

1. **Date your work** – you will be amazed on how quickly times flies when you reread your words and amazed at what changes and what stays the same. The dates ground your reality.

2. **Use any type of journal** and feel free to experiment with different formats. I keep coming back to smaller lined journals that you can find anywhere, but have tried three-ring notebooks with divided sections, apps on my phone, and bullet journals.

3. **Write anything but always keep in mind that someday someone may read your words.** When I write I knowingly know my kids and grandkids may read what I wrote but will say I am 99% honest in what I share. I have also written little notes to them to find at some future date. One of my most precious possessions is the 60 years of dairies kept by my great aunt Anna and I am hoping my spiritual journals will be cherished by future generations too.

4. **Writing in a spiritual journal is a form of prayer for me.**
What am I praying for? What am I most grateful for?
Struggling to find the right word, writing out something and realizing the depth and at times anguish in an experience, discerning back and forth a decision, recording special quotes, verses and inspiration, notes from retreats and conferences, and just plain talking with God fills the pages for me. Write out what you are observing, hearing, tasting,

reading, dreaming, risking. Pay attention and record your daily life. Just write. Don't edit. Let your heartfelt thoughts flow. Make it yours.

5. **I've added clippings** from magazines, blog sites and even writing from my own blog to the pages. One of the best activities I did was assigned during an online retreat: We were to find a picture of ourselves when we were young and write about: What do we see when we look at that photo? I copied several of photos to tape into my journal. The most powerful one was finding an old photo of my dad holding me as a baby. To my surprise, I also found a poem/prayer he wrote for me.

6. **Don't worry – just write.** If you miss for awhile, don't fret – just start again. My journal writing is hit and miss, but ends up about weekly to every other week. Find your own pattern and write.

“I became aware, little by little, that God’s Holy Spirit was directing my thoughts and insights as I wrote. On paper, the Lord and I were carrying on a personal communion. He was helping me, in the words of David, to ‘search my heart’. He was prodding me to put words to my fears, shapes to my doubts. And when I was candid about it, then there would often come from Scripture or from the meditations of my own heart, the reassurances, the rebukes and admonitions that I so badly needed. But this began to happen only when journaling was employed.”

Scripture prompts

Yes even the bits that are uncomfortable, challenging, or that you *don’t like*. And that’s key. If your spiritual practice is going to lead to growth you will have to deal with things outside your own comfort zone.

A lectionary keeps marching on, no matter *your* preferences. I find that being confronted with texts I wouldn’t normally choose to read often opens new questions for me. Some of your journal entries might just be how much you *hate* the text for that day. But even that can teach you something.

To use scripture as a journal prompt read the passage chosen for the day. (THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER WE WILL BE DOING THIS) You might read it more than once, or read it very slowly. Then write about your experience. What jumped out at you, what challenged you, what made you feel good or bad?

This isn’t Bible study, it is spiritual journaling. Forget all the stuff you learn in church or Temple and try to encounter the text new and fresh for that moment.

Questions to use with a passage of scripture:

1. When was the first time I remember hearing or reading this passage, what was my reaction?
2. Today, where am I in this story?
3. What do I hate about this story/passage?
4. What one word or phrase sticks out to me, why might that be?
5. Retell the story (or teaching) in my own words.

The following list of 100 prompts is to guide and inspire in practicing the spiritual discipline of journaling.

Make a list...(keep these prompts to use)

1. What are you grateful for in this moment?
2. A to-do list for the day, and then mark priorities
3. People to pray for who do not have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ
4. Goals: for your private life, your career, or in the spiritual disciplines

Describe...

5. Something you see

6. What you hear

7. How you feel

8. A food or drink you tasted

9. A place you visited

10. A person you met

11. Your struggles

12. Your joys

13. Your losses

Write down...

14. A beautiful poem

15. A meaningful quote

16. An inspiring illustration or story

17. Ideas to incorporate in your work

18. Ideas to decorate or arrange your home

19. Your travels, through a day or through a year

20. Random ideas you may want to consider when you have more time

21. The path you traveled that day

22. A conversation you had with God

23. Exciting news

24. Upsetting or sad news

25. Thoughts on a book, a blog, or a podcast

26. Meaningful daily events

27. A funny story

28. Your testimony

29. A conversation

30. What you want to say to someone else, but you know this would not be wise. Pray through your response with God, asking for his perspective.

Reflections on...

31. A sermon, perhaps key ideas or principles
32. A book or article you read
33. During and/or after significant life transitions
34. A decision you must make
35. What is depressing you
36. What brings you joy
37. What gives you energy
38. What drains your energy
39. Your day's journey
40. Your favorite music/podcast/book/television series
41. Your limitations and how to live in spite of them
42. Your temptations and how to avoid them

43. A personal trial

44. A treasured victory

45. Ways to serve your loved ones, friends, and work colleagues

46. A testimony of God's faithfulness that day/week/year

Relating to reading and studying the Bible...

47. A scripture to meditate on throughout the day

48. An application from a devotional on which to focus

49. Prayers of response to what was read or studied in scripture

50. A scripture God brings to mind during the day in answer to your pleas or in a time of need

51. Insights or questions on a passage

52. Convictions on how to apply a biblical principle or verse

Questions...

53. Questions about God himself

54. ...His character

55. ...His ways of interacting with the world

56. Questions you want to ask God

57. ...When you do not understand what He is doing

58. ...When He seems far away

59. ...When a dream has been destroyed

60. ...When you are experiencing a life you didn't sign up for

61. Questions about the Bible

62. Questions about whatever is confusing

Record things you do not want to forget...

63. Adorable things children say or do

64. Inspirational quotes

65. Important family events and/or dates

66. Significant events in the lives of loved ones

67. A time when you laughed and who you were with

68. How someone encouraged you

69. How you encouraged someone else

Relating to prayer...

70. Favorite prayers from church history

71. Meaningful liturgical prayers from your faith tradition

72. Prayers for your calling and/or ministry

73. Prayer requests from others and your prayers for them

74. Answers to prayer

75. Confession of sin

76. Prayers about your hurts, fears, or compulsions

77. Prayers reflecting your longings and the desires of your heart

78. Prayers about your anger, loneliness, or a crisis

79. Prayers for loved ones

80. Prayers for missionaries close to your heart

81. A prayer response to something the Holy Spirit impressed on you

82. Outline your day and pray through it with your Heavenly Father

83. Concerns relating to health, work, finances, or other struggles

Items to place in a journal (adding a few thoughts or details)...

84. Family pictures (print one occasionally instead of keeping all of them digital)
85. Movie ticket stub, including insights from the movie and/or whom you went with
86. Clippings from a paper or magazine
87. Pictures from a catalog
88. Drawings, of your own or from your children
89. Collage you create of your goals
90. An article or essay that affected you
91. Photocopies or printouts of special stories/illustrations
92. Pictures of places and experiences
93. Photos with a caption
94. Notes or cards from loved ones or friends

95. Encouraging emails from loved ones or friends

Other Ideas...

96. Compose a song, poem, or story

97. Sketch an image of one of your day's experiences

98. Sketch a drawing to express your emotional state

99. Put down on paper whatever will not stop swirling around in your mind

100. Attach a printout of one of your favorite hymns

End a time of journaling with a prayer:

Thank you, Holy Father, for your Presence. Guide me on my pilgrim journey with You.

When disciples of Jesus Christ acknowledge God's Presence, they invite the Creator of the universe to engage with them in an intimate way. As subjective perceptions and experiences spill over onto the pages of a journal, the Holy Spirit is able to use the impressions and ramblings of Christians to refocus their minds and remold their hearts. They begin to see his faithfulness and inter-workings throughout the hours and days and years of their adventure with faith through temporal time as they journey towards a future eternal hope.

Blessings!

Heather

