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Keep Thy Personal Journal Private!

By Barbara Carr Phillips

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If you live with other people, I know you shudder to think about what would happen if your personal journal fell into the wrong hands. Journaling is not about writing something and then leaving it on your bed so your family can see how you really feel about them. You may be tempted to do that at times, but don't.

It's just not cool for your mother to read your rant about how ugly you think her purple polka dot shirt is. You wrote that you scrunched down in your elementary school chair until your eyes were even with your desk, wishing to disappear when she walked into the room wearing that purple people eater.

You can still hear little Jimmy Morgan snickering behind you, saying the dots would make good bull's eyes for his spit wads. And look, she's still wearing that thing like some kind of vintage-fashion-rage fifteen years later and you want to barf.

Of course, it doesn't really bother you to that extreme, but you were thinking about it the day you wrote it in your journal and it felt good to exaggerate. Writing even made you laugh about it. But the thought of mom reading that entry makes your face flush and your knees feel weak.

I know one mom who read her daughter's journal all the time. The daughter always left it open on her bed, knowing her mother would make the bed and pick it up. After hearing about a few confrontational episodes between this mom and daughter, I suggested that the mom buy a journal that she and her daughter could write in and exchange. This way, each person could "talk" without interruption and there would be no invasion of privacy.

Passing a journal back and forth can be great fun if it's decided in advance. All other times: Keep thy journal confidential.

There are a few ways to do this. I never buy books that have "My Diary," "My Journal" or "My

"So-Called Life Since You Ruined It" imprinted on the cover. I think they're too tempting for snoopers.

Once I bought a journal that looked like an encyclopedia on the outside. No one in my family paid any attention to it as it sat on my bookshelf, and I used it as a cathartic journal (a type of journal used to express emotion).

Another way to protect your journal from snoops is to buy a book at a garage sale that wouldn't interest anyone in your family, (like, "How to Prepare your 1981 Federal Income Tax Return"). Pick out a book so dry that the garage sales will whisper, "see, people will buy anything at a garage sale," as you walk away. Hollow out the cover and put your journal in it.

If that's not secure enough for you, hide it in the unsweetened, generic cereal box at the back of the pantry. If your family is like mine, they will skip breakfast if unsweetened, generic cereal is all you have left. Trust me, I've done this. I wrote about it for Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible. It works.

If you still have doubts about privacy in your household, keep your journal in a locked file drawer, desk drawer or a small safe.

It is very important that you feel your writing is just for you. Otherwise, you are not going to write about how you really feel. You can be insecure and fearful in the world, but the writing part of you, the part that you share with your journal, cannot. Write about your fears and how they affect you . . . and tell the truth.

Barbara Carr Phillips journals, teaches journaling, writes about journaling, hangs out with journalers and sells cool journaling products at: www.journalworkshops.com.

Is it Love?

By Joyce C. Lock

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W. W. J. D. ?

Jesus said ... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mt. 22:37-40

So, there you have it. Hang the law.

Is it Love?

When you're the picture of health, yet you park in the handicapped zone ...

Is it Love?

If you leave shopping carts in any path but yours,
at the risk of other cars getting scratched ...

Is it Love?

When you scream absurdities at traffic that inconveniences you ...

Is it Love?

What if you use an automobile to intimidate drivers in your path ...

Is it Love?

When you belittle someone who has less than your abilities ...

Is it Love?

Suppose you take the credit and bows for another's accomplishments ...

Is it Love?

When you say things, in anger, that can damage another's testimony ...

Is it Love?

Maybe someone calls you with an immediate need,
just before a church service,
yet you ignore the request to be on time ...

Is it Love?

When you look down on someone who isn't dressed just right ...

Is it Love?

If you complain when someone takes your seat ...

Is it Love?

When you rush past someone waiting to talk to you,
so as not to miss the person going out the door ...

Is it Love?

Suppose you see the Spirit compelling,
but give the position to one with more credentials.

Is it Love?

When you're faced with a dilemma of choosing God's will over opposition ...

Is it Love?

When God reveals something to you contrary to man's teachings,
yet you keep silent ...

Is it Love?

If you want to know what Jesus Would Do,
just ask yourself ...

~ Is it love? ~

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," Matthew 11:30.

Ye keep my commandments by abiding in my love ... (par.) John 15:10.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," Proverbs 4:23.

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Joyce C. Lock is a published author, poet, and columnist. In addition, she founded and maintains the e-mail ministries "Heavenly Inspirations" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HeavenlyInspirations/> and "Share a Smile" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/smilessharing/>. Joyce's writings encourage us in our relationship with God and each other.

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