

BRING
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A Guide to Preserving Spiritual Experiences

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CHAPTER 1

Becoming a Record Keeper

*Therefore give heed to my words;
write the things which I have told you.¹
Write the things which ye have seen and heard.²*

—Jesus Christ

One day, after we read from the Book of Mormon, my youngest daughter, Scout, announced, “There’s a book of Nephi, a book of Alma, a book of Moroni. . . . There should be a book of Scout!” In that moment, I felt like the Holy Ghost said to me, “There *could* be!” My initial excitement about the possibility grew into a desire to compile The Book of _____ for each of my kids. But because I didn’t act on the idea right away, it slowly sank lower and lower on my mental list of good intentions until I forgot about my plan. It didn’t get as low as “Make a baby blanket for Scout,” who is now ten years old, but it slipped from my conscious thought.

Thankfully, I heard a unique analogy that brought it back up to the surface of my mind. During a general conference address, Elder Neil L. Andersen compared spiritual experiences to rocks:

When personal difficulty, doubt, or discouragement darken our path, or when world conditions beyond our control lead us to wonder about the future, the **spiritually defining memories from our book of life are like luminous stones** that help brighten the road ahead, assuring us that God knows us, loves us, and has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to help us return home. And when someone sets their defining memories aside and is lost or confused, we turn them toward the Savior as we share our faith and memories with them, helping them rediscover those precious spiritual moments they once treasured.

Embrace your sacred memories. Believe them. **Write them down.** Share them with your family. Trust that they come to you from your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. Let them bring patience to your doubts and understanding to your difficulties. I promise you that as you willingly acknowledge and carefully treasure the spiritually defining events in your life, more and more will come to you.³

Elder Andersen’s talk resonated with me because I have never outgrown my childhood love of rocks. Although I never mention it when another adult asks what I do for fun, I feel genuinely happy when I look for rocks up in the mountains, out in the desert, or at the ocean. Years before I heard the word “mindfulness,” hunting for rocks and admiring them kept me completely present in beautiful places.

When our family hikes together, I see at least one rock that I can't stand to leave behind on the trail. By the time I pick up one that catches my eye, my kids usually have several in their pockets. For years, I enforced a rule that everyone had to carry their own rocks because I didn't want my backpack to get heavier and heavier throughout the hike. When my children were little and needed to keep their hands free for balance and climbing, I told them they could only bring home rocks that fit in their pockets.

One afternoon in Neffs Canyon, I found a large chunk of gray rock with a rust-colored inclusion in the center. Considering the cantaloupe-sized stone a unique piece of natural art, I carried the odd shape in both hands and wondered who would point out my obvious disregard for our family guidelines. As I slowly crossed a small stream with this find, my son, Bear, teased, "What happened to, 'if it fits in your pocket, you can bring it home?'" And with that, I abolished every rule we had about rocks.

After transporting our treasures in pockets, backpacks, and bare hands, we display our new rocks on various surfaces around the house. Sometimes, we stack them into little cairns or arrange them in shallow bowls. However, several months later, those stones get relegated to the bottom of a catchall drawer and are eventually stored in shoeboxes and repurposed peanut butter jars under our beds. Every now and then (I won't admit how infrequently we deep clean), someone rediscovers one of these collections, dumps it out, and looks at the rocks one by one. Although a few stones remind us of specific places we explored together, more often we don't remember where most of them originated and someone will wonder out loud, "Why did I keep *this* one?" Once treasured, without their contextual meaning, most of them become just rocks.

Each of us have experienced moments when we received thoughts or feelings from our Heavenly Parents through the Holy Ghost. When I heard Elder Andersen's talk, the Holy Ghost reminded me about the Book of Scout and gave me another chance to gather my children's spiritually defining memories. This time, I decided to act, collecting journal entries, Primary and sacrament meeting talks, and notes from their priesthood blessings into inexpensive three-ring binders.

Then, I interviewed them about times when they had felt the Holy Ghost and typed simple paragraphs to journal those moments. My kids had seen me document other people's personal experiences before, so this didn't seem strange to them. For years, whenever a friend or family member shared a testimony-building story with me, I immediately asked, "Did you write it down?" Tortured by the possibility that the story would be forgotten or lose its significance, I would wait a few days, then call or text with a cheerful reminder. If they hadn't yet recorded the experience, I stopped nagging and offered to type everything I could remember and email it to them so they could use it as a starting point.

Are you a record keeper? Are your luminous stones easily accessible so they can renew your faith and the testimonies of others? If they currently lie under the bed in a dusty shoebox of forgotten memories, this book is *your* starting point, a way to collect your stories into a record that will have power in your life and in the lives of others. The books of Enos, Mosiah, and Helaman contain accounts of how God interacted with ordinary people in their imperfect lives. As you write the experiences when you felt loved, seen, and guided by God, you will become a record keeper who stands as a witness and creates a source of ongoing spiritual strength.

Writing about our faith-building experiences brings a multitude of blessings and benefits, including:

- As you record the moments when you felt the Spirit, you send a sign to God that you value those experiences.
- When you write down your memories, you get to relive those moments and enjoy them again.
- In addition to the good feelings that come from revisiting them, “remembering spiritual experiences . . . reinforces your faith.”⁴ Just like bearing your testimony aloud makes it stronger, writing your testimony reaffirms and solidifies your beliefs.
- Reading about your spiritual experiences may help your kids, grandkids, friends, and others, so taking the time to preserve your faith-building memories is one more way for you to help gather Israel.
- Your inspirational stories will be ready for you to easily incorporate into a future talk or lesson at church.
- When you encounter trials in the future, your written experiences can bring you comfort and motivate you to stay close to the Lord. You might even listen to your own advice when you aren’t open to the counsel of others!
- Peace of mind and other blessings come from following the counsel of current and past prophets, who have asked us to record sacred experiences. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught, “Obedience brings great strength and power into your lives.”⁵
- Writing about Jesus Christ is a form of worship as we acknowledge and praise Him.
- Recording personal revelation increases our capacity to receive it!

Many prophets and apostles have taught that writing is part of learning to communicate with God. When President Russell M. Nelson instructed us to “stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation,” he also explained *how* to do it. Did you notice that in addition to “increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon, and regular time committed to temple and family history work,” he also counseled us to write? He said: “Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! **Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings** and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will “grow into the principle of revelation.”⁶

In general conference three years later, President Nelson again referred to writing in conjunction with increasing our spirituality. He asked, “What would you do if you had *more* faith?” Then he instructed, “Think about it. Write about it.”⁷

If you want to enjoy the myriad of promised blessings that come from writing about sacred experiences but you feel stress, anxiety, or trepidation when you look at an empty page or blank screen, please know that these negative reactions are common. The daunting task of filling unstructured space with words makes many people freeze or walk away. Even those who desire to follow the counsel of Church leaders to record sacred moments often express valid concerns that fall into three main categories:

- “I don’t know where to start!”
- “I’m not a good writer!”
- “I can’t think of any spiritual experiences!”

Temporary Obstacle #1: “I don’t know where to start!”

As with most tasks and projects, figuring out where to start can feel like the hardest part. But the beauty of the story you are going to write is that you will begin in the middle! It’s actually better to not worry about an introduction because nothing kills momentum like too much context. When I reread old journal entries, I find myself slogging through paragraphs and paragraphs of backstory before I reach the beautiful moment of connection that I originally intended to record. I regret that before I explained the exciting event, I always felt the need to explain the evolution of the relationships and feelings that led up to that moment. Besides messing up the backstory-to-actual-story ratio, that approach has even altered the tone of my entry, especially when a story about forgiveness no longer has a tone of relief and joy because I spent five paragraphs chronicling the months that I held a grudge.

So, please don’t stress about an introduction. You will write that at the end, and by then you will find it surprisingly simple. We don’t need to know who went on the hike, who forgot the sunscreen, or which songs you listened to on the car ride to the trailhead. Your story starts with the moment that you bent down and picked up a beautiful stone. The moment that the Holy Ghost answered your prayer. The moment that you felt unexpected and inexplicable peace. You can add backstory later. When you write your story out of order, some of the pressure of getting it “right” dissipates.

Temporary Obstacle #2: “I’m not a good writer!”

For many people, how to start is only one of the obstacles that inhibits momentum. The other stems from years in school when teachers handed back our papers covered with corrections in red ink. Trained to watch for errors, our brains tend to think about writing the way we think about math. When we solve math problems, our goal is to discover the single right answer. By contrast, when we created art in school, our teachers accepted many results as valid and valuable. You might have liked your tissue paper owl more than the owl glued together by the little boy across the table, or vice versa. But all the owls had a certain charm, and we celebrated the differences; we didn’t point them out with a frown. In math, we compare our answers with others to see if we achieved the goal. But in art, every finished piece must be original; otherwise, we hold a copy, not a creation.

Writing falls somewhere between math and art, but most of us scoot it too far down the scale toward structured equations. Lurking in the back of our minds, Spelling and Grammar watch us for any misstep, ready to dock points and reduce our grade. But remember, no one will correct your story and give you a score. Anyone who reads it will feel grateful, not critical. We can trust that as members of our family hear our stories, they “will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither contempt.”⁸

Think of every piece of your story as a little art project, a natural expression of an idea that doesn’t have a “correct” or “incorrect” value. And if it helps you to think of it as a

first draft, simply remind yourself that once you get the basic story written down, it's manageable and straightforward to polish it later—if you want to. (See chapter 8 for more on improving existing stories.) As you record your spiritual experiences, just write them the way you would tell these stories to a close friend. Don't try to sound smarter than you are. You are the perfect balance of smart, funny, serious, honest, and spiritual to tell your own story, *The Book of _____*. Go ahead and write your name on that line right now! You are now a record keeper.

As you flip through the starter questions at the end of every chapter, notice which one jumps out at you and sparks a memory. Whichever question resonates with you is the exact spot to start. And as you consider the prompts, don't worry if you don't have answers to all of them. Even writing a paragraph in response to two or three will yield a beautiful and valuable record.

Temporary Obstacle #3: “I can't think of any spiritual experiences!”

Surprising things happen when we make our prayers as specific as possible. Ask our Father in Heaven to help you remember your spiritual experiences, and the Holy Ghost will bring thoughts to your mind. Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “Inspiration carefully recorded shows God that His communications are sacred to us. Recording will also enhance our ability to recall revelation.”⁹ And our Savior gave us this simultaneously reassuring and exciting promise:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and **bring all things to your remembrance**, whatsoever I have said unto you.¹⁰

President Henry B. Eyring shared a personal experience that illustrates this principle:

I came home late from a Church assignment. It was after dark. My father-in-law, who lived near us, surprised me as I walked toward the front door of my house. He was carrying a load of pipes over his shoulder, walking very fast and dressed in his work clothes. I knew that he had been building a system to pump water from a stream below us up to our property.

He smiled, spoke softly, and then rushed past me into the darkness to go on with his work. I took a few steps toward the house, thinking of what he was doing for us, and just as I got to the door, I heard in my mind—not in my own voice—these words: “I'm not giving you these experiences for yourself. Write them down.”

I went inside. I didn't go to bed. Although I was tired, I took out some paper and began to write. As I did, I understood the message I had heard in my mind. I was supposed to record for my children to read, someday in the future, how I had seen the hand of God blessing our family.

I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all

things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.¹¹

I love how the message President Eyring received didn't come after a magnificent miracle. The Holy Ghost instructed him to write about something seemingly ordinary. In the moment when he stood still and saw his father-in-law's gift of time with spiritual eyes, he recognized it as a blessing. Remember, "all things which are good cometh of God; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good . . . is inspired of God."¹²

Elder Ronald A. Rasband explained the true criteria for a sacred experience this way: "Miracles, signs, and wonders abound among followers of Jesus Christ today, in your lives and in mine. Many of you have witnessed miracles, more than you realize. They may seem small . . . but the magnitude does not distinguish a miracle, only that it came from God."¹³

When we decide to define our spiritual experiences by the source, not the size, we will start to notice more miracles. And if you are not sure whether certain moments in your life deserve the label "personal revelation," writing about those experiences will invite the Holy Ghost to testify to your heart and mind, enabling you to make connections that you didn't see before.

We often call the small miracles in our lives "acts of service." President Kimball taught, "The Lord does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs."¹⁴ When has someone met your needs? Maybe they deliberately fulfilled an errand from the Lord that day. Maybe they didn't even realize that they delivered a blessing. My mom used to tell us that we should always smile at an elderly person in the grocery store and say hello to them because "you will never know—you might be the only person who smiles at them in their whole day." Adamant that we learn this important lesson, she repeated the counsel more than any other specific admonition, and to this day, I cannot pass a white-haired customer in a grocery store without feeling a responsibility to show kindness.

We have the power to meet each other's needs in simple ways, and God has the power to meet our needs in more ways than we can imagine. Most of us have had a moment that we could call a coincidence or a tender mercy, depending on our perspective. When I discussed this concept with my friend Andy, even though he describes himself as "not religious," he immediately thought of an event in his life that he described as, "beyond good luck." Can you think of a moment like that? If so, you can summarize it in a sentence or two right here:

You just started your story! Well done.

Elder Richard G. Scott encouraged, "You will find that as you write down precious impressions, often more will come."¹⁵ Slowly, other memories will float up from your subconscious and surprise you because as your brain works on this project, you will receive spiritual help. When we work to build something that God wants us to create, He will help us "find ore to molten,"¹⁶ or access source material for our heaven-endorsed project. President Camille N. Johnson, who served as both Primary General President and Relief Society General President, taught that the Savior, "the author and finisher of

our faith,”¹⁷ can also be “the author and finisher of your story.”¹⁸ If we allow Jesus Christ to guide our lives, He will also guide us as we bring forth the record of our lives. We simply need to take the first step by indicating our willingness.

When my dad taught my youth Sunday School class during my senior year of high school, he liked to balance his open scriptures on one hand and read from them as he taught. His flat palm and long, outstretched fingers made the perfect platform. With his other hand, he gestured to emphasize his sincere, articulate testimony. I only remember one lesson when he deviated from his typical style. Since I learn best from visual aids, his most memorable lesson for me occurred when he uncharacteristically held his copy of the Book of Mormon in both hands and opened and closed it several times in a row to teach us about willingness. He told us that the moment we open the scriptures—pausing to slowly open the Book of Mormon in front of us—we show God that we *want* to receive personal revelation. Because I previously associated receiving personal revelation with extraordinary need or tremendous effort, my understanding expanded as he taught us that before we even read a single word, God will bless us for that tiny act of obedience. Closing the scriptures again, he emphasized, “As soon as you *open* them, the scriptures become a conduit for the Holy Ghost to speak to you.” I stared at the book, once again open in his hands, marveling at the abundant goodness of a God that will bless us for every small step toward Him.

With confidence, I testify that we can apply the same promise to writing our own sacred stories. Because the “Lord seeth not as man seeth,” He doesn’t look at the “outward appearance” of a person, an experience, or an empty page. Instead, He “looketh on the heart”¹⁹ and sees the potential of an individual and the miracle in the seemingly ordinary moment. When we intend to record our spiritually defining memories, we qualify for heavenly help the moment we pick up a pen.

When Jesus Christ visited the Nephites, He didn’t just ask whether they *remembered* the miracles they had witnessed; He also asked whether they had *recorded* the miracles:

Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not. And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: **Bring forth the record which ye have kept.**

And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said: Verily, I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words and they were all fulfilled.

And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them? And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that **Jesus commanded that it should be written**; therefore it was written according as he commanded.²⁰

Starting today, you can keep this commandment to write about those who have ministered to you and the miracles you have seen. You can bring forth your record of

how the Savior has influenced your life. As you compile your stories like the record keepers who contributed to *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, you will create *The Book of _____: A Personal Testament of Jesus Christ*.

1. 3 Nephi 23:4.
2. 3 Nephi 27:23.
3. Neil A. Andersen, “Spiritually Defining Memories” *Ensign*, May 2020; emphasis added.
4. Steven E. Snow, “The Sacred Duty of Record Keeping” *Ensign*, May 2019.
5. Joseph B. Wirthlin “Live in Obedience” *Ensign*, May 1994.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives” *Ensign*, May 2018; emphasis added.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains” *Liabona*, May 2021.
8. Jacob 4:3.
9. Richard G. Scott, “How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life” *Ensign*, May 2012.
10. John 14:26.
11. Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember” *Ensign*, November 2007.
12. Moroni 7:13.
13. Ronald A. Rasband, “Behold! I Am a God of Miracles,” *Liabona*, May 2021.
14. Spencer W. Kimball, “President Kimball Speaks Out on Service to Others” *Ensign*, March 1981.
15. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Knowledge and the Strength to Use It Wisely” *Ensign*, June 2002.
16. 1 Nephi 17:9.
17. Hebrews 12:2.
18. Camille N. Johnson, “Invite Christ to Author Your Story” *Liabona*, November 2021.
19. 1 Samuel 16:7.
20. 3 Nephi 23:6–7, 11–13; emphasis added.

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