

Breathe

We were recently sitting with some friends of ours at dinner. It was a few months ago that we had sent them off to begin their senior year of high school and freshman year of college. For his graduation gift, we gave Seth a journal. A leather one, no lines, with a great smell! After he unwrapped this gift, we took him on a field trip to our bookcase of journals, sat he and Adrienne down on our floor and asked them to pick a date starting from 1986. We had a great time pulling different journals from the bookcases and reading of those chosen day's events – March 12, 1989, January 23, 2002, etc. Seth and Adrienne found it quite entertaining to listen of our adventures in high school, college and beyond. It is all there, page after page of our journey. We consider it a treasure for many reasons. Our journals are a written reflection of our pilgrimage. When we take the time to slow down the chatter in our head, we see Father's hand more clearly in my life. When we journal, we take time to breathe! So, when we were together again the other night, it was just this that Seth and Adrienne were saying they had found as well. Journaling has brought them clarity, perspective and calm amidst the noise of the day-to-day.

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
Psalm 90:12

Ron's Story – Would you like to know that you are on the right path? Life is flying by, kids are getting older, years are adding to your marriage, and where are you? What has gone on in the last 10 years, 5 years or even last month? Where do you want to be in the next month, next year or next 5 years? It was these questions that prompted my journaling. Journaling brings clarity to my purpose and calms the confusion in my head. Because of the volume of activity in my life, I needed something to help me see what is important and what is just noise. Journaling starts the conversation with Father God and takes me to a deeper level of hearing and knowing.

I also believe that anything worth doing is worth doing well. Documenting life measures my purpose and reveals my intention. I want to be a person of purpose receiving direction from Father God, and journaling helps monitor this behavior. But, most importantly, my journal is a place of refuge from the daily pace. Relationships at times will remain elusive unless we intentionally seek to ask the questions and begin the dialogue. Journaling is a conversation between Father God and myself. Every time I come to journaling, I remember who I am in Father's eyes. The honesty, transparency or vulnerability of it all keeps me breathing at a slow and steady pace.

Karla's Story - I can't imagine my life without a journal. It would lack such color. It is here that I am known. It is here that Father and I sit together. It is here that I

rest in his promises, see his faithfulness and anticipate his answers. It all started for me when I walked into Mimuh's room that day and saw the walls covered with bookshelves and little red books. If the red shag carpet wasn't enough to get my attention, then these books she called journals certainly did. It was easy to see that my dear friend, Louise Wood (Mimuh to me) liked the color red, but there was much more to the mystery of red that I was about to find out.

Mimuh was a spectacular lady. You only had to be with her for a few moments and you knew she had a loving God whom she was crazy about and a wonderful husband whom she was equally crazy about. We became friends when I was in high school going to her home to paint their fence or something for a youth group fundraiser. Mimuh could have cared less about her fence. She just wanted us to come inside and talk. Her warm hug and authentic conversation kept me coming around again and again. It was on one such afternoon after school that she invited me to her world of journals! I had often wondered where such a sense of Father God and herself came from. I had never met anyone so calm, peaceful and full of life. I knew as I stared around her room that day that it had something to do with these little red books.

She couldn't help but pull them from the shelves and begin to read. I believe that when she wrote, she met Father God and they talked about all that was going on. Journaling was only one of the many things that Mimuh taught me about life. But she was adamant that I always journal and though I can't quite put my finger on it, I know that this activity created a result of friendship that I am not willing to pass me by.

So, each month we want to share with you a reason to journal and a "how to" of journaling!

Reason to Journal #1

It slows my mind and heart.

"Pour out your hearts to him." Psalm 62:8

"By slowing us down and prompting us to think more deeply about God, journaling helps us to feel more deeply (and biblically) about God." Donald Whitney in [Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#)

Reason to Journal #2

It records the journey.

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12

"If a man [woman] write little, he [she] had need have a great memory." Francis Bacon

Reason to Journal #3

It gives me peace and perspective.

“Have you kept a regular Journal? If you have not, you will be likely to forget most of the Observations you have made. If you have omitted this Useful Exercise, let me advise you to recommence it, immediately. Let it be your Amusement, to minute every day, whatever you may have seen or heard worth Notice. One contracts a Fondness Of Writing by Use. We learn to write readily, and what is of more importance, We think, and improve our Judgments, by committing our Thoughts to Paper.” John Adams in a letter to his son on May 14, 1783

“Meaning will come if you write regularly. You’ll begin to enter the world of your inner thoughts; and, in time, you’ll feel a little different, a little sharper, as if your senses have been fine-tuned. A squeaky closet door will no longer go unnoticed. You’ll begin to wonder how long it has been squeaky, why no one has fixed it, and what else is ‘squeaky’ in your life.” Patrick Sebranek in Writer’s Inc.

Reason to Journal #4

It keeps me aware of the victory.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

A “How to” of Journaling #1

What do I write?

1. Date
2. Daily events and feelings/observations about those events
3. Prayer Requests and Answers
4. Response to Bible Study
5. Songs, notes from a speaker, etc.
6. memorabilia (letters, ticket stubs, pictures, etc.)
7. Things to do

A “How to” of Journaling #2

How do I write?

Usually, it reads as a conversation between Father God and I. Perhaps I read some verses from his word, I then write them down and tell him what I am thinking/feeling about them. When I open the Bible to listen, I am always asking 2 questions – Who are you, God? And what do you want me to do? I look to answer those 2 questions in whatever I am reading. The conversation then

usually moves to the events/conversations of the day. I just record what happened in my day and what I am thinking/feeling about it all. Sometimes it is pretty bullet-oriented. Other times it is more in story-form. I might end my journal with some anticipation of what Father God and I might be up to tomorrow in the details of the day?

A “How to” of Journaling #3

When do I write?

We all have a certain time in our day when we are most reflective. Perhaps it is in the quiet of the morning or in the evening right before bed. Whenever you seek conversation with Father God, use your journal as the connector like before or after a Bible Study or prayer time. During those weeks of craziness, use some time on the weekend to catch up or a special retreat.

A “How to” of Journaling #4

How often do I write?

Depending on the season of your life or the events in your week, it just depends. At times, I have journaled 5 out of 7 days. Sometimes I have journaled once a week and used the time to reflect on the past week and then pray towards the upcoming week. There have also been seasons where I have gone weeks or months without writing. What is important is that you find your own pace and schedule that offers you the opportunity to breathe!

A “How to” of Journaling #5

On what do I write?

Quite an important question! The medium for such important recording can't be reckless. Personally, my favorite is a spiral bound, unlined, 5x7, “cover with a story” journal. The spiral gives you freedom to jam stuff in it and the ease to lay it flat. The unlined pages add to the freedom of things. You can't be bound by space. The size gives you room to write without the constant turning of pages. As well, the stuff you add is usually no bigger than this. And last, you must have a cover with a story. When I go to Barnes and Noble and scour the shelves, I am looking for something that describes me and what I believe this next chapter of my life will entail. It is an adventure as well as a statement. Of course, you can find some cool ones at Target or online, but I have had the most fortune at B&N. Now, if you are my husband all of these preferences go out the window. He prefers the Five Star 5x7 spiral that you buy at Office Max for \$6.59. Where is the romance in that? But, it works for him!

Record Reflect Respond

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