



Benefits of Journaling

Everything we need to know for living a healthy, happy, submitted life to Christ can be found in the Bible. The Bible is the written word of God, sort of like a love letter from God to you and me, a love letter that we can read over and over again in order to build our faith (Romans 10:17), to reassure us of God's love (1 John 2:5) and to reinforce the fact that God's word is true (John 17:17, Psalm 33:4).

God's love letter to us is not meant to be a one-sided form of communication. We have the privilege to commune with God through prayer and through writing Him our very own love letter in the form of a prayer journal.

Some of the benefits of communing with God via journaling are:

- **Gives you a way to release** your hurt, your pain or anything that is hindering you from a closer connection with Christ (1 Peter 5:7)
- **Is a way to share** your hopes and dreams with God in a meaningful way (Habakkuk 2:2)
- **Helps you document and "memorialize"** answered prayer requests (Psalm 118:21)
- **Helps build your faith** as you are able to look back and see how God has been with you in the past, giving you greater confidence that He is with you now and will be with you in the future (Mark 9:24, Malachi 3:6, 2 Corinthians 1:10, Mark 11:22-24)
- **Helps you be more accountable** to God and helps fortify your growth (Romans 14:12)
- **Is another form of prayer**, thus increases your connection with Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

For many of you journaling may seem daunting, but really, there's no one way or one right way to communicate with God via your prayer journal. But in case you want a few suggestions to get you started or to change up your writing routine a bit, here are a few recommendations:

Prayer-focused: This style of journaling can be your written prayers to God. Your prayers should include praise of who He is; confession of your sins and a request for forgiveness; requests on behalf of others as well as for yourself; thanksgiving for all that He's done; and praise and thank Him for what He is going to do in the future.

Topic-focused: Focusing on a particular topic gives your journaling experience a little structure. Choose a topic and begin writing your thoughts in relation to the topic. Then begin to search the Bible for texts related to the topic. Write lessons that you've learned in relation to the topic, questions that arise in relation to the topic, as well as your experience in living as God instructed in relation to the topic.

Scripture-focused: Select a scripture or a chapter from the Bible and delve deeply into the passage. Analyze the passage by writing down your thoughts about the passage. Record how God is speaking to you in reference to the passage. Additionally, record major points gleaned, reflections of major characters and/or an analysis of key words. Chronicle how lessons learned from the particular passage can be applicable to your life and document how you might change as a result of the passage.

Feeling-focused: This style of journaling can be equated to writing in a diary; simply pour out your heart to God. Write whatever you're thinking, feeling or experiencing. Don't think, just write. Write to God as if you're talking to your best friend--wait, you are, so go for it. You should still record God's responses to you and note all answers to your prayer requests.

Next, create an environment conducive to communing with God. Some ideas include:

Designating a special place where you will journal. This could be a special room in your home, a quiet seat in a park or garden, or the creation of a prayer basket that includes your Bible, your journal, a pen, your ipod, a devotional book, etc.

Setting your environment so that you feel relaxed and peaceful. You may want to light scented candles or play your favorite Christian songs, or sip a nice, warm cup of soothing tea.

Making a date! Block out a time daily dedicated to your time with Christ. Put it on your calendar and protect it. You may not be an early bird, but I find that starting my day with Christ, makes my day go so much better. Try getting up an half hour earlier in order to begin your day with Him.

Starting small with a plan to grow. You may feel that you can only spend 10 minutes a day journaling. And that's okay. But plan to grow. And actually, as you spend time and get to know your Savior better, you'll be amazed by how the time will fly. And watch out, you may even become more productive during your day, because you started the day with Christ and committed your agenda to Him!

Developing a method for reviewing previous prayer requests and documenting answered prayers. I use a highlighter and I highlight prayers once answered, I document the date which it was answered and I write a short, "thank you" for the answer.

According to Lao Tzo, "A journey of a thousand mile begins with a single step." So begin first with the commitment to journal and share your commitment with God. Ask Him to reveal to you the best approach for you, ask Him to give you the time you need, and ask Him to give you new insights, revelations and answers to your prayers!

HAPPY JOURNALING!