

## The H.E.A.R. Journaling Method

The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will your focus be on checking off the boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose will instead be 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).

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". Some people like to actually highlight or underline the verse in their Bibles. 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. 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. The next chapter will teach you in detail how to understand the meaning of a passage. Until then, 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.

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.

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 of time, 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 sixty-six books together. The preservation and survival of the Bible is as miraculous as its writing. Then God gave men, beginning with Gutenberg’s printing press, technological knowledge to copy and transmit the Bible so that all people could have it. All because God has something to say to *you*.

## **Memorizing the Word**

In addition to outlining daily passages for reading, your plan should also include Scriptures to memorize weekly. In the F260 plan, each Scripture was carefully selected to coincide with the week's reading. If you are following another reading plan, look for a passage to memorize each week that reinforces your reading plan.

### ***How can I memorize the word?***

While many plans for memorizing Scripture are effective, I like the simplicity of the F260 plan. Get a pack of index cards and commit to memorize God's Word. Write the reference of the verse on one side of the card and the text of the verse on the other. Writing the verse out actually helps you memorize it. As you accumulate memory verses, carry your pack of Scripture cards with you and concentrate on three to five verses to review, plus the current week's verse.

Throughout the day, whenever you have a few minutes, pull out your pack of Scripture cards and review them. Read the reference first, followed by the verse. Continue to recite the verse until you get a feel for the flow of the passage. When you are comfortable with the text, look only at the reference side of the card in order to test your recall.

It is important to recite the reference first, then the verse, and finish with the reference again. This will prevent you from becoming a concordance cripple. By memorizing the references, you will speak with authority and gain the respect of your hearers when you quote Scripture.

When you master five verses, begin to study five more. Review all of the verses you have learned at least once a week. As your pack grows, you will be encouraged to keep going in Scripture memorization, and you will experience its powerful effects in your life.

If you are more digitally inclined, there are a number of good memory verse apps available for your smart phone or tablet. The one I use is Scripture Typer, and I find it to be highly effective for prompting me for reviews and daily memory work. It's a free app until you accumulate 50 verses, then you will have to purchase it. But it's only \$10.