

The 7 Benefits of Keeping a Daily Journal by Michael Hyatt (Intentional Leadership)

My wife Gail and I have been on an extended vacation for the past two weeks. We have been tucked away in the mountains of East Tennessee on the edge of a beautiful lake.

When we arrived, Gail challenged me to keep a journal. I rolled my eyes but reluctantly agreed to give it another try, evidently forgetting [a previous post I had written](#) on the difference between trying and doing.

So far, I have written daily for twelve days in a row. I've surprised both of us.

Here's how journaling has worked for me in this setting.

- Gail and I get up at about 5:30 a.m. (Yes, even on our vacation. We can't help ourselves.)
- We read the Bible on our own while drinking a cup of coffee. I'm currently reading through [The One Year Bible](#) (Tyndale).
- When we finish, we grab our journals and walk down to the dock. It's only about twenty yards away.
- Then we sit quietly for fifteen minutes. No talking, no writing. No *doing*. Instead, we silently take it all in, give thanks, and pray. We take time just to *be*.
- Finally, we crack open our journals and start writing. This is completely unstructured. We don't edit. We don't judge. We just get it out. We write for twenty to thirty minutes.

I might write about what I read in my Bible, a dream I had last night, an experience I had yesterday, or what I hope to accomplish today. Sometimes I will write on one topic; sometimes on four or five.

The main thing is I am writing for *myself* rather than an audience. I have found this tremendously liberating and deeply satisfying. Amazingly, I am effortlessly writing five hundred to a thousand words a day.

What happens to us is not as important as the meaning we assign to it. Journaling helps sort this out.

If I had to sum it up, I would say journaling has afforded me seven benefits. It has enabled me to:

1. **Process previous events.** What happens to me is not as important as the meaning I assign to what happens to me. Journaling helps me sort through my experience and be intentional about my interpretation.
2. **Clarify my thinking.** Writing in general helps me disentangle my thoughts. Journaling takes it to a new level. Because I am not performing in front of a “live audience,” so to speak, I can really wrestle through the issues.
3. **Understand the context.** Life is often happening so quickly I usually have little time to stop and reflect on where I am in the Bigger Story. Journaling helps me to discern the difference between the forest and the trees.
4. **Notice my feelings.** I understand feelings aren’t everything, but they also aren’t nothing. The older I get, the more I try to pay attention to them. They are often an early indicator of something brewing.
5. **Connect with my heart.** I’m not sure I can really explain this one, but journaling has helped me monitor the condition of my heart. Solomon said “above all else” we are to guard it (see Proverbs 4:23). It’s hard to do that when you lose touch with it.
6. **Record significant lessons.** I’m a better student when [I am taking notes](#). Writing things down leads to even deeper understanding and, I hope, wisdom. I want to write down what I learn, so I don’t have to re-learn it later.
7. **Ask important questions.** A journal is not merely a repository for the lessons I am learning but also the questions I’m asking. If there’s one thing I have discovered, it’s the quality of my questions determine the quality of my answers.

Will I stick with this after my vacation? Time will tell. I sure hope so. So far, it has been one of best personal development exercises I have done in a long, long time.

<http://michaelhyatt.com/daily-journal.html>