

Journaling

As we learned earlier, journaling is both a map of where we're going, and a record of where we've been. The root word for "journal" and "journey" is the same. It is the Latin word *diurnal*. It refers to what is done or experienced during the course of a day. By definition, then, journaling is a *daily* habit. Journeying is moving from one place to another each day. Journaling records what happened during the journey. We write down the events of the day, and then we reflect on what happened. But we can't figure out whether we've made any progress unless we know where we're headed. We're not wanderers.¹ We're sojourners on our way to a specific place.² To calculate our progress on the journey, we need to determine our direction before we begin the day. We figure how far we can travel, and which route to take. We're not making a map to show us where we've been. We're using a map to plan our journey, and a journal to record whether our travel plans moved us toward our destination.

To repeat, **we're not map-makers**. We are not entering uncharted territory for the purpose of surveying the land. Christ has already done that. He was our map-maker. **We are map-followers**. The Spirit of Christ is our guide on the journey toward our destination. To the extent that we follow him, we remain on the right path. To the extent that we depart from him, we deviate from the path. We don't want to become side-tracked by our own agenda, or by a list of popular sights that we want to see.³ There is a condition, an estate, toward which all believers are headed.⁴ There is a path each of us must take to get there. Different events and circumstances uniquely characterize our journey on that path, but the path and the destination are the same for all of us.⁵ We're not free spirits making our whimsical way in the world.

Therefore, our journal does not record a private journey taken for private purposes. We are recording our trek along an established path, doing works that have been ordained for us, to accomplish those purposes for which we have been called (Jn. 5:36; 14:12; Eph. 2:10). That is, we have an objective, a goal for each day. That's what we record in our journal first thing in the

¹ Gen. 4:12 - Cain was made a wanderer. Num. 32:13 – wandering in the desert was God's punishment for his people's rebellion.

² Acts 7:6; 1Pet. 2:11 *Sojourning* means to stay for a time and then move on. We recognize that this world is not our home. But as we journey here, we also move from place to place. It's something like back-packing. We are conformed to Christ through the journey itself, traveling a path he blazed for us. We are moving closer each day toward his estate. As we go, we add supplies to our pack, and drop our excess baggage.

³ ^{NIV} **3 John 1:11** Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 11:1** Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. ^{ESV} **James 5:20** let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. ^{ESV} **Romans 8:14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

⁴ Imagine you have lived all your life in slavery in Babylon. Now you have been liberated. You are free to return to your home in Jerusalem, the City of God. You've heard the elders speak of it as the land beyond the river, but you don't know where it is. You only know that in Jerusalem you may express your true identity, and live in the land given to your forefathers by God himself. Each man will sit under his own fig tree (1Kgs. 4:25), by streams of living water (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:8; Rev. 7:17). That is the estate to which we aspire. It is learning to live in the kingdom of Almighty God, who abides with us there (Jn. 15:4-10; 17:21; Eph. 2:22; 1Jn. 4:12), inside the city gates (Rev. 22:14).

⁵ The bible repeats the theme over and over of intentionally considering a designated path, road, or way to travel. ^{ESV} **Haggai 1:7** "Thus says the LORD of hosts. Consider your ways. ^{ESV} **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ^{NIV} **Philippians 3:14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ^{NIV} **Matthew 7:13** "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ^{NIV} John 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going." ^{ESV} **Acts 18:26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ^{ESV} **Acts 24:14** But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets... ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 9:26** Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

morning. We record our objectives so we can judge our transformation when we reflect on them at night (Rom. 12:2). If needed, we will make adjustments to our course the next day.

Today's Objectives

Fine. So how do we define our objectives for today? After all, we have no idea what will happen. While that's true, we can and must pre-determine how we will respond to whatever does happen. To put it another way, while we cannot control our circumstances, we have 100 percent control over our response to them. Proper responses do not come naturally or spontaneously. Only training and discipline will ensure that a proper response becomes automatic and habitual. We are being trained over time, by instruction from the bible and experience in the world, to properly respond to the events and circumstances of our life. Those may come to us as attacks of the enemy, or as opportunities to serve. By nature, enemy attacks are sporadic, and tend to catch us off-guard. Opportunities are more common. Nonetheless, they are both designed to challenge our confidence, faith, and will, by trial.⁶ That's why we need to be prepared. Our training, therefore, must be designed to strengthen our confidence, faith, and will, whether enduring an attack, or making use of an opportunity. We "prove" our labors in the fire (1Cor. 3:12-15).

First, we must learn what we need for the overall journey. Second, we must learn how to apply our existing resources to our present circumstances. The first requires a map (the bible). The second requires a realistic assessment, and a willing heart. That's what the Journal is for. It records our assessment, and declares our willingness (i.e. our resolve or intent). Before we say that we lack the capacity to do what God is asking of us, we need to take stock of what he has supplied for us. We have infinite resources at our disposal to build the kingdom. Ask whatever we would have, and it will be given to us for that purpose.⁷

The Purpose of Circumstances

Circumstances create the environment for our journey. We cannot plan all the events of our life, but we do need to plan for contingencies. This is where many believers get side-tracked. I'll give you a little known rule to help prevent that: **God never *speaks* through circumstances.** God *teaches* or *tests* through circumstances. God *speaks* through his word. We don't ask, "What is God trying to tell me by these circumstances?" It's the wrong question. Instead, we ask, "How can I respond to these circumstances in a way that glorifies God?" Circumstances are not open-door/closed-door messages from God. That's a popular but false teaching from Christian mysticism. Circumstances are ambiguous at best. We never know if God intends a circumstance to stop us (closed-door), or if he intends us to go through them (open-door). We're not seers. We don't know God's intentions (the "why" of it all). Our obligation is to do what's right under the circumstances, glorifying God by what we say and do. Anything beyond that is presumption.

⁶ God is the one who sends Satan to test us. Satan cannot act on his own (Job 1:8-12). The Spirit is the one who leads us into the circumstance (Matt. 4:1). Trials strengthen and prove us (1Cor. 10:13; 1Pet. 1:6-7). Therefore, we should expect trials (1Th.3:3), and embrace them (Jms. 1:2-4). God is watching us in our trials (2Pet. 2:9) – literally, "God knows how to draw the godly out of trials." A clay figure is placed in a kiln. At the right temperature it becomes porcelain; but if it gets too hot, it shatters. Three clay cones that melt at different temperatures (3 events) are placed in the kiln to mark the progress. The sculptor watches carefully, drawing the figure out of the fire as the final cone begins to melt.

⁷ **John 15:16** ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. **1 John 5:14-15** ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

The Protocol of Growth- A protocol is an action-plan or a procedure that's designed to produce a specific result. God has a 4-step protocol for growth, as I read Scripture. If you recall Adam and Eve in the Garden, you'll recognize the process. It's a classroom setting that looks like this:

- **The Teacher** (God) appears through his word and declares the truth. It will either take the form of a rule such as "Do this and live", or a declaration of fact such as "God is sovereign." This always elicits a behavioral response from us. It's not just a fact to know. James tells us that faith requires action, or to put it differently, action is *caused* by faith. Faith is simply what we believe to be true. That's why works are the proof or evidence of our faith. What we want to do is identify the truth we hear God declaring in the passage.
- **The Students** (us) learn the truth. We acknowledge what God has said by repeating what we heard, just as Eve repeated the rule to the serpent. We are going to restate the truth *as we understand it*. That's what we're going to write down in the journal.
- **The Lesson** will be presented to us during the day. It will be an opportunity to learn the truth experientially, to take it to heart. And so we are expecting some event or circumstance to arise during the day that will allow us to apply the truth we have learned.
- **The Test** is a measure of how well we understand and apply the truth to the circumstance. We are going to find out, under fire, whether we are confident in the truth, and have the will to live by it. The test is where the Student applies God's Truth to the Lesson. We are going to *practice* what we have learned.

My experience is that we are given 3 lessons for every rule, and we are tested on each lesson. If we fail all three tests, we repeat the rule and the lesson series until we get it right. The tests are never meant to flunk us out of the course, but to teach us by experience and practice.⁸

Waiting: *practicing patience is part of every test.* Patience is learning to wait on God, while taking reasonable precautions in the meantime.⁹ We must not expect immediate answers to our questions, nor quick resolutions to our problems. But we ought to be looking for them. That way, when they occur, we can give God the glory that rightfully belongs to him.

DAILY READING - We will use two books: a Journal, and optionally a Journal Index. There is a sample *worksheet* at the back of this lesson to help you understand how to use the Journal. So take your time reading the explanations given in this lesson.

- **Journal** – this can be a bound or a spiral notebook, lined or unlined, or it can be a 3-ring binder, and you can pick whatever size you like.¹⁰

⁸ **1 Corinthians 10:13** ¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. **Jeremiah 13:23** ²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. **Philippians 4:9** ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice.

⁹ **Nehemiah 4:9** ⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

¹⁰ There are Journal Entry Forms and a Journal Index Form available. A descriptive list is provided at the end of this lesson.

- **Journal Index** – *this* will be a 3-ring binder. It has nine dividers for nine sections, with a number of blank sheets in each section. I'll explain more about the Index shortly.

Using the Journal

We do our bible reading at the start of the day. If we don't, we can't plan ahead, and we will be caught off-guard. So we read four or five paragraphs from a selected book of the bible first thing. Out of what we read, we select the main idea or key verse that speaks to us. If there isn't one in particular, we continue reading until we find one. Once we have it, we write down the Scripture **notation** in the Journal, not the whole text. If you are moved by a particular phrase or verse, feel free to write it down. It may help you remember the basis for the rule or truth that you are about to articulate. You can always look up the notation, so don't spend a lot of time copying large portions of Scripture into your journal. Focus on meaning and application.

Now comes the meditation part. We want to figure out what it means so that we can figure out what our daily objective will be. We need to know how to respond to this truth. Every passage of Scripture tells us something about the heavenly realm, or something about the earthly realm. We're going to look at three distinct perspectives in each of these two categories, and then we're going to assign this passage to **one** of these six perspectives. We're going to determine its **primary** emphasis as a way of focusing our response to what it says.

Here are the two categories and six perspectives:

The Heavenly Realm

1. What does this tell me about the Father?
2. What does this tell me about the Son?
3. What does this tell me about the Holy Spirit?

The Earthly Realm

4. What does this tell me about myself? (my condition apart from Christ)
5. What does this tell me about the church? (my relationship to believers)
6. What does this tell me about the world? (my relationship to non-believers)

We go down the list one at a time, asking the question and deciding whether the main emphasis of the passage falls under that perspective. Once we determine which one of the six that these verses **primarily** address, we write down the main idea as God's declaration of truth from that perspective. We do it as briefly as possible, preferably in a single sentence. Here's an example.

In Philemon, I might settle on verses 15 and 16. I choose to put down both verses.

Verse: Philemon 1:15-16 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good – no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

For me, this passage isn't primarily about the heavenly realm. It doesn't tell me about God. It's not about my condition apart from Christ. It's not about the world. So my topic is *the church*.¹¹

Now I've got to meditate on the passage. **What does it mean?** I pray for wisdom and insight. The context is that Paul is asking Philemon to take back his former slave, Onesimus, who ran away. He had been serving Paul in prison. Philemon is under no legal obligation to take Onesimus back. Paul is making a plea, and presenting certain persuasive truths. This passage is talking about how we are to behave towards other believers who have offended us. I chew on it a bit, and then I write down this rule:

Rule or Truth: Forgive your brother in Christ because he is your brother in Christ.

I might mark down a related passage or an explanation here, such as

Note: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors Matt. 6:12; Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you. Eph. 4:32

After writing down the rule, I now have to figure out what to do about it. I look at my **Kingdom Journey** which also has three questions (these 9 questions form the divisions in our Index):

The Kingdom Journey

7. How am I to respond to this? What is my attitude going to be today? (Phil. 2:5)
8. What can I actually do to express the truth of this today?
9. Who am I in Christ?

For now, all I write down is my attitude or expectation for today (question 7). My expectation is that at some point during the day, someone (probably a Christian),¹² is going to offend me. My attitude or mindset is going to be this:

Attitude: No matter how some brother, sister, or stranger may offend me, I will refuse to take offense. I will not be held prisoner by resentment or bitterness. I will forgive whoever it is and release myself, not just that person, from the debt of the offense. I will treat him as a "dear brother." To God be the glory.

¹¹ NOTE: There is no "right" topic that it *must* belong to. Let the Spirit tell you which one to put it in. He emphasizes a particular aspect of a passage in order to speak to you about that topic. Which one he emphasizes will vary according to what he intends to teach you today, and that may change its meaning to you. Once you assign it to a topic, however, you have to state the rule in a way that focuses on that topic.

¹² While the passage concerns a brother in Christ, I don't treat brothers differently than non-believers. I am to love my enemies. God shows no favor, making it rain on the good and the bad alike. (Matt. 5:43-45). More than that, my theology teaches me that I may well be dealing with a brother who has not yet come to the faith – and my actions may be part of God's calling to that individual. I don't care who offends me today.

Camping out on the journey

Sometimes we can't figure out what God is saying right away. Or we don't know how to respond. God's word is the bread of life. We may need to chew on it awhile. It may take several days or even weeks before we can "wrap our mind around it." We're going to camp out on that passage. That doesn't mean we stop reading and put our other lessons on hold. Each day has its own lessons.¹³ We can't afford a back-log, so we continue to establish a habit of reading and applying while we're waiting on the Spirit's insight.

We ear-mark our journal for the passage we're chewing on. Each day or week we can re-visit it. We continue to pray about it, and ask for insight. We look for a theme in our ongoing reading to see if the harder passage fits into the theme. That is, understanding may come through a series of shorter lessons that God gives over time. We may not have been ready for God's rule in that area of our life yet. And so God's Spirit leads us through a curriculum designed to teach us the harder or more comprehensive lesson using a group of shorter and easier lessons.

I'm done for the morning. I depart from the pasture and go out into the world.

Around Noon or mid-day I take a moment to contemplate. I go over the Lesson, which was presented to me in the events or circumstances of the morning. Did I have an opportunity to apply the rule? Did I take advantage of it, or did I miss it? If necessary, I make my mid-day adjustments and look for another opportunity to apply the rule. It may or may not come that day, but I am prepared to recognize it when it does.

When the day is over, I get out my Daily Journal again. I record any event or circumstance during the day that was an opportunity to apply the rule of forgiveness from that morning.

Lesson: In an email, I backed off my complaint that I won't get the same bonus this year that everyone else is getting. My boss said he read my "mea culpa" and suggested my reason for withdrawing the complaint was that I didn't want to "rock the boat," meaning I was afraid to upset him or jeopardize things.

Now I can record how I actually responded to it (question 8). What did I actually do to affirm God's declaration of truth today? Or, what happened today that made me realize the Rule/Truth which I wrote down this morning was mistaken? If I was mistaken, I write down the corrected Rule/Truth in the *Adjustment* portion of my journal.

Action: I grinned and pointed my finger at him in jest, as if he was exactly right. He grinned back, probably thinking he caught me. I wasn't apologizing for submitting the complaint, which is what "mea culpa" means ("my fault"). He didn't need to know that, and I didn't need to defend my actions.

¹³ **Matthew 6:34** ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. The longer rule is this: Yesterday is past and we can't change it. Tomorrow isn't here yet and we can't live in it. So live today for today's sake.

Maybe I didn't respond, or I responded badly, or perhaps there was nothing to respond to. What I do in that case is to reaffirm God's declaration that night, and reaffirm my attitude so I'm ready to respond properly next time. I have no doubt that someone is going to offend me, and soon...

Let's say I got defensive instead of jesting about it. It could have gone like this:

Action: I told him, "Look, you guys robbed me of the full bonus, but there's nothing I can do about it, so I'll just have to live with it, OK? There's no need to mock me." He said I was "too sensitive" and that I was asking for something that I didn't deserve anyway. I walked off in a huff.

This is where I take the time for introspection. Why didn't I respond appropriately? How did I make that person feel? How does that reflect on the church and on Christ? What caused me to take offense? Why don't I act like I'm in Christ? If I acted that way, I might have written this:

Adjustment: That was some witness for being content, and submitting to the sovereignty of God. He knows I'm a Christian, and now I've demonstrated that we're just as grasping and greedy as everyone else. I need to apologize to him tomorrow for my rude behavior. If I hadn't said what I did, he probably wouldn't have responded the way he did. I'm supposed to be slow to take offense, but I let Christ down today. Lord, help me be content...

Before I close, I record my prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication concerning the precept that I have been taught this day. This is what I actually wrote:

Prayer: Lord God, you have given me much more than I need. I know that my paycheck isn't my security, but I act like it is. Even though I responded in a way that gave no offense, I suspect that I still took offense. I didn't trust you completely when I complained. You know my heart. Purge my fear, bitterness, and envy. They get between me and you. I want to be conformed to your Son in more than just outward appearance.

Using the Journal Index

I may want to track my progress on the journey toward maturity. It would be nice to recognize what God is working on in my life right now. To do that I need to see the trend of my responses. I want an easy way to review the lessons and the "map" of my journey. That's what the Index is for. It is a reference catalog of God's lessons, my responses to them, and my prayers concerning them. Remember, it's optional. **Keep it simple – do what actually works for you.**

The Index is broken into three sections: the Heavenly Realm, the Earthly realm, and the Kingdom Journey. Remember those? The very same method we used to focus our thoughts and derive our daily objective, is used to categorize the truths we're learning, and our responses to them. This is where we can track the "opportunities for personal growth" that God provides us.

Get yourself a loose-leaf binder that you can add pages to. You're going to put 9 tabbed dividers into the binder. On the tabs you will put a one-word description for each of the nine topics you saw above: Father, Son, Spirit, Self, Church, World, Attitude, Actions, Identity. Add a number of blank pages to each section. Each day, depending on your rule for the day, you will mark in the appropriate section what you learned about that topic.

In the example I gave, I would go to the section tabbed "Church" and make an entry. I put down the date, verse, and the rule or truth (if you corrected it, put down the corrected one).

Date: 1/21/05 Verse: Phm. 15-16

Rule/Truth: Forgive your brother in Christ because he is your brother in Christ.

I can quickly see all the passages I've been reading about the church, and the teaching I've been receiving about it from the Spirit. All of my lessons are topically arranged in the Index according to my areas of fellowship. Even the section on Self reflects the fellowship I have in other areas. I can see if my earthly fellowship is perhaps more important than my heavenly fellowship, or if my fellowship with the world is interfering with my fellowship in the church. The map tells me where my focus is in my walk.

Altogether I make four entries in the Journal Index:

1. In the appropriate section (in this case, **Church**) I put down the date, verse, and declaration of God's truth as you see above.
2. In the **Attitude** area, I put down the date and my attitude or expectation for the day. All I'm looking at here is what my attitude is *supposed to be* over time.

Date: 1/21/05 Take no offense

3. In the **Action** area, I put down the date and a summary of the action I took. If I took no action, I still put down the date with "no action." If I see a trend of no action, I know that I'm puffed up with knowledge and I need some output. (*Pipe and Bucket Theology*: I have turned into a bucket). All I'm looking at here is what my behavior *actually is* over time.

Date: 1/21/05 I acted like I took no offense by treating it with humor.

4. In the **Identity** area, I put down who I am in Christ as it relates to the day's rule or truth. This is tricky. I am asking who I am in Christ with regard to one of the six areas of fellowship. In the example, I am asking this: "For today, who am I in Christ with regard to the church?" I need to be honest about my current **expression** of who I am in Christ. Remember, our **position** in Christ never changes, but our **expression** of it must change. We *want* it to change. The more we're conformed to the image of Christ, the more he shows in our actions. This index helps us to chart our growth in **appearance**. It compares a snapshot of us at a moment in time, seen in our daily actions, against our true image in Christ.

There are six perspectives or vantage points from which to observe our identity in Christ. It's like an artist's model who walks around a clay figurine of himself as it is sculpted. He knows what the final form is by looking in the mirror. The section on **Actions** describes the figurine. This section on **Identity** describes our image in the mirror. That image is not Christ. It is our image, in Christ. Picture the figurine in the middle of a 6-sided room with a window in each wall. Each day, we describe ourselves from one of those six windows, which is that day's perspective or emphasis. We record the progress of our sculpting seen against the final image of ourselves in Christ.

Heavenly Realm Perspectives	Earthly Realm Perspectives
<i>Father</i> - how does the Father see me?	<i>Myself</i> - how do I see myself?
<i>Son</i> - how does the Son see me?	<i>Church</i> - how am I seen in the church?
<i>Spirit</i> - how does the Spirit see me?	<i>World</i> - how does the world see me?

With regard to today's lesson, I might be inclined to write a quick personal insight:

Date: 1/21/05 I acted like I took no offense and ignored my boss's comment, but I suspect that I did actually take offense. That being true, I did not forgive him as Christ forgave me. In Christ I am forgiving.

My inclination sounds OK, and it's accurate, but I'm answering the wrong question. I wasn't asked how I see myself, or how the world sees me. The question is, How am I seen **in the Church**? Am I causing disunity in the body by my behavior? Am I misrepresenting the Church, or Christ? I need to describe who I am in Christ from today's perspective or emphasis. So instead of that entry, I put today's perspective, and a description of myself in Christ from that vantage point:

Date: 1/21/05 Church - I wasn't seen taking offense by my boss despite his provocation. On the other hand, I didn't represent Christ very well to him. He knows I'm a Christian. If he misperceives my motives as selfish or fearful, he may assign such motives to the whole church. Could I have avoided that? Or must I ignore the motives that others assign to me? In Christ, I seek the favor of God more than men, righteousness more than pleasing others.

Masking our True Identity

The daily actions that we record in our journal are a witness to how we are actually *behaving*. What we record in our Journal Index under our *Identity in Christ* is who we actually *are*. The mistake many Christians make is believing that they are supposed to grow out of one and into the other, as if Christ-likeness was some kind of "ideal" toward which we strive. That would mean the old man is still alive, and the new man is somehow developed alongside him – we are putting off the old while putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). That's not what this passage in Ephesians means at all.¹⁴ The old man is truly and actually dead. He died on the cross with Christ. The new man is truly and actually alive. He was born in the resurrection of Christ (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:5-12). That's what it means to be "in Christ." These are facts, not concepts. The problem with our behavior is that we act as if the old man was still alive, when he is not. We need to drop the dead body that is strapped to our back (put off the old). That's not who we are any more. All the fullness of Christ lives in us (Col. 2:9-10; Eph. 3:19; 4:13). The outward clothing (our behavior) must be *put on* to match our identity in Christ. A prince of the kingdom does not wear filthy rags (Zech. 3:3-4). We are to realize (make real) who we *are* in Christ.

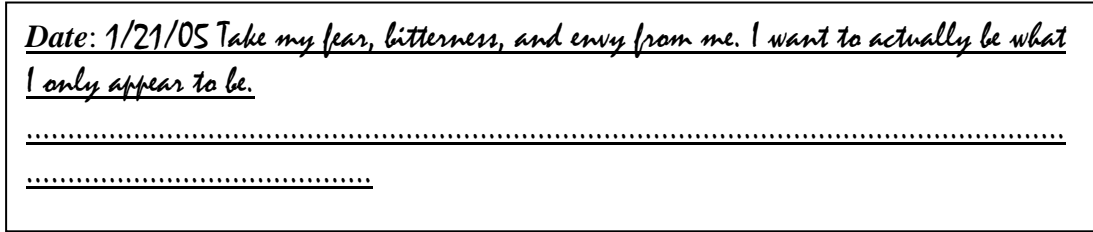
Understand, we cannot be *more* "in Christ" today than we were on the day of our conversion. We are everything God intended us to be, right now. *But we don't act like it*. The progress we make each day, the goal toward which we strive, is to stop acting as if the old man were still alive, and begin acting like who we already are in Christ. The old man is the lie. The new man is the truth. If we *believe* that, we will begin to *act* like it (Rom. 7:25; 13:12). The journal is designed to help us recognize when we are acting "out of character" with who we are in Christ. The discrepancy between our behavior and our identity must not be cause for dismay or depression. Why? Because that gap is covered by Christ's blood. What we see revealed should cause us to celebrate and glorify Christ, not denigrate ourselves. *He* is the focus of our attention, not our own image. *He* is the one we see in the mirror darkly, not our own reflection (1Cor. 13:12). We lift up our eyes to the one who saves us: Ps. 25:15; 119:18,37; 121:1-2; 123:1; 141:8-10; Dan. 4:34; Lk. 2:30-32. The phrase, "O what a wretched man am I" is not a lament, but a praise: "Thanks be to God -- [I am rescued] through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25).

Prayer Index

You may find it useful to add a 10th tab to your Journal Index. Mark it "Prayer." If you have been praying about something or someone, and are waiting for an answer to your prayer, use this index to locate it and record the answer. On the day you offer up your prayer, go to the Prayer section of the Index and write the date and a summary of your request. Leave 1-2 blank

¹⁴ What gets us off-track is the phrase "sinful nature" that some translations use. There is only one word here; it is the Greek *sarx* (NT:4561), which means flesh. "In my **mind** I am a slave to God's law, but in the **flesh** a slave to the law of sin." This is not an Eastern mysticism concept that what is physical is evil and what is spiritual is good. Christianity has no such dichotomy. We have the mind of Christ, but the flesh is not obeying the mind. It behaves as if it had no headship. The Christian struggle is to bring the flesh (our actions) into conformity with the mind of Christ (which we now have; 1Cor. 2:16). "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" **1Cor, 9:26-27**. Or as Christ put it, "The spirit is willing; only the body is weak" (Matt. 26:41). We are spirit-driven, not flesh-driven. We are slaves to righteousness, and we refuse to become slaves again to sin (Rom. 6:6). As with Cain, we must master our sin (Gen. 4:7), and not let it master us (2Pet. 2:19).

lines under it to record God’s answer, and the date; or use two columns. Over time you will see God’s faithfulness revealed, or perhaps why your prayers have gone unanswered.¹⁵



The Box - If you feel confined by all this, that’s OK. The disciplines need to have a narrow focus in order to produce growth. That focus demands that we restrict our attention. We are only talking about six areas of fellowship when we talk about the disciplines. The Journal Index can be a useful tool to review our progress. It keeps us from living an unexamined life (Socrates). It’s tailored to help us make considered choices, disciplined choices, about how we live. Hopefully it helps us make *better* choices.¹⁶

Luke 10:41-42 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

THE GOAL – Our goal is to fill in the Journal for 21 consecutive days in order to create a habit. If we miss a day, we start the count over. There are no holidays, no days off.

How much should we reveal to others from our Journal?

This journal is not about introspection, but biblical fellowship. For the most part, we aren’t recording the depths of our depravity, though much of what we enter could be embarrassing. We have to consider that our words and our actions will reveal as much or more about us than what we write down. But finding someone trustworthy to share with, to hold us accountable without judging or condemning, is difficult. Moreover, some things shouldn’t be spoken of (Eph. 5:12); the Journal is not a source of gossip and titillation. We’ll address this issue further when we get to prayer. For now, consider your Journal private so that you can be honest.

¹⁵ **James 4:2-3** ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

¹⁶ My personal philosophy: you cannot be disciplined in one area of your life and undisciplined in another. You’re either disciplined or you’re not. It’s a character trait. We’re not talking about skills, competence, or interests here. I can be a skilled cellist, and a bad pianist. I can keep a clean office and a messy house. That’s because I am applying my discipline to the one area but not the other. Discipline, in its broadest sense, is a systematic approach to training or working. Once we learn it, discipline can be applied to any area of our life that we choose. Journaling is an excellent way to learn discipline.

SUMMARY – There are 3 sets of 4 activities

In the morning, open the Journal.

1. **Read** a passage from the bible and pick a verse that strikes you.
2. **Write** today's *Date* and the *Verse* you selected.
3. **Rule/Truth**: write down its meaning as a command or propositional truth.

Pick the perspective that this passage primarily addresses (one of the six areas of fellowship).

4. **Attitude**: State what your attitude or mindset will be for today based on the rule/truth. Word it appropriately for today's perspective/emphasis.

Close your Journal and go about your business.

At mid-day, mentally review the morning in light of your stated attitude. Adjust if needed.

At the end of the day, open your Journal again.

1. **Lesson**: Write down any event or circumstance that was addressed by the rule/truth.
2. **Action**: Write down what you actually did in response to the event or circumstance
3. **[Adjustment]**: Write which quality you need so that next time you can properly respond
4. **Prayer**: Write down your prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Open your Journal Index

1. Go to the section for today's perspective (six areas of fellowship)
Write down the **Date** and the **Rule/Truth**
2. Go to the section on **Attitude**
Write down the **Date** and the **Attitude**
3. Go to the section on **Action**
Write down the **Date** and the **Action** you took, or else "no action"
4. Go to the section on **Identity**
Write down the **Date** and **Who you are in Christ** from today's perspective

If you'd like to, open your Journal Index to the **Prayer** section

Write down the **Date** and a synopsis of your **prayer**

You're done for today.

On the next page is a list of Journal worksheet formats, and a Journal Index that are included as separate documents. You may print them out or copy them if you would find that easier.

Journal Entry Forms

These forms are included separately. Forms beginning with “09E” are designed for use on a computer. The others may be printed out for hand-written entry. There are descriptive footers in each document. Any non-electronic form may be printed single-sided (ss) or double-sided (ds). All forms therefore have two pages. Electronic forms are one or the other, as described below. The double-sided 5x8 electronic forms are marked for days 1-4, depending on the form, so you know which day is which as you make your entries. When you print them out, they will then align correctly front to back. Obviously they will need to be cut in half after printing.

For those electronic forms having morning on top, evening on bottom, you may want to use 10-point Times Roman so you can type more. The size is intentionally designed to limit your space, thus forcing you to be brief. Remember, this style of journaling is not for self-focused introspection, or contemplation of the cosmos. It for developing biblical fellowship.

Hand-written Journal Entry Forms

09Box - The form is boxed and lined, 1/page, 8.5 x 11 (ss/ds)

09L - Landscape, morning on left, evening on right, 1/page, 5x8 or 8.5 x 11 (ss/ds)

09P - Portrait, morning on top, evening on bottom, 1/page (ss/ds)

Electronic Journal Entry Forms

09EL258 – Landscape, morning on left, evening on right, 1/page, 5x8 (ds)

09EL411 – Landscape, morning on top, evening on bottom, 2/page, 8.5 x 11 (ss/ds)

09EL458 – Landscape, morning on top, evening on bottom, 2/page, 5x8 (ds)

09EL811 – Landscape, morning on left, evening on right, 1/page, 8.5 x 11 (ss/ds)

09I – Journal Index: This is a complete Journal Index with a “live” Table of Contents (click on the page number or description to go to that section). It has separate pages for each of the 10 tabs. Headers describe each section.

Electronic forms are designed for use on a computer rather than printing it out for manual entry. Of course, you may print your completed pages, three-hole punch them, and place them in a binder. If you do this on regular basis, then should your hard drive die, you will still have your hard-copy.

EPILOGUE: I’ve wrestled for a long time with the complexity of this sort of journal. What I’ve said in this chapter I think is helpful to understand what a journal is for; but in the end, *what I’ve described is just too complicated to do for any length of time.* The proof is that, personally, I don’t actually use a journal like this. I use a blank sheet of paper, enter the *date*, *passage citation*, *gist of the text*, and a personal *application* for today. I try to keep it to a paragraph. As I said on page 7, do what works *for you*. What good is *any* journal if you’re not going to use it?

That being said, I don’t want you to think I’ve wasted your time. When I make a daily entry, I do take into account all the things I’ve written in this lesson. It’s not theory or whimsical. I’ve tried to provide you with a framework that you can set aside over time. You’ll know when that time is, because this way of considering your conformity to Christ has become a ***habit*** for you. *I pray so.*