

Guided Journaling through Nothing Will I Withhold by Kathi Wilson

Take a moment to imagine something... you are sitting at a table and you decide that you would like to put together a puzzle. Someone suddenly comes over and dumps out a pile of puzzle pieces onto the table and then leaves. The person does not give you any idea of what picture the puzzle creates and they have taken the box with them. You are left with just a pile of puzzle pieces.

Have you ever felt that your thoughts, feelings, and experiences seem like a scattered pile of different puzzle pieces? You may feel confused, frustrated, or even overwhelmed as you try to organize, make sense of, and put together all these different aspects. You might be thinking to yourself... "How do I even begin putting this all together? There are so many pieces! How should I look at this piece—which part is up and which is down? What part of the picture does this piece belong to? Why won't this piece fit with this other piece? Am I spending too much time trying to find a place for this single piece when I should be working on another part of the puzzle? What is the big picture here?"

Sometimes when you have quiet times with God and try to be still, listen, and journal, it is easy to get hung up on all those kinds of questions and become distracted or discouraged. This is where having a guide can help give you something to focus on, much like how you can look at a picture of how the puzzle will turn out to help you as you put it together. Guided journaling is a process where you can write down thoughts, feelings, and experiences in an organized way with the help of questions, prompts, and Bible verses so that you can have more direction and focus as you reflect and write.

Try to find a place and time when you can be still. Have some writing or drawing utensils and a Bible handy and you'll be ready to begin.

This guided journaling is meant to be used in tandem with the CD Nothing Will I Withhold. Each song on the CD has a segment of guided journaling that goes along with it, and each segment is divided into two parts. The 'preparing' part involves reading or thinking about certain things before the song is played. The 'while listening' part involves reading, writing, and/or drawing while the song is playing. Feel free to spend as much or as little time in a segment as you want. If you think you'll want to spend more time on a particular song you can set the song to repeat until you have fully explored and expressed yourself for that segment. If you have finished one segment and wish to move on to the next, remember to stop or pause the CD so you can go through the 'preparing' part before you hear the next song and start the next 'while listening' part.

Be blessed through this journey and enjoy!

Jen Schumacher

'Mighty Rushing Breath of God'

Preparing:

Imagine yourself at a beach... it is a beautiful sunny day, but there are no crowds...you are the only one there. All of your senses focus on the water and the wind: the look of lazy waves rolling along, the sound of the surf, and the feel of the wind and sea spray on your face. The wind blows one direction and then another—all around you—as if it were embracing you tenderly. You breathe in deeply, a fresh and calming breath, and you feel the presence of God.

While Listening:

Still at the beach, you continue to breathe deeply... breathe in God's spirit and relax. Exhale the events and worries of the day to feel God's spirit enter into you in gentle cleansing breaths.

What do you need to exhale or lay aside to focus on and come to God?

In Jeremiah 33:3, God says to Jeremiah, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." It is God's desire to engage us in conversation. He longs for us to talk to Him, and He longs for us to listen so that He may respond.

Invite God to speak to you... and then listen peacefully. Trust that He hears you and that He will answer.

What is God saying to you? What does He want you to take in (inhale) in place of what you exhaled? What promises or truths does he want you to know?

'Nothing Too Difficult'

Preparing:

In Mark 9:14-29, Jesus heals a young boy that had been possessed by an evil spirit. The young boy is brought to Jesus by his father, and as the father is asking Jesus to help he says, "...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus repeats the father's words "If you can," and then replies, "Everything is possible for him who believes." The father responds by saying, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" After this, Jesus casts out the evil spirit and heals the boy.

We all have difficulties of some kind, and we can call out to God for help. If you are having a hard time with your faith or trust in God, invite Him to help you overcome your unbelief. God can conquer the impossible and He desires to help us!

"Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." ~Jeremiah 32:17

While Listening:

Think about some difficulties you are having right now... they may be things that are physical, emotional, or even spiritual.

All of these difficulties can bunch together and become like a huge boulder that we must push up a mountain. Write down what these difficulties are.

Something important to remember is that you are not alone in pushing up this boulder. Imagine that there are two figures pushing this heavy rock up the hill, a small one and a large one. The small one is straining under the boulder's weight (this figure represents you), and the large figure represents God. God is much bigger than the rock and He can move it with ease!

When you call out to God, He hears you. He may not choose to remove the rock you are struggling to move up the hill, but He will help you to push it with His capable, mighty hands.

There is no difficulty that you can't handle with God's help.

Start declaring Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him [God] who gives me strength."

You can even declare that God is bigger than each difficulty that you wrote. "God you are bigger than _____. God you are bigger than _____. God you are bigger than it all!"

'Crossing Over'

Preparing:

Think about a time when you've moved or traveled to someplace unfamiliar. How did you feel? Scared, nervous, excited?

The Hebrew people did plenty of moving and wandering in their time. One of the most memorable times was when the whole people group left Egypt for the Promised Land. The Hebrews had succeeded at escaping from the Egyptians and now they had the opportunity to enter the Promised Land (Canaan). In Numbers 13 we read about how Moses sent twelve men to explore Canaan and then report back what they saw. The men found the land to be exactly as God had promised, a land flowing with milk and honey, but they also saw the fearsome inhabitants of the land that would have to be defeated first. When the twelve men reported back to the others what they had found, the Hebrew people did not want to cross over into Canaan—even though this was the Promised Land they all had hoped to go to. Of all things, they wished that they could go back to Egypt! Being in Egypt was a horrible experience, yet it was something familiar, something they knew.

While listening:

So many times we confine and limit ourselves to what is familiar... even if that means staying in unhealthy or unpleasant places. It is easier to continue living in our bad habits or our little corner where everything is 'under control' because that is what we know. It's too scary to try something new... it's too painful to be stretched... it's too difficult to change. God has so much more for us though! He is inviting us to emerge from our little comfort zone to come out and experience the large expanse of living fully and abundantly in Him.

Think about and write down where you are currently at physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Imagine that what is familiar is on one side of a river. Along the banks there is a bridge, built by God, where you can cross over into uncharted territory. God wants to lead us across that bridge. Thankfully, God knows how we feel about going into the unknown, and He reassures us that He will help us go from places of bondage to places of freedom.

What are some things that you want to leave behind and then cross over to? Crossing from lies to truth? Grief to joy? Worry to peace? Bitterness to forgiveness? Pride to humility? Stubbornness to yielding?

What does God have for you on the other side?

"The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid." ~Psalm 118:6

'I Will Tremble'

Preparing:

It can be hard to become intimate with God since He does not usually show Himself to us as something tangible. However, some of the best and most tangible things we do have from God today are His words and commands. They are something we can see, something we can hear, something we can hold as a Bible in our hand. The more we read the Bible, the more we can become acquainted with God—the book's author.

The psalmist who wrote Psalm 119 knew the value of reading and knowing God's words... in fact there is so much the psalmist has to say in regards to this it is the longest chapter in the whole Bible! Here are some things that the psalmist writes:

"Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." (v. 1-2)

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (v. 18)

"I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes." (v. 58-59)

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (v. 105)

"My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws." (v. 120)

Reading God's words help us to fear (respect, be in awe of, show reverence to) God and to be more in touch with what is on His heart. Listening and obeying His commands leads to a deeper love and intimacy with God our Father. We can come, sit at His feet, and enjoy His awesome presence there.

While listening:

Read and explore Psalm 119 further. As you read, imagine that you are walking down a path. This path is taking you to 'Papa's place' (God's dwelling place 😊) where you can enter in, find God, and sit at His feet. Look for confessions, prayers, truths, and promises that are especially meaningful to you.

What did you find on your 'walk' through Psalm 119? Write down some of the verses that are special to you and your relationship with God.

'Fill My Cup'

Preparing:

Many people, before going on a trip to the grocery store, will see what things they have in the house. They take note of what is running low or what is completely gone. Just as people take inventory of the contents of their cupboards, you can take a 'spiritual inventory' of yourself. Are you running low on strength and trust? Have you completely run out of peace and patience?

There are times when we may all feel that something is just 'off' with ourselves. It may be because we are missing some needed 'spiritual goodies'. Think of things like the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When you physically lack something important (like vitamins or minerals) it can affect your body, for example how some people who have an iron deficiency, suffer from weakness and fatigue. Are you suffering spiritually (perhaps even emotionally and physically) because you are deficient or lacking some of God's spiritual goodies?

It is so valuable to be aware of what your own spiritual needs are. Even more importantly, it's essential to know that you can turn to God and ask Him to restock or refill those things that you are in need of.

Listening:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." ~Matthew 7:7-8

Invite God to help you take a 'spiritual inventory' of your needs. (This may include laying down pride to ask for help, asking for wisdom to know what you need, and/or having courage to admit what you're lacking.)

Write down all the things that you are running low on or are completely out of and then ask God to refill you in all those areas you wrote down.

Don't forget to thank God for the ways He provides for you.

'These Are the Tears'

Preparing:

Have you ever felt that God was distant from you? That He was so far away you couldn't reach Him? I imagine this could look like someone reaching out a hand, trying to touch something they couldn't see—stretching, striving to make contact—only to grasp a handful of air.

Did you know that the Bible describes God as having an 'outstretched arm'? Psalm 136 is one of those places. The Psalm describes God's awesome love and the things He has done for his people. In verse 12 it says, "...with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever."

Truly know, God's hand is stretching out to yours. He doesn't want to leave you grasping at nothing. He longs to make a connection with you. To be near you so that he can touch your heart, your mind, and your soul in intimate ways. He wants to be the one to comfort you and wipe away your tears, both shed and unshed. Each tear is precious to Him, for you are precious to Him.

"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy...You O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living." ~Psalm 116:1, 8-9

While Listening:

As God stretches out His loving hand to you, take hold of it, and begin a journey. Allow God into the tender, hurting places in your life. Tell him about your sorrows and record what grieves you. Perhaps those things feel small—too trivial to bother God with—or perhaps they feel too big to even begin to express, but God will hold all that we offer to him—big or small—dear to His Heart.

Our grief can be a painful thing to bear, but there is good news for us... the promise to be comforted!

"For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." ~Revelation 7:17

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." ~Psalm 23

'My Heart Overflows'

Preparing:

In Luke 17:11-17, we can find a story where Jesus heals ten men of leprosy. When Jesus encounters the men, they call out to him and say, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When Jesus sees them, he says, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as the men headed off to the temple, they were all cleansed. What happens afterward is interesting. "One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'"

It is surprising that more of the men didn't come back to Jesus, but let's focus on the one man that did. I would imagine that this man was immensely grateful to Jesus for what He had done. I wonder if he felt this gratitude so strongly that he could barely contain himself. Perhaps he felt like he couldn't stop talking—that no number of 'thank yous' and praises would suffice. Perhaps he felt that there was nothing he could ever do to reciprocate what was done for him?

When you think of how amazing the works of the Lord are, do you feel that same kind of awe and gratitude? One that seems so vast and overwhelmingly wonderful that you can't contain it? Let's take some time to let our praises pour out onto paper.

While Listening:

Spend some time thinking and recording how amazing God is. Think about examples of how God reveals His wonder, beauty, power, grace, and holiness in your life and in all of creation. See if you can find any Bible verses with some of these words in them.

Talk to God and tell Him about how you feel about Him.

"Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!" ~Psalm 147:1

'I Am Undone'

Preparing:

There is nothing more refreshing than drinking an ice-cold glass of water after spending time out in the hot sun. While being out in the heat of the day, it's inevitable that we will begin to get dehydrated. Just as we can get physically thirsty, we can also become spiritually thirsty when we don't spend enough time taking in Jesus our living water.

While Listening:

Take a moment to read over Psalm 42.

Did you notice how the author of Psalm 42 decided to put his hope in the Lord? Much like the psalmist, we have an amazing hope in all circumstances! That hope is God, who, in his loving-kindness, wants to continually refresh, renew, and revive us with a cleansing flow.

God wants to make each one of us a holy place where His Spirit can dwell. This means that God will have some 'house cleaning' to do inside us. He will see the nice looking parts of our 'house' along with the places we may wish could be left unseen... those secret places where the residue of sin is left behind.

Let God do some 'spiritual house cleaning' for you. Perhaps you can feel God refreshing your outlook on life as if He opened windows to let stale air out and a fresh spring breeze in. Can you see Him renew your dry, cracked spirit as if He put polish on some worn wooden furniture? Maybe you can feel God reviving your soul—saving it from the death of sin—as if He watered your house plants and picked off all the dead leaves.

What does this 'house cleaning' look like in your life?

'Nothing Will I Withhold'

Preparing:

Sometimes it can be hard to imagine that our big, powerful, omnipotent God desires to be intimate with us. Truly it is amazing how we are the bride and Jesus is our bridegroom. The book of Song of Solomon paints so many vivid pictures of the kind of intimacy God desires for us as the bride of Christ. In chapter 1:2-4, Solomon's beloved (who would later become his bride) says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you! Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers."

God invites us into His chambers so that He can create deeper relationships with us, but how many times do we shy away from God's intimacy?

Think about what it would be like to be in a public dressing or changing room while you happened to be completely bare and then someone accidentally opened the door on you. There is an instinct that tells you to close the door immediately to hide yourself. Similarly, we can develop 'spiritual modesty' with God.

The first example of 'spiritual modesty' in the Bible occurs with Adam and Eve. After they sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, they became aware of their nakedness and were ashamed. Naturally, they covered themselves up by making clothes of fig leaves and they also 'hid' themselves from God. Obviously God could find Adam and Eve wherever they were because He knows and sees all things; nevertheless, Adam and Eve hid themselves because of the shame and fear they felt.

While Listening:

Sometimes we can be afraid to come before God because of things we have done in the past. We feel ashamed, afraid, or perhaps not even worthy to be in God's presence.

Is there anything that is keeping you from revealing your whole self and being intimate with God? What are you afraid God might see?

God is patiently waiting for you in His chambers...longing to see you. Open the door. Lay down those items that are hiding your whole self from God. Let Him see you as you are. Surrender yourself to God, and let Him love on you, for you are His beloved.

'Beautiful Glad Tidings'

Preparing:

How do you feel when someone tells you some good news?

When I hear good news, I feel like someone has tied a huge bunch of helium balloons to my heart strings. My spirit gets excited and begins to rise within me!

Did you know that one of the meanings of the word 'gospel' is glad tidings? The gospels (the first four books of the New Testament) contain glad tidings or good news that speaks of Jesus. In Luke 2:10-11 an angel appears to some shepherds in Bethlehem to tell them about Jesus. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Truly, this is great news! Although we are sinners, we have a savior. It is through Jesus' death and resurrection that the wages of sin have been paid through His blood and we are saved. Hearing this good news certainly causes my heart to soar!

While Listening:

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" ~Isaiah 52:7

God loves us despite our imperfections. In fact He loves us so much He sent His son Jesus to die for us. Because of Jesus' death, we are clothed with the garments of salvation—He has wrapped us in His robe of righteousness. Amen!

Respond to this song in words and pictures. How does it feel to hear this good news?