



## Keeping a spiritual journal

Unlike regular journals or diaries, a spiritual journal isn't simply a record of where you went, what you did, and how you felt about it. A spiritual journal is a tool for developing your relationship with God; specifically, in strengthening the manifestation of your faith through mindfulness and reflection.

There's more than one way to do this, but here's my suggestion: Every morning, write down at least one thing you'd like to do to please God that day. Keep in mind that it's to please *God*, not necessarily yourself. It doesn't have to be a big deal, and it certainly doesn't have to be what most people call "religious." Here are a few examples:

- I'll go all day without saying anything sarcastic to my sister
- I'll do my best on today's test/assignment/rehearsal
- I'll say something nice to the bully in my class today, and I'll mean it
- I'll do a bit of housecleaning today without being asked
- I'll read a book that will teach me something important about life
- I'll go on a walk today and think about how beautiful the world is
- I will spend no more than an hour on television/video games/the computer

You get the idea. The important thing is that you write it down your intention *before* you do it; this is called **mindfulness**. Then at the end of the day, you add a **reflection** – did you carry it out? Write about the details. Do you think your action pleased God? How did it feel to you? Is there a habit you could develop associated with this intention? (If you aren't a morning person, you can write your intention for the next day at night, after your reflection for that day.)

Here's another way to do a spiritual journal: Read a bit of the Bible every day (I recommend starting with the Psalms or Gospels). Find one sentence, phrase, or even word that strikes you as true and important for your own life. Write it down and expand upon it. For example, say I read John 3:16 – my reflection might start out like this: "Believe in him: What does it mean to believe? Is it just something you do in your head, or are there signs of it in your life? ..."

A third way to do it is simply as a prayer journal – every night, write to God about your day, including your trials and your celebrations. Ask for help or give thanks as indicated. Don't forget intercessions – people and situations you want to pray for. Writing down prayers helps articulate what we think and what we want to say. (God doesn't care about spelling or penmanship, by the way!)

No matter how you do it, a spiritual journal is a good discipline to develop. I pray it will bring you closer to God, and to your own blossoming soul.