

Journaling

As we learned earlier, to be *transformative*, journaling must be *purposeful*. It's a record of where we're going, and where we've been. The root word for "journal" and "journey" is the same. It is the Latin word *diurnal*. It refers to what is done or experienced during the day's journey. By definition, then, journaling should be a *daily* habit; and journeying is moving from one place to another. Typically, in the morning we write down where we intend to go; and at night we reflect on where we actually went – they don't always match. We sometimes have a serendipity: a "happy accident" on the way to somewhere else: something that is unexpected, but rewarding (a lesson learned, or a blessing received).

Even so, to know if we've made progress toward our destination, we should at least know where we were headed. We're not wanderers.¹ We're sojourners on our way to a specific place.² To measure our progress, we need to determine (1) our direction at day's beginning, (2) how far we can reasonably travel in a day, and (3) the best route to take. The map of God's word helps us plan our day's journey, and set the direction. Journaling in the morning records our response to what we've read in God's word. That establishes a path to take for that day, as we follow Christ. Journaling at night records whether we followed that path, or at least moved in that direction. It's normal to grow *by trial and error* – we gain skill and experience as we apply what we believe about Christ, to the life we live in Christ (Gal 2.20). That's how we're transformed into Christ's image, day by day; and it's why we count it all joy when we fall into various trials (Jas 1.2).

To repeat, **we're not map-makers**. We're not entering uncharted territory to survey the land. Christ has already done that. He was our map-maker. **We are map-followers**. The Spirit of Christ is our guide on the journey toward our destination (Rom 8.14). As we follow him, we remain on the right path. And as we depart from him, we leave the path. We don't want to become side-tracked by our own agenda, or by a list of popular sights we want to see.³ There is a condition, or an estate, toward which all believers are headed.⁴ There is a path each of us must take to get there. Different events and circumstances uniquely characterize our journey on that path, but the path and the destination are the same for all of us.⁵ We're not free spirits making our whimsical way in the world. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8.17).

¹ Gen. 4:12 - Cain was made a wanderer. Num. 32:13 – wandering in the desert was God's punishment for his people's rebellion.

² Acts 7:6; 1Pet. 2:11 *Sojourning* means to stay for a time and then move on. We recognize that this world is not our home. But as we journey here, we move from place to place, something like back-packing. We are conformed to Christ through the journey itself, traveling a path he has determined for us. And in a sense, as we're going, we add supplies to our pack, and as necessary, we drop any excess baggage.

³ ^{NIV} **3 John 1:11** Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 11:1** Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. ^{ESV} **James 5:20** let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. ^{ESV} **Romans 8:14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

⁴ Imagine you have lived all your life in slavery in Babylon. Now you have been liberated. You are free to return to your home in Jerusalem, the City of God. You've heard the elders speak of it as the land beyond the river, but you don't know where it is. You only know that in Jerusalem you may express your true identity, and live in the land given to your forefathers by God himself. Each man will sit under his own fig tree (1Kgs. 4:25), by streams of living water (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:8; Rev. 7:17). That is the estate to which we aspire. It is learning to live in the kingdom of Almighty God, who abides with us there (Jn. 15:4-10; 17:21; Eph. 2:22; 1Jn. 4:12), inside the city gates (Rev. 22:14).

⁵ The bible repeats the theme over and over of intentionally considering a designated path, road, or way to travel. ^{ESV} **Haggai 1:7** "Thus says the LORD of hosts. Consider your ways. ^{ESV} **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ^{NIV} **Philippians 3:14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ^{NIV} **Matthew 7:13** "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ^{NIV} John 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going." ^{ESV} **Acts 18:26** He began to speak

Therefore, our journal does not record a private journey taken for private purposes. We are recording our trek along an established path, doing works that have been ordained for us, to accomplish those purposes for which we have been called (Jn. 5:36; 14:12; Eph. 2:10). That is, we have an objective, a goal for each day. That's what we record in our journal first thing in the morning. We record our *objectives*, so we can judge our *transformation* when we reflect on them at night (Rom. 12:2). That's how we can adjust our course, and return to the path if needed.

Today's Objectives

Fine. So how do we define our objectives for today? After all, we have no idea what will happen. While that's true, we can and must pre-determine how we will respond to whatever does happen. To put it another way, while we cannot control our circumstances, we have 100 percent control over our response to them. Proper responses do not come naturally, or spontaneously. Only training and discipline can ensure a godly response becomes more automatic and habitual. We're being trained over time, by instruction from the bible, and experience in the world, to properly respond to the events and circumstances of our life. Those may come to us as attacks of the enemy, or as opportunities to serve. By nature, enemy attacks are sporadic, and tend to catch us off-guard. Opportunities are more common. Nonetheless, both are designed to challenge our confidence, faith, and will, by trial.⁶ That's why we need to be prepared. Our training, therefore, must be designed to strengthen our confidence, faith, and will, whether enduring an attack, or making use of an opportunity. We "prove" our labors in the fire (1Cor. 3:12-15). This is not asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" because we don't know. But it's definitely asking ourselves, "What did Jesus teach?" or "What does the Bible say about that?"

How do we prepare for this leg of the journey? **First**, there are things we need for the overall journey, and not just this leg of it. These are the habits we've practiced, and the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ that we've attained so far. That's what the parable of the Ten Virgins is about (Mat 25.1-12). If we haven't been diligent up to now, we may be unprepared for this next leg of our journey. **Second**, we must learn how to apply those existing resources — the various things which God has given us (time, talent, instruction, experience, etc.), to our present circumstances. It's too easy to acquire experience and knowledge, and then fail to apply them to the needs of the moment — to be learned, but unwise. The *first* requires a map (the bible). That's our God-given means of sanctification and spiritual growth (Joh 17.17); it's our food and drink. The *second* requires a realistic assessment of ourselves and our circumstances, and a humble heart that's willing to obey, regardless of the cost or outcome. That's what the Journal is for. It records our daily assessment of successes and failures; and it declares our willingness to obey (our resolve or intent). Moreover, it records our *growth*: the things we've *learned* on the way.⁷

boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ^{ESV}
Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets... ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 9:26** Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

⁶ God is the one who sends Satan to test us. Satan cannot act on his own (Job 1:8-12). The Spirit is the one who leads us into the circumstance (Matt. 4:1). Trials strengthen and prove us (1Cor. 10:13; 1Pet. 1:6-7). Therefore, we should expect trials (1Th.3:3), and embrace them (Jms. 1:2-4). God is watching us in our trials (2Pet. 2:9) — literally, "God knows how to draw the godly out of trials." A clay figure is placed in a kiln. At the right temperature it becomes porcelain; but if it gets too hot, it shatters. Three clay cones that melt at different temperatures (3 events) are placed in the kiln to mark the progress. The sculptor watches carefully, drawing the figure out of the fire as the final cone begins to melt.

⁷ **Joh 6:45** Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

Now, before we say that we lack the *ability* to do what God is asking of us, we need to take stock of what he's supplied to *enable* us. We have infinite resources at our disposal to build the kingdom. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness..." (2Pet 1:3) Based on that promise alone, we may ask God for whatever we need to further His kingdom both in us, and around us; and we can be confident that we have it (Mat 8.13; Mk 11.24).⁸

The Purpose of Circumstances

Circumstances create the environment for our journey. We cannot plan all the events of our life, but we do need to plan for contingencies. This is where many believers get side-tracked. I'll give you a little-used rule to help prevent that: **God never speaks through circumstances.** God *teaches* or *tests* through circumstances. God *speaks* through his word. We don't ask, "What is God trying to tell me by these circumstances?" It's the wrong question. Instead, we ask, "How can I respond to these circumstances in a way that glorifies God?" Circumstances are not open-door/closed-door messages from God. That's a popular but false teaching of Christian mysticism. Circumstances are ambiguous at best. We never know if God intends a circumstance to stop us (closed-door), or if he intends us to struggle through them (open-door). We're not seers. We don't know God's intentions (the "why" of it all). Our obligation is to do what's right under the circumstances, glorifying God by what we say and do. Anything beyond that is presumption.

The Protocol of Growth- A protocol is an action-plan or a procedure that's designed to produce a specific result. God has a 4-step protocol for spiritual growth as we read the Bible, responding to it with action. If you recall Adam and Eve in the Garden, you'll recognize this process:

1. **The Teacher** (God) appears through his word and declares the truth. It either takes the form of a rule such as "Do this and live", or a declaration of fact such as "God is sovereign." This always elicits a behavioral response from us. It's not just a fact to know. James tells us that faith requires action, or to put it differently, action is *caused* by faith. Faith is simply what we believe to be true. That's why works are the proof or evidence of our faith. What we want to do first is clearly identify the truth we hear God declaring in the passage we're reading.
2. **The Student** (us) learns the truth. We acknowledge what God has said by repeating what we heard, just as Eve repeated the rule to the serpent. We are going to restate the truth *as we understand it*. That's what we're going to write down in the journal.
3. **The Lesson** will be presented to us during the day. It will be an opportunity to learn the truth experientially, to take it to heart. And so we are expecting some event or circumstance to arise during the day that will allow us to apply the truth we just learned and recorded.
4. **The Test** is a measure of how well we understand and apply the truth to our circumstances. We are going to find out, under fire, whether we are confident of the truth, and have the will to live by it. The TEST is where the STUDENT applies the TEACHER'S truth, to the LESSON at hand. We're going to *practice* what we've *learned*.

⁸ **John 15:16** ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. **1 John 5:14-15** ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

I'm a slow learner. And so I've often seen God kindly apply a "rule of three's" for me. He gives me three lessons to help me learn each rule; and he provides a test for each lesson. If I fail all three, He repeats the rule and the lessons until I learn. God is long-suffering and abundant in mercy (Psa 86.15; 2Pet 3.9). So He patiently teaches us through experience and practice.⁹

Waiting: *practicing patience is part of every test.* Patience is learning to wait on God, while taking reasonable precautions in the meantime.¹⁰ We must not expect immediate answers to our questions, nor quick resolutions to our problems. But we ought to be looking for them. That way, when they occur, we can give God the glory that rightfully belongs to him.

WHAT DOES JOURNALING LOOK LIKE?

I journal in a document on my laptop. I create a separate journal file for each year (e.g. Personal Journal 2007). Each day, I enter the *date*, the name of the book I'm in, the chapter-and verses I've just read (about 20-25 verses per day), the gist of the *text*, the main principle or principles I see revealed there, and my prayerful response to what I've just read. That prayerful response contains my personal *application* for today – my area of growth for today; it's something I'm going to focus on, *today*. I try to keep the entry to a paragraph. I let the Bible be a mirror to my soul, exposing my sins, and reminding me of my blessings in Christ. It reveals my weaknesses and my strengths, my great need for Christ, and my joy that he is my Savior and my Lord. The questions I ask are some form of this one: *what must I believe and do to glorify Christ today?*

Maybe today I need to recognize and submit to the sovereignty of God; to express gratitude and thanksgiving for everything that happens today, good or bad; it may be to learn to be content with what I have, or don't have; it may be to love someone well today, in Christ's name and to his glory, not drawing glory to myself; it may be to celebrate God, the cross, and grace; it may be to look for Christ in the faces of others, to serve him by serving them; it may be to get my eyes off myself; it may be to seek an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel today, in word and deed: to bind up the weary and broken-hearted, and set the captives free. When I see a repeated theme in these sorts of entries, I must confess that as my sin and repent of it, because God is repeating the same lesson to me over and over. It means I haven't learned it yet, or taken it to heart. I *need* to learn it, or I won't be prepared for what lies ahead, on my journey home.

In this very simple process, I am being conformed to the image of Christ; my broken image is being made whole in him. I am distancing myself from the world. I am reminded that my citizenship is in heaven, that I am only a sojourner here, living in a fragile tent, who longs to live in a permanent abode. I have to invest the talent I've been given, and not bury it in the earth. I hear this constant call: "Don't hold on to anything in this world, but cling to Christ alone." And my chore today, and every day, is to heed that call, to submit, and to humble myself under God's mighty hand, that he may lift me up in due time. "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*" (Luk 9.23) How will I do that, today?

⁹ **1 Corinthians 10:13** ¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. **Jeremiah 13:23** ²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. **Philippians 4:9** ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice.

¹⁰ **Nehemiah 4:9** ⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

Please, please, do what works *for you*. The *inspection, meditation, and reflection* you write into your journal, are designed to establish a habit of spiritual growth by comparing yourself to the image of Christ. But what good is a journal if you're not going to use it because it's too much of a hassle? And what good is journaling if it's not helping you grow spiritually? And yet, how do you expect to grow if you're not building spiritual habits? And how would you know if you're building spiritual habits, if you're not recording your journey? That's called an exhortation...

Using the Journal

We do our bible reading at the start of the day. If we don't, we can't plan ahead, and we will be caught off-guard. So we read four or five paragraphs from a selected book of the bible, first thing. Out of what we read, we select the main idea or key verse that speaks to us. If there isn't one in particular, we continue reading until we find one. Once we have it, we write down the Scripture *notation* in the Journal, not the whole text. If you are moved by a particular phrase or verse, feel free to write it down. It may help you remember the basis for the rule or truth you're about to write down. You can always look up the notation, so don't spend a lot of time copying large portions of Scripture into your journal. INSPECT its *meaning and application*.

This is where the MEDITATION part happens. We want to figure out what the passage means so we can figure out how to respond appropriately. Every passage of Scripture tells us something about the heavenly realm, or something about the earthly realm. Here's one way to look at these two realms, so you can choose which you will serve today (Jos 24.15):

The Heavenly Realm, and my relationship to it:

1. What does this tell me about the Father? (How will I value His love for me?)
2. What does this tell me about the Son? (How will I value his sacrifice for me?)
3. What does this tell me about the Holy Spirit? (How will I value his ministry to me?)

The Earthly Realm, and my relationship to it:

4. What does this tell me about myself? (Will I be led by the Spirit or by my flesh?)
5. What does this tell me about the church? (Will I do my part in love and unity?)
6. What does this tell me about the world? (Will I seek first the kingdom, or the world?)

Go down the list, asking yourself the appropriate question for that passage. Here's an example. In Philemon, I might settle on verses 15 and 16. I choose to put down both verses.

Verse: Philemon 1:15-16 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good – no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

For me, this passage isn't primarily about the heavenly realm. It doesn't tell me about God. It's not about my condition apart from Christ. It's not about the world. So my topic is *the church*.¹¹

Now I've got to meditate on the passage. **What does it mean?** I pray for wisdom and insight. The context is that Paul is asking Philemon to take back his former slave, Onesimus, who ran away. He had been serving Paul in prison. Philemon is under no legal obligation to take Onesimus back. Paul is making a plea, and presenting certain persuasive truths. This passage is talking about how we are to behave towards other believers who have offended us. I chew on it a bit, and then I write down this rule:

Rule or Truth: Forgive your brother in Christ because he is your brother in Christ.

I might mark down a related passage or an explanation here, such as

Note: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors Matt. 6:12; Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you. Eph. 4:32

After writing down the rule, I have to determine what to do about it today. I am on a **Kingdom Journey** today, and there are three additional questions I might ask myself about whether I will seek first the Kingdom of God, or instead seek the things of this world:

7. What is my *attitude* going to be today? (Phil. 2:5)
8. What can I actually do to express the truth of this today?
9. Who am I in Christ, and how can I express *that* today?

For now, all I write down is my attitude or expectation for today (question 7). My expectation is that at some point during the day, someone (probably a Christian),¹² is going to offend me. My attitude or mindset is going to be this:

Attitude: No matter how some brother, sister, or stranger may offend me, I will refuse to take offense. I will not be held prisoner by resentment or bitterness. I will forgive whoever it is and release myself, not just that person, from the debt of the offense. I will treat him as a "dear brother." To God be the glory.

¹¹ NOTE: There is no "right" topic that it *must* belong to. Let the Spirit tell you which one to put it in. He emphasizes a particular aspect of a passage in order to speak to you about that topic. Which one he emphasizes will vary according to what he intends to teach you today, and that may change its meaning to you. Once you assign it to a topic, however, you have to state the rule in a way that focuses on that topic.

¹² While the passage concerns a brother in Christ, I don't treat brothers differently than non-believers. I am to love my enemies. God shows no favor, making it rain on the good and the bad alike. (Matt. 5:43-45). More than that, my theology teaches me that I may well be dealing with a brother who has not yet come to the faith – and my actions may be part of God's calling to that individual. I don't care who offends me today.

Camping out on the journey

Sometimes we can't figure out what God is saying right away. Or we don't know how to respond. God's word is the bread of life. We may need to chew on it awhile. It may take several days or even weeks before we can "wrap our mind around it." We're going to camp out on that passage. That doesn't mean we stop reading and put our other lessons on hold. Each day has its own lessons.¹³ We can't afford a back-log, so we continue to establish a habit of reading and applying while we're waiting on the Spirit's insight.

We ear-mark our journal for the passage we're chewing on. Each day or week we can re-visit it. We continue to pray about it, and ask for insight. We look for a theme in our ongoing reading to see if the harder passage fits into the theme. That is, understanding may come through a series of shorter lessons that God gives us over time. We may not have been ready for God's rule in that area of our life yet. And so God's Spirit leads us through a curriculum designed to teach us the harder or more comprehensive lesson using a group of shorter and easier lessons.

I'm done for the morning. I depart from the pasture and go out into the world (Joh 10.9).

Around Noon or mid-day I take a moment to contemplate. I go over the Lesson in my mind, which may have applied to the events or circumstances of the morning. Did I have an opportunity to apply the rule? Did I take advantage of it, or did I miss it? If necessary, I make my mid-day adjustments, and look for another opportunity to apply the rule. It may or may not come that day, but I am prepared to recognize it when it does.

When the day is over, I get out my Daily Journal again. I record any event or circumstance during the day that was an opportunity to apply the rule of forgiveness from that morning.

Lesson: In an email, I backed off my complaint that I won't get the same bonus this year that everyone else is getting. My boss said he read my "mea culpa" and suggested my reason for withdrawing the complaint was that I didn't want to "rock the boat," meaning I was afraid to upset him or jeopardize things.

Now I can record how I actually responded to it (question 8 above). What did I actually do to affirm God's declaration of truth today? Or, what happened today that made me realize that the Rule or Truth which I wrote down this morning, may have been mistaken? If I was mistaken, I write down the corrected Rule or Truth as an *Adjustment* to my journal.

Action: I grinned and pointed my finger at him in jest, as if he was exactly right. He grinned back, probably thinking he caught me. I wasn't apologizing for submitting the complaint, which is what "mea culpa" means ("my fault"). He didn't need to know that, and I didn't need to defend my actions.

¹³ **Matthew 6:34** ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. The longer rule is this: Yesterday is past and we can't change it. Tomorrow isn't here yet and we can't live in it. So live today for today's sake.

Maybe I didn't respond, or I responded badly, or there was nothing to respond to. What I do in that case is to reaffirm God's declaration that night, and REFLECT on my attitude, so I'm ready to respond properly next time. I have no doubt that someone is going to offend me, and soon...

Let's say I got defensive instead of jesting about it. It could have gone like this:

Action: I told him, "Look, you guys robbed me of the full bonus, but there's nothing I can do about it, so I'll just have to live with it, OK? There's no need to mock me." He said I was "too sensitive" and that I was asking for something that I didn't deserve anyway. I walked off in a huff.

This is where I take the time for introspection. Why didn't I respond appropriately? How did I make that person feel? How does that reflect on the church and on Christ? What caused me to take offense? Why don't I act like I'm in Christ? If I acted that way, I might have written this:

Adjustment: That was some witness for being content, and submitting to the sovereignty of God. He knows I'm a Christian, and now I've demonstrated that we're just as grasping and greedy as everyone else. I need to apologize to him tomorrow for my rude behavior. If I hadn't said what I did, he probably wouldn't have responded the way he did. I'm supposed to be slow to take offense, but I let Christ down today. Lord, help me be content...

Before I close, I record my prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication concerning the precept that I have been taught this day. This is what I actually wrote:

Prayer: Lord God, you have given me much more than I need. I know that my paycheck isn't my security, but I act like it is. Even though I responded in a way that gave no offense, I suspect that I still took offense. I didn't trust you completely when I complained. You know my heart. Purge my fear, bitterness, and envy. They get between me and you. I want to be conformed to your Son in more than just outward appearance.

Masking our True Identity

The daily actions that we record in our journal are a witness to how we are actually behaving. The mistake many Christians make is believing that they are supposed to grow out of who they currently are, and into who they're supposed to be – as if Christ-likeness was some kind of "ideal" toward which we strive. That would mean the old man is still alive, and the new man is somehow developing alongside him – that we are putting off the old while putting on the

new (Eph. 4:22-24). That's not what this passage in Ephesians means at all.¹⁴ The old man is truly and actually dead. He died on the cross with Christ. The new man is truly and actually alive. He was born in the resurrection of Christ (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:5-12). That's what it means to be "in Christ." These are facts, not concepts. The problem with our behavior is that we act as if the old man was still alive, when he is not. We need to drop the dead body that is strapped to our back (put off the old). That's not who we are any more. All the fullness of Christ lives in us (Col. 2:9-10; Eph. 3:19; 4:13). The outward clothing (our behavior) must be *put on* to match our identity in Christ. A prince of the kingdom does not wear filthy rags (Zech. 3:3-4). We are to realize (make real) who we *are* in Christ.

Understand, we cannot be *more* "in Christ" today than we were on the day of our conversion. We are everything God intended us to be, right now. *But we don't act like it.* The progress we make each day, the goal toward which we strive, is to stop acting as if the old man were still alive, and begin acting like who we already are in Christ. The old man is the lie. The new man is the truth. If we *believe* that, we will begin to *act* like it (Rom. 7:25; 13:12). The journal is designed to help us recognize when we are acting "out of character" with who we are in Christ. The discrepancy between our behavior and our identity must not be cause for dismay or depression. Why? Because that gap is covered by Christ's blood. What we see revealed should cause us to celebrate and glorify Christ, not denigrate ourselves. *He* is the focus of our attention, not our own image. *He* is the one we see in the mirror darkly, not our own reflection (1Cor. 13:12). We lift up our eyes to the one who saves us: Ps. 25:15; 119:18,37; 121:1-2; 123:1; 141:8-10; Dan. 4:34; Lk. 2:30-32. The phrase, "O what a wretched man am I" is not a lament, but a praise: "Thanks be to God -- [I am rescued] through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25).

THE GOAL – Our goal is to fill in the Journal for 21 consecutive days in order to create a habit. If we miss a day, we start the count over. There are no holidays, no days off.

How much should we reveal to others from our Journal?

This journal is not about introspection, but biblical fellowship. For the most part, we aren't recording the depths of our depravity, though much of what we enter could be embarrassing. We have to consider that our words and our actions will reveal as much or more about us than what we write down. But finding someone trustworthy to share with, to hold us accountable without judging or condemning, is difficult. Moreover, some things shouldn't be spoken of (Eph. 5:12); the Journal is not a source of gossip and titillation. We'll address this issue further when we get to prayer. For now, consider your Journal private, so you can be honest.

¹⁴ What gets us off-track is the phrase "sinful nature" that some translations use. There is only one word here; it is the Greek *sarx* (NT:4561), which means flesh. "In my **mind** I am a slave to God's law, but in the **flesh** a slave to the law of sin." This is not an Eastern mysticism concept that what is physical is evil and what is spiritual is good. Christianity has no such dichotomy. We have the mind of Christ, but the flesh is not obeying the mind. It behaves as if it had no headship. The Christian struggle is to bring the flesh (our actions) into conformity with the mind of Christ (which we now have; 1Cor. 2:16). "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" **1Cor, 9:26-27**. Or as Christ put it, "The spirit is willing; only the body is weak" (Matt. 26:41). We are spirit-driven, not flesh-driven. We are slaves to righteousness, and we refuse to become slaves again to sin (Rom. 6:6). As with Cain, we must master our sin (Gen. 4:7), and not let it master us (2Pet. 2:19).