

End of Year Reflection Guide

Are you running on fumes, or do you have fresh wind in your sails as you approach the final days of 2023?

Whatever your situation, it is important to make space to reflect with God on the year that is passing and to prayerfully prepare for the year ahead.

Taking time for reflection is a critical practice. Reflection fosters learning, stimulates growth, calls for course corrections, identifies priorities and renews focus and energy.

In the midst of the chaos, complexity and change all around us, it is also important to carve out quiet space to simply listen to God and reflect.

So to help you or your team or even your family intentionally reflect, we have created this updated guide.

Set aside an hour in a quiet space, download the guide, bring a journal/paper/pen and invest in intentional reflection. Rest and refocus in this opportunity to slow down, listen, reflect, pray, process and refocus.

If you are doing this exercise with your team or family:

- Start by sharing the vision/reason behind this activity [see above] and hand out printed copies of the guide.
- Share that this is an opportunity to reflect and process individually and together, but that they get to choose what they are comfortable sharing with the team/family after some personal processing time.
- Assign time for personal processing [approximately 30-60 minutes] and give people space to go off on their own with the guide, paper/journal and pen.
- When the group gathers back, you can ask the group what the exercise was like overall and why [e.g.: easy, hard, not enough time, too much time, etc.].
- Invite [nicely require] everyone in the group to share 1 or 2 items from their praise and thanks list. Take a moment to celebrate the group's list together.
- Invite [not require] everyone in the group to share something from one other segment of their choosing.
- Invite [not require] everyone to share something from the preparation segment that looks ahead [e.g.: leave behind, take with you, priorities for year ahead, etc.].
- Pray for one another. You could pray over each person in the group or divide the group into pairs.

Pray Numbers 6:24–26 blessing over each person by name:

"The Lord bless you, _____, and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24–26).

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GET STARTED

- Take a few slow deep breaths to slow your heart and mind down.
- Pray silently, out loud or on paper.
- Thank God that he is with you right now.
- Let him know that you want to hear from him and for him to guide you in this time of reflection.

Here's a sample prayer:

Lord, thank you that you see me right now. Thank you that you are with me right now. As I reflect back on the year that's been, would you guide me. Help me to see what you see. Prompt me with things that are important to you and important for me. Guard me from distraction and protect me in this time.

NOTE

There are seven parts to this reflection time. Take your time and reflect with the Lord through each one. Linger where you need to linger. Move on if it makes sense to move on.

Part 1 – Praise and Thanks

Even in hard seasons there are blessings, special surprises and concrete examples of God's goodness and provision. Celebrating is good, and most of us need to celebrate more than we do. Above all, we also need to thank God and celebrate his goodness.

What are you thankful for?

How have you seen God at work?

What have you learned?

How have you persevered?

What can you celebrate?

Make a list of at least 10 items. Write your own psalm of praise or thanksgiving. Or if helpful, you can use these prompts:

- Lord, I want to praise you and thank you for what you have done.
- I am thankful that you have . . .
- I am thankful that you are . . .

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Part 2 – Grieve

No one likes to grieve, but losses are real and need to be processed. Grieving with God is a biblical, healthy and needed outlet, especially in difficult seasons.

Looking back over the year, what's been hard, disappointing or a struggle?

Who or what has been lost, or at least seems lost?

You can share your grief with God by writing or saying a prayer using these prompts:

- Lord, these are some of the things that have been hard this year . . .
- Lord, even as I grieve, by your grace, I choose to trust you regardless. You are . . .
[Declare truth about God's character here.]

Part 3 – Confess

Sometimes we blow it. We make mistakes. We sin against God and others.

Rather than live in the guilt and shame, we need to admit it to God and seek his forgiveness.

Sometimes other people offend, hurt and harm us. It's important not to diminish the impact on our lives, but Christians are called to forgive because we have been forgiven by Christ [Colossians 3:13]. Forgiving someone doesn't necessarily mean the relationship is fully restored to the way it was. But forgiving does mean that you release them before God and no longer carry the weight of unforgiveness.

Reflect back over the year, is forgiveness needed anywhere?

Do you need to forgive anyone or seek forgiveness from God or others for anything?

This prayer helps you to seek and receive forgiveness from God:

God, I have sinned against you by _____.

I ask your forgiveness knowing that my sins are forgiven through Christ's work on the cross.

Thank you for forgiving me and purifying me.

This prayer helps you extend forgiveness to others:

God, by your grace I choose to forgive _____ for _____,

and I release them and their actions to you and to your good care.

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Part 4 – Entrust

Whether you have hopes, dreams, fears or worries, you are called to—and can trust all—to God. The end result is deeper peace, increased freedom and deeper connection with God.

What or whom do you need to entrust to the Lord?

What emotional, mental, physical and practical burdens are you carrying into the new year? [Make a list]

This prayer of response can be helpful:

God, I can't carry _____.

Instead, I choose to entrust _____ to you and your good care.

Part 5 – Bless Others

Who has blessed, served, and/or encouraged you this year? [Think back and make a list]

How could you express your gratitude and encourage these people?

- Make a note for any follow-up actions [e.g.: thank you notes, words of appreciation, phone call, flowers, etc.]
- Pray a simple prayer of blessing over these people.

Here's an idea for a prayer of blessing:

"Lord, thank you for _____ and how they have blessed me this year by _____.

I pray that you would bless them and keep them and make your face shine on them and be gracious to them. Turn your face toward them and give them peace" [adapted from Numbers 6:24–26].

Part 6 – Preparation

A new year is coming. This section will help you identify things you need to leave behind, take with you, and establish for the year ahead.

As you look ahead to this next year, what do you need to leave behind from this past year?

[e.g.: habits, mindsets, fears, wounds, etc.]

What do you need to take with you?

[e.g.: confidence, trust, hope, mindsets, new skills, etc.]

What new priorities/habits/rhythms need to be established for the year ahead?

[e.g.: spiritual, character, relational, work/service]

What are your longings for the year ahead?

[e.g.: a hope/dream, specific need, someone to come to faith, etc.]

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Here are some prayer prompts to help you respond:

- Pray about what you are leaving behind.
- Pray about what you are taking with you.
- Pray about what you are seeking to establish.

Here's a sample prayer:

Lord, by your grace I am choosing to leave behind _____ and to take with me _____.

Lord, in your strength, I want to establish _____ as a new priority/habit/rhythm.

Lord, I give you these longings on my heart _____.

Part 7 – Closing Prayer

Thank the Lord for this time of reflection.

Here is a prayer prompt from Isaiah 41:13:

Lord, thank you for walking with me through the year that's been and for promising to walk with me in the year ahead. Thank you that you take hold of my right hand and say to me, "Do not fear; I will help you."

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