
Chapter 6

How to Grow pt 3 | Time, Space, Journal

I started participating in the Word of the Year project in 2011, over 15 years ago. I recently interacted with a woman on Substack who was blown away by my commitment to this project year after year, but I was topped! A friend recently posted online that she has participated in the Word of the Year for over 20 years!

This friend, I, and others have chosen a Word year after year because it has transformed our lives. However, the last 5 to 6 years have been my most fruitful years of selecting a Word. These lessons I'm sharing with you are why I grow each year. As a reminder, they are:

- Believe and Share
- Listen | Study, Pray, Meditate, and Contemplate
- Act

Of course, it all begins by being intentional. I'm sure you're sick of that word by now, but **intentionality is THE key to this entire project.** I have two more steps for you to take in this session, but they work only if you intentionally take them.

Let's dive in.

#1 - Find a Time + Space

Self-improvement doesn't happen in a vacuum or because you wish it to happen. It takes time and effort. I've suggested incorporating study, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and action to learn and grow from your Word of the Year. However, these things won't happen if you don't determine a time and place for them.

This is one of those keys I've found over the last few years for success. **I need a specific time and place to learn and do.** I've also become both a disciplined person and a morning person, but neither is natural to me.

Several years ago, I began waking up a little earlier each morning on workdays to read, meditate, and pray. Initially, I would stay in bed, but inevitably, I would fall back asleep or wake my wife, who was still sleeping. My habit of falling back asleep led me to get out of bed and head into our kitchen (rather than our living room, where the temptation to sleep remained) to sit and read.

Most recently, I have moved from my kitchen table to a newly created office space in a spare bedroom.

So you won't miss the point, I wake up at 6:15 each morning and walk from my bedroom to my office table to read, pray, meditate, and contemplate God's Word, which I have also paired with my current Word of the Year. I have a specific time and place I've set aside to grow.

If you review the life of Jesus when reading through the Gospels, you'll see that finding time and space to be alone was one of his regular practices. He often would remove himself from the hustle and bustle of life to be alone. In these moments, we must assume he prayed, meditated, and contemplated the things he had studied over the years (how this worked in his day is much different from the always-available information we have today). Finding time and space were regular practices of Jesus.

You need this time and space, too. It doesn't need to be early in the morning, at home, or every day. It just needs to be a regular slice of time where you can be quiet and think.

Time + Space for Doing

This principle also applies to the action step of learning. I have two ways I actively learn from my Word of the Year – writing and screenprinting.

Every Wednesday and Thursday morning, I work remotely at one of several coffee shops in the area and write. Not always, but the writing is often directly related to my Word of the Year. Some sessions aren't about writing; they're about preparing for future writing, so I'll go back through my notes and thoughts from the past weeks and months. I'm often reminded of the things I'm learning through my Word of the Year.

I also have a space in my basement for screen printing. It isn't large, but it is big enough to hold a simple one-color screen print and the supplies needed for it. However, I currently lack the specific time to make this happen throughout the week and month. **In fact, writing this booklet has been an incredible challenge for me, as I have to find the time to be in this space regularly.**

It has challenged me enough to take a short break from writing to go online, purchase t-shirts and a few supplies I'm lacking, and to sketch out an idea for a t-shirt to print. Thanks for your help!

Disclaimer: Busy is Reality

I won't lie. Finding time and space is so much easier now that my children are (mostly) grown. Some days, I pop my head into a bedroom to wake up a sleeping teen for school, but I'm not changing diapers, making lunches, or brushing children's hair. It's easier today than it was 15 years ago, but even then, the potential was there to find 15 minutes a few days a week to stop and think.

I'm sure you are busy too. You have a business or work full-time, and possibly have another job on top of that. You have children, are married, or are committed to a charitable organization. You have chores around the house, maintenance to keep up with your vehicle, and you try to work out regularly. You're busy, and this means finding a slice of time in your already busy day.

As counterintuitive as it may seem, committing 15-30 minutes several times a week to do what seems like nothing will be the thing that helps improve every one of those areas of your life in ways you could never imagine.

I wish I had started these practices earlier in life. Don't make the same mistake. Find a time and place to learn, act, and grow.

#2 - Journal

Do you ever have a fantastic idea you can't wait to implement? And then, for some reason, you are distracted, and then you cannot recall the groundbreaking concept you had a day, an hour, or even five minutes before?

Finding Time and Space is an obvious step, but this may be less obvious depending on how you view journaling. Beyond not living intentionally, this is why some of my Words in the earlier years of this project felt dry. **The reason was twofold: I didn't take the time to write down the ideas, and I didn't have a system to record them.**

Historically, I was not a journaler, but most of the people I admire (either personally or from a distance) write down their thoughts and ideas. Again, I had never been a journaler, so I had no idea how to get to that point. Determined to figure out this discipline, I literally Googled "How to Journal." Not surprisingly, I found pages of options to choose from in my journaling quest.

It worked.

My journal probably doesn't look like many others', but I now have a collection of thoughts (mine and others'). The biggest plus to this new element of my life is the habit of writing or copying things that speak to me throughout the day.

The first step you need to take to have your own journaling success story is to create a journaling system.

Create a Journaling System

For this project, I suggest three systems of journaling: physical, digital, and hybrid. Over the last several years, I've tried all three, but I have settled on a hybrid system. I maintain two digital journals, one in which I handwrite (using a digital pen) and the other in which I type or copy text.

For my first journal, which I use almost every day, I use an iPad Mini, an Apple Pencil, and the Notability app, mainly for my early-morning meditation practice. I always handwrite the thoughts and quotes I find in these sessions (usually from Scripture or other spiritual literature).

My second journal is Apple Notes. In it, I capture moments of contemplation in my life. I type, copy, or take pictures of quotes or links to intriguing articles and videos.

What is important to me in creating my system is accessibility. This has a two-fold meaning for me. First, I want to take a note when I have an idea or a thought. By using the Apple Notes app, I can always take a note because I almost always have my phone with me. Second, I want to review my notes no matter what device I have handy. The Notability app works across multiple devices—computer, tablet, and smartphone—so it is a perfect option for this purpose.

Create a Journaling Habit

Your journaling system is only as good as what you record throughout the weeks and months of the year. It doesn't need to be daily, but you should regularly record your thoughts about your Word or what you are learning in life.

It is not helpful for me if I am militaristic about the process. It doesn't need to be daily, but do you have something to record a few times a week? It could even be a few times a month. It doesn't have to be pages, but is there even a sentence or phrase you can record to spark your memory? I've found recording the thoughts and ideas of others on my Word (or anything intriguing) is as good or better than the thoughts I have, too.

All of this should add up to interesting notes to look back on over the year(s).

Review Your Journal

If I'm an expert at Word of the Year (which would be self-proclaimed), it is only because of analyzing all the mistakes I've made over the years. **One of the mistakes I've made is not reviewing my journals enough.**

As I stated earlier, my 2024 Word of the Year was CONTENT, and midway through the year, I reviewed my journals. This review process was enlightening because I didn't think I had gained much until I looked back over them. I realized I had way more knowledge about contentment than I imagined.

I suggest reviewing your journal quarterly. As you read your thoughts and notes from the year, see if you can identify any themes or have a more profound revelation about what you first considered your Word at the beginning of the year. (Remember that little note you wrote down? This is where you review it to see how your understanding of your Word has changed and expanded.)

Journaling is invaluable because it reminds me of what I'm learning. If you are impressed by the little nuggets I pass along, you should first be thankful I journal. **Just as important, you have similar pieces of wisdom inside of you. You think of them all the time, but you most likely don't have a system to capture them.**

Chapter 6 Homework | Time, Space, Journal

Captain Obvious with this homework assignment, but it needs to be said.

1. Define when you can commit to studying and meditating 3 times a week.
2. Define the place where you will study and meditate.
3. Create your journaling system (digital, physical, or hybrid).
4. Commit to journaling 1-3x weekly.

About Andy



My name is Andy Bondurant. In over 25 years of professional and volunteer ministry experience in the urban, suburban, international, and domestic worlds, and now as a pastor at a local church in Kansas, I have found that most people make connecting to God too complicated. Most people don't believe they can personally connect to Jesus.

Understanding the God of the Bible is easier than you might think, and I want to show you how.

You can find a new article about once or twice a week, where I'll show you how to connect with and understand God. If you don't want to miss one of these, sign up for updates, and I'll send you a free eBook devotional that will help you draw closer to God in just 30 days.

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