

## Journal with a Fountain Pen

I enjoy writing in my journal with a fountain pen. Yes, an old-fashioned fountain pen. And whether a new model or a “vintage” pen, with a stiff nib or a flexible one, a good fountain pen is a pleasure to write with. Even the ritual of pausing to draw ink from a bottle into a thirsty pen can bring a sense of nostalgic satisfaction in our high-tech, efficiency-driven world. I commend this method of journal writing to you.

Journaling with a pen provides adds variety to this discipline, a change from always clacking entries into a computer. In some cases, writing by hand affords a flexibility of time and place for journaling that electronic means cannot allow. The variation in method or location may even spark more creative entries, for fresh ideas often follow fresh approaches.

There’s also an intentional slowness to journaling with a fountain pen. When I’m dancing all ten fingers as rapidly as possible in front of my computer it’s hard for my soul to be serene. But watching my words take shape with the free flow of ink to paper frequently helps my soul decelerate to the pace of my body.

What’s more, there can be a beauty in the strokes of a pen that goes beyond the strict utility of just recording your thoughts. Writing by hand with a splendid pen is more expressive than banging out words on a plastic keyboard. Despite all it can do, the computer cannot replace the singular quality that has caused the fountain pen to endure for generations. Even the pen itself can be beautiful, something we don’t typically ascribe to computers.

“But my handwriting’s awful,” you say. A fountain pen immediately improves it, sometimes dramatically. Using a good pen in a meditative frame of mind also causes you to take more time with the turn of the letters, adding flourishes and style that beautify your script.

I don’t say that you should always use a pen when journaling. If I know I’m likely to write several pages, I’ll almost always choose the computer because of time constraints. And there are times when, as I’ve advocated elsewhere, it frees the heart or the thought-flow to write in your journal quickly. But you can do that with a pen, and not just with a computer.

No matter whether you put your thoughts on paper with a fountain pen or a computer, use an acid-free paper that will last. Many standard copier/printer papers are acid-free. They can also work for hand-written entries. I cut sheets in half and hole-punch them to fit in my ring-binder journal. Be aware that a fountain pen works differently on different papers. On some coarse papers, like those found in some handsomely bound journals, the ink can bleed.

As with any discipline, journaling can become routine. So use tools that will invite you to write. If necessary, ask a fountain pen user or at a pen shop about pens and papers. You might even find a colorful ink that makes you want to fill a page with it. Depending upon the pen, you may not have to use bottled ink unless you choose to do so. Many pens can use either cartridges (convenient for traveling) or bottled ink.

Finally, there’s a simplicity inherent in using a pen to write in a journal. It doesn’t require electronics, a printer, or batteries. It can slow us into the same mental rhythms of the one who penned, “This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord” (Psalm 102:18), and of the apostle Paul, who dipped a quill to say, “I have written to you with my own hand” (Galatians 6:11).

The heft of a pen in my hand with the things of God on my mind has often been good for my soul. Try it for yours.