them blur, or the private pages stop being honest.

SLIDE 22 · Readings — This Week’s Reading · 30 sec · 1:26

Point, don’t teach. Recommended: Why We Write Our Story (WhyzMen, 3 pages, about 10 minutes). Say where it lives (binder / shared folder). Going Deeper, once and lightly — optional, never assigned: Narrative Identity (McAdams) · the Allender Reference — the genre arcs, and Flight & Desire · the Adler Reference · Pennebaker, Healing Benefits of Writing · the Life Story Interview. Why We Write Our Story stands in for the two books (The Stories We Live By; To Be Told); they stay in the bibliography. Same list as slide 21’s READ and DEEPER tiers.

SLIDE 23 · Practice of the Week — Ask for a story · 1–2 min · 1:26

SAY “Tell me about a time when...” Then listen for the turning point. One minute now: try it once on the man beside you.

Read the practice: Ask for a story. Name its skill and section: “It is section 2, Ask, in your Toolkit — the card is the menu, the Toolkit is the kitchen.” Then one minute, in pairs, right now: Ask the man beside you, “Tell me about a time when...”, and listen for the turning point. Then swap. Out of time? Each man names the one person he will try it with this week. The tracker is weekly, not daily: “Tried it this week ☐” and one moment line on the card. Rooted in David Brooks, How to Know a Person: ask for stories, not opinions. This week you are writing your own story; the practice turns the same skill outward.

CHECK-IN Session 6 opens: “Tell us one moment with this week’s practice: Ask for a story.”

DECK Next, click past 24–25 to slide 26 (both are in reserve).

SLIDE 26 · Next · Session 6 · 1 min · 1:27

Say what happens to the writing so the writing is sized for it: each man reads his §1.1 draft aloud, two minutes; two witnesses answer “what I heard” and name the arc. Twelve men at four to five minutes is fifty to sixty — which is why it is 250 words and not three pages. Adler’s three marks — coherence, complexity, resolution — are Session 6’s listening lens; name them and leave them.

SLIDE 27 · What to Bring — Session 6 · 1 min · 1:28

Ninety seconds, after the Session 6 preview, before the Benediction.

SAY “Next week is the one morning we ask for paper. Not the whole Charter, not the guide — three things. Your Life Map, which is already paper and already done. Your §1.1 draft, printed: Steps One to Three, two or three sheets. And we put a worksheet and a pen at your seat.”

WHY The marking exercise has them reading one page while writing on another. On a tablet that is a page-flip every thirty seconds; on a table it is nothing.

GUARDRAIL The raw pages stay home. Nobody reads Layer One — say it again here so no one prints them by mistake.

LOGISTICS A man who can’t print emails his draft two days ahead; print it and have it at his seat. Hand out the one-page “What to Bring” sheet as they leave, or send it with the deck tomorrow.

SLIDE 28 · Benediction · 1 min · 1:29

Benediction, not lecture. Allender’s image: every story reaches the moment the protagonist must accept the quest — retirement is that moment. Read Jeremiah 29:11 and Ephesians 2:10 together as authorial commentary, not proof texts. Brief prayer: courage to read the story faithfully, faith to write the next chapter with intention. Announce Session 6: Read My Story — bring the Life Map and the §1.1 draft on paper (slide 27).

Watch-Fors · The Whole Morning on One Page

the man with no markers	No shame at the table. He writes them at slide 12, three sentences each, and you find out privately this week whether “didn’t” means “couldn’t.” It is usually the valley.
the résumé writer	Chapter titles that are date ranges; a Life Map that is a career chart. Ask for the weather of those years. Ask what his wife would call the chapters.
the man who goes quiet at the valley	He is not stuck; he is there. Give him the room during the block. Check in at the break — never at the table, never in the circle.
the Tragedy man	“My best days are behind me,” said as realism. Don’t argue it this morning. Name the arc with compassion and let the Witness Pair do what you can’t: someone else hears his story and finds the thread.
the Comedy man	Jokes through the check-in, jokes through the map. Protective, not malicious. The one-word genre exercise is for him; he will write “comedy” and laugh, and that is the first honest thing he has said all morning. Follow up privately.
the witness who fixes	“What you should do is...” Hand on the shoulder, the sentence again: what I heard you say was. Fixing is the reflex forty years of competence built; it takes three interruptions to retrain.
the man who tells the whole story at What Surfaced	Ninety seconds, then: hold that — it is exactly what Session 6 is for. Say it warmly; he is the man most ready for next week.
the Bible-as-proof-text man	Jeremiah 29:11 was written to a nation in exile; he may know that and object to its personal use. Agree — and say that is exactly why it is read as authorial commentary this morning, not as a promise of prosperity.
tears, anywhere	This morning and Session 6 are the likeliest sessions. Do not rescue the room from silence. A hand on the shoulder at the break beats a public comfort in the moment.

Accuracy Guardrails

McAdams. Dan McAdams, Northwestern, is the founding architect of narrative identity — the empirically grounded claim that identity is the internalized, evolving story a person constructs. “Nuclear episodes” is his term for peak, nadir, and turning-point scenes; the Life Story Interview (2007 revision) is the instrument, and its first section — chapters of a book — is slide 10 almost verbatim. Agency and communion are his two master themes. “We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell” is his line; use it as printed.

Allender. The three arcs (tragedy, comedy, romance), wounds and gifts as the same material, flight and desire, and God as the Author are Dan Allender’s framework in *To Be Told*, adapted for this program in the participant reference. The genre glosses on slide 13 — especially reading comedy as the avoidance arc — are the program’s adaptation; if a well-read man says Allender uses the genres differently, concede cheerfully and keep the lens.

Pennebaker. James Pennebaker, University of Texas at Austin. The expressive-writing protocol: 15–20 minutes a day, three to four consecutive days, about a significant or difficult experience. More than 200 studies is a safe figure. The language findings — gains tracked with rising use of causal and insight words, and with a shift away from first-person singular — are his. Samples were mostly college students of both sexes: say people, not men. The four-day table is our adaptation of his one-event protocol to a life story; do not attribute the day-by-day prompts to him. Talking into a recorder: Pennebaker and colleagues found comparable benefit from spoken disclosure — say “comparable,” not “identical.”

Adler. Jonathan Adler, Olin College, studied under McAdams. Coherence, complexity, and positive resolution as narrative qualities that track well-being, and the finding that the arc a person gives an experience — not the content — predicts outcomes, are his. They are named on slide 26 as Session 6’s lens; do not teach them this morning. “Prototyping your story” is our phrase, in his design-thinking spirit.

Scripture. Ephesians 2:10 — *poiema* is the Greek behind “handiwork/workmanship”; “work being written” is gloss, not translation, and the slide punctuates it as such. Jeremiah 29:11 is addressed to Judah in Babylonian exile, a corporate promise seventy years long; read it as authorial commentary on God’s character, not as a personal prosperity text, and say so if asked. Romans 8:28 (in the Allender reference) promises that God works all things — including the valleys — toward good; it does not say all things were good.

The five losses. Slide 7 refers to the losses named in Session 2 and Session 3 (structure among them). “Really one loss” is the program’s reframe, not a research claim.

In the Facilitator's Kitchen

Sources to draw from, and to ration on participant-facing slides: Why We Write Our Story (the participant synthesis of McAdams, Allender and Pennebaker) · McAdams, The Stories We Live By and The Redemptive Self · McAdams, The Life Story Interview II (2007) · Allender, To Be Told · Pennebaker, Opening Up by Writing It Down (with Joshua Smyth) · David Brooks, How to Know a Person (the Practice of the Week) · Adler et al., “The Incremental Validity of Narrative Identity” (2016) · Frederick Buechner — “pay attention to the things that make you laugh and the things that make you cry.” And the oldest line in the room, from Socrates by way of the Charter’s front page: the unexamined life is not worth living — with Buford’s reply beside it, that the examined life is hard to live. This morning is the examination. Keep it kind.

What's Due When

ITEM	BRING TO	DUE
Three sittings of raw writing — private	—	This week; $3 \times 20 \text{ min} = 60 \text{ min}$; nobody reads it
Charter §1.1 My Story draft — 200–300 words, from the Three Markers	Session 6	Mon Dec 14 — 40 min; read aloud, two minutes each
Read: Why We Write Our Story (WhyzMen, 3 pages). Going Deeper, not counted: McAdams · Allender · Adler · Pennebaker · Life Story Interview	Session 6	Mon Dec 14 — 10 min
Carry: “What has your story been fleeing / seeking?”	—	Not written; asked at the Session 6 opening, surfaces again in §1.2
VIA Character Strengths survey (free, viacharacter.org)	Session 7	This week — 25 min; bring top 5 to Session 7 (Mon Jan 4)
Practice of the Week · Ask for a story — tried it this week	Session 6	Mon Dec 14 — 5 min; one moment at the opening check-in. Total this week: about 140 minutes — a milestone week, longer on purpose
On paper: Life Map + §1.1 Steps One to Three printed	Session 6	Can't print? Email the draft two days ahead

Tees Up · Session 6 — Read My Story

Every man reads his §1.1 draft aloud; two witnesses answer and name the arc. Session 6 teaches redemption versus contamination sequences (McAdams/Adler) and Adler's coherence · complexity · resolution as the listening lens — and it opens with one insight from the writing process itself, because McAdams notes that what a man revises between drafts is as revealing as the draft. Session 6's homework runs three weeks over Christmas (Session 7 is Monday January 4): Genesis 50:20 read twice, Charter §1.2 My Compass part 1 — the Workview and Lifeview essays, about 250 words each — and 3–5 candidate values circled on the Values Inventory; about 115 minutes in all. VIA is already done this week, so the break is for the essays. This morning's writing is the fuel for all of it: a man who did the three sittings arrives at Session 6 with something to read, and at Session 7 with a theme to hang values on.

Open Items for Dave

1. r9 (Wave 2): homework cut to the plan — three sittings instead of four days, one required reading (Why We Write Our Story), VIA moved here from Session 6. McAdams, Allender,

Adler, Pennebaker and the Life Story Interview are Going Deeper. The “What to Bring to Session 6” handout is now r2 (three sittings, Steps One to Three, the paper notebook); print it before Dec 7.

2. The recorder permission (talk it into a phone, listen back) is new. If any man in the room does not use a smartphone, have one alternative ready — a small digital recorder from the church office, or a man from his table who will listen.
3. Session 6 asks this week’s items at its opening: Why We Write (one sentence), the three sittings (done / not yet), §1.1 (open to §1.1), VIA top 5 (bring it — used at Session 7), the practice, and the fleeing/seeking question.
4. The Allender participant reference still labels “Charter 1.2 · My Purpose Statement”; in Charter v12, §1.2 is My Compass and purpose lives in §2.1 My Mission. The reference is now Going Deeper, but the label is still worth a one-line fix. Worth a one-line fix before it goes out again.
5. Deck r8 order: the duplicate of slide 5 is gone and The Grammar of Both now sits at slide 6, straight after the two truths; the printed slide-number labels match physical order. The other two middle-voice slides, 24 The Writing Transforms You and 25 Heard into Becoming, still follow the Practice of the Week rather than their design homes (after slides 14 and 15); this guide holds them in reserve until you decide.

The Morning on One Page · Cue Card

#	BLOCK	CUE
1–2	Open ★	Markers out. “Which was hardest?” — not what it says. Kitchen Table: one thing heard. Marriage practice: one line read. One moment with Her day first. Movie question for levity. Ten minutes, hard.
3–9	The Frame	McAdams: you are the story you tell. Protagonist honored, co-author named — poiema. Slide 6: active, passive, middle — the writer and the written. One loss. Reconnaissance, not therapy — say row three twice. Share only what you choose.
10–11	Map ★	Chapter titles: weather, not dates. Life Map: landscape, career and life, initials for the people who recur. Quiet. Walk the room; say nothing unless stuck.
12–13	Mine	Don’t re-assign the markers — read them back, tick the one with heat. Two moments circled. Genre: one word, the one he recognizes. Invitation, not diagnosis.
14	Pennebaker	People, not men. Venting does nothing; meaning does. Point at the word lists and move.
15–16	Tell ★	Four minutes each. “What I heard you say was.” No fixing. What Surfaced: one thing, not a story. Read with them — find the thread he can’t see. Author question last, lightest.

#	BLOCK	CUE
17–20	Hand-off ★	Knapsack: carry the wisdom, not the weight. Steps Two and Three — read the God sentence aloud. Two layers: private three sittings, shared 250 words. Say the dip.
21–28	Send-off	DO / READ / SURVEY / DEEPER — about 140 minutes. Recorder permission. Readings: point. Practice: Ask for a story. Paper morning: Life Map + §1.1 printed. Carry the fleeing/seeking question. Session 6 reads it aloud, two minutes each. Jeremiah 29:11 + Ephesians 2:10 as commentary. Pray.

“We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell.” This morning every man in the room discovers he has been telling one for seventy years. Your job is to hand him the pen, keep the clock, and get out of the way.