



Spiritual Disciplines Toolbox

07 Journaling

“Set up road markers for yourself; make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went.”
— Jeremiah 31:21

What are Spiritual Disciplines?

At some point we all get stale, stuck, or start searching for more. Most often all we need is the right tool to break through in our relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines are the biblical tools Christians have been using for centuries to draw closer to God. We use the disciplines because we need help, not because we are so holy. Experiment with the tools to find out what helps you connect with God the best.

What is Journaling all about?

Life is a journey. From our first breath to our final destination, we are in transit. Life is change and flux and movement. We might want to slow it down, rewind it or just pause it—but we can't. We are a people on our way to eternity with our final home as a fixed point on the horizon. But how do we make sense of today? Journaling is the tool by which we mark progress and recognize God's hand in the whirlwind of our lives.

God is always at work. He doesn't sleep (Ps. 121:3-4), He doesn't get tired (Isa. 40:28), He doesn't stop working in us (Phil. 1:6) or around us (Rom. 8:28). The question is—are we aware of what God is doing? When we journal, we give ourselves the space and time to identify God's movement in our lives so that we can submit to His leading. God commands that we stop and take note of our journey, think on what it means, and let it direct our decisions in the future (Jer. 31:21). Journaling is one of the best ways to do that.

Where do I start?

Just Write. Stop thinking about getting it perfect or someone seeing it later, and just write honestly. Keep God in mind. You can even write directly to Him. You can make a list, jot down memories, capture a thought, anything! Then read back over what you have written in an attitude of prayer and openness to God.

What other ways can I use this tool?

Word Picture. Sometimes we are so scatter-brained or emotionally overloaded that writing neat linear sentences is impossible. Instead, express your thoughts and emotions before God by jotting down single words like joyful, angry, tired, content, hopeful, or anxious. Once you have poured out everything on the page, take the time to prayerfully reflect. Ask God to help you understand what you are experiencing. Ask for help in areas where you need it. Note: You can also do this by drawing simple pictures.

Prayer Journal. Write down prayer requests, the date, and then pray. As God answers prayer, go back and write in the answer and the date. You'll be amazed at how God doesn't forget a single prayer and is faithful to answer when we ask. After a while, share the prayer results with family and friends to encourage their faith.

The Big One. Simply take the big ideas God has been pressing on you from a time of spiritual intake (listening to a sermon or song, reading the Bible) and then reflect on it later with God, praying your thoughts and emotions. Keep these thoughts together in one place to be able to look over periodically—giving you a powerful, big-picture glimpse of what God is up to in your life.

Questions, Questions. A well-written question is worth more than a thousand possible answers. Our hearts are often flooded with fuzzy questions. When we take the time to form our discomforts, heartaches, yearnings and desires into questions, we are prepared to experience truth in profound ways. The difference between the Christian who is stuck and one who is moving is sometimes just the ability to ask good questions.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

— Socrates