



The
FLOW
Adult CURRICULUM

#17

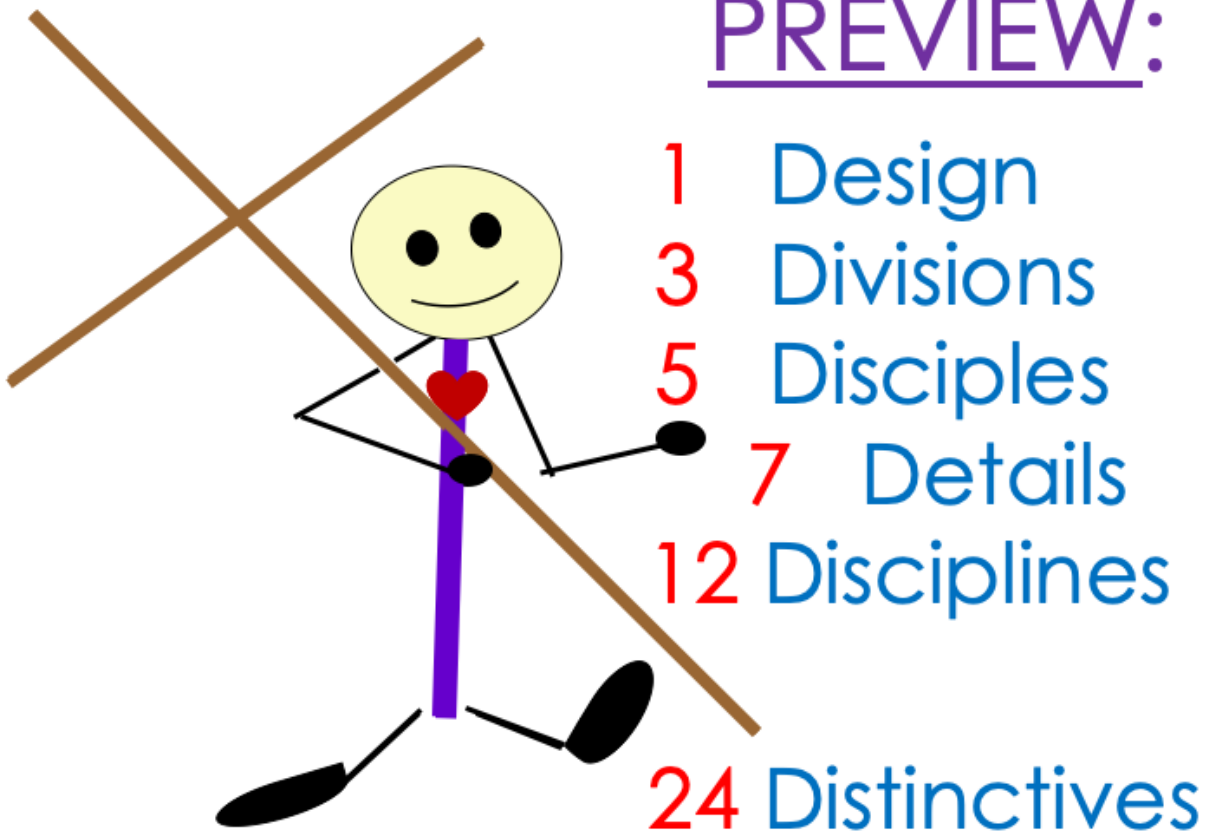
JOURNALING

Hebrews 12:3a

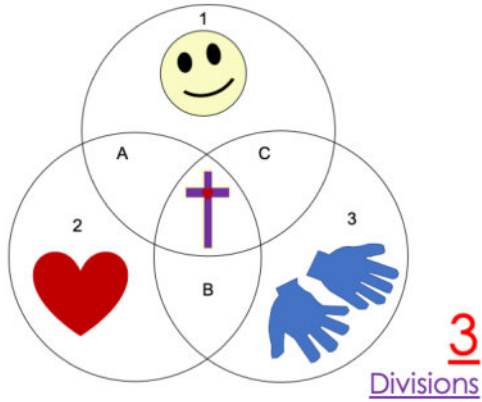
(Come And See Christianity book pages 54-61)

The FLOW

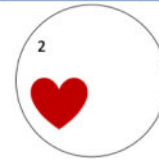
PREVIEW:



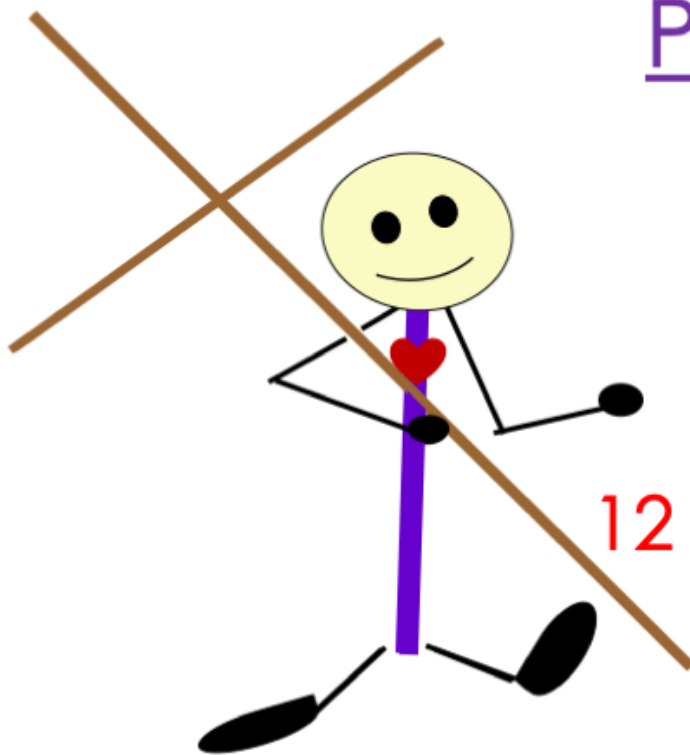
SECTION FIVE: 12 Disciplines



The
HEART



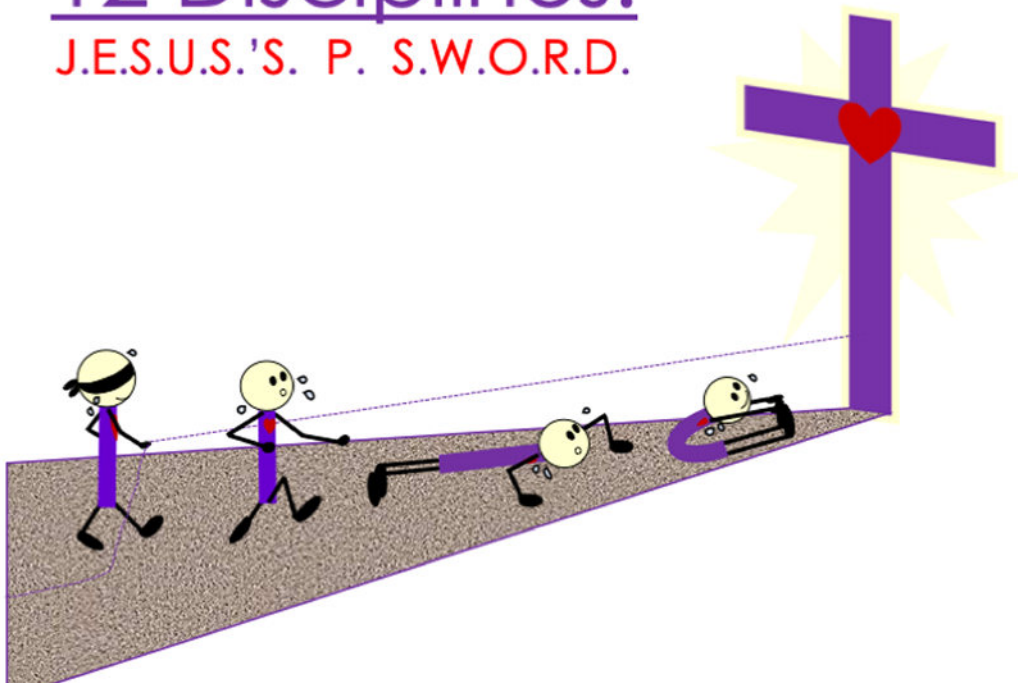
PREVIEW:



12 Disciplines

12 DISCIPLINES: Here are some heart exercises for you... These discipleship “**disciplines**” can help Christians to **strengthen** their **faith** and grow as missional & maturing Christ-followers.

12 Disciplines:
J.E.S.U.S.'S P. S.W.O.R.D.





Journaling

Journaling: We want to encourage everyone to write down and keep track of what **God is doing** in & through your life... Going back through your journal can be an **incredibly** powerful experience.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

INTRO:

Welcome to another major transition point in your discipleship journey and our Come And See Christianity curriculum. By way of review, thus far, we have gone through Section One's single lesson on God's divine DESIGN, then Section Two's three unifying and introductory lessons on every human's 3 DIVISIONS (our HEAD, HEART, and HANDS); we then followed up with the universally inclusive definitions and descriptions of humanity's 5 types of people, also known as biblical DISCIPLES (the LOST, LOVER, LEARNER, LEADER, and LIFER), each having received their own lesson. Next came what we just completed, Section Four's 7 lessons on Christianity's fundamental, knowledge-based truths, also known as The DETAILS (FOUNDATIONS, FRAMEWORK, FACTS, FIGHT, FAITH, FAMILY, and FOREVER).

Now, in the same way that Sections 1-4 (and their 16 compiled lessons) all concentrated on aspects of "The HEAD" and the truth of God's Word, Section 5 will contain 12 complementary lessons (**J.E.S.U.S.'S. P.S.W.O.R.D.**) that focus on HEART exercises, also known as spiritual DISCIPLINES, that can help to grow and strengthen the Christian's truth-filled, loving, and faithfully obedient HEART...

12 HEART Strengthening DISCIPLINES:

1. *Journaling*
2. *Eat-nothing (Fasting)*
3. *Scripture intake*
4. *Understudy of Scripture*
5. *Solitude*
6. *Stewardship*
7. *Prayer*
8. *Serving*
9. *Worship*
10. *Outreach*
11. *Relationships*
12. *Development*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

Spiritual Disciplines

(The content herein is predominantly derived and expanded upon from Dr. Don Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines* & Dr. Chuck Lawless' *Disciplined Warriors*.)

I. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES . . . FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS

*Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down.
... We **need** the rugged strength of Christian **character**
that can come only from discipline.*

- V. Raymond Edman

Discipline without direction is drudgery!

The Bible says of God's elect, "*For those whom He foreknew He also predestined **to be conformed** to the image of His Son"*
(Romans 8:29)

Although God will grant Christlikeness to us when Jesus returns, until then He intends for us to grow toward it.

We aren't merely to wait for holiness; we're to pursue it.

All who come to God trusting in the person and work of Jesus to make them right with God are given the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13-14). The presence of the Holy Spirit causes all those in whom He resides to have new holy hungers they didn't have before.

Hebrews 12:14 is clear:
anyone who is not striving for holiness will not see the Lord!

The urgent question every Christian should ask is, *“How then shall I pursue holiness... How can I become more like Christ?”* God’s Word offers a clear answer in...

1 Timothy 4:7
“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”

The only road to Christian maturity and godliness (a.k.a. Christlikeness & holiness) passes through the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines.

Godliness is the goal of the Disciplines... remember this and the ***Spiritual Disciplines become delights vs drudgery.***

II. WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture (and in application) that promote spiritual growth among believers in The Gospel.

Spiritual Disciplines are the **habits of devotion** and **experiential Christianity** that have been **practiced** by the people of God since biblical times.

The Disciplines could be described in several ways:

- “First, the Bible prescribes both **personal** and **interpersonal** Spiritual Disciplines.”
- **Spiritual Disciplines are activities, NOT attitudes.**
 - Disciplines are practices... NOT character qualities, graces, or “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).
 - **Disciplines are things you do!**

The goal of practicing a given Discipline, is not about “DOing” as much as it is about “BEing,” that is, BEing like Jesus. But the biblical way to grow in BEing more like Jesus is through the rightly motivated doing of the biblical Spiritual Disciplines.

- We do specific practices *sometimes* that cultivate being more like Jesus *all the time*.
- Spiritual Disciplines are practices taught or modeled in the Bible. (Without this limitation, we might call anything we fancy a Spiritual Discipline.)
- Spiritual Disciplines found in Scripture are sufficient for knowing & experiencing God & growing in Christlikeness.
 - See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - See 2 Peter 1:3 & Philippians 4:13
- Spiritual Disciplines are practices derived from the gospel, NOT divorced from the gospel.
- ***Spiritual Disciplines are means, not ends.***

Godliness is both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

CAUTION: *While we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly...*

So, the Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

III. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... AS MEANS TO GODLINESS

Godliness comes through discipline.

- God uses **three primary catalysts for changing us** and conforming us into Christlikeness, but only one is largely under our control.

#1: God uses people to change people.

- *“Iron sharpens iron,” says Proverbs 27:17*
- *Sometimes God uses our friends to sharpen us into more Christlike living, and sometimes He uses our enemies to file away our rough, ungodly edges.*

#2: God uses circumstance(s) as His catalyst for change.

#3: God uses spiritual disciplines to change His people.

*God uses spiritual disciplines
to work on His people from the **inside out**.*

Colossians 1:29 illustrates how **the efforts of a Christian & the work of God—can occur simultaneously** in a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” (cf. Philippians 2:13)

See here divine grace AND human responsibility...

*As physical disciplines promote bodily strength, so
the Spiritual Disciplines promote godliness.*

- Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as ways by which we can spiritually place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek Him, much **like Zacchaeus** placed himself physically in Jesus’ path and sought Him. The Lord, by His Spirit, still travels down certain paths that He has ordained and revealed in Scripture. We call these paths the Spiritual Disciplines...

*If we will place ourselves on these paths and look
for Him there by faith, we can expect
to encounter Him.*

IV. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... GOD’S WILL FOR CHRISTIANS

*“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”
makes it plain that **this is a command of God**, not merely a suggestion.*

- **Holiness is not an option for those who claim to be children of the Holy One** (see 1 Peter 1:15-16), so neither are the means of holiness—that is, the Spiritual Disciplines—an option.
- Jesus is the model of discipline in & for godliness.
- Many professing Christians are spiritually undisciplined and seem to have little Christlike fruit and power in their lives. Yet, many of them are remarkably disciplined in other areas of their lives.

- Too many Christians trivialize their effectiveness for the kingdom of God through a lack of discipline.
- The danger of neglecting the Spiritual Disciplines is the danger of bearing little spiritual fruit—your life counting little for the sake of the kingdom.

“I’m not afraid of failure. I’m afraid of succeeding at things that don’t matter.”

- William Carey

“Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact freedom is not at all the opposite, but rather the final reward, of discipline.”

Elisabeth Elliot

If your picture of a disciplined Christian is one of a grim, tight-lipped, joyless half-robot, then you’ve missed the point.

*By means of the Disciplines,
let the truths of The Gospel restore your soul.*

Micro

What value is there in Christian journaling?

“Journaling” can mean different things to different people. For some, journaling is written prayer. For others, journaling is keeping a record of prayer requests and answers. Some keep a journal of especially poignant spiritual truths, perhaps insights from a sermon or quotes from spiritual books or a collection of Scripture. Some may write accounts of particularly meaningful encounters with God. For some a journal is a form of diary, a place to record the events of their day and a few thoughts or insights about it; these entries may be as brief as one or two phrases or a long narrative. Some might keep a “gratitude” or “joy” journal that lists one or more things each day—small or large—for which they are thankful. Still others journal in the sense that they write out their thoughts or respond to a particular prompt; it is not so much a prayer or specifically God-directed as it is a written exploration on a topic. Journals can come in a variety of forms—written in a notebook, typed on the computer, in an online forum, shared with friends or private, including art work or pictures or solely visual art without words, etc. The Bible does not mention journaling, so is there value in any of these activities?

Writing or creating art of any kind causes us to slow down enough to attend to our inner being. Words may flow effortlessly, or they may take time to formulate. Either way, writing is a method to help us reflect, contemplate, and more fully digest the things of life. [Proverbs 4](#) talks about gaining wisdom at all costs. Its words imply intentionality and alertness: “My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. . . . Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil” ([Proverbs 4:20–23, 25–26](#)). Journaling can help us pay attention and keep wisdom at the forefront of our thoughts. It can also be a way to guard our hearts as we search our inner being, paying attention to what is going on in our hearts and submitting it to God.

Although the biblical psalms are not true examples of “journaling,” they do illustrate how the truth of our experiences can be expressed alongside the truth of who God is. The varied themes in the [Psalms](#) and their unabashed candidness demonstrate how we can be perfectly honest with ourselves and with God about our feelings and thoughts. In journals, we can express ourselves to God and remind ourselves of His greatness. [Luke 2:19](#) tells us about Mary treasuring the events around Jesus’ birth and pondering them in her heart. [Psalm 111:2](#) says, “Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.” Journaling can help us ponder the good things of God and give Him praise.

Another benefit of journaling is having a written record to which to later refer. In times of [spiritual dryness](#) or discouragement, one can look back at a journal and find encouragement in God’s past faithfulness or reminders of truth. God often instructed the Israelites to set up forms of remembrance. The [Passover](#), for example, was to serve as a reminder of God’s faithfulness in rescuing the Israelites from Egypt ([Exodus 12](#)). After the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land, God gave Joshua instructions about setting up memorial stones, which were “to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” ([Joshua 4:6–8](#)). [Psalms 77](#) and 143 talk specifically about remembering God’s works in times of hardship. Journals can be one way to remind us of what God has done in our personal histories.

For those who are “natural” writers, journaling can be a way to intentionally use their gifting to grow in Christ. They can explore through journaling the truth presented in Scripture or the things God may be teaching them through

life circumstances. Journaling can be used to look back at the past, asking God to reveal truth we may have missed along the way or to bring about healing. We can also use journals to express hopes for the future and submit our desires to God. Journals can be used as a method of personal Bible study. Journals filled with scriptural and spiritual truths can be a quick reference tool.

Journaling is exciting for some and sounds laborious to others. There is no right or wrong way to journal. And, depending on the person, it may be highly valuable or not add much. Journaling is certainly not a requirement for Christian growth, but it can be a great tool.

- **GotQuestion.org**

Message

Hebrews 12:1-3a

1Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3**Consider him...**

BIG IDEA: Healthy Christians consider, keep track, remember, and reflect upon what Christ has done and is doing in and through their lives.

PREVIEW:

1. Journaling helps us to RECORD.
2. Journaling helps us to REMEMBER.
3. Journaling helps us to REFLECT.

TEXT: Hebrews 12:3a
Consider Him

1. Journaling helps us to RECORD

Psalm 102:18

*“Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.”*

Illustration:

Why do we record the dates of birthdays, anniversaries, and legal matters? Why do we collect souvenirs and take pictures when we visit various places? What is at the heart of documenting and creating proof of our life experiences? The answer is simple. **We record what we treasure.**

*There could be an unimaginable future spiritual impact
in something we write today.*

- Whitney

Explanation:

For Christians, Christ is at the core of all that counts. In other words, Almighty God is who and what we treasure most. Consequently, for the biblical believer, **JOURNALING is an intentional way of recording and remembering how the Lord has expressed His love to us and through us.** In short, our consistent JOURNALING maintains a continuous, personal account of our divine Treasure and His amazing grace, miraculous mercies, and revolutionary revelations.

Application:

NOTE: Nothing in Scripture obligates the followers of Jesus to keep a journal.

There are no rules for keeping a journal!” In other words, the method you find most edifying and useful in your pursuit of godliness is the way you should keep a journal. This goes for content, format, length, and frequency.

Use the method that works best for you.

For STARTERS:

- ~ As a starting entry for each day, try listing the one verse or idea from your Bible reading that impressed you most.
- ~ **Meditate on that for a few minutes, then record your thoughts and insights.**
- ~ From there consider adding recent events in your life and your feelings and responses to them, brief prayers, joys, successes, failures, quotations, and so on.
- ~ **Discipline yourself to write at least one sentence per day.** For most people, the biggest problem is just getting started.

2. Journaling helps us to REMEMBER.

Illustration:

On Saturday, 20 June 1942, Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl who eventually died in the Holocaust, wrote the following in her personal journal: "I haven't written for a few days, because I wanted first of all to think about my diary. It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary; not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems to me that neither I - nor for that matter anyone else - will be interested in the unbosoming of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl. Still, what does that matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart."

- Anne Frank

Explanation:

One of the most repeated and important words in all the Bible is "remember." Over and over again, from cover to cover, God emphatically commands His people to remember who He is, what He has done, what He is going to do, why we all need a Savior, where the cross belongs in the Christian's life, what it means to BE ready to BE The Church.

To put it another way, Hebrews 12:3 begins by commanding Christians to “consider Christ.” To “consider Him” is to remember Him with a reverent sense of faithful fear and loving awe. So, whether we remember through journaling or we recall the reason for the twelve stones that the Lord instructed Joshua to have put beside the Jordan River; whether we keep track of what the Holy Spirit is revealing today or if the church is remembering Christ through our New Testament commitment to Communion, the common blessing is found in God’s written Word and our remembering through JOURNALING.

Application:

We tend to forget how many times God has answered specific prayers, made timely provision, and done marvelous things. But having a place to collect the memories prevents them from being forgotten.

If you or God want it remembered... write it down!

Psalm 77:11-12

“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.”

3. Journaling help us to REFLECT.

Illustration:

Missionary Jim Elliot used his now-famous journal to irrigate the practice of the Disciplines in his life when the tide of zeal for them ran low.

The Christian life is, by definition, a living thing. If we can think of the Discipline of Bible intake as its food and prayer as its breath, many “Christians have made journaling its heart. For them it pumps life-maintaining blood into every Discipline connected with it.”

- Whitney

Explanation:

“Pour out your heart before him,” says Psalm 62:8. **A journal is a place where we can give expression to the fountain of our heart.**

A spiritual diary will tend to deepen & sanctify the emotional life of a child of God.

– Roberts

Application:

Write hard and clear about what hurts.

– Ernest Hemingway

The Discipline of journaling is not a burden from God to document your entire life; rather it is meant to bless you and be a means to joy and godliness.

– Whitney

George Whitefield’s journal had a list of criteria he used nightly for self-examination.

Whitefield would ask himself:

Have I...

1. Been fervent in prayer?
2. Used stated hours of prayer?
3. Used ejaculatory prayer each hour?
4. Considered how every conversation/action might tend to God’s glory?
5. After any pleasure, immediately given thanks?
6. Planned business for the day?
7. Been simple and recollected in everything?
8. Been zealous in undertaking and active in doing what good I could?
9. Been meek, cheerful, affable in everything...?
10. Been proud, vain, unchaste, or enviable?
11. Recollected in eating and drinking, while being temperate in sleep?
12. Taken time for giving thanks...
13. Been diligent in studies?
14. Thought or spoken unkindly of anyone?
15. Confessed all sins?”

CLOSE:

*“Our forefathers kept honest diaries where the soul’s battles
were recorded.”*

- Roberts

The fact that many Puritans kept diaries of this kind helps to explain their pursuit of social virtue: diaries were the reckoning books in which they checked the assets and liabilities of their souls in faith.

Your journal can be your mirror.

- Whitney

For What?

*A journal is one of the best places for charting your progress in the
other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself
accountable to your goals.*

- Whitney

So What?

*“Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God...
Through the knowledge of ourselves and our condition
we are aroused to seek God.”*

- John Calvin

Now What?

*Consider journaling, not only as a way to raise up a “monument to
God’s faithfulness” in your life, but even more importantly
“for the purpose of godliness.”
Perhaps the most valuable contribution the Discipline of journaling
makes to the pursuit of godliness is how it facilitates
intensifying attention & meditation on Scripture.*

- Whitney

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

"Consider Him"
Hebrews 12:3a
May 5, 2019
Sermon Series: Hold On!