

Dear friend, do what I tell you; treasure my careful instructions. Do what I say and you'll live well. My teaching is as precious as your eyesight—guard it!

Write it out on the back of your hands; etch it on the chambers of your heart. Talk to Wisdom as to a sister. Treat Insight as your companion.

Proverbs 7:2-5 MSG

- Journaling is a powerful way to connect with God and to take His Word deeper, from our heads to our hearts.
- Reliable scientific studies have proven many benefits of handwritten journaling. Our minds can be renewed by neuroplasticity as we focus intently on the truth.
- There are several forms of journaling that will aid us in our journey to know God and to be transformed internally.
- Make journaling a regular part of your time with God. Start with short increments of time and use whichever method best matches your particular need on a given day:

1. Scripture Journaling

- This is a great way to begin the habit of keeping a journal. Start with your current devotional plan – if it doesn't include journaling, simply add 5 to 10 minutes of writing.
- The most basic version of this method is to identify the verse, phrase or word that spoke to you and write it down.
- This slows your mind enough to let the words penetrate more deeply. It also engages more areas of your brain enhancing your understanding and recollection.
- You can expand this practice by responding to God's Word with questions such as "How would my life be different if I really believed this?" Let the Holy Spirit show you.
- Start tomorrow's time with the Lord with what you've written in the last few days.
- Be on the lookout for themes that emerge over time. The Lord often does this to make it personal and to give us deeper understanding: Ps 51:6 NAS -- Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

2. Expressive Journaling

- When we acknowledge our painful emotions and make room for them through journaling it provides us with the opportunity to receive comfort and truth from the Lord.
- Unresolved issues will eventually express themselves in our lives. When we're proactive in dealing with our pain it prevents ugly meltdowns that often spread our hurt to others.
- Set aside 10 to 15 minutes to deal with a current or past stressor. Write in one column how you feel (no editing, please). Write until you have emptied out the negative energy.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of Scripture that apply to your situation. You can look up verses on your topic and list them beside the emotions: "I Feel but God Says":

I FEEL

BUT GOD SAYS

- Return to the truth frequently until your mind and heart have aligned themselves with what the Lord says is true. In this way you exchange the hurt for new freedom: Luke 4:18-19 NLT -- The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come.

3. Gratitude Journaling

- Scripture instructs us to practice gratitude in a way that may feel untrue to your current state of affairs: 1 Thes 5:16-18 NLT -- Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.
- The Lord who made us knows something that we may not realize – we were made to worship Him, and our hearts will not feel satisfied unless we do.
- When, by faith, we make the choice to obey this command we learn to look past our troubles and find that we can say with integrity that it truly is well with our souls: Col 3:15 AMP – Let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always].
- The intentional practice of gratitude is most helpful when we are confused, disappointed, anxious, or just feeling distant from God.
- Begin by asking HS to bring to mind 3 to 5 things that you can thank God for and really mean it. Write them down as they come to mind then pause to say, "Thank you, Lord."
- It might be helpful to create a master list that you add to over time. This will enable you to gain an accurate perspective on your life's circumstances.

4. Reframing Journaling

- Journaling about events and long-standing situations can help us to think beyond our own limited reactions and opinions.
- When we take time to write about them, we engage the part of our brain that regulates emotions. When practiced regularly we grow in our ability to wait and withhold judgment.
- Instead of our own limited viewpoint, we want to ask for God's wisdom and perspective: Isaiah 11:2-3 NLT -- The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay.
- Processing a daily event may take 10 to 15 minutes. It may take more than one session of seeking the Lord through journaling to reframe a long-term circumstance.
- Pray, asking God for His wisdom, then write your answers to these 5 questions:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What are your feelings about it?
 - c. What message did you come to believe?
 - d. What is God's truth?
 - e. How do you want to respond next time based on the truth?
- Revisit what you've written whenever this issue bubbles up again. Press into God's presence with the insight you've gained and then ask Him for greater understanding.
- Know that the Lord always welcomes you and will continue to minister to your situation no matter how long it takes.