



Guide for Personal Growth & Devotional Time

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Journaling

Journaling is a tool to help you slow down in your studies and listen to your heart, soul, mind, and most importantly to God. Often it really helps to write out what we are feeling - even to write out our prayers.

Consider some of the following when journaling:

- How am I feeling today? What are the major things that are going on in my life right now? What are the things that are affecting me most at this time?
- One Bible verse, story, or thought that made an impression on me today was . . .
- A new idea I encountered today is . . .
- One thing that made me uncomfortable today was. . .
- The effort I am willing to put into this course and into my own spiritual formation during this module is best described by the word . . .
- The prayer I most want to pray right now is . . .
- Considering the things that I've learned through my journaling today, what action steps do I need to take in my life to live out what God has been saying to me?

Lectio Divina is an ancient Christian practice of prayer and scripture reading that is intended to draw us closer to God, to help us to hear Him speaking to us, and to increase our knowledge of God's Word. It is a way of reading Scripture that calls us to study, think about, listen to, and pray from Scripture. There are four steps to Lectio Divina:

READ.

Read the selected passage over and over again until you feel that you have a basic grasp on what it is saying. Read it from different perspectives, placing emphasis upon different parts of the passage each time. Once you feel you grasp the text basically, move on.

THINK.

This time, read through the passage again, almost as if you are "skimming it." Ask God to cause a word or phrase to "jump off the page," or to catch your attention. When that happens, stop and think about that word or phrase, what it meant to the writer, what it means to you, what you think it has to say in our world today. Do this until you have completed the passage.

PRAY.

Now pray about the things that God has pointed out to you during the second step. Ask God, "Lord, what are you trying to tell me through this passage? Why did you bring this word or phrase to my attention?"

LIVE.

Too often we read the Word, God speaks to us through it, and then we go away and forget what we read. Once you feel that you know what God has been trying to say to you through this exercise in scripture reading, make a plan as to how your life will be altered as a result of what God has spoken to you today. Then follow through on that plan.

A Daily Prayer Guide

Centuries ago, St. Ignatius came up with this way of looking back over our day and asking God to show us areas of habitual, sometimes even unconscious, sin in our lives that He wants to help us to do away with. It's called the "Ignatius Examen," and is a very helpful way of examining how we are doing in our relationship with God and with others.

The Examen traditionally has five steps:

- 1.** Remember that you are in God's presence. No matter where you are, you are a part of God's creation, and the God who created you is very much concerned about your life.
- 2.** Give thanks to God for the ways that He has blessed your life. Spend a moment looking at what He's given you today. Take stock of what you received from God and what you've given to others.
- 3.** Ask God through his Holy Spirit to help you to look at the things you've done today with honesty. God will help you to see the areas in our life in which you need to grow and change. Ask Him to give you the desire to change.
- 4.** Now examine how you are living this day. Recalling the events of your day, think about your actions. Review the day, hour by hour. Think about what you did, said, and participated in, who you spent your time with. What caused you to act the way you did during that hour? Is there something that you've done that you need to confess to God and ask for His help with?
- 5.** Ask God to forgive you for the things that you have done wrong today. Say the things specifically to Him, and ask for His help not to do those things tomorrow. Now that you have looked over this day of your life, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God and try to realize how much God loves you and wants to help you to grow. Express sorrow for sin, give thanks for His grace, and praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to become more like Him.

John Wesley's Self-Examination Questions

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
3. Can I be trusted?
4. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
5. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
6. Did the Bible live in me today?
7. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
10. Do I pray about the money I spend?
11. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
12. Do I disobey God in anything?
13. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
14. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
15. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time?
17. Am I proud?
18. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
19. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
20. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
21. Is Christ real to me?

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