How to Keep a Spiritual Journal

Compiled by David Robertson from various web sources

Below are some notes on journaling I copied from internet sites. I love journaling! I have written well over 1,000 entries into my journals over the years. I created a blog to post some of my public journal entries – I call them Thoughts about God. You can click here to check it out when you have some time.

I also have kept a spiritual journal for years in Microsoft Word. I simply start a new one each year calling in “A Journal of My Journey with Jesus – 20xx.” Here I write and then I listen to hear God’s voice. I record what I think I hear the Lord saying to me. It’s been a wonderful element of my quiet time with the Lord most mornings.

So what else can you do with a journal? That’s what this article is all about. You can...

- Journal about current events – who what when where and how and your personal thoughts
- Journal about your mom, dad, siblings, spouse, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, individually, as a family unit or about family gatherings
- Journal about teachers, authorities, government, community
- Journal about friends, activities, and the day you just had.
- Journal about what you know about God
- Journal about what you are thankful for
- Journal your questions about experiences that are mind boggling
- Journal your complaints like Job or your enemies and those who have used you

Journaling Benefits

- Increased awareness
- Sharper focus
- Creative problem-solving
• Broader perspective
• Active thinking
• Empowers brainstorming
• Deeper level of analysis
• Stronger sense of self
• Generation of new ideas
• Clears the mind
• Life-changing potential
• Builds self-confidence
• Development of action plans
• Brings clarity of thought
• Greater honesty
• Self-paced learning
• Allows self-expression
• Integration of ideas, perspectives
• Uncovers unknown needs/wants
• Enhances self-expression
• Release of fears/tensions
• Awakens inner-self
• Stimulates self-growth
• Improved communications skills
• Better physical and mental health

Journaling is a very simple process that requires only a journal, writing utensil, and a heart and mind ready to reflect.

**FAVORITE RESOURCE TIP**

There is an amazing web site called examen.me that can provide you with a free online journal experience. It is super cool. It only takes a few minutes to register and then you it offers you many opportunities to journal about God’s Word. According to the developers, it can “bring focus and depth to your personal interaction with God.” It also has a generic free-flow option where you can journal to your heart’s content in a safe, secure environment that is password-protected and available to you anywhere you have an internet connection. Cloud-based computing (software that lives on the Internet) is fast becoming the wave of the future.  

[Click here](#) to go to Examen.me.

**NO LIMITS, NO BOUNDARIES**

There is no limit to how creative you can be when it comes to journaling. For the real die-hard journalers, there is the multiple colored pen approach. For example, if you like to reflect on everyday events (This is more of a reflective diary style) you can use different colors for the days of the week. You can also utilize different colors when quoting something you've heard or
perhaps a theme or idea for the day. Many other journal keepers like to use a particular color on a monthly or seasonal basis. All this to say, the sky's the limit.

As far as journals go, there is a potpourri of themes from which to choose. It seems that most people go for a personal journal to do reflective journaling. Close behind is the diary for those who would rather keep a chronology of everyday events. Other styles of journals include sports journals, health and diet journals, grandparent’s journals, nature journals; music journals, etc. (see our Journal Styles pages for more examples).

Finally, we would like to encourage you with tips to keep in mind as you journal. Most importantly is getting beyond the "Blank Page" syndrome. There are days when writing anything can seem like a chore, and believe me, we fight that battle sometimes here at Journalinglife.com. Our advice, force yourself to writing anything. Yes, we mean anything. Writing is like exercising, the more you do it, the stronger your skills become. Even if your creative levels are low or seemingly nonexistent, it's important to "just write. Its okay in dry times to not write reflectively or creatively, but the act of writing alone will still help you with sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. Your creative juices will soon return and you'll be back in the business of creativity. In the meantime, at least exercise your writing skills

Keeping a journal can produce many positive attributes in your life. It can help you clarify your thoughts about everyday life; be a source of profound encouragement in times of trouble; is a friend you can turn to with all of your deepest thoughts, emotions, and feelings. But journaling is much more than self-clarification or self-reflection. It's a conduit into our very souls, a stage upon which our immaterial thoughts take physical form for all to see. How often have people regretted throwing out old letters and photographs of loved ones who have passed on? There is something so intriguing and spellbinding about the words people leave behind. To have a record of what they felt, thought, cherished and valued is priceless. Journaling is a way to leave a piece of you behind; a way to make memories more fully alive. We can always leave estates to our children after we are called home, but leaving them precious memories and thoughts is something far more valuable than money.

Here are some thoughts to get you started in Personal Journaling.

- Have you every read someone's life story and wondered how your own would sound? What's stopping you from doing it? Just get started. Don't worry about making it perfect or edited, that's not quite the idea. If you struggle with the blank page, getting ANYTHING on paper will get your started.

- Devote a quiet time each day or evening and do your best to write whatever comes to mind. It is a regular examination of your life and daily interactions that will yield wonderful fruits for your journaling time.
Gratitude Journals

One of the nicest gifts I ever saw a lady get was a gratitude journal. It was assembled by the ladies in her church and everyone wrote a page about the wonderful, loving and gentle soul of this lady. They wrote memories of her, and the blessings that she had brought into their lives. They expressed their gratitude in her friendship and the wonderful fellowship they had shared with her. When they presented this journal to her, there wasn't a dry eye in the place! How wonderful to put into words, the thoughts we have about our friends and loved ones, yet don't always express.

You can create a gratitude journal for a friend or loved one, on the occasion of a birthday or special day, or just because. It is especially nice when you can have other people reflect on the journal as well, to share in the blessings you have to give back to the intended recipient.

There is another type of Gratitude Journal and that is one that you personally keep to highlight the blessings that come to you and your life. Keeping a journal just of the truly special events of your life that you wish to cherish and remember when times are low, can certainly give you a sense of peace in this chaotic life. I find when I write in this special journal I keep, it truly reminds me of the things in life that are so special. I may write daily for a few days, then go a month between writings. However, each time I return and glance through the pages, I am reminded of the true blessings of my life through little special events and happenings that sometimes we forget about in our stressful, busy lives! A gratitude journal can help you to keep your blessings counted!

Here are some thoughts to get you started with a Gratitude Journal.

- Find a lovely journal that is special to you. A gift journal that perhaps is not something you would write in daily is perfect. Or perhaps one that is a little small. You want to be able to record brief moments and thoughts of gratitude, not necessarily long winded diatribes of daily thoughts!

- If you are giving this journal as a gift, remember to protect it with a study envelope or small box while it is making it's rounds to the various authors. You might want to slip it into a plastic bag to protect it while it travels about.

You might want to write in this journal only when the mood strikes, however, it might be helpful to pick a day of the week that you'd like to set up a routine with... perhaps Sunday after church or Monday morning to set your week off on a positive note!
**Spiritual Journaling**

As you journey through life seeking truth and wisdom, a journal can be your steadfast companion on the road to eternity. Spiritual growth can be a complicated process and capturing your heart’s deepest thoughts in a journal allows you to see exactly how you are traveling that road.

A spiritual journal can serve many purposes; including a catalog of your own prayers, wisdom and insights you have gleaned from sacred readings, and even daily encounters with others on their own spiritual journeys that serve to help you on your pathway.

**Here are some thoughts to get you started in Spiritual Journaling.**

- Your thoughts and prayers can be helpful to write out and see in the written word.

- A study journal of your sacred readings can be an excellent way to record your thoughts and interpretations of what you are learning about.

**Reasons to Journal**

There are many reasons to start a journal. Most journals fall into several categories of reasons and types of journals. First, we will look at the reasons to keep a journal. In the next section, we will examine the different types of journals.

**Discovering the inner-self**

A journey through the emotions, reasons, thoughts, fears, hopes, and life-experiences.

Through finding out why we think or act in certain ways, we can help to analyze our surroundings, ourselves and discover our inner sense of being.

**Creativity**

There are many writing techniques that help to unlock our creative side.

Everyone, no matter who they are or think of themselves, has the ability to become creative. There are many exercises that serve as keys to find our imaginations.

This type of journaling fuels the creative spirit and soon we can find our ability to communicate, not only with the written word, but in understand and interacting with other people, dramatically improve.

This is not only a good tool for writers, but also for anyone who wants to discover their inner-creativity. The more we write, the better our skills develop.
Through unlocking our subconscious, we can quickly find our journals filled with art, poems, or interesting insights

**Haven**
The universe is a chaotic place filled with a myriad of confusing and disturbing images.

We can form our own world in our journals where we can escape from the tortures, or mundane aspects, of life. When we separate ourselves from the outside world, we can find our individuality and our own identity.

Taking time for our own purposes is an effective technique of separating ourselves from the world, building self-esteem, and gaining perspective for our own lives.

**Logging life events**
During the holidays, traveling, births, weddings, anniversaries, or visits from friends and family we slip from our ordinary everyday lives into special events that make up many of the special moments that we cherish.

By keeping a log and description of these events, often with photos, we create a written memory of our lives.

**Problem Solving**
When overwhelming life events are reduced to words on paper, words that can be analyzed and seen from a different perspective with our thoughts, we can gain a new perspective of the situation and find new solutions for seemingly difficult problems.

**Organization**
Daily life can be overwhelming with many tasks, errands, and other issues. By taking time out of our hectic schedules to stop, analyze, and plan, our busy schedules can become easier life routines. Do not think of a routine as a boring way to live, it is a way to accomplish the necessary efficiently so we can take more time for ourselves and loved ones to bring more enjoyment to our days.

**Chronicling a Lifetime**
Daily or weekly journal entries become a diary of our lives. A written record of who we are, what we have done, our hopes, dreams, and a time capsule for moments in the past. A sense of accomplishment, not of a single day, but of an entire life can be seen in the pages of such a journal.

**Emotional Perspective**
A journal can be a therapist. A journal does not complain, cry, ask for help, or bother us in any way. A journal accepts our thoughts and ideas without question.
By transcribing emotions onto pages, we can gain a perspective of our emotional life. Words on a paper are non-threatening, overwhelming emotions can threaten our sense of well-being.

**Emotional Enjoyment**
Not only is a journal a therapist to get us through dark times, but a journal is also revels in the originality of our life. Our dreams, accomplishments, and hopes for the future remind of the pleasures in life.

Many a poem and many a thought are based on the most simplistic of wonders. The smell of a flower, the color of the fall leaves, a walk in the woods, is each a seemingly small event. By learning to enjoy and finding the sense of wonder in the small things in life, our lives become a unique, mysterious journey of celebration.

**History**
Our lives may or may not seem spectacular to ourselves. However, did your parents, grandparents, or other distant relatives think the same way?

Yet, what would you give to have a diary of one who passed before you knew them? By leaving a legacy of our lives to those who come after us, we have left a cherished family heirloom that will keep family traditions, struggles, and celebrations alive for generations to come.

**Getting Started Writing Your Journal**

You decided you want to start a journal – What is next?

Here are a few simple steps to help you get started. Always remember the tips and hints presented in these pages are just that - suggestions. Some will find these suggestions work well for them, while others will customize the techniques to fit their personality or writing style.

The most important factor is your comfort level. If you feel uncomfortable with something in these pages, then that is a good place to start your journal page and explore why you are uncomfortable and what would solve your problem.

**Materials**

**Pens and Pencils**
A pen you enjoy writing with and a notebook. Pens fade less than pencil overtime. There is a large variety of inks, colors, and pens.

Find a pen that feels good in your hand. If you want to color code journal entries, then keep a few pens on hand. It is best to keep your favorite writing pen with your journal so it is always handy.

And don’t forget your electronic options with Microsoft Word or the Examen.me web site!
A journal can be anything from a spiral bound notebook, to a hand crafted leather journal. Some people prefer to use loose-leaf notebook paper so they can organize a notebook into categories.

If you keep your journal with you at all times, it is best to find something small that is portable. If you mostly write at a designated place, then any size will do. If you use a plain notebook, do not be afraid to draw on the front, or for those of us who cannot draw, favorite quotes written in various inks, make unique covers.

As your journaling experience grows, do not be afraid to experiment or change the type of journal you use. I have spiral bound notebooks sitting next to nice leather journals. It makes for an eclectic mix of thoughts, we are not perfect, and our journals do not have to be either - they are a reflection of ourselves.

**Other Questions...**

**How often should I dust off my journal and write?**
This depends on the reasons why you journal. If your sole reason for journaling is Emotional Perspective, then write when your emotions overwhelm you and you need a break to gain perspective.

If you write for creativity, then you should write everyday. As most of us write for a myriad of reasons, you must develop your own style.

To form effective journaling techniques, it is best to make journaling a habit. Even if the weather seems clear, and you write for emotional perspective, it is still suggested you write at least on a weekly basis.

If all the emotions are in harmony and you write about them, your journal will lend you greater insight when you need to write for Emotional Perspective, since you can analyze your feelings of dread against your feelings at a time of stability.

Some people find it helpful when they finish an entry to write in the next time they will write in their journal.

Whether it is one day a week, everyday, or once a month, set aside time to write in your journal.

**How long should I write in my journal?**
Again, this is entirely up to you. If you write everyday for creativity, it is best to write at least fifteen to thirty minutes, and writing for an hour or two can be very rewarding.
If you are writing for Problem Solving, write until you have gained some perspective, or at least committed the words to paper so the next morning you can review and gain better perspective.

If you are interrupted and you have not satisfied with your entry, go back and write some more. Once writing in your journal becomes a daily or weekly habit, you will find a comfortable length of time to write.

**When should I write in my journal?**
Many people like to write in the morning when they first awaken. For someone who keeps a dream journal or a creative journal, this is a wonderful idea as it starts out your day by awakening your mind.

If you keep a chronological journal, it might be best to write in the evenings when the day is still fresh in your mind.

Some, especially those who write on a daily basis, will find themselves consulting their journal multiple times a day, even if it is only for a few minutes to jot down a few thoughts to ponder the next morning when they do their creative writing.

An effective technique over time is to form a habit of both when and how often you journal.

Once you find a comfortable time and interval, you will find that your writing during those times will be easier.

**Where should I write?**
There are a couple factors to consider - privacy and comfort.

You want a place without interruptions. You do not want to be concerned with the phone, knocks on the door, or someone looking over your shoulder.

If you need to tell the kids, a loved one, or a roommate to leave you alone for a few minutes, and please no interruptions, then do it.

You are taking time for yourself to better understand life. You do not need to tell them you are keeping a journal, most people accept that you just need some time to yourself.

Your place should be where you feel comfortable, a quiet spot underneath a tree, a bench in a museum, an office, or the kitchen table are all good places.

You may find yourself varying where you write. If you generally write in your office, one day sit in the park and watch the birds, smell the flowers, and write in your journal. You may be surprised how much our environment affects our emotional and creative state.
You want to be comfortable writing in your journal as well, so it is fine to write in the same place most of the time. The most important factor is to maintain your focus on your thoughts and your journal.

**Journal Structure**

It is a good idea to put the date of each entry at the top of the page.

You can also leave the first couple of pages in the journal blank so at a later date you can create an index of the journal.

You can write on only the front of the page, so at a later date you can write comments on the back of the page.

You may wish to add photos to the pages, or write inspirational quotes at the back of your journal.

The only rule to really follow is dating your journal. Everything else is a suggestion. As your journal grows, you will figure out how best to organize your thoughts and develop techniques unique to your writing style.

**Honesty and Spontaneity**

When you are ready to start writing, put the pen to the paper and write.

Do not criticize your writing. Do not let the inner voices of other people hamper your style. Do not lie to yourself.

Your journal is for you, and only by being open and honest with yourself, will you learn and grow from journaling.

There is no right or wrong answer. There is no grading style. If you find yourself blocked, there are exercises covered in the Muse Pages here to help unblock your thoughts.

If you find yourself suddenly drawing on the page, then let your thoughts flow in the form of a doodle, drawing, or picture.

A journal is a collection of yourself - treat it with the respect you deserve.

**Sharing your journal?**

- You may find yourself wanting to share your journal. Even if it is just a dream, a single entry, or multiple pages, there are a few factors to consider.
• Be sure the person is one who will not criticize you, your journal, or the fact that you keep a journal.
• Make sure it is someone you trust. Never share your journal with people who put you down, disagree with your lifestyle, or will hamper your creative spirit.
• Never let someone talk you out of expressing yourself fully and honestly in your journal.

Be Yourself

• There is not greater sense of accomplishment than completing something on your own terms.
• There are no rules. There are no boundaries. There are no others. The journal is your own.
• If you want to write upside down, backwards, or in multiple colors - go ahead.
• If you want to start at the back of a journal and work to some ideal you wrote on the front page – then do it.
• If you enjoy writing from front to back with orderly titles and page numbers, that is what you should do.
• Your journal should never intimidate you, for it is you. Your journal should be a friend, for it is you.
• A journal is one place where being yourself, no matter who you are, is the best rule to follow.

Multiple Journals

• If you find you want a journal for everyday writing, another for special events, and yet another to chronicle your family's history, do it.
• There is no rule that says you must only keep one journal.
• You may find that keeping a photo album with captions under them is a great way to chronicle the holidays. You may want one journal to share with your special loved one, and yet another that is your private diary not to be seen by another person.
• These are your works and your life, do what makes you comfortable, and enjoy your writing.