

COMMENTS ON JOURNAL WRITING

By Bill Vamos

Journal writing is the process of writing about our experiences, and about our feelings re: those experiences, in a way that is personal, private, therapeutic, and even fun. Your journal may contain impulsiveness, confession, overflowing thanksgiving, and deep discouragement all written within the covers of one book, and all of it is yours.

Each person keeps a journal in her or his own way. Some people journal out of the need for catharsis; some, in order to wed personal struggle or excitement with creative writing; some journal their prayer, some write to keep a record of where they have been in their inward and outward journey; some write for all of these reasons and more. Each of us has our own unique perspective toward journaling. For me, keeping a journal is often a means toward clarity, a way of getting my insides on paper. It is also a release of fears and hopes and dreams which somehow become less scary when I lay them down to rest on a piece of paper. I like to write my prayers and just let them flow. For me journal writing is sometimes an outlet for anger. It helps me to be honest with myself.

Our focus will be journal writing with Scripture. When we root our journaling in Scripture, we can realize that our stories are part of God's story. But for now, let's have some fun with a few concepts of journaling by looking at what various journals might say if they could talk. I've given each of these journals a name.

Honest Alice

"I'm sorry but I don't like being Alice's writing place. She complains so often. She's honest though and I like that, I mean she holds back none of her feelings. Sometimes she uses words that make my paper blush. She scrawls all over the place and scratches my pages. Some days I think her anger will light me on fire. But here is one advantage to Alice's approach. She's dependable. She's also blunt and occasionally obnoxious, but I can depend on Alice not to pretend. I like the uninhibited flow of a pencil much better than the smudge of an eraser. And Alice never uses an eraser."

Dialogue Daniel

"Wow, is it ever exciting to be Daniel's journal. I mean I pick up all the latest gossip. You see, Daniel writes his prayers, and Daniel tells God everything. What is really exciting is that he actually lets God in on his life. He says things like: "My wife and children are such needy people. Lord, will you help the helpless? What's that, you say anybody who would pray a prayer like that needs more help for the pray-er, than for the pray-ees! Okay Lord, help me your very helpless child."

Rainbow Ralph

"Yes, I'm, Ralph's journal and I am very colorful. Sometimes Ralph writes as though he is James Michener, descriptive and voluminous. At other times he is so shy and reserved,

I can hardly get a “yes” or “no” out of him. I like it when he flamboyantly writes as though the sky was his soft blue paper and he romps across it with his pen. Then there are his down days. You know what I get then – nothing! He claims he has no energy when he’s down. But sometimes it’s like he is painting my pages black and white and polka dot, his words are so vivid.

What is journaling? It is a gift. It is a way of healing. It is freedom. And sometimes it is pain. And always it is yours.