

Keeping a Journal

By Susan Vogt

You may have grown up with memorized prayer, prayer books, or singing Kumbaya as your way of praying. All of these and more are genuine ways of communicating with God. If you've never kept a prayer journal before, however, you may want to experiment with this form of prayer. If you have children, this is not a substitute for praying with them, but an addition to nurture the adult side of your spiritual life.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Spring

Needed

Some paper. It's nice if it can be a booklet or notebook with empty pages, but this is not essential. The important thing is that you have space to write down your thoughts and feelings as you sit in the presence of God. If technology is a comfortable medium for you, you could do this electronically, but many people find a physical booklet that is reserved as a prayer journal to be motivating. Unless you have an iron will, using an electronic medium may tempt you to check your email, Facebook, or other items and distract from your prayer focus.



Prepare in Advance

- If you are married, talk with your spouse about whether you want to make this a joint activity.
- Decide on a time of day that you can usually count on having a few minutes of peace and quiet.
- Decide on a place that is comfortable for you. Many people find it helpful to have a focal point like a crucifix, a sacred picture, a window to the sky or nature. You may want to light a candle or play background music.
- Decide how to prompt your journaling. Some like to use a daily scripture (<http://www.usccb.org/calendar/index.cfm?showLit=1&action=month>) or a favorite prayer book. Others just like to sit down like a blank slate and ponder the day just completed or the day ahead.

Activity Plan

1. Calm your spirit and open your mind and heart to God's presence.
2. Either privately or out loud invite God to be with you by saying something like: "Dear God, help me to know you better today. Guide my (our) thinking and writing. Amen."
3. Use your prayer prompt or sit quietly for as long as it takes your mind to clear.
4. Write a few notes about what thoughts, feelings, or insights come to you. Write directly to God as if writing a letter to a beloved friend. It needn't be long. Write until you feel ready to close.
5. You might close with something you want to ask God for, thank God for, ask forgiveness, or express gratitude for something in your life.
6. Repeat daily or regularly.