

Warning and Encouragement

Let me add this word of caution, though: even good things can be misused and perverted. There may be times when you should not journal. Carson, reflecting on how the bronze snake that God used to deliver his people later became an idolatrous snare (Num. 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4), warns of a similar danger lurking around a couple of our spiritual disciplines. He warns that **even properly motivated spiritual aids have the potential to slide into the “triple trap” of legalism, self-righteousness, and superstition**:

(A) in your mind you so establish journaling as the clearest evidence of personal growth and loyalty to Christ that you look down your nose at those who do not commit themselves to the same discipline and pat yourself on the back every day that you maintain the practice (**legalism**).

(B) you begin to think that only the most mature saints keep spiritual journals, so you qualify—and you know quite a few who do not (**self-righteousness**).

(C) you begin to think that there is something in the act itself, or in the paper, or in the writing, that is a necessary means of grace, a special channel of divine pleasure or truth (**superstition**).

“That,” Carson concludes, “is the time to throw away your journal”.

But with a proper perspective and a right heart before the Lord, journaling is and can be a remarkable blessing. So, why not start off 2021 with something that you may have never tried before? It might just transform your life and release blessings that have been missing in your past. **Are you willing to take the 2021 challenge?**



A CHRISTIAN ROAD MAP TO LEAD US INTO A NEW YEAR

“THE 2021 CHALLENGE”



“The Bible was not given for our information, but for our transformation”

D.L. Woody

REASONS TO MAKE A CHRISTIAN JOURNAL A PART OF YOUR CHRISTIAN

LIFE

Adapted from: [7 Reasons to Keep a Journal \(thegospelcoalition.org\)](https://thegospelcoalition.org)

As we move into a New Year, my desire is that our focus will be on rebuilding. Not only rebuilding our church with a strategic focus on advancing, but also rebuilding our Christian walk with Christ with a strategic focus on growing...and “adding to our faith” – 2 Peter 1:5-7.



One of the things that I have put into practice is a Christian Journal. I am not much of a writer, so my journaling has been electronically during 2020. But as I move into 2021, the Lord has laid on my heart to start writing more and using electronics less.

Some today view journaling as a sentimental token of a bygone age. For others, it's a distraction from getting things done amid our frenetic pace of life. Yet for many, they have discovered that journaling has been an invaluable means of grace in their Christian walk and a practical discipline that comes with many benefits. Ask yourself, how diligent am I in being in God's Word in a daily systematic way? What safeguards do I have in place to ensure that I do not stop or give up along the way? May I suggest that you add an accountability partner to help motivate you to stay consistent (NOTE: This is what I am doing through a private social media forum).

Here are six quick reasons that I want to challenge each member of LBC to commend to practice in 2021:

1. JOURNALING HELPS US KEEP A RECORD OF LIFE'S JOURNEY

In journaling one can remember the mundane, recall the funny, and not forget the humbling, painful, formative events of life. Pete Hamill, in his introduction to Edward Robb Ellis's diary, explains: “The diarist has one essential goal: to freeze time. . . . This day will never come again, but here, in this diary, I will have it forever.” Likewise, diarist Andi Ashworth reminds us that with a journal “*we have a notebook in which to be a student of life.*”

2. JOURNALING CREATES A TANGIBLE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S BLESSING IN OUR LIFE.

We do not want to be like Israel and “forget” the Lord and all he's done (e.g., Judges 8:34; Ps. 106:21; Hos. 8:14). One of the beauties of corporate worship is coming together as God's people to recite what God has done. Don Carson is right:

Believers who spend no time reviewing and pondering in their minds what God has done, whether they are alone and reading their Bibles or joining with other believers in corporate adoration, should not be surprised if they rarely sense that God is near.

Journaling is another means of “pondering what God has done,” of tangibly recording his unwarranted grace in my life. The words you write will either serve to spur you on toward greater faithfulness or will be a haunting reminder of an ungrateful life.

3. JOURNALING SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT GOD IS WANTING TO SANCTIFY OUR LIFE

We all need constant reminders that we don't become holy overnight; it takes time and holy sweat to allow this to happen (cf. Phil. 2:12–13; 1 Tim. 4:15).

Journaling can serve as a mirror: It reminds us of resolutions we've made and broken, and how desperately we need God's enabling grace to obey and honor him.

4. JOURNALING WILL ASSIST US IN DAILY PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Focused, meditative reading can be difficult in our age of texts, tweets, and posts. After reading two or three pages of an article or book, Nicholas Carr admits, “I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle.”

Journaling allows you to slow down and focus your thoughts, to unplug and disconnect as you pray and meditate on the Scriptures.

5. JOURNALING HELPS US BECOME BETTER WRITERS

This is an area that God has specifically spoke to me about. My penmanship is terrible, and as a student in God's Word, I often have to write papers. Journaling helps both penmanship and writing skills. Whether you desire to write for a public audience or simply for writing's sake, keeping a journal is a wonderful way to fine-tune the writing craft.

6. JOURNALING CAN BECOME AN ENDURING GIFT TO OTHERS

When we lose a parent, wouldn't it be nice to be able to look back and their thoughts and what God had taught them? [Don Whitney observes](#) that the goal of journaling over a lifetime is to “build a monument to God's faithfulness.” He then adds that your last entry will “most likely . . . introduce your great-grandchildren to your life and faith and to influence them for Christ's sake.”