

A photograph of a forest path during autumn. The path is covered in fallen leaves, and the trees on either side have leaves in various shades of green, yellow, and red. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

Spiritual  
Journaling  
for  
Christian  
Youth

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# Introduction:

You may be asking yourself, “Just what *is* journaling anyway. Isn’t it just another name for a diary? I don’t get it! Aren’t they both the same?”

Well in fact, there are a couple of very key distinctions. To put it simply, a diary is primarily a record of daily events, while journaling focuses more on one’s reactions to those events and their subsequent effects.

A diary is typically for recording things that happen in one’s life, along with secret thoughts and feelings. The writing in a diary is often very personal and serves predominantly as a private, emotional outlet full of reactions and streams of consciousness. Though a diary *can* be shared with others, it is usually meant only for the eyes of the person that is writing it.

A journal, on the other hand, involves much more meditation and reflection. Both diaries and journals can contain events and interactions, but a diary is more intimate while a journal is more intellectual, perhaps even serving as a philosophical exercise or an initial record of observatory and participatory research that will eventually be transformed into a final literary publication to be released to the public.

A journal reflects on the complexity of human experience and serves as both an emotional *and* an intellectual function – a place to write out your ideas, thoughts, feelings and perspectives on life. A diary is more of a chronology, or list, of events occurring throughout the day or year, while a journal (or more specifically, a *spiritual* journal) is a tool to help you record God’s transforming work in your life.

You can record anything you like in your journal. It’s simply a record of what you are thinking or feeling. You can even have lists in the back of things to do, books to read, or helpful quotes.

You can use any paper, but you may find a colorful spiral bound notebook a good way to start. Any size will do. Stationery departments carry attractively bound journals but one of the advantages of a spiral notebook is that after you’ve vented some of your anger, you may feel even better tearing that page out and destroying it!

Don’t be surprised if you find that writing in a journal turns out to be of immeasurable value in helping you to sort through the joys, difficulties, problems, triumphs, and perplexities of your Christian walk. It is likely to help you draw closer to God, enjoy peace in stressful times, and focus more on eternity than the here-and-now. In short, journaling is a great way to help God to help you to help yourself.

At TrinityTutors.com each instructional day begins with a short focus period where students either write in their [Spiritual Journals](#) or consider a [Memory Verse](#), which entails memorizing a specific Bible passage and both reading about and discussing its spiritual significance.

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# Know God

# Know Yourself

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## STARTING A JOURNAL

**S**piritual growth can be a complicated process, but capturing your heart's deepest impressions so that you can see them written down can be very helpful in better recognizing how you are growing as God's wisdom and truth guide you along the road He has prepared for your eternal destiny.

A Christian journal is a place where you can write down your prayers, collect your thoughts on the things God is teaching you, record your interpretations of Bible passages and the wisdom and insight you're gaining from biblical scripture, or even catalog the daily encounters you have with other Christians that serve to help you on your way.

It can be an amazing tool to help you record God's transforming work in your life, so to keep it from becoming an overwhelming process that does little more than tire you out, we will suggest some creative techniques that we believe can renew joy and intimacy in your relationship with God.

So, let's get started!



## Journaling Tips

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### ■ Begin with prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit, who is your Counselor, to open your heart and guide you to the truth.

### ■ Date every entry

It's important to record the date of each journal entry to help you see the progress you've made.

### ■ Write what's on your heart

Start talking to God and share your joys, victories, desires, frustrations, anger, fears, hurts, heartaches, and praises with Him. You can record special events, spiritual insights, revelations, strengths, weaknesses, goals, prayers, dreams, memories and scriptures you love.

### ■ Do not worry about mistakes

Don't be concerned about spelling, penmanship or content. Thinking too long about what you're going to write may hinder you.

### ■ Listen and record

Record what God impresses on your heart. *(His voice will always line up with His written Word.)*

### ■ Use a highlight pen

Highlighting scripture and specific words God speaks to your heart will enable you to easily locate them in your journal and re-read them later. *(Sometimes God speaks repeatedly, trying to get our attention to warn us or prepare us for the future.)*

But, most of all, remember that there is no right or wrong way to journal. Rather, your journaling style should reflect your unique relationship with God.

## **JOURNALING PROMPTS...**

### **#1 Quotes Journal:**

Collecting quotes and thought-provoking observations from your favorite Christian writers, ministers, or teachers is a powerful journaling technique that can boost your spiritual morale.

Begin by copying important quotes from your teacher's lessons, your pastor's sermons, or from selected readings into a reference journal.

If you're more of a reader than a writer, a Quotes Journal is a wonderful way for you to meditate on some of the amazing things you're learning in your spiritual walk. Whether you love Christian lyrics, poetry, fiction, or theology, your journal can become a special repository for your favorite quotes and thoughts.

You might also enjoy illustrating each quote in a memorable way. For example, for Jesus' sermon teaching that it's more difficult for a rich man to enter heaven than it is to squeeze a camel through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19:24), you might glue a thin silver needle to the page to drive the point home.

After a few weeks of journaling this way, you'll find yourself at unexpected times of the day dwelling on the ideas and Scriptures you've copied into your journal.

(A Quotes Journal allows you to reinforce spiritual concepts and record inspirational ideas from the great minds of our faith.)

### **#2 Attributes Journal:**

Another technique is to list a particular attribute of God on a given page of your journal.

On the left-hand side of the page, record the most meaningful passages or quotes having to do with that attribute.

On the right-hand side of the page, list the times in your life that same attribute was revealed to you, became a reality in your heart as well as your head, or dramatically impacted your life in some significant way.

Here is a partial list of God's attributes to help get you started...

1. Creator
2. The Only God, One
3. All Powerful, Almighty, Omnipotent
4. Everlasting, Eternal
5. Ancient of Days
6. Love, Loving
7. Just
8. Trustworthy
9. Merciful
10. A Refuge, My Fortress
11. Patient, Longsuffering, Persevering
12. All Wise
13. Holy
14. Personal
15. Giving
16. Provider
17. The Good Shepherd
18. Miracle Worker
19. My Peace
20. Healer
21. Comforter
22. My Victory
23. Forgiving
24. Burden Bearing
25. Faithful
26. Sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords
27. Liberator
28. Lifter of My Head
29. Light
30. God of Joy
31. Prayer Answerer
32. God of All the Earth
33. Beautiful
34. Blessed
35. Spirit
36. Invisible
37. Good
38. Righteous
39. Kind
40. Full of Grace

41. Jealous
42. Righteously Angry
43. Perfect
44. Glorious
45. Great, Awesome
46. All Knowing, Omniscient
47. Self-existent
48. Immutable, Unchanging
49. Transcendent
50. The Alpha and the Omega / The Beginning and the End
51. Was, Is, and Is to Come
52. Rescuer, Savior
53. Counselor
54. Friend
55. The Door, The Gate
56. The Bread of Life
57. The Way, the Truth, and the Life
58. Lamb of God
59. Redeemer
60. Advocate
61. Friend
62. Shield, Buckler
63. Fortress, Strong Tower
64. Foundation
65. Rock
66. Provider, Source
67. Spirit
68. Omnipresent

...feel free to add attributes you discover on your own to the list.



## **JOURNALING PROMPT #3**

### **Impossible Prayers Journal:**

A lot of Christians in America don't pray God-sized prayers. Examine your prayer life and see if you ask God to do things that are more on a scale with His power and glory, or merely in line with your limited human thinking.

Jot down some "impossible" requests in your journal. (For example, you may have a goal of leading two people to Christ this year.)

You are likely to find that God will answer each prayer in an amazing way, and His exciting answers to specific prayers will stretch you to continue praying. As 1 John 5: 14-15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

It's incredibly energizing to pray according to God's will and ask him to do what he plans and promises. This may become one of your favorite journaling techniques.

## **JOURNALING PROMPT #4**

### **Creator's Journal:**

If you enjoy the beauty of God's creation, one way to enjoy his handiwork even further is through a Creator's Journal. Find pictures that express all kinds of natural elements, press leaves and flowers, or snap photos of different seasons and types of weather.

Whether you gravitate to the photographer Ansel Adam's black-and-white portraits or to colorful faces from every nation and tribe, a journal of awe-inspiring sights can drive your thoughts to the grandeur and glory of the One who created them.

Under each illustration or photograph, write down reasons why these scenes inspire you. You also can incorporate Scripture that speaks about God's workmanship.

Always be on the lookout for outlines you can trace into your Creator's Journal, and after tracing a rock or a plume of pampas grass or the shadow of a tree onto your page, ruminate about all God has created as a daily exercise in humility. It will do you good to spend some time every day thinking about how big God is.

## JOURNALING PROMPTS #5

### Family of Faith Journal:

Photos are one of the most powerful ways to remember, but often, pictures of our times of fun do not include the best part or our relationships. What about the time your dad fearlessly trusted God to provide for your family when he lost his job, or the time you and your friend prayed in her car in the church parking lot for an hour after a late night of ministry?

You need a place to record what God is doing in each of your lives. Isn't that one of the most exciting aspects of fellowship, anyway?

So, begin to chronicle your friends' and family's spiritual highs and lows alongside beaming photographs. Included the verses you memorized with, or the prayers you said for, each other, as well as the encouraging cards you received, or short stories that demonstrate the characteristics you most admire in each friend or family member.

These photo journals will become a record of how God grows both you and your loved ones. Flipping through the pages, you'll see and read countless tangible reminders of God's goodness.

Moreover, a Family of Faith Photo Journal can be a great way to teach your (future) children to remember God's work in their lives as well.

This can be as simple as taking a picture at the start of each school semester and using a blank page to record the triumphs and challenges God brings you (or your kids) through.

Or, you could build your album around important spiritual events in your family's life, such as each member's spiritual birthday.

## JOURNALING PROMPT #6

### Gratitude Journal:

If you don't have a ton of free time, this is one of the easiest journals to keep. All you have to do each day is list three to five things for which you're thankful.

No one has more to be thankful for than a Christian! There's a huge difference between feeling "lucky" for your good fortune and realizing that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" James 1:17.

You can create Gratitude Journals for other people, too. There's nothing more meaningful for a leader or mentor than a journal from a person they serve, outlining some of the ways they've seen Christ's love in their service. Many Christian workers long to see fruit in the lives of those for whom they labor, so let your pastor or Sunday school teacher know how God has used their teaching and prayers to help you grow.

## JOURNALING PROMPT #7

### Traditional Prayer Journal:

A traditional prayer journal is perhaps the most intimate of all journals because it contains information about the most vulnerable places inside of us. When we pray, we enter a realm of spiritual intimacy with the Creator of the universe, the author of our being. Through prayer we agonize over life's sorrows and problems. We confess our sins and weaknesses through prayer, and seek God's will and forgiveness as a result. Prayer is, without question, a time of self-reflection and analysis before our Creator. Keeping a journal of our prayers is a wonderful way to track our progress in faith, and to always remember from where we came, where we should be headed in this life, and that we will one day be crossing the doorstep into the next life.

If you like, you can have a designated journal "only" for prayer along with your thoughts about your prayers. Keep this journal with you throughout the day so that you can always log in those intimate moments in prayer you've spent with God.

You might also want to write out prayers for your family and friends, naming them, and keeping the prayers separate.

### SUMMARY

Whether you want to expand your prayer life, express your admiration of creation, give thanks, boost your faith, or trace God's work in the lives of your loved ones, there's a journaling style for you. So forget any daunting notions of what a journal is supposed to be. And once you find a way to journal that feeds your relationship with God, stick with it and share your ideas with others!