

Discipline: Journaling

Biblical Support: In the Old Testament the people were commanded to write things down so that they could remember them. Writing to remember continues to be a practical learning tool today.

Read the following passages and write out your observations. What do these passages say about the importance of remembering, not only the Word of God you are studying, but also the things you see the Lord do around, in, and through your life every day?

Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)

⁹ Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 11:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁸ Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates...

Proverbs 7:1-3 (NIV)

¹ My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. ² Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

Revelation 3:1-3a (NIV)

¹ "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent...

Practical Application:

One of my favorite memory verses is Deuteronomy 4:9. This verse reminds me that it is important that I do not forget the things I am learning as I interact with and internalize the Word of God every day. But I believe this verse goes beyond just talking about remembering what I read in Scripture. The Lord is still writing His story in and through the lives of those who follow Him. As we walk with Him we experience Him. As we experience Him His truth comes to life all around us. When this happens we need to write it down. We are not writing new truth, but writing how we see the truth come to life around, in, and through our own lives every day. These things we write will help us stand firm in our faith and share our faith with others.

Journaling as a spiritual discipline can include different types of writing:

- Writing what we are learning as we interact with and internalize Scripture
- Writing how we see the Lord working around, in, and through our lives
- Writing prayers
- Writing sermon notes

The following page is a sample journal entry:

Luke

3:7-14 → Crowds came to John the Baptist to be baptized. John did not get all excited when the crowd came, instead he got in their faces and challenged them. He told them there was more to being saved than just being baptized. He told them to prove their commitment by the way they lived their lives. He said to them, “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (v.8).

Reflection

If I am a follower of Jesus Christ then my life will show it. I will grow and produce fruit globally to the glory of God the Father.

If crowds came to be baptized in our churches today we would celebrate and believe that revival had begun. I am not sure we would question their sincerity or ask if they had counted the cost of following Jesus before we simply baptized them and assimilated them into the church family. John made sure that those who came to be baptized really came for the right reasons. He made sure they knew that the decision they were making was a decision to repent and follow the Way of Jesus. He made sure they understood that repentance meant turning from their life of sin and feeding their flesh to a life following Jesus.

This weekend I am speaking at a disciple now for a friend of mine. As I am working on the messages for this disciple now weekend this passage will be a great addition for the first message that focuses on what it really means to be saved. I will be able to use this passage to point out the importance of repentance and not just being dunked.

Respond

Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you for John’s example. I pray as I share with students this weekend that you will speak through me just as clearly to help them understand what it truly means to be saved. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

Explanation of Sample Journal Entry Format:

This is a typical journal entry as I do my daily reading during my quiet time. On this particular day I was reading through Luke 3. After I read 3:4-14 I wrote out what I saw in the passage. Next I reflected on what I read and wrote out how it related to my life and our day and time. Finally, I wrote out my response to the Lord in the form of a prayer. I don’t always write out my response in the form of a prayer. Some days the response is something I need to do and I will simply write “App.”, put a block around it (to make it stand out), and then write out the action points I need to take in response to the reading and reflection.

The blocks are simply used to make the particular heading stand out. For example, in my journal you will find reflections from my quiet times, sermon notes, and reflections from every day life as I see the Lord work around, in, and through my life. Some other headings you would see in my journal are:

Adoption

to signify that I am journaling about the adoption process our family went through and how we saw the Lord working in and through this process to impact our world for His kingdom.

E. Asia

to signify that I am journaling about a trip I was taking and how I saw the Lord working in relation to this trip.

The list could go on and on. I journal about what I am learning as I interact with and internalize the Word of God. I also journal about how I see the Lord at work around, in, and through my life. I use the boxes to help the headings stand out so I can go back and find things easier. You never know when you might want to go back and share how the Lord has been working and being able to find something quickly helps.