

What is a H.E.A.R. Journal?

The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. It's not about checking off the boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose is to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.

The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. After settling on a reading plan and establishing a time for studying God's Word, you will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.

For an illustration, let's assume that you begin your quiet time in the book of 2 Timothy, and today's reading is the first chapter of the book. Before reading the text, pause to sincerely ask God to speak to you. It may seem trite, but it is absolutely imperative that we seek God's guidance in order to understand His Word (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). Every time we open our Bibles, we should pray the simple prayer that David prayed: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law (Word)" (Psalm 119:18).

H

After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, open your notebook or journal, and at the top left-hand corner, write the letter H. This exercise will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of your reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. After reading the passage of Scripture, **HIGHLIGHT** each verse that speaks to you by copying it under the letter "H". Write out the following:

- The name of the book
- The passage of Scripture
- The chapter and verse numbers that especially speak to you
- A title to describe the passage

This practice will make it easier to find the passage when you want to revisit it in the future.

E

After you have highlighted the passage, write the letter "E" under the previous entry. At this stage you will **EXPLAIN** what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of God's Spirit, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Why was this written?
- To whom was it originally written?
- How does it fit with the verses before and after it?
- Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?
- What is He intending to communicate through this text?

At this point, you are beginning the process of discovering the specific and personal word that God has for you from His Word. What is important is that you are engaging the text and wrestling with its meaning.

A

After writing a short summary of what you think the text means, write the letter “A” below the letter “E”. Under the “A”, write the word **APPLY**. This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

- How can this help me?
- What does this mean today?
- What would the application of this verse look like in my life?
- What does this mean to me?
- What is God saying to me?

These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. They provide a way for God to speak to you from the specific passage or verse. Answer these questions under the “A”. Challenge yourself to write between two and five sentences about how the text applies to your life.

R

Finally, below the first three entries, write the letter “R” for **RESPOND**. Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you have learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

Notice that all of the words in the H.E.A.R. formula are action words: Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. God does not want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop some truth into our laps. Instead of waiting passively, God desires that we actively pursue Him. Jesus said,

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7).

Think of the miracle of the Bible. Over centuries, God supernaturally moved upon a number of men in an unusual way that resulted in them writing the exact words of God. God led His people to recognize these divine writings, and to distinguish them from everything else that has ever been written. Then God’s people brought these 66 books together. Then God gave men knowledge to copy and transmit the Bible so that all people could have it. All because God has something to say to you.

Sample H.E.A.R. Entry

Read: Philippians 4:10-13

Date: 11-30-13

Title: Secret of Contentment

H (Highlight)

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

E (Explain)

Paul was telling the church at Philippi that he has discovered the secret of contentment. No matter the situation in Paul's life, he realized that Christ was all he needed, and Christ was the one who strengthened him to persevere through difficult times.

A (Apply)

In my life, I will experience many ups and downs. My contentment is not found in circumstances. Rather, it is based on my relationship with Jesus Christ. Only Jesus gives me the strength I need to be content in every circumstance of life.

R (Respond)

Lord Jesus, please help me as I strive to be content in You. Through Your strength, I can make it through any situation I must face.

Kairos Journal

The Kairos Journal method is an alternative to the H.E.A.R. Journal. It is a more simplified version and is based on a core principle called the Kairos Circle that you'll find later in this guide. The thrust of the Kairos Journal method is to learn to engage God's Word in a way that transforms your heart, mind, and life. It's also not about checking off the boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose is to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.

The Kairos Journal method is based on two core questions: 1) What is God saying to me? And 2) What am I going to do about it?

To use this method, we would encourage the following process:

- Pray and ask God to reveal Himself and His truth to you through His word. Ask for understanding and the wisdom to know how to live it out.
- Write the date and the scripture being studied at the top of the page
- Read the passage, taking time to think about the following questions
- Write the question, "What is God saying to me?" Below that, write your notes and observations from that passage. Think through the context, what is being conveyed, and any principles that are taught through that passage. Write in your own words what God is teaching you through that passage.
- Below that, write the questions, "What am I going to do about it?" Below that question, write out your application. Think through how you can specifically live out the truth that God was showing you from the first question. It's a good practice to come up with an application you can live out that day!
- Finish with prayer thanking God for his Word and asking Him to help you live it out.

Sample Kairos Entry

Read: Philippians 4:10-13

Date: 11-30-21

1. What is God saying to me?

No matter what, I can be content in my life.

Whether I have a lot or nothing, God is enough.

I can choose contentment because Jesus is the one who fulfills me.

There are some things in my life that I'm putting too much stock in so I can be happy. I need to choose to be fulfilled by Jesus alone.

2. What am I going to do about it?

I need to stop looking to my possessions for contentment and happiness. I am committing to not purchasing any new clothes or technology for the next 2 months.

God, help me find fulfillment in you alone!

While you can use any Bible reading plan with a Kairos Journal, we recommend using either the Foundations 260 plan that helps disciples discover the comprehensive message of the Bible over a year, The Gospel Thread plan that chronologically covers the Gospel story throughout the Bible in a chapter a day, or the NT260 that covers the entire New Testament in a year. You can find those plans at MyFFBC.com/Bible.