

WEEK TWO

Fresh Pages

A Journaling MasterClass

with Ann Voskamp

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Fresh Pages

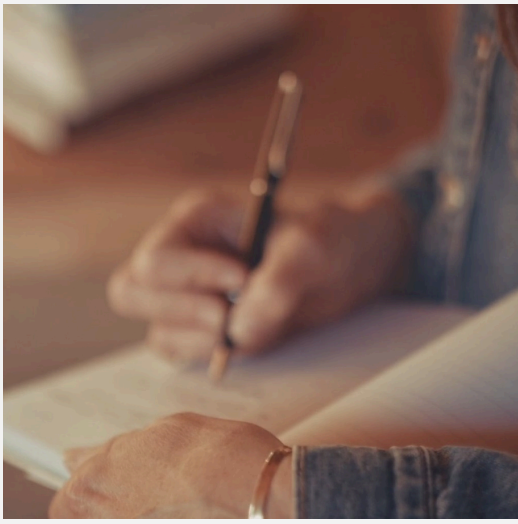
Recap

In our first session, we learned that the way out of bondage to anything in this world, is to turn toward bonding to the Word Himself.

Make a binding commitment every day to open your Fresh Pages, pick up a pen, and journal — and you begin a journey toward bonding more intimately with the Word Himself.

This week, we turn to a specific kind of journaling: Doctor Journaling, a method of journaling as a therapeutic tool.









notes to soul from session 1

When you pick up a pen and begin to write words — you encounter the Word Himself.

"They overcame him — the evil one — by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony"
—Revelation 12:11

The Story does the slaying.
The Story ALWAYS does the slaying.



INTRODUCTION

The Word Himself has saved my life — and writing words has healed my life.

The Word Himself is the only perfect and whole human being — and the more words write in the presence of the Word, the more I become a whole human being.

Moving the pen across the page - moves more of the pain of life out of my veins.

- **Journaling doesn't have to take much space or time** — just a few lines and 15 minutes of time.
- **Journaling doesn't have to cost anything at all** — except your willingness to be all honest.
- **Journaling doesn't have to be done anywhere expensive** — and can be done anywhere you're willing to simply pay attention.
- **Journaling doesn't have any requirements of youth or health** — but is incredible for soul health and mental health.
- **Journaling doesn't have to be about more than just showing up** — and writing your heart down, so your heart and hopes and life can rise up.

notes to soul



Shame dies
when our stories are told
in safe places.

Shame dies
when we write our stories
down in journals
that truly become
our safe places.




“SHAME DIES WHEN OUR STORIES ARE TOLD in safe places”



Doctor Journaling

Journaling as a Therapeutic Tool



BACKGROUND

Doctor Journaling

1. A practice supported by over 200 peer-reviewed studies

2. Scientifically proven to significantly improve mental and physical health, while markedly reducing anxiety, improving sleep, boosting immunity, and alleviating symptoms of autoimmune disorders.

3. Initially discovered and researched by Dr. James Pennebaker in the mid-80s, as he developed a protocol around how to journal about traumatic or difficult experiences in healing ways.

4. A practice that profoundly changed my life and brought me on a journey toward real soul health.

UNPACKING

Doctor Journaling

A Therapeutic Tool to Heal from Trauma

There's a difference between diary journaling – or doxological gratitude journaling – or daily decluttering your mind journaling – or doctrinal Scripture journaling – or dialogue with God in prayer journaling – and this kind of journaling: *doctor journaling*.

This doctoring, healing journaling focuses on healing from difficult experiences and all kinds of trauma.



In this journaling, we journey back to a difficult experience, even a traumatic experience, and we undertake doctoring journaling – to therapeutically bring our souls and minds and lives into greater healing.

"A simple pen and paper can be a cheap medicine, and this is a daily way to dramatically and radically remake your whole life"

THE PROCESS OF

Doctor Journaling

Find a quiet, safe place… gather a pen, paper, or even a keyboard and digital page suffices.

Choose a difficult experience that you want to bring to this appointment of doctoring journaling. It can be something that your mind keeps returning to or worrying about – or what your mind keeps avoiding or trying to escape from. Or any experience that's deeply affecting your life, that you're ruminating on, that's impacting your emotional state – something difficult just from this week – or something traumatic from a decade ago.

Spend 15 minutes doing the following:

1. Write the detailed facts of the difficult experience. Where were you? What did the space look like? What did the people involved look like, what was the scene, the time of year? What were the sounds, the temperature? Detailed facts, detailed scene.

2. Write the deep feelings of the difficult experience – the deep feelings then, the deep feelings now… How did you feel in your body? How did your chest feel, your throat, your hands? How would you name the feelings – and how did those feeling make you feel?

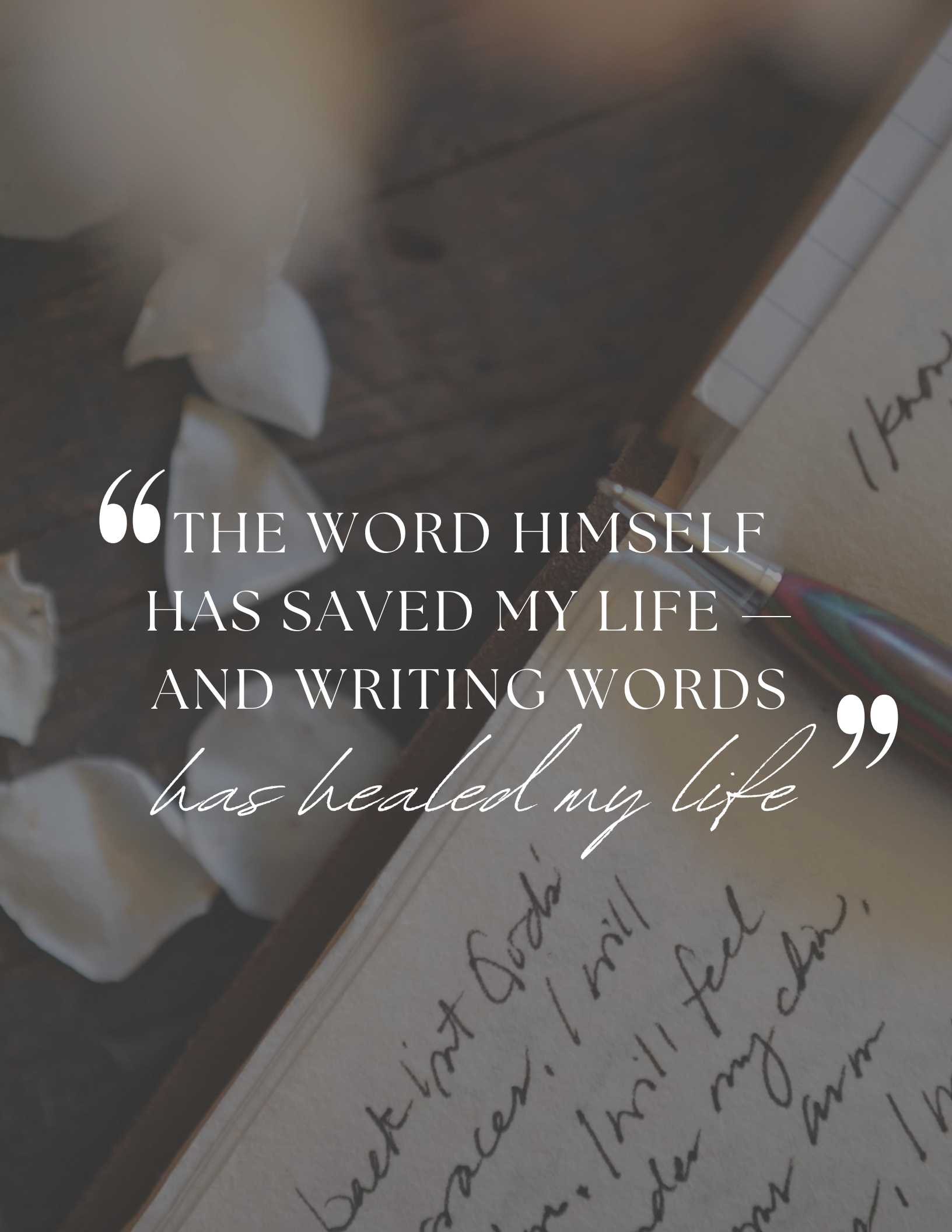
3. Explore the direct links between detailed facts, deep feelings and any other aspects of your life.

4. When you return for subsequent sessions, review what you wrote in previous entries and look for patterns.

Notes

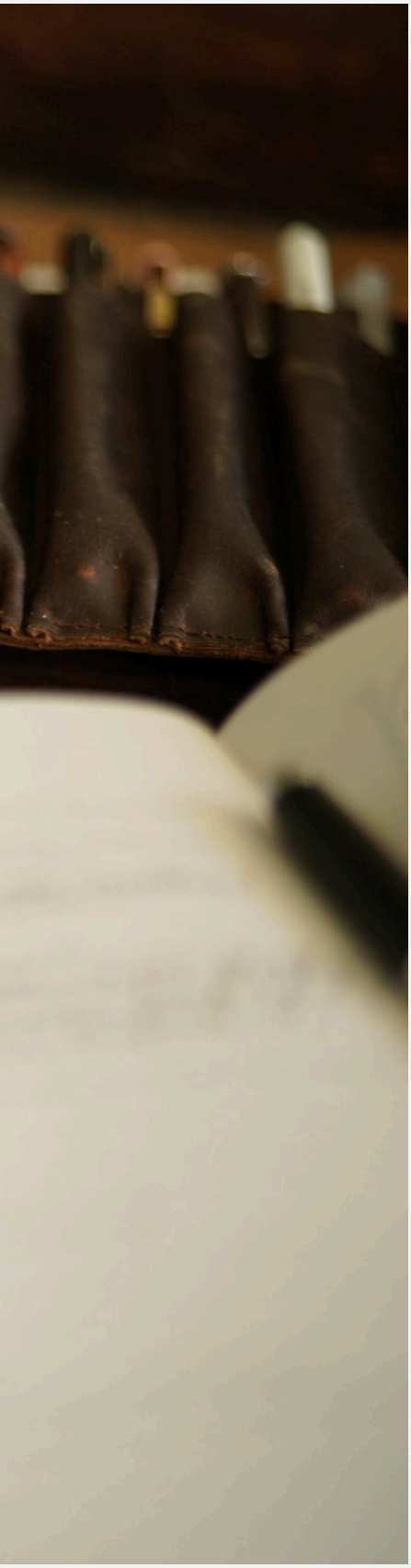
what stood out to me:

Healing writing weaves detailed events to deep feelings.


“THE WORD HIMSELF
HAS SAVED MY LIFE —
AND WRITING WORDS
has healed my life”

Four Thoughts

To Help with your Doctor Journaling



- **Consider using a pencil**, as the scratching of the pencil on the paper may give more auditory and sensory feedback to your brain, which may allow you to more easily access the detailed facts and the deep feelings.

- **Do doctoring journaling sessions on the weekend** – because there may be more time to be gentle with yourself after the journaling session, time to gently move your body to move the stress through – to go for a walk after your doctoring journaling session. Or to connect with your people and feel not alone.

- **Set aside time to gently decompress.** As much time as you set aside for doctoring journaling (say 15 minutes), set aside half as much time (7 minutes) to gently decompress in ways that are life-giving to you, before you re-enter your day.

- **Plan for Pennebaker's "freak out rule."** If you're journaling into such a difficult traumatic experience and feeling like you're overwhelmed and getting too deep, if you feel as if you may actually "freak out" — just pause, and turn to something gentle and pleasing and calming.

The Healing Math of Doctor Journaling

4 sessions

x

15 minutes each

=

one hour

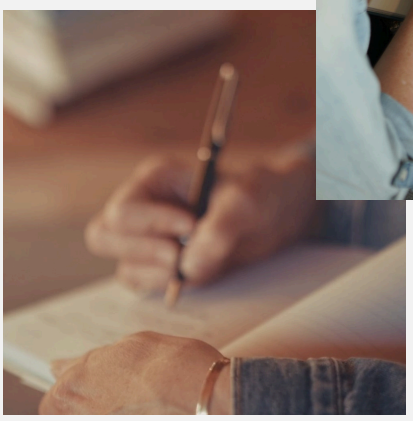
to bring our souls and minds into greater healing

Tip: Look for Patterns

Before you begin subsequent sessions of Doctor Journaling, *review what you wrote the last time,* looking for patterns between how often **negative words** are journaled and how often **positive words** are journaled

You may even choose to circle the **negative words** in one color… and the **positive words** in another color… and each time as you review before you begin the next journaling session, see if any patterns emerge in what you've written across the 4 journaling sessions.







Powerful Theories

Why Doctor Journaling is Healing & Therapeutic

ONE

As your eyes move from right to left across the page, some suggest that you're activating the same areas in the brain that the practice of EMDR activates.

TWO

Doctor Journaling is a way to safely and fully express your feelings, accept your feelings, process your feelings – and then let this e-motion – *move you forward* – toward the Word Himself.

THREE

While the Word Himself calls us to give thanks in all things, and there is much research to back how completely transformative gratitude journaling is — this doctoring journaling about difficult experiences is actually a form of Lament that we see in the Word Itself.

"The Word gives us a model in the Psalms where there is exactly this kind of doctor journaling — and the psalms prove to us that **soul healing happens through honest lament."**

Notes

what stood out to me:

Enter into the discomfort of journaling the story – to heal the discomfort of the wounds of the story – and find real comfort.



A Word on Lament

This is the tender cadence of faith… and of journaling:

We lament. And let our laments be met with Love…
Love Himself.

We sit with our souls in their lament, we name our fears and failures…. and then we speak to our lamenting souls of the Love of Jesus — and let His love Heal us in the name of Jesus.

What's one gentle, kind loving Word the Lord might speak over this situation?

Carry that Word, that Scripture, that truth with you today and let His true Word heal your tender journaled words.

A loving word for this situation:

Notes from Joel

Get in Touch with Reality — and Weep!

The title of Joel 1 from The Message

Lament the Loss

Read Joel 1:11

The Lord's Answer

Read Joel 2: 19-28

Just as you have journaled tender, raw WORDS of real pain,
as you bravely lament losses... God meets you, sending showers of words –
His Word – to refresh and nourish your soul.

He PROMISES, right now, He is restoring the years and the fruit the locusts ate up...that He is nourishing you and your soul with more of Himself and His Word, that *He is the WayMaker* who is working redemptive wonders all around you.

And He, in this very moment, is present to pour His Spirit out upon you...
and His Spirit is a Comforter.

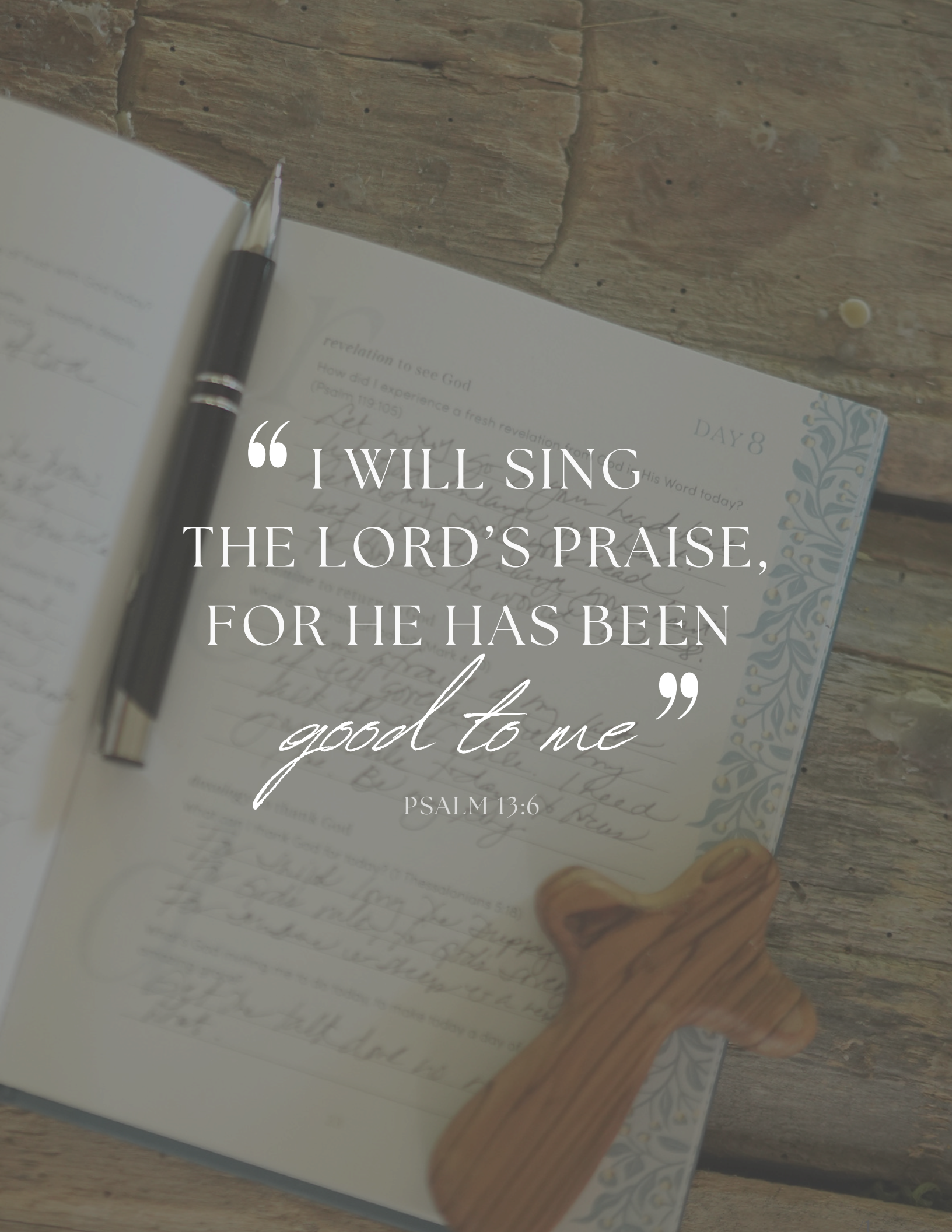
Psalm 13

niv

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the Lord’s praise,
for he has been good to me.


“I WILL SING
THE LORD’S PRAISE,
FOR HE HAS BEEN
good to me”
PSALM 13:6

After care for journaling

After you have written through
4 doctoring journaling sessions,
you can ultimately –
shred it
or **toss it**
or **store it safely away** –
whichever feels safest to you.

But what is going to last regardless –
is improved mental and spiritual and
physical health…
that's yours to keep forever.



"If we deny
the pain –
we deny ourself
healing…
if we repress
the whole story —
we repress
our own
wholeness."

DOCTOR JOURNALING

DOS & DON'TS

DO SELECT ONE DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE
and return to it across your four journaling sessions.

DO WRITE IN 15-MINUTE INCREMENTS
and no more than 30 minutes, and give yourself half as much time to decompress when you're done.

DO COMPLETE ALL FOUR SESSIONS
writing about the same experience each time, and keep in mind that journaling 4 consecutive days is slightly more effective than 4 times over several weeks.

DO CHOSE THE EVENT THAT FEELS INVITING —
you are invited to only write about what events and memories feel comfortable to journal about right now. When you can handle remembering and journaling other situations, you're invited to, but only *when you are ready, and not before*.

DO WRITE THE DETAILS —
the detailed facts, the detailed scenes, and the deep feelings then & now.

DO INVITE THE WORD HIMSELF
to minister to you as you write your words across the page.

DO BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF —
You may feel tender after a journaling session. Turn toward the sturdy, robust, real comfort of the Word, of praise music, of a gentle walk through nature while praying and talking to God, of connecting with a safe person who will comfort you in Truth and affirm your true identity and soul-safeness in Christ.

DOCTOR JOURNALING

DOS & DON'TS

DON'T EDIT OR EVALUATE OR REVISE —

you are just invited to keep your pen moving — no self-editing, no stopping, no worries if you're repetitive. Until the time is up, just keep getting any memories down.

DON'T GO IT ALONE —

the session is private, but tell a safe person or therapist about the experience . You may want to explore the further support of a prayer team, a health care provider, or a Christian therapist or counsellor, if you sense after 4 sessions you aren't making progress.

DON'T BE AFRAID —

You're safe -- no one else will ever see this. You can write freely because these are words just between you and the Word.

DON'T FEEL STUCK

Always, always, always -- if you are overwhelmed and, at this time, coping is too challenging, you can press pause at any time and find comfort and care in His Word, the Psalms, in singing your favorite hymn, in going for a walk while listening to His Word.



DOCTOR JOURNALING

RECAP

1/ **DOCTOR JOURNALING**

In this journaling practice, we delve into our difficult experiences – with detailed facts, deep feelings, looking for direct links between the detailed facts and deep feelings and discovering connections to other parts of our lives

2/ **HEALING MATH**

Journal across 4 sessions in 15-minute increments. You could do this for 4 consecutive days, or across 4 consecutive weeks... Returning to the same difficult or traumatic incident 4 times — which is just 1 hour total to experience more of the depths of healing of the Word Himself

3/ **THE RESEARCH PROVES**

The research indicates that people who engage in this type of journaling **saw 50 percent fewer visits to medical health clinics** than before they began journaling

4/ **THE HEALING IS IN THE WORDS**

Healing writing weaves detailed events to deep feelings.
The healing is in the weaving of words – words about detailed events and deepest feelings.

5/ **INVITE JESUS CLOSE TO YOU IN YOUR HEARTACHE**

At the end of these Doctor Journaling sessions, let the Wounded Healer Himself, our SAVIOR, hold you in your Lament, catching your tears, answering your cries — and see how, even now, He is being good to you

Notes

what stood out to me:

Let the Wounded Healer Himself, our SAVIOR, hold you right now in your Lament, catching your tears, answering your cries – and see how, even now, He is being good to you...

THE REALITY IS...



Venting only airs out and redresses our wounds – it doesn't heal our wounds.

What heals our painful wounds — is to be brave enough to write out the painful story.

Enter into the discomfort of journaling the story – to heal the discomfort of the wounds of the story – and find real comfort.

Discomfort heals discomfort…
and ultimately brings real comfort.



4-SESSION CHALLENGE

Are you ready to try Doctor Journaling? Check the box when you've completed a 15-minute session, and jot down a few words here to express how you feel after each session.

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4


“
TELLING THE HARD STORY
always slays
THE HARD THINGS

HELPFUL

RESOURCES



BOOKS

A collection of books around journaling as a therapeutic tool, including several from Dr. Pennebaker.

browse

MORNING & EVENING PRAYERS

Morning Prayers of Intention and Nightly Prayers — in tiny booklets for you to print & fold!

download





THE PERFECT TIMER

A gentle and beautiful timer to set for your Doctor Journaling Session

treat yourself



FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember our first session and the story of Odysseus and the sirens?

Telling the hard story always slays the hard things.

“Write hard and clear about what hurts” is what Ernest Hemingway said.

And we would say together:

Write hard and clear about what hurts —
and over time, you will clearly heal.

sources

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Start & End Your Day
with Sacred Prayer with God
and gratefulness to God

Gift someone the gift of deeper joy
and intimacy with God.



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