

#14 Recording and Reviewing God's Prophetic Words -- Writing

Journaling. Putting thoughts on paper. Writing. It is an important part of understanding prophecy. The "writing prophets" of the Old Testament understood that God's Word needs to be recorded. Jeremiah took great pains to record and re-record the prophetic words he received. Amos, the first of the writing prophets, recognized that though the word spoken through him had been rejected, it was necessary that the word be recorded and that God would receive the recognition when it came to pass. It is important for us today to record God's word in writing. But how do we do that?

Let me approach this subject in a rather unusual way, utilizing the example of three writers (not necessarily Christian, nor even religious). Each of these men was "inspired" in his own right, and each has recorded how they found that inspiration and utilized it in writing their novels. Because of the wide scope of the art of journaling, I am going to divide this topic into three teachings. Today we will look at writing. In the next lesson I'll discuss rewriting. And the third teaching will tackle the topic of discerning God's voice through writing.

Isaac Asimov was one of the most prolific writers of the twentieth century. His basic approach to writing was to "think with my typewriter." He would spend as much as fifteen hours a day typing. It didn't matter the subject, because as he would type the thoughts began to flow. He would rise at about 6:00 AM, prepare himself for the day, then situate himself at his desk no later than 7:30 AM. Once settled he would type. His inspiration came as he began to put words to the page.

Fr. Nick Henderson used to say that we should sit with paper and pen and begin writing until God has something to say. As I'm writing this, I'm at Mepkin Abbey. One of the primary ways that I hear God in this place is that I spend as many hours as possible writing in my journal. Just this morning I sat in the commons room with a cup of coffee and stared at a blank page. There was no inspiration. So, I began to write. I wrote about the reason I was here. I wrote about the new retreat center. And then I wrote about the night past. As I wrote, God cleared my mind and I began to remember a dream I had during the night. God began to unfold that dream for me and I understood what He was showing me. It was the process of slowing down and putting words to the paper that helped bring God's inspiration--His "inspiring" of my thoughts.

It is easy to come to God with an agenda. Often, when I come to the monastery, I have to fight against my mind being cluttered with what I want to talk about with God. I come to God with MY agenda. "Please God, tell me about . . ." But, more often than not, God wants to talk about what we didn't ask. Journaling helps us sort through our thoughts and open us to what God wants to say. The act of writing words down and letting them flow freely onto the page helps us cut through the clutter of our agenda and the various voices vying for our attention.

Journaling does not have to be anything formal. You don't need an "official" journal book. A simple spiral binder or looseleaf notebook will do. You don't have to worry about proper spelling and punctuation or legibility -- this isn't necessarily for publication! It is the discipline that opens our spirit to God's Spirit.

Sadly, we have become techno-dependent. We want to take shortcuts. We want to use audio recording devices and computers to do our recording. Schools no longer teach children cursive writing, and none of us believe we have the time to waste on writing with pen and ink (or pencil, if you prefer). But there is tremendous value in the discipline of time given to God to record His word in our lives. And stopping long enough to sit down and record our thoughts (and God's inspired words to us) on paper opens us more and more to His voice. This discipline helps us learn how to hear and recognize His voice.