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## INTRODUCTION

Journaling is not an official word found in the dictionary, but its root stems from the word, journal. By Merriam-Webster standards, journaling is an account of day-to-day events, a record of experiences, ideas, or reflections kept regularly for private use, and periodical dealings; especially those that relate to matters of current interest. Taking this definition into account, journaling must then refer to the action of clarifying these experiences, ideas and reflections, in a continual record of events that may aid in exploring emotions.

There are two characteristics that may aid in the progression of personal development of an individual: (1) reflective thinking, and (2) critical thinking (Brookfield, 1987). The reflective thinking process responds to situations and experiences during the course of a certain time where one should examine their beliefs and attitudes to ultimately gain self-knowledge and reinforce thoughts on how to settle a situation. Consequently, the evaluation of reflective thinking will be more efficient through a progressive learning process. Critical thinking is another characteristic that should be honed when creating a personal journal. This involves logical reasoning, reflective judgment, creating and testing hypotheses, and recognizing irrational reasoning so that more sound decisions are concluded in the future (Paul, R. and Elder, L., 2006).

Taking the definitions of journaling, reflective thinking and critical thinking into account, from a Christian perspective, I have applied these concepts to better analyze and evaluate my strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned, and conclusion to how to draw nigh to Him (James 4:8). I chose this format to increase my personal relationship with the Lord because I aim to be a fluid writer and believe that these thoughts that are written may aid others in the future. Through this short paper I will not only define the inward disciplines utilized, but will also

Throughout this project I was searching for a response. A response as to the direction God wants me to go to complete His tasks. The Lord reveals Himself in multiple ways which include through visions, dreams, and encounters, so throughout the length of the project I began to attempt to understand why every coincidence has happened in my life (Numbers 12:6-8).

Although God may not answer immediately or as soon as I may want (Job 7:11-12), I understood that no answer is sometimes an answer, at times God has already given the answers to my inquiries, and I should be encouraged to know that I may sometimes find answers by searching the Scriptures (Psalm 144:3).

Creating a personal journal was a great way for me to critically reflect on my relationship with Christ. Any journal, in general, usually aids in helping us keep situations in perspective and allows us to relay our thoughts and feelings to God in a consistent pattern that supports in keeping the lines of communication open with Him. What happened throughout this project was two-fold: (1) I was drawn closer to the Lord, and (2) a clear revelation that I have no purpose without Him. Through attempting to strengthen my inward disciplines I was able to instill a confidence in myself that will be difficult to whither. I stayed on track with the project and had a mentor who was supportive in multiple facets throughout the time. I believe a weakness that I could strengthen would be the inclusion of adopting a more consistent pattern of a central theme throughout my day to God. It was a difficult process because my schedule was not as streamlined as it has been in the past.

What I have learned throughout this process relates to principles for development by Marion G. Fray that may be referenced in Chapter 36 “*Strategies for the Development of the Spiritual Life of Missionaries*” in a text entitled *Missiology*. Fray’s steps to fullness of spiritual formation includes: (1) hunger, (2) confession, (3) belief, (4) surrendering, and (5) obedience.

Following his methodology of how we should attempt to come closer to the Lord, I am now confident that I should have an everlasting thirst and desire to know the Lord (Psalm 42:1,75:25-28), that I should confess and have the desire to be cleansed (I John 1:7-10), that I should have faith in His answers when I ask Him for guidance on situations (Matthew 7:7-11), that I should surrender my all to Him (Romans 12:1), and that I should obey His commandments and not allow myself to be selective to His Word (John 14:21).

### CONCLUSION

Two guidelines that support the mentioned discipline's effective application are: attempting to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us, and loving God. Discernment of the Holy Spirit centers on the Lord (I Corinthians 12:3). **If our minds are centered on Him, than our thoughts begin to be directed by what He taught us. At that point our darkness then turns into light (Isaiah 8:19-20).** Discernment provides an understanding to His statutes which will then guide our disciplines. Love is also essential for effective application of the spiritual disciplines because when we realize the love that God has for us by giving His only begotten Son, we realize that His love is paramount and deserves our reciprocal reaction. **The Lord has been chasing us since the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden and now it is our turn to counter that love (Genesis 3:9).** I believe that when someone loves, they will do anything to retain its subsistence because there is no greater love than the obedience of His commands (John 15:12).

**I believe that the purpose of this project: experiencing an accepted method of application to spiritual discipline to my life, was attained and will aid me in disciplining myself to the purpose of godliness (I Timothy 4:7).** **With the aid of my mentor, Tonya Dickerson, I will be led to a position that does not allow me to compromise certain theological absolutes.** She has asked me questions that relate to my ministry that were compiled with meeting agendas that kept me

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focused, and she will be able to guide me to right decisions through matters that I deem complicated because she understands how vital being a servant of God is. Through the strength of the Lord and guidance and prayers of Ms. Dickerson, I have been strengthened beyond any measure that I would have sought myself.

## MENTOR MEETING AGENDA QUESTIONS

### Ministry Discussion

- What ministry has taken place since we last met?
- What went on in that ministry?
- What questions or issues were raised for you by the experience?
- What did you learn from the experience?
- What do you plan to do (differently?) in the future?

### Student's Learning Goals

- How does the ministry activity relate to the goals set forth in the learning covenant?
- Are you making satisfactory progress toward those goals?
- Are you actually learning from these ministry experiences or just going through the motions?
- What ministry priorities need to be set for the next two weeks to move you in the right direction toward meeting his or her goals?

### Spiritual and Vocational Implications

- How is God working through your ministry experiences to reveal Himself and to mature you?
- How are your experiences in ministry informing, reforming, affirming, or calling in to question your call and sense of giftedness?
- What should you do to advance the growth and discovery process?
- Are there personal roadblocks, blind spots, and fears that you would like to discuss?
- How can I specifically pray for you this week?