

Keeping a Journal **YOUR WAY**

By Tara Walker

One Christmas I traveled with my family to the Holy Land. A good part of each day we spent in a tour van as we traveled around Israel, visiting where the Savior walked. While en route to the Dead Sea, the hills of Bethlehem, Golgotha, and the Old City, I spoke into a digital voice recorder and talked about the beauty of the landscape, the juxtaposition of so many religious faiths in one place, and the reality of Christ's life and presence there. Making an audio recording proved to be one of the most convenient ways I have ever kept a journal. But using my recorder didn't stop me from writing things down or taking pictures and video. Using a variety of mediums, I was able to capture the richness of a trip of a lifetime, from how my father jokingly negotiated to sell me to a Bedouin man at the base of Petra for 24 racing camels and a souvenir shop,

to reverently singing hymns of worship with my family while we stood in the Garden Tomb.

When I was a little girl, my mother always encouraged me to keep a journal. It quickly became one of my favorite things to do because of the way it quieted my mind before getting into bed. Pouring out my heart on those pages also helped me make decisions. My journals are full of highs and lows, happy times and sad times. Each journal helped me to maintain eternal perspective and hope for the future. I was able to stay connected to and remember who I really am.

Now I'm a young adult, and keeping a journal is still a powerful way for me to express who I am as an individual

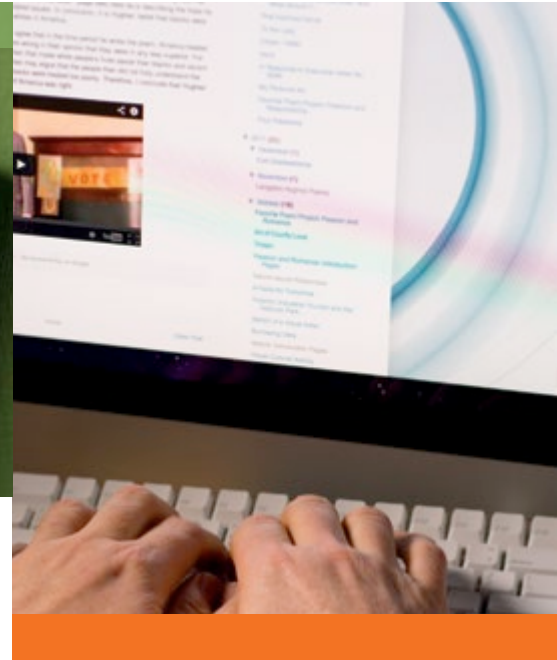
Keeping a journal can be a fun and exciting way to record your personal history. Consider trying one of these options for preserving your thoughts and experiences.

and how I fit into the fabric of God's eternal plan. You too can create a rich and meaningful history of your life experiences. What you have to offer to the world, and to the ongoing work of the restored gospel, is unique and powerful. What you give and share can start with a little introspection at the end of each day, week, or month. However you choose to keep a journal, remember that it is your chance to preserve your thoughts, feelings, and experiences for you and your posterity.

Following are some ways you can record your story. Find what works for you and stick with it. Not only will your own life be blessed, but someday countless others will express gratitude for the time you took to share your successes and failures in this life, thus connecting your past with the present and the future.

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...better...
...for this...
...to attend...
...need to have...
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Traditional Journals

Find a paper journal that matches your personality and writing style. If you are unsure what to write about, try a journal that suggests a daily prompt. You can also make a traditional journal into an art journal by using paint, pastels, or colored pencils. Decide beforehand on a consistent time to write in your journal so that you can establish a habit. Regardless of the style or size of your journal, you can follow the counsel of President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, to seek “ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness”¹ and express gratitude for blessings in your life.

Online Journals

Online journals are a great option because you can write wherever you are without having to keep track of a traditional journal, and they allow you to compile more experiences, thoughts, and feelings in less time. Most online journal sites also give you the ability to upload other media to your journal entries. For example, you can add pictures and video, and you can embed

links to articles or websites that have enhanced your learning or experience.

Most online journal websites are private, so usually you don’t have to worry about confidentiality. And many of these sites provide sharing and publishing options when or if you decide to share or print a copy of your journal. All of your entries are archived on the website you use, so both you and your posterity will have access to anything you’ve recorded. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, reminds us that “technology can be a wonderful thing, and it is very useful when we cannot be near our loved ones.”²

Blogs

Blogging is an interactive way to keep a journal. You can make it a collaborative process by allowing family members to contribute their memories along with yours. Share your blog publicly or keep it private. Create a personal profile that illustrates your interests and goals. Be “an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12) in a very open way by sharing what you’ve learned about life and living the gospel. People can freely read your testimony and ask questions, and you can provide informed and helpful answers.



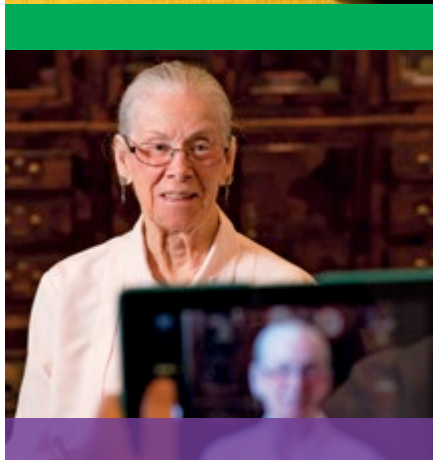
BOTTOM LEFT PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER

Scrapbooks

Scrapbooking is a fun way to keep a journal because it's hands-on. In this way, reminders of the experiences you've had can be preserved in the form of ticket stubs, magazine and newspaper clippings, programs, photos, fliers, and notes. President Uchtdorf has said: "Creation brings deep satisfaction and fulfillment. We develop ourselves and others when we take unorganized matter into our hands and mold it into something of beauty."³

Photo Journals

Photos are a marvelous way of capturing what you see as you experience life. You don't have to be a talented photographer to get involved in keeping this kind of journal, especially with all the technology available. Basic digital cameras for the budget conscious can provide good quality pictures, or you may simply want to use the camera feature that comes with many cell phones. There are several applications that provide tools for enhancing and sharing your photos. Print and store them in a photo album, or post them online. Either way, keeping track of your life



WHAT COULD YOU DO BETTER?

"What could you do better for your children and your children's children than to record the

story of your life, your triumphs over adversity, your recovery after a fall, your progress when all seemed black, your rejoicing when you had finally achieved?"

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals," *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 61.

through pictures is a great way to save memories now and share them later.

Audio Journals

Most audio recorders are digital and take up very little space, so you can take your handheld recording device with you anywhere. You can record thoughts or impressions you receive during the day by simply speaking into the device. You may find that articulating ideas in this way is easier than trying to write them down, since you don't have to worry about making your writing or typing speed keep up with your thoughts. The audio files you create can often be transferred from the device directly to your computer. You also may be able to download free transcription software if you want to turn your recordings into documents.

Video Journals

You can use a webcam on your computer or any other video camera to record yourself sharing stories and experiences from your childhood. Then consider interviewing your grandparents to preserve their stories too. You and your posterity will be able to watch and enjoy these videos years down the road.

Conclusion

Whichever method you choose, as you make the effort to keep a journal and capture your life's story, remember to enjoy the experience as well as be introspective. Doing so will bring blessings both to you and to the posterity you leave behind. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "O Remember, Remember," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Of Regrets and Resolutions," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 22.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Happiness, Your Heritage," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 118.