

# Journaling as a Spiritual Discipline

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*Materials adapted from Karen Mains*

A spiritual discipline is an activity whereby we put ourselves in a spiritual position where we are open to God doing a transforming spiritual work in our lives. Journaling can provide the opportunity for us to express our thoughts and feelings to God. As we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings, we hold them up to the truth and light of God's Word in order to experience renewal and healing. In a journal written for this purpose, there are as many references to God and his Words as there are to our thoughts and feelings. The following format is a good way to begin.

## **Lord, I come into Your presence.**

Intentionally focus on the experience of being in God's presence. There are a number of ways you can help yourself to be aware that you are in God's presence. You might sing a song like "Be Still and Know That I Am God," or "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus," or "As the Deer Panteth for the Water." You could also read a scripture passage that expresses the invitation of God ([Revelation 3:20](#), [Matthew 11:28-30](#), [Revelation 22:17](#), [Psalm 100](#)) or humanity's desire for God ([Psalm 42:1](#), [Psalm 62:1-2](#), [Psalm 62:1-8](#), [Zephaniah 3:17](#)).

## **Lord, this is what is on my heart today.**

Write about an issue that you need to explore and get God's perspective about. This section is designed for more than venting any and every negative emotion you might have. Instead, it begins with honest descriptions of how you think and feel. (For an example of this kind of exercise read [Psalm 69](#), [137](#), [21](#), [30](#).) Your prayer as you write this section should be, "Lord, this is how I really am. I want to end up thinking Your thoughts about these situations."

## **Lord, I am listening for Your voice.**

"Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" ([1 Samuel 3:10](#)). Go to the scriptures to experience God's Word. Sometimes God's Word for you will come in the midst of your reading from your scheduled portions of scripture. Sometimes God will bring to mind another place in his Word for you to explore. Read with the prayer, "Lord, how does Your Word teach me to feel and think about my life?" Invite Him to be your guide as you read.

## **Lord, I confess sin and I acknowledge Your compassion and forgiveness.**

As we consider our lives in light of God's Word, we become aware of our limitations, our needs, our incorrect thinking, and our sin. We confess these things and then revel in the reality of God's grace, forgiveness, and compassion. Having a list of scripture references that affirm God's response to our confession is helpful at this stage (e.g., [Psalm 103:8-14](#), [1 John 1:9](#), [Romans 8:1](#)).

## **Lord, today I praise You and worship You.**

Praise and thanksgiving are means God gives us to lift our perspective beyond our circumstances. We praise God for who he is by focusing on an aspect of his character. Begin to develop a list of his attributes that you can focus on during these times. Use the Psalms and music to help you express your love and appreciation for God. Thank him for what he has done and how he has revealed himself to you. (The "God Hunt" – Where have I seen evidence of God's presence and work today?)

## **Lord, today I intercede for the world, for those I love, and for myself.**

Create an intercession section in your notebook to keep a record of the requests you bring to God. Develop a list of Scripture references that provide instruction for intercession.

## **Lord, is there anything else?**

Before you leave your focused time with God, take a few minutes for silence. Pay attention to the thoughts

that come to mind. Tell your thoughts to God, inviting him to be at home in your mind and heart as you move back into the activity of your day.

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A fuller description of Journaling Scripture and other approaches to engaging Scripture can be found online at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/>.