

Spiritual Discipline: Journaling

February 2016

More than any other discipline, Journaling blends the Bible and daily living, like the confluence of two great rivers into one. And since each believer's adventure down life's river involves their own unique bends and hazards previously unexplored by him or her, something about journaling this journey appeals to the adventuresome spirit of Christian growth.

A "journal" is a place in which a person records information important to him or her personally for preservation or consideration. As a Christian, your journal is a place to document the works and ways of God in your life. You may include an account of daily events, a record of personal relationships, Biblical insights and applications, devotional thoughts, and/or a list of prayer requests. A journal is one of the best places for charting your progress in the other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself accountable to your goals. It is a simple history and reference for reviewing what God has been doing in your life over a period of time.

The Value of Journaling:

1. **Help in Self-Understanding and Evaluation:** In Romans 12:3, each Christian is exhorted "not to think of himself more highly than he ought...". Keeping a journal causes us to examine ourselves in light of Scripture and can be the means by which the Holy Spirit shows us areas of sin or weakness in our lives.
2. **Help in Meditation:** Compare Josh 1:7-8; Ps 1:1-3; and II Timothy 2:7. Journaling is an excellent way to slow us down, force us to concentrate on the meaning of Scripture, and focus our prayers.
3. **Help in Expressing Thoughts and Feelings to the Lord:** Sometimes it is difficult to tell others our deepest and most intimate thoughts. This is also true when we speak to God. Ps 62:8 encourages us to "pour out your heart before Him," and our human thoughts and emotions can range between extremes. Journaling helps with this.
4. **Help in Creating and Preserving a Spiritual Heritage:** Journaling is an effective way of teaching the things of God to our children and grandchildren and transmitting our faith into the future (Deut 6:4-7; II Timothy 1:5).
5. **Help in Clarifying and Articulating Insights:** When insights from a quiet time are clearly fixed in one's mind through journaling, they can be ready to use later in conversation, counseling, or witnessing (I Peter 3:15).
6. **Help in Monitoring Goals and Priorities:** Journaling is a great way to keep before us the things we want to do and emphasize. Listing desirable habits and character qualities can help us in becoming more Christlike.

There are no "rules" for keeping a journal, so the method you find most edifying and useful is the way you should go. This applies to content, format (handwritten or digital), length, and frequency. Everything is valid as long as it helps you be consistent in your discipline of journaling, and if it helps you draw closer to God and become more Christlike.

Here are some tips for better journaling:

- Don't fret over spelling, composition, or how often or how much you write. Focus on your thoughts.
- Be persistent through the dry times. The novelty of journaling may soon wear off. Stay faithful to the process.
- You must start journaling before you can experience its value. As with exercise, good intentions aren't enough.

Throughout the month of February, live out the spiritual discipline of Journaling by working through the items below and discussing them with your 222 Group.

- Journaling is not required to grow in your Christian walk. Do you think it is something that might help you?
- Try journaling for one week and see if you find it helpful?
- If so, go to a Christian bookstore and peruse the journals. Note what appeals to you and what doesn't. Do you want pages designated for prayer requests or insights from Scripture? Do you like a beautifully bound journal? A nontraditional, edgier style? A simple spiral-bound notebook? Or maybe a simple file on a computer?
- Discuss new insights with your 222 Group.