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Journaling

Desire	to be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God’s presence and activity in, around and through me
Definition	Journaling is a tool for reflecting on God’s presence, guidance and nurture in daily comings and goings. Journals can be kept regularly or during time of transitions.
Scripture	<p>“I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.” (Psalm 16:7) “Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths.” (Psalm 25:4) “What’s God going to say to my questions? I’m braced for the worst. I’ll climb to the lookout tower and scan the horizon. I’ll wait to see what God says, how he’ll answer my complaint.” (Habakkuk 2:1 <i>The Message</i>) “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.” (Joshua 1:8) “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” (Psalm 119:18)</p>
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● keeping a written record of God’s ways in your life; journals can include a collection of clippings, drawings, collages, articles, poems, quotes and so forth ● journaling daily or weekly or during significant events and transitions ● making journals and scrapbooks for children or others ● recording external or internal journeys—or both ● telling your “exodus” story in a journal ● recording prayers, prayer requests, answers to prayers and responses to God in all of this
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● keeping company with Jesus through reflective journaling ● listening to God and praying your life ● slowing down and reflecting on where God shows up in ordinary routines ● remembering God’s faithfulness throughout your journey ● leaving a legacy for others

- awareness of God's way of turning all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28)
- awareness of phases and stages of your personal pilgrimage

Journaling

In a consumer society it's easy to accumulate experiences, believing the more we have the better! Yet experiences don't necessarily bring wisdom, nor do they automatically transform us. We need to listen and reflect on our experiences in the presence of the Holy Spirit to learn from them. Journaling is a way of paying attention to our lives—a way of knitting the vast ball of our experiences into something with shape that attests to the state of our soul. Fredrick Buechner reminds us in *Listening to Your Life* that “there is no chance thing through which God cannot speak.” On the pages of a journal, in the privacy of a moment, we can take tentative steps into truth and scour our feelings, hurts, ideas and struggles before God. Over time repetitious themes, sins, compulsions, hopes and concerns emerge. We begin to recognize our besetting sins, limitations and desires. During times of transition, travel, loss, joy, illness and decision making, journaling can provide a way of processing the hopes, fears, longings, angers and prayers of our heart. It can be the place we sound off before God so we don't sound off in an inappropriate way to others.

The ongoing nature of a journal catalogs the journey of a soul into God. It reveals how we hammer out our identity as a Christ-follower through the ups and downs of daily routines as well as in times of crisis. There is no right way to journal. You don't need to journal every day or even every week. Find the rhythm of journaling that suits your phase and stage of life. If writing isn't your thing, make a journal of photos or drawings or articles. Assign key words or thoughts or themes to the entries. If you don't write well, remember that you don't need to write beautifully or use complete sentences. Journaling is a way for you to be with God and your thoughts, not an exercise in language arts. Tell the truth to God and yourself as best you can. Review what you write on a regular basis. As you do, you will begin to recognize recurring life themes, desires, frustrations and patterns of interaction. These insights become matters for dialogue with God.

Reflection Questions

1. If you live your life at full tilt, when and how do you reflect on your life and your experiences?
2. How does writing help you focus or know what you think?
3. If writing is not a medium you enjoy, what other ways might you process and reflect on your experiences in the presence of God?
4. What is it like for you to read someone else's published journal?
5. How does the thought of someone reading your journal strike you?

Spiritual Exercises

1. As you read magazines and newspapers, cut out articles or photos that touch your heart. Paste them in your journal. Use these clippings to help you pray and join in God's care for the world.
2. Develop a journal for quotes, poetry and Scripture that have touched you. Reflect on these words and their significance to you.
3. If you enjoy art, create a collage journal. Express your thoughts and feelings to God through pictures, textures and colors.
4. Keep a prayer journal: record requests, prayers and answered prayers.
5. Make a journal for a child, a parent or a friend, recording some significant event and your prayers for them.
6. Use your journal as a place for your unedited thoughts, feelings and reactions. • Out of this overflow ask the Holy Spirit to form a godly response in you. Write the response you hear from God. • Ask for grace to live out of this graced place.
7. It can be helpful to divide your journal into particular sections that reflect
 - your journey with God
 - events of the day
 - prayers for the world
 - prayers for those you love
 - desires of your heart

Resources on Journaling

Journal Keeping: Writing for Spiritual Growth by Luann Budd

An Ordinary Day with Jesus by John Ortberg and Ruth Haley Barton

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney