

# Journaling and Learning

## JOURNALING

Although journaling is not commanded in Scripture, something very much like what we call journaling is modeled in Psalms and in Jeremiah's Lamentations. God has blessed the use of journals since biblical times. Keeping a spiritual journal can be a valuable aid to maintaining other Spiritual Disciplines, such as biblical meditation. Although there are no rules for keeping a journal and journaling can be fruitful at any level of involvement, journaling requires \_\_\_\_\_ through the \_\_\_\_\_. Its value can be experienced only through doing so.

## JOURNALING...FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS

Journaling has a fascinating appeal with nearly all who hear about it. One reason is the way journaling blends the Bible and daily living, like the confluence of two great rivers into one.

A journal (a word usually synonymous with diary) is a place (tangible or digital) in which a person records information important to him or her personally for preservation or consideration. As a disciple of Jesus, your journal is a place to document the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of God in your life.

Does a Christian have to keep a journal in order to grow more like Jesus Christ? \_\_\_\_\_, nothing in scripture obligates the followers of Jesus to keep a journal. Prayer, as an example, is the direct fruit of salvation. Journaling is not. Let's make clear that Jesus did not live and die for sinners to turn us into journal keepers. He came to make us right with God. But, once someone is right with God, journaling can be a great tool for thinking about and applying the life and death of Jesus.

## VALUE OF JOURNALING

### Help in Self-Understanding and Evaluation

Josiah Pratt – The practice of keeping a diary would promote vigilance. The lives of many are spent at a sort of hazard. They fall into certain religious habits: and are perhaps under no strong temptations. They are regular at church and sacrament, and in family worship. They read the Bible and pray daily in secret. But here it ends. They know little of the progress or decline of the inner man. They are Christians, therefore, of very low attainments. The workings of sin are not noticed, as they should be, and therefore grace is not sought against them; and the genial emotions of grace are not noticed, and therefore not fostered and cultivated. Now, a diary would have a tendency to raise the standard to such persons by exciting vigilance.

Help in meditation

Help in expressing thoughts and feelings to the Lord

Help in Creating and Preserving a Spiritual Heritage

Help in Clarifying and Articulating Insights

Help in Monitoring Goals and Priorities

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Help in remembering the Lord's works

Help in maintaining the other Spiritual Disciplines

## WAYS OF JOURNALING

How is it done? "Your way of keeping a journal is the \_\_\_\_\_ way...There are no rules for keeping a journal!" Many Christians find that the most practical approach is to use everyday notebook paper or common printer paper. While some choose a spiral-bound notebook and others prefer a professionally bound journal. Some feel strongly about journaling only by hand, that it's more spontaneous and expressive.

As a starting entry for each day, try listing the one verse or idea from your Bible reading that impressed you most. Meditate on that for a few minutes, then record your thoughts and insights. From there consider adding recent events in your life and your feelings and responses to them, brief prayers, joys, successes, failures, quotations, and so on. Consider journaling, not only as a way to raise up a "monument to God's faithfulness" in your life, but more importantly, "for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_."

## LEARNING

Why do so many Christians live as though they've been told, "Choose you this day whom you will serve: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_"? We maintain that the more Christ like we grow, the more we will pursue both, a full head and a full heart, and the more we will radiate both spiritual light and heat. Christians must realize that just as a fire cannot blaze without \_\_\_\_\_, so burning hearts are not kindled by brainless heads. We must not content ourselves to be like those the Bible condemns as having "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

Does this mean we must be brilliant to be Christians? Absolutely not. But it does mean that to be like Jesus we must be learners, even as He was at only age twelve, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). An examination of the New Testament word disciple reveals that it means to be not only "a follower" of Christ but also "a \_\_\_\_\_."

In Proverbs 10:14 we're told, "The wise lay up knowledge." The Hebrew word here means "to store up like a treasure." Wise men and women love to learn because they realize that knowledge is like a precious treasure. A wise person not only "acquires" knowledge, he or she "seeks" it (Proverbs 18:15). 2 Peter 1... Add to youth faith.. \_\_\_\_\_.

In Proverbs 23:12, we're commanded, "Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge." No matter how much previous instruction you have received, nor how extensive your knowledge—especially about God, Christ, the Bible, and the Christian life—and regardless of how intelligent or slow you consider yourself, you still need to apply your heart and ears to learn, for you haven't learned at all.

Godly learning is an important Spiritual Discipline because the more Christ like we grow, the more we will pursue a full head as well as a full heart. As Proverbs 9:9 tells us, a characteristic of wise people is their desire for godly learning. We must not be content to have zeal for God without knowledge. Jesus Himself said to "love the Lord your God...with all your mind: (Mark 12:29-30). We glorify God when we use our minds as well as our hearts to learn of Him, His ways, His Word and His world.

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## **Learning to... fulfill the Greatest Commandment**

Part of God's greatest commandment said Jesus, is "Love the Lord your God...with all your mind" (Mark 12:29-30). What God wants most from you is your \_\_\_\_\_. And one of the ways He wants you to show love and obedience to Him is by godly learning. God is glorified when we use the mind He made to learn of Him, His ways, His Word and His world. Unless we love God with a growing mind, we will be Christian versions of the Samaritans to whom Jesus said, "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22).

## **Learning... essential for Increased \_\_\_\_\_**

The Christian life begins with learning—learning the gospel. No one is made right with God unless he or she learns about Him and His message to the world, a message of good news called the gospel. No one believes in Jesus or loves Jesus unless he or she has heard the story of Jesus and had at least a minimal understanding of it. And just as we cannot believe in and love Him about whom we've learned nothing, so we cannot grow in our faith and love of Him unless we learn more about Him.

God's truth must be \_\_\_\_\_ before it can be applied. The Word of God must first go through your head if it's going to change your heart and your life. That's why the apostle Paul said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2, emphasis added). Christ like transformation of the heart and life—growth in godliness—involves a mental renewal that cannot happen without learning.

No one grows into Christlikeness without a knowledge of it—what Christlikeness looks like, how to cultivate it, why it's necessary, where it leads, and more. If you know little about godliness you will grow little in godliness. To know it requires the Discipline of learning.

## **Learning Is Mostly by Discipline, not by \_\_\_\_\_**

We must not assume that we have learned true wisdom just by growing older. The observation found in Job 32:9 is, "The abundant in years may not be wise" (NASB). Age and experience by themselves don't increase your spiritual maturity. Becoming like Jesus doesn't happen incidentally or automatically with the passing of birthdays. Godliness, as I Timothy 4:7 says, requires a deliberate discipline. The Discipline of learning transforms accidental learning into intentional learners.

## **Learning in a Variety of Ways**

- Listen to recorded books
- Listen to audio and video recordings via the Internet.
- Listen to Bible teaching programs of reputable ministers.
- Use study guides for books when available.
- Prepare good questions in order to dialogue meaningfully with spiritually mature Christians.
- Read the best books.

Above all, remember that learning has a goal. The goal is \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-29, "come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me" (emphasis added). There is a false or superficial knowledge that "puffs up" 1 Corinthians 8:1), but godly \_\_\_\_\_ leads to godly \_\_\_\_\_.

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