

Journaling – a Spiritual Practice – Linda Saffrey

Keeping a journal is a wonderful spiritual discipline for those who desire to walk closely with God. Journaling is a means of reflection, a written (or crafted) response to what we have seen, heard, and experienced. It helps us to look inward, to see how we have been affected by the events of our lives.

- Choose a method for recording your thoughts and feelings. You may choose to keep a computer folder, and use modern technology to key your entries. Or you may choose to write in a spiral notebook, or other bound book. You may want to keep your journal for many years so choose something that is pleasing to the eye. Some folks prefer lined paper and others choose blank paper, so that they can also draw, or paint their thoughts. I often paste in newspaper clippings and quotes or sayings that have struck me as being meaningful.
- Perhaps take a moment to breathe deeply or offer a prayer before you begin. You might prefer to set aside a particular time each day to record your thought; or to write once a week as part of a Sabbath discipline. Truthfully, my own habits have been sporadic over the years, but I always come back to the practice and have kept a journal for more than twenty years.
- You can write journal entries in response to an event in your life, eg. Child's graduation; or based on a daily scripture lesson or other reading. You can keep a dream journal where you record in as much detail as you can recall – the sequences of your dreams – and then contemplate their meaning, using various dream interpretation resources. You can write a response to a movie you've seen, or music that has moved you. You can reflect upon how a conversation has changed you, or ponder how a time of meditation or a walk in the great outdoors has brought you into the presence of God.
- As you record your thoughts, let the words flow freely, without worrying about spelling or punctuation. These words are for you alone, so no need to edit or try to put a different spin on things. Just let it come naturally. I often find that my words become a prayer to God – either of thanksgiving or petition.
- Write until you run out of time, or until you feel that you have given what was within you to share with yourself and God. Remember to give thanks for the gift of time that was used in this way.

A few written resources to help you on your inward journey:

Journaling: A Spirit Journey, by Ann Broyles, *The Upper Room* , 1988.

Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest, by Christina Baldwin, Bantam Books, 1991.

Linda Saffrey shares ministry with the Blackstock-Nestleton congregations.