

**King's Online Bible School
Introductory Course**

Journaling

One of the most helpful ways to pay attention to what God is saying and doing in your life is to keep a journal. Keeping this kind of a journal is similar to keeping a diary, but only in two regards:

- 1) because you will be writing down what is important in your life, and
- 2) because you will be doing this on an ongoing basis.

What makes the journaling we are asking of you quite different from keeping a diary is that this journal will *only* include what *God* is saying to you, working in you, and helping you to realize.

You should not write down anything in this journal unless it is something you know God is speaking to you or showing you.

A. The Importance of Journaling: Responding to the Holy Spirit's Work

1. Hearing

Journaling helps you be aware of what God is doing in your life. It prompts you to be listening for what He is saying – staying alert to words, thoughts, and impressions you recognize as being from Him because they are answers that bring realization, clarity, and peace.

He will speak to you and move in you at any time during the day or night, whatever you may be doing. Sometimes (probably more frequently) it will be when you are reading the Bible or listening to a sermon or praying. Not every insight or realization that comes to you during a sermon or in Bible reading carries this special sense of God speaking into your life or bringing an answer you are seeking. As you ask Him, He will teach you and help you to recognize His voice and the ways He is moving in your life.

2. Understanding

Because journaling involves writing down what God has been saying and doing in your life, it requires you to put each of these realizations into words. Doing so adequately takes thoughtful consideration of what He has said. This reinforces and even increases its impact in your life. Not only have you heard and experienced something from Him; writing helps you make each impartation your own because writing coherently requires some level of understanding. Journaling is an expression of honoring God's words, receiving them with thoughtful attention.

3. Storing

Journaling is storing up treasure. It keeps you from missing or forgetting the Father's life-giving impartations in your life. You want to ensure that you receive each instruction and truth He adds to His growing treasury of grace in you. Once you have written it down, you know it hasn't been lost and that you have secured it for your living.

It is not so much because you will need to look back to your notes to remember. Journaling is more important because of the way it helps you immediately after He speaks into your life. It is the way we hurry to secure thoughts as soon as we recognize that they are from Him.

Whatever He imparts is timely. It brings light and peace and the answer we need at each moment. We recognize its helpfulness and importance and assume that we won't forget. But sometimes His shaft of light-imparting truth comes in a fleeting second and, then, waits its turn among all our other thoughts to receive our fuller attention. Some days He is saying so much to us that we can-

not trust our memories to keep track of it all. Journaling helps you be sure you have received everything He is bringing into your life.

David declares that the God's words are "more desirable than much fine gold" (Ps 19:10). Most precious and valuable is what the Holy Spirit personalizes and discloses to you.

B. Receiving the Holy Spirit's Instruction (Suggestions for Journaling)

1. Remembering

The Father desires to be speaking into our lives all the time. "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh" (Deut 8:3).

His constant help and counsel require that you have a way to keep track of what He is saying all along the way until you have an opportunity to include it in your journal.

You can do this adequately by having a plan for making brief notes of each thing you want to remember for your journal. Write down just enough of what He has said to help you recall when you are able to think about it more completely and record it in your journal.

You do not need to write in your journal every day. If it does not seem that God has said anything to you, do not write anything.

When God is helping you see something new, do not wait to record it any longer than necessary. Add it to your journal while it is still fresh in your memory.

2. Writing

This journal is not for exploring yourself or keeping your own memoirs. It is for building a treasury of the words of truth and life God's Spirit speaks to you.

a. What not to write:

We suggest that it is best to keep comments about how *you* feel or what *you* think to a minimum. When you refer back to your journal, you do not want to have to sort through all your passing feelings and impressions to locate what God was saying to you. Do not write down *your own* reactions just for the sake of remembering things about yourself.

b. What to write:

It is sufficient simply to record whatever God has said to you, impressed on you, or brought to your realization. Restricting your journal entries to these is important.

Of course, what God's Spirit is saying in your life is usually addressing issues in your thinking and emotions:

- i. You will need to identify the things to which He is referring in your life, your thoughts, and your ways;
- ii. It will be important to include the implications and conclusions that result from what He has said.

Write down what God is saying about what you think and feel. Do not write about what you think and feel unless it is to identify issues or document His victories in your soul.

c. How much to write:

Write as much as necessary to remember:

- i. everything that is important to you about what God has said or done;
- ii. everything that is the result of that.

Do not write less than this or more than this.

Do not use more words than necessary.

Sometimes you will need to say the same thing more than one way as you search for the best way to put what you are realizing into words. Often, writing down one sentence helps you realize that by itself it isn't enough. What you write helps you know what to write. But don't add words unnecessarily.

3. Filing

a. If at all possible, use a word processor.

- Arrange your entries by subject matter.
- Choose one-word or two-word titles for each subject.
- Use the titles as a heading (bold font) to identify each subject.

- Add each new insight under its appropriate subject heading(s).
- Preface each addition with the day's date.

Use cross-referencing, directing your attention to related entries in other files and the date to which you will want to refer. Alternatively, copy your comments under each heading where you will want to see it or where it may occur to you to search for it later.

Note on file management:

- Create a new folder, entitled "Journal."
- Begin by entering any number of subjects in alphabetical order on one text document.
- When the file becomes too large, divide it into the earlier and later halves of the alphabet.
- Continue subdividing alphabetically as necessary, creating new files in your "Journal" folder.

b. If you do not have a word processor:

There are two options for organizing your journal entries.

i. Dating your recordings

- Each time you add to your journal, begin by entering the day's date.
- Add your entry or entries beneath the date.
- Keep each new entry separate.
- Write one or two words in the left hand margin, identifying the nature of each entry. Alternatively, you could underline or highlight key words.

ii. Categorizing your entries

It is much more effective for navigating your journal (whenever you desire to refer back to it) to keep your notes separate according to subject matter.

- Choose one-word or two-word headings for each subject.
- Arrange the subjects in alphabetical order.
- Add each new insight under its appropriate subject heading.
- Preface each addition with the day's date.

Dating each new entry provides easy cross-referencing. Add brief notes in any of your files, directing your attention to related entries in other files and the date to which you will want to refer.

The practical disadvantage in categorizing your entries on paper is the need to continually insert extra pages into your journal in order to maintain constantly expanding subject categories in alphabetical order.

A final note about God's ways in your life and His will for you as a member of Christ's body:

Your dignity as a person is guarded by the fact that only God can see into your heart. God entrusts you with the freedom to decide how vulnerable you are willing to be in responding to Him and to those with whom He has joined your life. Precisely because you have this freedom from God, much responsibility lies with you.

"Do you not know . . . that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20)

God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).