

Journaling to Enhance Your Spiritual Development

Life Mastery Course: Choosing Happiness

You don't have to be a great writer, perfect speller, or creative thinker to keep a personal journal. Journal writing means that you regularly write down your thoughts and experiences.

A journal is a continued series of writings made by a person in response to their life experiences and events. Diaries contain a description of daily events. A journal may include those descriptions, but it also contains reflections on what took place and expresses emotions and understandings about them. It doesn't matter what you call your writing, either a diary or journal, as long as you see the distinction between these two ways of writing.

A journal is a helpful way of keeping up with our spiritual journey. A spiritual journal is different from a regular journal. It is a written record of personal reactions to spiritual matters. The importance of a spiritual journal is that it gathers strength in helping us with our daily spiritual life, especially if we write in it often. A journal of spiritual materials grows more powerful as it is used.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

It is helpful to include entries by date. This allows quick retrieval of materials that have previously been entered. A helpful way to begin a day entry is to read the assigned daily readings from Choosing Happiness and describe anything which comes to your mind. If an exercise is described in the daily reading, do as instructed sometime during the day and then write your reactions to the exercise in the journal. Also include insights from class, discussion groups, and seed meditations.

WHAT YOU CAN INCLUDE IN YOUR JOURNAL

Explore your feelings as you do the daily readings and include any experiences that have been meaningful to you as it relates to the readings and/or exercises that may be part of the readings. Any awareness of God's revealing to you should be included. Feel free to include Bible verses, quotes from inspirational readings, Sunday message notes, or phrases that have a special meaning for you. Include any other thoughts that come to your mind. Note any images that touch your life. (Example: Seeing a rainbow after the rain). Note especially feelings you have. Write how you feel about events, persons, ideas, and relationships. Note "anything that rings a bell in your life" in your journal. Every month summarize the month. What were key events that had a major impact on your spiritual development?

HOW YOU CAN BEGIN

Write from your feeling, accept whatever comes to mind, and note it in your journal. Write all "the feelings" you have in one day. Keep photographs, news clippings, and notes of world events if this helps to understand "the Christ in you" better.

WHAT DEVICES YOU CAN USE

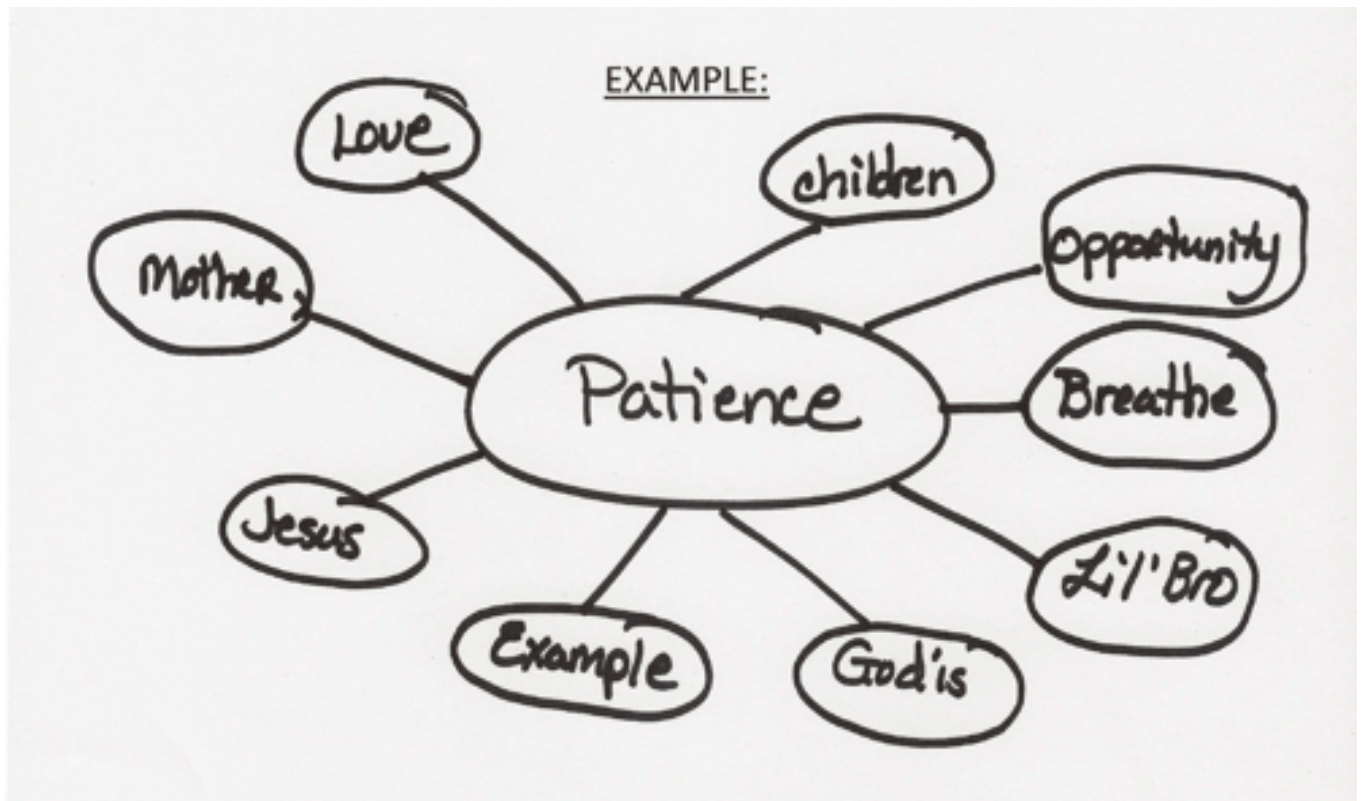
Feelings, descriptions, reflections (re-looking at the past), images, thoughts, and "whatever comes to mind" are what should be included in your journal. Keep lists of events, past happenings, or important events that have happened in your own life. Dialogue with yourself and carry on an imaginary conversation with yourself. This can be helpful.

In summary, your spiritual journal is the key to developing your spiritual life. Work with it and your life will be greatly enriched.

SEED MEDITATION EXERCISE

Take a blank sheet of paper. Write down in the center of it the word or phrase you are focusing on. It could be a value you want (patience), it could be an issue that is causing you problems (feeling taken for granted). Circle the word or phrase, then close your eyes and just hold this word in your mind. When associations arise, however odd, write them down, encircling each one, and linking it to your "seed" with a single line. Repeat this process. When your page is covered with your inner associations, or a half an hour has passed and your page is still blank, leave the seed meditation alone and rest.

(reference pages 17-18 in Choosing Happiness)



Viewing a Stereogram



A stereogram is a two-dimensional picture that has a 3-D image hidden in it. The hidden image is not on the surface of the paper. To find the hidden image you must focus your eyes through the paper. Pretend that you are looking through the paper to the distant background. This causes you to switch from "near point" to "far point" vision and will allow the hidden image to come into view.

- Put your face close to the paper. Pretend to look through the paper.
- Now, **very slowly** move back from the paper and as you do so the image will come into view.
- This may take several attempts.
- Please be patient, and you will be rewarded with the hidden image.