



indiana **school of ministry**

JOURNALING RESOURCE

1. **Journaling by Gordon MacDonald (*Ordering Your Private World*)**
2. **Prayer Journaling Sample by Wayne Cordeiro (www.lifejournal.cc)**
3. **The Inspirational Journal (ISBN#: 978-1-4157-4824-7)**

JOURNALING

Excerpts taken from "Ordering Your Private World," by Gordon MacDonald (Chapter 11, pages 130-136)

Journal Keeping – A Way to Listen to God

I became impressed by the fact that many, many godly men and women down through the centuries had also kept journals, and I began to wonder if they had not put their fingers upon an aid to spiritual growth. To satisfy my curiosity, I decided to experiment and began keeping one for myself.

At first it was difficult. I felt self-conscious. I was worried that I would lose the journal or that someone might peek inside to see what I'd said. But slowly the self-consciousness began to fade, and I found myself sharing in the journal more and more of the thoughts that flooded my inner spirit. Into the journal went words describing my feelings, my fear and sense of weakness, my hopes, and my discoveries about where Christ was leading me. When I felt empty or defeated, I talked about that too in the journal.

Slowly I began to realize that the journal was helping me come to grips with an enormous part of my inner person that I had never been fully honest about. No longer could fears and struggles remain inside without definition. They were surfaced and confronted. And I became aware, little by little, that God's Holy Spirit was directing many of the 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 out of Scripture or from the meditations of my own heart, the reassurances, the rebukes, and the admonishments that I so badly needed. But this began to happen only when the journal was employed.

A key contribution of the journal became its record of not only the good moments, but the bad times as well. When there came times of discouragement, even of despair, I was able to describe my feelings and tell how God's Spirit ultimately ministered to me to strengthen my resolve. These became special passages to look back upon; they helped me celebrate the power of God in the midst of my own weakness.

I am reminded that the Lord once had the Israelites save "three quarts of manna" (Exodus 16:33, TLB) so that they would have a tangible reminder of His constant care. The journal became my "three quarts," for in it I had all the testimony I needed to the faithfulness of God in my life. This remembering process, which a journal provides, is very significant.

How To Journal

My own journals are spiral bound notebooks, which I purchase at an office supply store. They are rather unimpressive in appearance. I can complete one of these notebooks in about three

months. The virtue of their smaller size lies not only in portability but in the fact that, should one ever be lost, I would not have misplaced a year or more of writing.

And what is in there? An account of things that I accomplished in the preceding day, people I met, things I learned, feelings I experienced, and impressions I believe God wanted me to have.

As I said before, I include prayers if I feel like writing them down, insights that come from reading the Bible and other spiritual literature, and concerns I have about my own personal behavior. I love to record things I am seeing in the lives of members of my family. I anticipate that someday our children will read through some of these journals, and if I can posthumously affirm them for things I see in their growing lives today, it will be a treasure for them.

All of this is part of listening to God. As I write, I am aware that what I am writing may actually be what God wants to tell me. I dare to presume that His Spirit is often operative in the things I am choosing to think about and record. And it becomes important to search my heart to see what conclusions He may be engendering, what matters He wishes to remind me about, what themes He hopes to stamp upon my private world.

As I write on consecutive pages of the journal, I also write from the back page toward the front. The back pages hold my list of people and concerns that I have chosen to make a matter of intercessory prayer. At the top of those pages I've written the phrase "Does my prayer list reflect the people and programs to which I am most committed?"

Then, continuing to work from the back pages toward the center of the journal, I often put in excerpts from my current reading that particularly impress me. Often, I will take time to simply read through many of these brief paragraphs. They may be prayers, reflective comments from the writings of people like St. Thomas, A. W. Tozer, and Amy Carmichael, or portions of Scripture.

When the daily record beginning at the front of the journal meets the daily reflections coming from the rear, I simply close the volume out and begin a new one. It has become one more scrapbook portraying my spiritual journey, with its struggles and its learning experiences. And the pile of spiritual scrapbooks continues to grow. Should our house ever begin to burn, and assuming all the family is properly evacuated, I think these journals would be the first things I would try to grab and take out the door with me.

Journal keeping becomes a habit for most people if they will stick with it for the better part of a year. Most people quit too quickly, never achieving the habit pattern, and that is unfortunate.

The main value of a journal is as a tool for listening to the quiet Voice. Journal keeping serves as a wonderful tool for withdrawing and communing with the Father. When I write, it is as if I am in direct conversation with Him. And there is that sense that in the words that you are led to write, God's Spirit is mysteriously active, and communion at the deepest level is happening.

Prayer Journaling Sample

Life Journaling: **S.O.A.P.** method by **Wayne Cordeiro**

This journaling requires no special tools. Your thoughts may be written in a simple spiral notebook. Number your pages so that later you can develop a Table of Contents for future reference. Record the date of your journal entry. After you record your scripture, you may want to give it a title or determine a topic for reference.

Date: _____ **Title/Topic:** Marching Orders (optional)

S Scripture (Write down the main Scripture.)

"What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops." Matthew 10:27

O Observation (Write what you see in the Scripture.)

If I am not hearing Him in the darkness, what will I speak in the light?! If I am not hearing Him whisper in my ear, what will I proclaim on the housetops?!

A Application (Write how you will be different today because of what you have just read.)

What a great word! This scripture reminds me to not only talk to God in prayer, but equally important is to hear Him in prayer!

P Prayer (Write out your prayer.)

"Dear Jesus, help me to hear You today! I want to be still that I may hear Your marching orders for my day, for my week, for my life. Speak Lord! Your servant is listening!"

