

Reflecting on 2018

Resolving for 2019

Stepping Back

From time to time, each of us needs to step back and take a look at our life and the direction we're heading. The Christian life is not just a moment of conversion followed by a lifetime of trying to be good—it's an exciting, endless journey into God's love and purpose for creation. Continuing on that journey means allowing God's grace to shape us and change us. But if we're not intentional, it's easy to get off track or stop all together.

The beginning of a new year provides a perfect opportunity to prayerfully assess where we are, discern where God wants us to be, and figure out the next steps for moving in that direction. At the beginning of 2019, set aside some time and use this guide to help you start the new year seeking God's path.

Find a place where you can focus without interruption. Set aside any devices or distractions. Grab a Bible and a pen or pencil, and print this guide, or fill this out electronically.

Pray the following or your own prayer:

*God of our past, present, and future,
All that we have and all that we are is from you.
As we stand at the edge of a new year,
Help us appreciate your blessings,
And guide us into your future
So that we might become the people you made us to be
And resemble Jesus more with each passing year.
In his name we pray, Amen.*

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13.

Next, thoughtfully and prayerfully work through the following questions.

2018 in Review

Think back over the last year. What were some of the high points? What were the low points?

What are the things you did or achieved that you are most proud of?

What are some of the failings or disappointments?

What blessings are you most thankful for?

As you look back, where can you see God's hand at work?

Vocation

Now look more closely at different areas in your life. As you look at your vocation or calling (this may be your work or school), are you ahead, behind, or about the same place as a year ago?

What are some of the obstacles that got in your way, whether external or internal?

How would you like to grow, or what would you like to accomplish in this area in 2019?

What needs to happen for you to do this?

What is the first step you need to take for this to happen?

Family

Now, think about your family life. Are you a better spouse/parent/child/sibling/etc. than you were a year ago?

What have been some of the best moments with your family in 2018?

What has hindered your relationship with your family?

How do you need to grow to love your family better?

How can you better prioritize your family in 2019?

What is the first step?

Spiritual

In your relationship with God, are you closer, further away, or about the same as a year ago?

What have been some of the highlights of your spiritual life last year?

What has gotten in the way?

How would you like to grow in your relationship with God in 2019? What spiritual practice would you like to grow in?

What is the first step?

Health

Regarding your health, are you in better, worse or about the same shape as a year ago?

How has your health improved?

What areas need attention?

How would you like to improve your health in 2019?

What is the first step?

Financial

Regarding your finances, are you in better, worse or about the same shape as a year ago?

How has your financial standing improved?

What areas need attention?

How would you like to improve your finances in 2019?

What is the first step?

Serving

Regarding service to others, are you doing better, worse or about the same as a year ago?

How have you served others this year?

How would you like to grow in service in 2019?

What is the first step?

Committing

You've now looked at several key areas of your life, assessed where you are, and discerned where God is leading you into the future. **As you set these resolutions and goals, keep in mind that one of the quickest ways to get discouraged is to try to make several big changes in your life at once.** What area would you like to focus on first?

As you continue your journey into a new year, remember that you aren't traveling alone. Christ's body, the church, is there to encourage, support, and challenge you as you travel the Christian journey together. How can you give and receive support in 2019?

Now, commit yourself to walking this journey with God. Pray this prayer as you offer these reflections and resolutions, the year 2019, and your life to God:

*I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you,
Exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, O Glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,*

*You are mine, and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.¹*

Finally, don't just put this aside—put it somewhere you'll look at it regularly. You could copy your resolutions onto a notecard, or type them into a note on your phone and use a screenshot as your lock screen. There are lots of options, but the bottom line is, for this to work, you have to review your intentions!

May 2019 be a year of blessing and growth for you and your family, and may God's purposes be fulfilled through you this year and in the years to come.

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Feel free to share.

¹ John Wesley (attr.), "A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition," *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 607. Adapted.