

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions.

DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 3 –

The Power of Journaling

Day 1

Renew the Mind

Introduction

1. So far, we've addressed 15 reasons why someone might not hear God.
2. We also introduced a wonderful tool called S.T.A.R., which helps us quiet ourselves to hear God.
3. **This week we are going to learn the spiritual discipline and power of journaling.**
4. **What is Journaling?**
 - a. *Journaling is the discipline of consistently reading and responding to the voice of God in your life as you interact with His Word – the Bible*
5. Where does the idea come from? What is it good for? How do we do it?
6. The idea of journaling really comes from the Bible.
7. God didn't just write out or dictate to someone the Bible.
8. One way the narratives and stories were passed down from one generation to another was orally – they had to carefully memorize them and pass them along that way.
9. Eventually these were gathered and committed to writing, like the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) and the Gospels (first four books of the New Testament).
10. In other cases, prophets wrote down prophecies that they received over the years, and then they were collected into a book, often named after the prophet who received and 'journaled' them.
11. Prayer conversations were also written down (journaled).
12. Now, no one is suggesting that OUR journaling has the same level of authority – of course not!
13. The point is simply to say that we didn't come up with the idea of journaling – it has been practiced for thousands of years!

Mentored by God

1. When you learn the discipline of journaling you discover that through this process God comes alongside you and personally trains and equips and makes you into the person, He purposed you to be. God says, "I will meet you any day, anytime, anywhere and I will mentor you and nourish you so that you can become spiritually mature." **Journaling is you making a commitment to be mentored by God Himself.**
2. Journaling is not keeping a diary, it's not an outline of your daily events, it's you responding and interacting with the voice of God in your life as He speaks to you through the Scriptures. Of course, this is not the only way to spend time with God – but it's a good way that nourishes your soul and your life if you give it a chance. The reason we want to continue to put such an emphasis on this discipline is because statistics show that most people do not have a consistent devotional time with God – and we want to change that stat. We believe that it's our responsibility to equip you to hear God's voice for yourself and the discipline of Journaling will accomplish that in your life.

Four Things to Bring When You Journal:

1. **Bible** - If journaling is new to you, you may want to use a Bible that is easy to read, like the New Living Translation of the Bible. This is the version that we teach and encourage study from at Main Street Church.
2. **Pen** - (highlighter, etc.)- When you are reading through the Bible, feel free to mark up the passages that leave an impression on you. Circle words or underline sentences that speak to you as you are reading. (*You're allowed to write in your Bible*). A tattered, marked up Bible is a Bible that someone is reading.
3. **Journal** - Of course this is an important part of the process. You can use any kind of wordless book, be creative and find something that appeals to you.
4. **Daily Planner or blank paper** - As your journaling you will discover that your mind will be flooded with other thoughts (get an oil change, call the school, pay the Hydro bill, etc...). Simply take a moment to write them down as they come to your mind so that your mind remains uncluttered and focused. The devil wants to get your focus off spending time with God and he will often do it by reminding you of good and important things.

Different kinds of journaling

1. **Devotional Journal:**
 - a. How can you profitably use a Devotional Journal?
 - b. **First:** this can be our daily journal, to record things the Lord is primarily saying to us through His Word and listening prayer.
 - c. **Second:** we can use it to record our listening prayer sessions with our spouse, or with others in the body of Christ.
 - d. **Third:** we can use it to record prophetic words sent to us from our family, prayer partners, friends or others in the church
 - e. Of course, we do not have to record everything that we ever receive in prayer, or from others. We have to be selective. Otherwise, we'll just write for the rest of your life!
 - f. **Fourth:** We can also track answers to our prayers in this journal.
 - g. This can prove to be a real faith builder and motivator to pray!
2. **Life Journal:**
 - a. This is where we record significant events in our lives, marriages, families, careers and ministries.
 - b. This is a selective, but very significant journal, recounting stories of what God has done, including dates, names and places.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are the two kinds of journals described in this lesson.
3. What are four ways that we can use a Devotional Journal?

Life Application

1. Text or call three friends. Ask them if they journal, and what kinds of journals they use. Also ask them to share what they have found useful about journaling.
2. Prepare to start journaling. This can be on paper, or electronically. If you have no journals, start with a devotional journal. Get it ready this week! (put it in your schedule)
3. If you already have a Devotional Journal, start a Life Journal this week (again, put it in your schedule).

Day 2

Renew the Mind

For this day, we'll look at four reasons for journaling. On Day 3, we will look at an additional four.

Reasons for journaling the God-events in your life

- First:** So you remember what God has done for you, your family and your church
 - We are prone to quickly forget what God has done for us.
 - As a result, we end up being ungrateful.
 - When we journal, it is a way of treasuring what God has graciously done for us.
 - It's like when we keep some valued item in a special place – we treasure it.
 - And this will generate thanksgiving, praise and worship in our personal lives!
- Second:** When you review what God has done - you, your family and your brothers- and sisters-in-Christ will be less inclined to turn away from Him
 - Just before Moses died, he repeatedly warned the people not to forget what the Lord had done, as forgetfulness would result in leaving God.
 - For this very reason, see how the Psalmist commits to reviewing what the Lord has done with the succeeding generations
 - Psalm 78:4-11 (NIV)** ... *we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done ...* ⁷ *Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands ...* ⁹ *The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle; ¹⁰ they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. ¹¹ They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.*
 - Your journaling will give you a record of God's faithfulness in your life as well as give you stories to share with family and friends.
 - This is a biblical thing to do!
 - But you can't do it well without journals, because you'll forget many things yourself.
- Third:** You remember approx. 70% more if you write something down.
- Fourth:** So, we don't forget the guidance or promises He has already given us, while we are waiting on Him to move.
 - The Lord may be guiding us through a situation that will take weeks, months or even years to navigate.
 - Much happens in our lives while we are waiting, and the promises or guidance may fade.
 - We may lose hope, or we may forget what He already instructed us to do.
 - But if we have it journaled, we can quickly recover and review what He has already shown us.

Reflecting and Reviewing

- Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
- What four reasons were shared in this day regarding why we should journal God-events in our lives?
- How can previous journal entries help us during a difficult or confusing time?

Life Application

- Take your Devotional or your Life Journal. Spend some time recording a list of things that God has done for you personally. Ask God to help you with remembering (He loves to do this!).
- Make a list in your journal of as many things you can think of that you are thankful for. Keep writing until you can't think of anything more.

3. Take your Devotional or your Life Journal. Spend some time recording a list of things that God has done for your family (if not married, you can include parents, even if this includes good things that happened historically). Ask God to help you with remembering (He loves to do this!).

Day 3

Renew the Mind

For this day, we'll look at four more reasons for journaling. On Day 2, the first four were discussed.

1. **Fifth:** When you continually rehearse what God has done for you, it will build your faith, your family's faith and the faith of your brothers- and sisters-in-Christ - to do what He wants you to do next.
 - a. As we rehearse what God has done, our own faith for next steps can grow.
 - b. Also, as we share our stories with others, we will begin to notice that they too want to live by faith.
 - c. It can additionally help us cast the vision that God has given us in any area we have influence (i.e. family, small group).
 - d. We can begin by rehearsing with others key faith stories of the past and in recent months.
 - e. That inspires them and gives them confidence in what God is calling us to do collectively.
 - f. The Devotional and Life Journals that we develop, and use will help us greatly in this regard.
2. **Sixth:** Time has a way of revising history. When you record it, you will remember what God actually did.
 - a. This is important in a church where a pastor has obeyed the Lord, and done the difficult things God asked him to do.
 - b. Some, who may have been around at that time, may wish for the history to be forgotten, or the story modified to suit their own sensibilities or to receive credit.
 - c. We then forget what God actually accomplished!
 - d. This reason for journaling can also be very important for families and for our own individual journeys.
3. **Seventh:** When you rehearse what He has done for you, your family and anything you lead, it will grow great trust in your leadership and witness, which will help you in the present.
 - a. People will not find it hard to follow you when they see and know who you are following. When your people or employees or co-worker or whomever see that you rehearse and talk about what God has done they will see how real He is in your life.
 - b. We are first and foremost called and described in the Bible as FOLLOWERS of Jesus. A record of what God has done and what He has asked you to do will keep you in that posture of humility and willing to do whatever God asks.
4. **Eighth:** To leave behind as a recorded legacy for the next generation, whether in your family or church.
 - a. There is no greater inheritance that parents can leave their children than a godly heritage and example.
 - b. We already mentioned the benefit of being able to share stories with one's children and grandchildren.
 - c. However, there is another important point: if we journal, we have an accurate record to pass on to many generations long after we are gone.
 - d. Further, a journal can also speak into the life of the church long after the pastor is gone.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What four reasons were shared in this day regarding why we should journal God-events in our lives?
3. How can journaling help us in leading or influencing others?

Life Application

1. Take your Devotional or your Life Journal. Spend some time recording a list of things that God has done in the church you currently attend, or in some of the people in the church. Ask God to help you with remembering (He loves to do this!)
2. These past two days, you have been doing some remembering. Make a commitment to share with someone today – preferably a family member – something that you were remembering.

Day 4

Renew the Mind

In Lesson Three, we learned how to have prayer conversations with God. We want to encourage you to record some of these! Now, it may seem hard or even awkward at first, but here are three good reasons to journal our prayer conversations. And this is a shorter lesson, because we have a longer Life Application today!

Reasons for journaling prayer conversations with God

1. **First**, so very much Scripture is conversational prayer – so there we have the example.
2. **Second**, when writing out the conversation with God, it moves you from being tentative about what God is saying and moves you over to faith in what He is saying.
 - a. When people are learning to intentionally listen to God, they sometimes wrestle with thoughts such as: “Is this God speaking, or is this my thought, or is it the devil speaking?”
 - b. So instead of moving forward in a conversation with God, they get stuck with these questions running around in their heads, preventing a conversation with the Lord.
 - c. When you begin writing, it keeps you from dismissing what you are receiving.
 - d. Every stroke of the pen or the keyboard is an act of faith.
 - e. Very soon the person becomes comfortable with conversing with God.
3. **Third**, it will keep your mind focused, rather than thinking about what others are doing in the room around you; or what’s on your to-do list for the day; or other random ideas that distract you.

Remember

1. Your spiritual development is first and foremost based upon you receiving nourishment from God Himself. You play a part in your spiritual growth. You are called to persevere and to press into the Lord. Journaling is a powerful tool to do just that. God uses journaling to keep you focused when other things vie for your attention. God uses journaling to encourage you when you face trial and hardships. God uses journaling to satisfy you when you feel spiritually dry. Journaling is a tool God provides for you to feed on His Word and grow you spiritually.
2. Journaling removes the temptation to rely on others to feed you spiritually and sets the groundwork for you to feed yourself.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are three good reasons for recording your prayer conversations with God?

Life Application

1. Read the book of Habakkuk today. Notice the number of times that the prophet asks questions, and that God’s answer is recorded.
2. Write down 3-5 questions that you have for God. You will be using this list during Day 5.

Day 5

Renew the Mind

How to journal prayer conversations with God

1. It's not at all complicated – after all, Jesus said that everyone would hear his voice; not just some 'elites.'
2. If you think about how a human conversation might go, you begin to realize that it's quite simple and logical for anyone.
3. When you wish to begin a conversation with someone, you either state something or ask something.
4. Then you wait and listen for the response.
5. **Conversing with God is the same.**
6. So, when you journal, you might want to do something like this . . .
7. Begin by writing down your own first initial with a colon – i.e. **S:**
8. Then write out your prayer to God – it may begin with a sentence or sentences of thanksgiving and praise for what He has done for you that day or week.
9. Again, praise is one of the key ways that we come into the Father's presence.
10. Or you might wish to write out a sentence or sentences, confessing some sin you committed that day or the day before. This is another way to enter His presence.
11. So, it might look something like this ...
S: Lord, I just want to praise and thank you for the huge answer to prayer today! I can't tell you how grateful I feel inside. Only you could have done that. What a gift from you. I really love you! You are such a wonderful Father.
12. At this point you can write the letter "**G:**" and then listen with your pen pressed on the paper, or fingers hovering over the keyboard, for the first thought.
13. As soon as you begin to have a thought or a picture, you just begin writing – not debating in your mind where it came from.
14. It could look something like this ...
G: You have no idea what joy it gave Me to answer this prayer for you. I have wanted to demonstrate to you this year, an aspect of myself to you. I have wanted to reveal myself to you as one who delights to answer your prayers. I am so pleased that you were one of those who came back to say thank you – not everyone does.
15. It could be that much; it could be less and it could be more. Who cares? It's a conversation! There's no rules for a conversation! You're just enjoying a conversation together.
16. Now you might ask, "What would I do next?"
17. What do you FEEL like doing next?! There's no right or wrong here.
18. Perhaps you have a question for the Lord – remember, you're having a conversation. Take the lead, the Lord delights in spending time with you! He is NOT too busy for you – ever!
19. **Let's try a question ...**
S: Lord, I have this big decision to make (marriage, family, work, ministry). I just don't know if it's best to do this or that?
G: Why don't you?
S: Lord, I never even thought about that! Thank you for that incredible insight. And how do you think I should go about doing that? How do I convince so and so that this is what we need to do?
G: Why don't you ask so and so to listen in prayer with you? I will speak to both of you at the same time.
S: Oh Lord, you are truly amazing. You not only care about advancing your kingdom, you care about relationships, and you know just how to navigate such touchy issues. I praise you for that, Lord! This will be a win-win-win; for your kingdom, for the other person and for me! I bless you Lord! I really do.
20. As you have conversations this way, you may even sense His Spirit moving upon your spirit, confirming in your heart that you are truly hearing Him!

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. When you listen in prayer, do you naturally trust that you are hearing God, or are you more naturally a skeptic?
3. What are important aspects of a conversation with anyone? This helps us understand how to have a great conversation with God!

Life Application

1. Go back to Day 2, Life Application question two. **You wrote down a list of questions that you have for God.** Pick one of them, and in your journal record a conversation that you have with God about that question.
 - a. If you didn't come up with a question here are some examples you can use:
 - i. Jesus, when you look at my heart what do you see?
 - ii. Lord, who in my family do you want me to specifically pray for?
 - iii. Lord, what character issue do you want to work on in my life?
 - iv. Jesus, is there any negative attitudes that you want to address in my life?
 - v. Lord, what do you want to encourage me in today?
2. Pick a second question to ask God and go through the same process. If this feels very new for you, don't give up! We may be developing brand new habits that will eventually be automatic.

Day 6

Obedience

1. For this final day, we want to focus on OBEDIENCE, as we as disciples are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). The Bible clearly teaches that obedience is a clear echo of our love for God (1 John 5:3).
2. It is also through obedience that we find blessing and our lives are built on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
3. Take this lesson and quickly scan the title and headings – do not re-read the entire lesson.
4. Humbly go before God and ask – “***what is one step of obedience that I can take as a result of this lesson?***”
5. Perhaps have a section in your journal where you record this step (and steps from future lessons). Or put it in the calendar on your phone. This shows God that we are both intending and committing to obey.
6. Write or speak out a prayer of commitment based on the step.