

15. Ocean

Whether it will make it or not, whether it is aware of it or not every river on the face of the earth is striving towards the great ocean. Its ultimate destiny. In becoming one with the ocean the river finds its fulfilment.

Whether you are aware of it or not, whether you will make it or not, you are moving towards the great ocean – God!

“Our hearts are made for you Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you”, St. Augustine put it so powerfully after learning the lessons from his own life.

- Are you aware that you are striving towards God?
- Are you aware that HE is your deepest desire?
- What choices are you making towards the fulfilment of this deepest desire?



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Don Bosco Spiritual Adventures

i=RIVER : A Journey to Self Discovery

Reflect on your life as resembling the flow of a river, from its first beginnings in a hidden secret source, to its out-flowing into the ocean of its destination.

- 1** A child is born through-
The flow of my life begins
- 2** My source: in what space does my life's flow begin? What gifts spring up from me?
- 3** My tributaries:
Who and what has formed me into what I am?
- 4** The river runs peacefully
- 5** The river seems to disappear underground. I seem to forget my deepest desire
- 6** The river is diverted for other people's purposes. I feel exploited
- 7** The river makes detours. I am straying from my life
- 8** The river struggles through obstructions,
- 9** The river dries up. My life feels wasted
- 10** The river runs into bog-land and gets stagnant. Maybe there never was a flow.
- 11** The river hits rapids. I feel frightened and alone.
- 12** The river widens and deepens, becomes a source of refreshment for others, flows into deserts,
- 13** Where is the river's destination?
- 14** My deepest desire?

Consider the following:

- ◆ What do you know, and value about your origins?
- ◆ What kind of landscape has your river flowed through so far?
- ◆ What kind of obstructions or hazards has it had to negotiate?
- ◆ Have you ever felt that your river's energy and power was being sapped and exploited by others?
- ◆ Has your life river ever appeared to disappear? To go underground or to dry up?
- ◆ What detours do you see with hindsight that your life has made?
- ◆ What landmarks have left you feeling angry, disappointed, misled or in any way negative?
- ◆ How and where, do you feel that your river is flowing?

The river that makes a difference to the landscape through which it flows

1. The Origin

Every river has its origin. Often the origin of a river may be hidden and insignificant. Even a great mighty river begins with a small tiny stream. Often you go to a swampy area and people say here is where a big river is born. You see no river but only reeds. Yet the river is there.



- The origin of the river of your life was also insignificant and hidden. It happened in the dark corner of the womb of your mother. Yet it was the greatest miracle that has ever happened in your life.
- What do you know about your own origins?
- Are you proud of your origin? May be there were certain painful events associated with your origin.
- Have you accepted the story of your origins?

The flow of your life will not be smooth as long as you have not accepted your roots.



2. Tributaries

As the river progresses on its journey there are other rivulets that flow into it. The tributaries add volume to the main river. A large river is able to receive its sources gracefully, and keep moving towards its own target. Sometimes the tributaries may add dirt to the river, especially in our industrial world. Yet the river

keeps moving.

As you grew up there were different tributaries that flowed into your own life. The people, whose lives crisscrossed your own. Your parents, family, teachers, elders, friends. The places where you have lived. The schools that you have studied in. And the different events of your life are your tributaries.

- Have you acknowledged your tributaries?
- Have you taken time to thank them? May be there were negative influences in your life – people, places and events that added dirt to your flow.
- Have you forgiven and accepted to move on towards your own destiny?

3. Peaceful Flow

The course of the river is often marked by peaceful moments. It flows quietly and effortlessly. It seems to know where it is off to. No obstacles. No strain. Everything is smooth.

It is on your deepest desire that you invest all your energy

But the pity is, you may not be really aware of your deepest desire. Or you have displaced mistaken desires. You may mix up your shallow desires with your deepest ones. You continue to be restless because you have not got in touch with your deepest desires nor have you made the choice in your life to fulfil your deepest desires.

- How can I know my deepest desire?
- Start a chain of 'Why questions'. Why do I get up in the morning?
- I have to go to school. Why do I go to school?
- I want to study. Why do I want to study?
- I want to pass with good marks. Why good marks?
- To get a good job. Why good job? ...



Are you able to get in touch with your deepest desires?

14. Contributions

A mature river is able to make valuable contribution to enhance its environment. It does not dry up while sharing its water with others. It does not feel exploited nor used up, because it has enough for everyone. Plant life, animal life and humans enjoy a good river.



- What are the contributions that you are making to the people around you?
- Are you mature enough to make meaningful contribution?
- If you are hiding your own emptiness by reaching out to others, you run the risk of being exploited and feeling wasted.
- Where can I start?

I can get in touch with my deepest desires. I focus on my DESTINY.

My life has a deeper meaning and reality that is more than just the clothes I wear or the food I eat. How meaningful is my life?

11. Deepening and Widening

As the river matures it deepens and it widens. Deep rivers hardly get dry. Rivers that are sufficiently wide begin to enhance their environment. They make lands fertile. They welcome people to enjoy their resources.



A mature person is deep and sufficiently wide.

- When I become aware of myself, when I constantly get in touch with my inner self, I become deep.
- When I reach out to other people in genuine relationship I become wide. I mature.
- When I am deep and wide I begin to enhance the community of people around me. I serve others without feeling exploited. I reach out to others without being selfish.

12. Destination

Every river – small and big – that's flowing on the face of the earth has its destiny. Whether it is aware of it or not, whether it will make it or not, every river is striving towards its ultimate destiny.



- Are you aware that the river of your life is flowing towards a great destiny?
 - You are striving towards a goal
- Whether you are aware of it or not, whether you will make it or not, you are moving towards an Omega point in your life.
- If only you can be aware it, your life can become more meaningful and your striving more enjoyable.

13. My Deepest Desire

What are the deepest desires of your heart? Why do you do all that you do throughout the day? What will make you ultimately fulfilled?

St. Ignatius said, "You are your deepest desires".

You become what you are striving towards, because consciously or unconsciously every daily choice of yours is directed towards that which you desire most in your life.

- What were the moments in your life when you experienced peaceful flow? Peaceful moments in our lives are those when we are clear about our own life goals. Apparent obstacles in the environment seem even insignificant when we know where we are flowing towards.
- At this moment in your life, are you experiencing a peaceful flow? Good health, financial stability, united family, intellectually bright, morally upright, religiously stable....
- Are you grateful to God for such a moment?



4. Unseen (Hidden Flow)

Sometimes the river may disappear underground. It flows but hidden. Under rocks, under cracks of mountains. Normal life may go on above the river; people may even walk over the river without knowing that there is a river under. If one walks down stream a little, one may see the river continuing its journey once again.



May be there was a time in your life when you were in the limelight. You were popular. You were a celebrity. But suddenly you had to move to another place and then no body recognized you, your life became quiet and hidden. Great heroes often have hidden phases in their lives.

Joseph of the Old Testament is the popular son of Jacob. He is sold as a slave and lives a hidden life in Egypt and even in the prison. But only to be made in time the governor of the land of Egypt.

Moses enjoys a life of a celebrity in Egypt. Because he kills an Egyptian he has to run away. Lives a quiet life tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, only to be called by God to be sent back to Egypt as the liberator of his people. Jesus spends thirty years in the quiet of the little hamlet of Nazareth, before he could come out as the powerful rabbi and messiah.

The hidden phase in the lives of these heroes are actually moments of preparation. A period of incubation.

- Have you recognized the fact that the hidden moments in your own life are moments of preparation? God is only buying time before he could make you a hero or heroin.

5. Detours

Rivers make detours. They go away from their course of flow. Often caused by the landscape, or by overflow during flooding. When rivers make detours their journey is prolonged. Their energy wasted. I too make detours in my life.

- When I make wrong choices. When I stray from the goal of my life. When I forget my deepest desires.
- When I go chasing butterflies on the sidewalks of my life.
- When I make unnecessary detours in my life, due to an attachment to a place, an improper relationship, mistaking pleasure for happiness, my own life journey is prolonged. And my energy wasted



6. Diversions

Sometimes the river is diverted for other people's purposes. The energy of the river is overly exploited. The river runs the risk of drying off if its sources are not sufficient enough.

- In our lives, we could say that detours are straying away because of our choices. But diversions are when we are victimized by other people's choices.
- When did you feel that you were forced to make a diversion because of the selfishness of another person?
- When did you feel exploited in a relationship?
- When did someone else take advantage of your goodness?
 - Did you feel used up? Dried up? Wasted?
 - Have you forgiven those people?
 - Have you accepted those moments in your life history?



By our readiness to forgive those people who diverted us we are not 'righting' the wrong. Evil remains evil. Only we have decided to move on with our lives. By forgiving we refuse to be bogged down

by the negativity of the bad experience.

7. Obstacles

In the course of the journey of the river, sometimes it meets with obstacles, boulders, blocks. And the river often pushes its way through with tremendous energy. In the flow of our own life there may be obstacles – sometimes thrown by nature and other times caused by people around us. Handicaps and sicknesses. Jealousies and quarrels.

- Do you agree to be defeated by these apparent block in your life?
- Are you ready to unblock the challenges of your life?
- Are you a reactive person who lets things happen your life – blaming others and focussing on impossibilities?
- Or are you a proactive person who makes things happen – taking responsibility and focussing on possibilities?

8. Dry Spell

Due to overuse of its resources, running to difficult terrain, and lacking continuous supply of water from its source, the river may experience a dry spell. Too many detours and diversions, having succumbed to obstacles, the river dries up.



- When was it last that you experienced a dry spell in your life?
- Are you experiencing one in your life at this very moment?
- How are you handling it? Feeling burnt out? Feeling exploited? A victim of your own wrong choices?
- What lessons can you learn from these moments?



Desert experiences can become strengthening moments for us, if only we can endure through the agonizing loneliness and exhausting dryness. If only we can do a soul searching in the quietness of our hearts, rather than blaming others or justifying ourselves through rationalization.

9. Stagnation

Sometimes rivers run into bog land. They become stagnant. There is no flow. When rivers become stagnant they begin to gather dirt. Their tremendous energy remains wasted.



When I mistake small achievements with the fulfilment of the deepest desires, I may become stagnant. Graduating from college, getting married, a priestly ordination, getting a job. These are only milestones in the ongoing journey of my life. They are not the end, but often only beginning of another stage in my life. When I falsely believe that I have reached, I get stagnant.

- When I am stagnant I gather dirt; I become rustic. The energy of my talents and skills gets wasted.

10. Rapids

Rivers fall over cliffs in rapids. There is tremendous energy – often uncontrollable. You cannot believe it was the same river that was stagnant a while ago. Where was all this energy? Often if this energy is not channelised it not only goes waste, it begins to destroy the environment around.

- When did you feel that your life was falling fast in rapids?
- You were running from pillar to post. Doing many things. Going places. Meeting people. You even wondered, where did all this energy come from?
- Are you going through such a moment right now in your life?
- Would you like to take control of yourself, lest you hurt other people? Lest you hurt yourself.