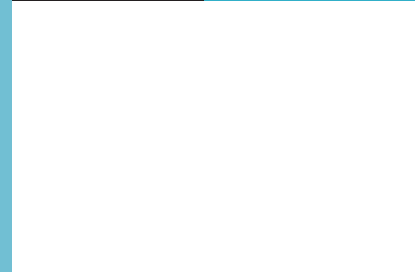


soap

S

O



A

P

how to life journal

One of the great challenges we face today as Christians in a world of distraction is the daily discipline of seeking God and His Word. Whether you've never opened the Bible or read the Bible every day, we believe that God graciously invites us into an intimate relationship with Him through His Word.

Here are some steps as you engage Scripture each day:

pray

Be still for a minute with your heart open toward God. Ask God to cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. You can echo King David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

read

Open your Bible to the passage for the day. Read it slowly with an open heart several times as the Lord gives you words of encouragement, clarity, and conviction for your personal life.

write

As you notice God speaking to you through His Word, write down your thoughts and reflections in the blank journal pages. Use the "S-O-A-P" method as a guide for your journal entry.

S

SCRIPTURE

Write down the verse or verses from your reading that speak to your heart the most. What jumps out at you? What passage rises to the top? Watch for what the Holy Spirit highlights for you and write it down.

O

OBSERVATION

Make observations on the entire passage to ensure the correct interpretation of the verse or verses you wrote down. What is going on in the text and what is it saying? What do you think is the author's original intended meaning and how would the original recipients have understood what the passage is saying? Write what you see in Scripture.

A

APPLICATION

Give yourself an assignment for the day. How will you be different because of what you have just learned? What is the Spirit saying to you and what specific action can you take today in light of that realization? Is there a sin to confess, promise to claim, or an attitude to change? Is the Holy Spirit inviting you to obey a command or follow an example? Apply the Scripture to your life.

P

PRAYER

As you sense the Holy Spirit's invitation for you today through this passage, respond to God in prayer to what he has revealed about himself or about you. Confess any sin and ask for power to live out the change you have committed to making in your life.

some tips

Even though you have flexibility to choose your own reading plan each day, be sure to develop a sacred rhythm of spending quality time with God daily so that your discipleship can flourish more abundantly. Here are some tips as you take this journey:

Take small steps: 15 to 20 minutes a day is a great starting point.

Don't rush: It's about quality, not quantity. Make room for God's Spirit to minister to you.

Don't worry about doing this perfectly— just begin! Invite the Holy Spirit into the time you have and let God's grace and truth shape your reading of Scripture, your prayers, and your soul.

As you daily engage your Life Journal, take notice of what changes may be taking place in your relationship with God and your life as a result.

additional resources

APPENDIX

This section includes spiritual disciplines to help grow a deeper prayer life.

PRAYER LIST

A place to write prayers for your community, our nation, and the world.

Devotional Sample Epistle Example

Hebrews 10:19-39

Date: September 22

Title/Topic: Wanted and Accepted by God

S

SCRIPTURE " ¹⁹Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings..." *Hebrews 10:19-39*

O

OBSERVATION Jesus has opened the door for his people to access the presence and closeness of God at any time through his sacrifice on the cross. Now, God's people can draw near to God with full confidence that nothing stands between them and God's love and acceptance.

A

APPLICATION What are the fears, concerns, or hesitations that keep me from going to God with confidence? What's stopping me? The answer is...guilt. I am ashamed of my past and I feel like a disappointment to God. So, I would rather avoid him than risk being rejected by him. But, God assures me that Jesus has created full access for me to approach the Father without fear, but with anticipation of great love. So, today, I will stop running from God. Instead, I will plunge my failure into his grace and stop trying to prove to Jesus that I am someone other than who I truly am--a broken child who is wanted and accepted by his Heavenly Father.

P

PRAYER Lord, I am so grateful that you made it possible for us to be together. Through your Son Jesus, I can now be close to you and that has changed everything! When I fail, help me to stop running away from you. Instead, give me the courage to approach you in confidence knowing that I am free from guilt and shame because of your Son's sacrifice on the cross. In Jesus' name, amen!

Devotional Sample Narrative Example

John 8:1-11

Date: October 30

Title/Topic: Dropping our Stones

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SCRIPTURE “⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her...’”
John 8:1-11

O

OBSERVATION The religious leaders try to trap Jesus and force Him to authorize the woman’s public execution. Jesus begins to write on the ground. What was He writing? Was He drawing? Everyone leaves, one by one, when they realize they are unable to cast stones at the woman if they too are guilty of sin. Jesus exposes the hypocrisy in the accusers' hearts. He expresses compassion and forgiveness to the woman, but tells her to sin no more.

A

APPLICATION When I hear of others’ sin, what are the “stones” that I am quick to throw at others, even if I too have sinned? Like the religious leaders, I am often ready to cast judgment even though my own life is far from perfect. How quickly and self-righteously I bring before Jesus the sins of others while overlooking and denying my own sins. Today, I repent of my hypocrisy. I commit to “looking in” at my own faults rather than “looking out” at the imperfections of others.

P

PRAYER Lord, I confess to you that I am a stone-thrower. Even though I have sins of my own, I pelt others with stone of judgment as though I am better than they are. Forgive my hypocrisy. Help me to turn from my self-righteous ways. You refuse to throw a single stone my way even though you are the only one who is without sin. Teach me to see others like you do and change my heart that I may show kindness and compassion to others, just as you do. In Jesus’ name, amen.