

## **JOURNEY – THE ROAD YOU’VE TRAVELED\***

Ask participants to get comfortable and close their eyes if they’re comfortable with that. Read the following slowly and with feeling:

Think back.... as far as you can remember – to when you were a young child. Try to picture your childhood home. Picture your parents or guardians -- How do you think they felt about your birth? Were you planned or a surprise? ... Were they married or unmarried? ... Perhaps you were raised by your biological mother and father or maybe by one parent alone ... Or by grandparents, a stepparent or adoptive parents. Whatever your situation, I want you to picture your caretakers now.

Visualize the other people who may have lived with you - sisters/brothers and any other relatives or close friends. Picture their faces. How did members of your family get along? What was your style of communication as a family? ... How much affection was shown and how was it shown? In particular, how did your parents or caretakers get along, what was their relationship like?

Picture yourself in elementary school. What kind of “kid” were you? Were you outgoing, curious, shy, a good student, a behavior problem, a leader, a follower? What activities did you enjoy at that age?

Other than your biological parents, who were the important men and women in your life when you were growing up? Was it your grandfather or grandmother? An uncle? Aunt? Older brother? Sister? Minister or religious leader? Coach? Neighbor? Family friend? Nobody? As you think about it, were there many adults in your life or very few? What was your relationship like with these men and women? What did you learn about relationships and parenthood from these men and women?

Now think specifically about your biological parents. What role did they each play in your life? How did you feel about your mother when you were growing up? What about your father? If he was active in your life, what kind of father was he? Was he distant or close with you? Were your parents approving or disapproving? Stern or nurturing? How much time did they spend with you? Did they attend events that were important to you? Could you go to your mother or father with your joys and worries? Why or why not?

If your biological father or mother were not active in your life, how did you feel about that? How did this absence affect your feelings about yourself? What were you told about your absent mother or father? How was this absence explained to you? Did anyone else play the role of mother or father in your life? If so, what were they like and how did you feel about them?

As you look back, what impact has your relationship with your parents and other key individuals had on your life in general? On your current attitudes toward and your expectations of men or women? What personal issues have you had to sort out or do you continue to sort out as you deal with your own personal relationships today?

\*Adapted by Nigel Vann from an activity developed by Pamela Wilson for NPCL in 2000.