

SPIRITUAL FORMATION TOOLS · NO. 8

Journaling

Habakkuk 2:2 · Writing it down so you don't lose it.

I've started probably a dozen journals in my life. Nice ones, leather ones, the kind you buy hoping the cover will make the discipline stick. Most of them have about nine entries in them before they end up in a drawer.

Here's what I've finally learned: journaling isn't about the notebook. It's about slowing down long enough to notice what God is actually doing in your life — because if you don't write it down, you will forget it, faster than you'd think. The prophet Habakkuk was told to write down what God showed him and make it plain, so it wouldn't get lost and so it could be carried to others. That's still what journaling does. It keeps you from losing your own story.

This is the eighth tool in our spiritual formation series at Restoration Church. You don't need to be a writer. You don't need good handwriting or a spiritual insight worth quoting. You need a pen, a page, and the willingness to be honest on it.

Five movements: Presence, Reflection, Honesty, Scripture, Response. Not a diary of what happened. A conversation with God about what happened.

“Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” — Habakkuk 2:2 (NIV)

HOW TO USE THIS

Any notebook works. So does a document on your phone, if that's genuinely where you'll use it. Set aside ten to fifteen minutes — end of day works well, but any consistent time will do. Move through the five movements below, writing as you go rather than thinking first and writing later. The writing itself is where the noticing happens.

Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, or whether it's good writing. No one else has to read this. Write like you're talking to someone who already knows you and loves you anyway.

1. Presence — Who am I actually writing to?

WHY

A journal can be just a diary, or it can be a conversation. The difference is who you picture on the other side of the page. Starting by naming that God is present while you write turns the whole exercise into prayer instead of just record-keeping.

HOW

Before you write about your day, write a line acknowledging God is with you as you do it. Something as simple as “God, I’m writing this to you” changes everything that follows.

PAUSE AND PRAY

“God, I’m not just writing this down. I’m writing it to you.”

2. Reflection — What actually happened that matters?**WHY**

Not everything that happened today deserves a line in your journal. This movement is about sorting through the noise of the day and noticing what actually mattered — a moment, a conversation, a decision, a feeling that showed up uninvited.

HOW

Scan back through the day or the week. Write down one or two things that stand out — not because they were dramatic, but because something in you knows they mattered.

PAUSE AND PRAY

“God, what actually mattered today was ____.”

3. Honesty — What am I not saying out loud, even to myself?**WHY**

Let’s be honest: a journal is one of the only places where you don’t have to manage how you sound. No audience, no performance. This is where you get to write the sentence you haven’t said out loud to anyone — including yourself.

HOW

Ask what you’ve been avoiding saying, even in your own head. Write it plainly, without softening it or explaining it away. The page can hold more than you think.

PAUSE AND PRAY

“God, the thing I haven’t said out loud is ____.”

4. Scripture — What does God's word have to say to this?**WHY**

Journaling that stays only about you eventually turns inward and stays there. Bringing Scripture into the page lets God talk back to what you’ve written instead of just listening to yourself think.

HOW

Write down a verse that comes to mind, or look one up that speaks to what you named above. Write a line about how it lands on what you just wrote — agreement, tension, comfort, conviction, whatever's honest.

PAUSE AND PRAY

“God, the verse that speaks into this is ____, and here's what it stirs in me: ____.”

5. Response — What do I want to say back to God?

WHY

The entry shouldn't just end — it should turn into prayer. Everything you've noticed, confessed, and read is meant to lead somewhere: an honest word back to God before you close the notebook.

HOW

Write a short prayer as the last thing on the page — a request, a thank you, a confession, a question you're still sitting with. Close it the way you'd close a letter to someone you trust.

PAUSE AND PRAY

“God, in response to all of this, what I want to say is ____.”

This Week's Invitation

1. Journal through these five movements at least four days this week, same time each day if you can.
2. Read back last week's entries, if you have any, and notice what's changed.
3. Share one honest line from your journal with someone you trust.

Start there.

A Simple Prayer

God, help me not lose what you're doing in me. Slow me down enough to write it honestly. Meet me on this page the same way you meet me everywhere else. Amen.