

20

ahead
LOOKING ~~BACK~~

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REFLECTION AND PRAYER GUIDE

SALT + CLAY

INVITATION TO PRAY AND REFLECT
as we leave 2020 and enter 2021

Pull up a chair in the quiet (if you can get some), and have a closing conversation with God about 2020 and the promise of 2021, a New Year!

In his last intimate time with his disciples, Jesus said: *"I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*
- John 16:33

If ever there was a year of "trouble" it was 2020! But because we know of God's love and His promise to never leave us we can ask him to help us reflect on 2020 and to begin looking to Him for direction and wisdom as we go into the year ahead.

Why look back? It would be easy to move from one year to the next and miss the moments of joy or struggle that revealed how God has been present - speaking, healing, teaching, transforming, active in our journey, and also where the Spirit is leading next. Reflection and prayer are especially valuable as we seek meaning from our past experiences and make space for whatever the new year will bring.

Sit with God in a quiet space and reflect on these questions and statements, perhaps journaling or jotting down notes as you have insights. We pray this time will be helpful as you enter 2021.

Prayer: Father, thank you for being with me through this difficult year. Thank you for your direction, strength, comfort, and your protection. Help me as I reflect on 2020 and give me eyes to see how you have entered into my life, even if I didn't see it at the time. Reveal to me the seeds of faith, creativity, vision just starting to sprout in my heart. Show me how to nurture these seeds that will lead me to some fresh ways of living, loving, and serving others in 2021. In Jesus' name, Amen

REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR

As you reflect on the past year, consider using some of these key questions and statements:

1. When I think about the past year, I . . .

2. The most challenging part of 2020 for me was . . .

-- What surprised me about my response to the challenge of the year?

3. What/who "saved my life" in the past year?

-- What spiritual practices supported me during the year?

4. Where did I notice the movement of God in my life?

-- How did I grow because of my awareness of God's presence?

REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR

5. Who were the wise ones, my companions, in my life? What did they reveal to me?

-- In what ways was I a wise one to someone else?

6. How have I welcomed the stranger? How have I offered hospitality to others?

7. Where have I crossed borders into foreign territory, unfamiliar terrain?

8. What questions have formed that invite me into new learning, growth, practices, experiences?

9. Am I carrying extra baggage that I need to surrender, release, or ask God to hold for me moving forward?
(fear, unforgiveness, etc.)

PRAY AND REFLECT ON THE YEAR AHEAD

We do not have to face 2021 alone! Things in our world/country may not change overnight. But just as Jesus was with us all through 2020, He will be with us into the new year! Like the sheep with the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23, we can trust Jesus to be our guide and protector. The experiences and opportunities become part of the adventure with Jesus.

You may want to use these questions as you ponder your year ahead with Jesus:

1. Was there a unique thread, pattern, or theme woven through my year that I'm being invited to follow? If so, how does it offer direction for the year ahead? How does it offer insight on which step to take next? Maybe my answer is for the next day, the next week, or the next season. That's ok. Trust the Beloved that your next step will be lighted by the lamp of God's word when guidance is needed. Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path!*

2. From the challenges of 2020, I gained valuable treasures of insight and wisdom. What are some of the treasures I carry with me into 2021?

3. How can I strengthen my relationship with God? What spiritual practices could enhance that relationship?

4. What invitations do I notice as I ponder who I am becoming as well as what I am doing?

5. What is/are my intentions as my journey continues into a new year? How will I move forward with intention in the year to come?

Some suggestions to help envision our intentions for the new year:

- Look for opportunity.
- Chase kindness.
- Discover something new.
- Let go of something.
- Walk with hope.
- Fall into wonder.

PRAY AND REFLECT ON THE YEAR AHEAD

To end this time of reflection and prayer, *journal your own prayer for the New Year*. Start with Gratitude. Then move into a personal time of sharing your heart, mention things that are most on your mind and heart.

Prayer:



*Adapted from New Year's blog posts by Nancy Agneberg and Lacy Ellman