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## As You Enter the New Year

*For ye have not passed this way heretofore. —JOSHUA 3:4*

**Look back and thank God.** Be like Paul who said, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Philippians 1:3).

Thank God for friends, food, and family. Thank Him for His promises, His provisions, and His presence. Thank God for the Bible, books, and beauty. Thank God for sight, smell, and sanity. Thank God for redemption, regeneration, and reconciliation.

**Look forward and trust God.** Be like David who said, “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5). As the daily reading says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (v. 5).

Trust Him in times of success. Trust Him in times of sorrow. Trust Him when He seems near. Trust Him when He seems far away. Trust Him when you know His guidance. Trust Him when you need His guidance.

**Look around and serve God.** Be like the Hebrews who were encouraged with these words, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

Serve Him in youth like David did. Serve Him in middle age like Paul did. Serve Him in old age like Simeon and Anna did.

**Look up and walk with God.** Be like Enoch. “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:24).

Walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Walk in love (Ephesians 5:2). Walk in the light (Ephesians 5:8). Walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15).

Someone ingeniously put it this way, “Without God, our week is Mournday, Tearsday, Wasteday, Thirstday, Fightday, Shatterday, and Sinday. So, allow Him to be with you every day!”

I hope others notice your “good looks” this year as you look back, ahead, around, and up as did the aforementioned Bible characters.

READ

Proverbs  
3:1-12

ABOUT GOD

TO DO

## Redeem the Time

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. —ECCLESIASTES 12:1*

**T**ime moves swiftly. It is like the swift ships (Job 9:26). It is like a speedy courier service (Job 9:25). It is like an eagle that hastens to its prey (Job 9:26). Yes, time flies—but remember, you are the navigator.

READ

Colossians  
4:1-6

So much time is wasted, not necessarily in hours, but a few minutes here, ten minutes there. If I have two pails of water, and the one has a small hole in the bottom, whereas the other gets knocked over, they will both become equally empty. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). Use time like you pack luggage—fill up the small spaces with little things.

A man from India who left Hinduism and accepted Christ was given a Bible and a clock. He said, “The clock will tell me how time goes, and the Bible will tell me how to spend it.”

We are to make good use of time, “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). Determine to make each day of the new year count for God. The greatest use of time is to spend it for something that will outlast it.

This means serving God who made time and some day will declare that time shall be no more. A. W. Tozer put it well in *The Knowledge of the Holy*: “How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains; and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves.”<sup>1</sup>

Here are two helpful ideas. First, have a place for everything and keep everything in its place. How much time do you spend looking for a paper or a phone number, saying, “I know I put it somewhere”? It is estimated that the average American spends eighteen months of his life looking for lost stuff—a Christian can put those eighteen months to much better use.

Second, overcome procrastination. Procrastination is the fertilizer that makes difficulties grow. No farmer ever plowed a field by turning it over in his mind. Do now what you ought to do.

ABOUT GOD

TO DO

## An Amazing Hymn

*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. –1 TIMOTHY 1:14*

It was in a New Year's sermon that the song "Amazing Grace" first appeared. As John Newton, an ungodly sailor and slave trader prior to his conversion, was preparing a sermon in late 1771, he used the passage you read in the daily reading. He got to thinking about his own life and his sordid past. Newton's sermon had three points:

READ  
1 Chronicles  
17:1-17

**1. Look back.** He noted that in David's experience, God took him from "following the sheep" (v. 7) to shepherding the people. So David asked, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (v. 16).

Newton, no doubt, reflected how God had saved his life in answer to his prayer when it appeared that the ship he was on was going to sink in a bad storm. But more than that, God saved him from his profanity, gambling, immorality, cruelty, and greed, and saved his soul from sin and its penalty. God's grace, Newton said, "saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see."

Have you looked back on your life to see God's grace in your life and salvation?

**2. Look around.** God told David, "I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked . . . and have made thee a name like the name of the great men" (v. 8).

Newton wrote: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; 'Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

Newton may have thought of the time he was forced into the British navy, of his attempted escape and subsequent flogging, of thoughts of suicide, of his own time as a slave in Africa and the mistreatment he received, and later in life of experiencing a severe fever (which prompted a true conversion), and a stroke.

**3. Look forward.** As Newton thought about what God promised David for the future (vv. 10-12), he wrote about God's promises to him and his parishioners. "The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures." And then his thoughts went to Heaven. "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun."

ABOUT GOD

TO DO

## A Quiet Time With God

*I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.* —PSALM 143:5

A caterpillar of the cabbage butterfly feeds on cabbage. A caterpillar of the alfalfa butterfly eats alfalfa. A caterpillar of the monarch butterfly feeds exclusively on plants of the milkweed family; therefore, it is sometimes called the milkweed butterfly. Thus, you can often identify a caterpillar by observing what it feeds on.

If you were to be identified by what you feed on, what would people conclude? We can tell what sort of person Job was. Referring to God, he said, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). Likewise, we can tell what type of person Jeremiah was. He said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16). The psalmist relished the flavor of God’s Word. He testified, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103).

Many Christians have found that their spiritual condition is reflected in their devotional life. When their devotional life is vibrant and meaningful, their walk with God is close. When their Bible reading seems dry and their prayer life is stale, they stop growing spiritually.

I like the song written by Cleland McAfee:

There is a place of quiet rest,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where sin cannot molest,  
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where we our Saviour meet,  
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where all is joy and peace,  
Near to the heart of God.

READ

Psalm  
145:1-19

ABOUT GOD

TO DO

## Seven Helps for Your Devotional Life

*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* —PSALM 5:3

A teen wrote to me and asked, “How can my quiet time with God be more meaningful?” I responded to her with the following seven suggestions:

READ

Psalm  
119:9-18

1. Try to have a regular time. Most people find the morning to be the best time, although some prefer the evening.
2. Don't feel you need to read a long time each day. But do ask God to show you something. It may be something you read about God or what He has done for which you can say, “Thank You, God.” It may be something He is asking you to do. It may be something about Jesus that you can praise God for and follow. It may be something you ought to confess to God. Keep reading until you have found something you understand and that applies to God or yourself. Hurried devotions become nothing but religious “commotions.”
3. Expect that reading the Bible and praying will take effort—that's because the devil wants to keep you from drawing closer to God.
4. When praying, concentrate. A quiet place away from a lot of activity is better than being around other people.
5. Try to keep a balance in your prayers. Don't just ask God for things, but remember to give Him thanks and praise. Also, confess your wrongs. Ask for forgiveness. Pray for others, not only yourself: government leaders, ministers, parents, teachers, missionaries—the list could go on and on. Ask the Lord to give you guidance.
6. Remember, God loves you dearly. He cares for you—Jesus pleads for you at the throne of the Father. Enjoy His love and being in His presence. Tell Him of your love for Him.
7. Live for God during the day.

May your devotional life be enlightening and enjoyable. An elderly Scotch woman who lived alone was asked, “What do you do during the day?”

“Well,” she said, “I get my hymnbook and sing. Then I get the Bible and let the Lord speak to me. When I get tired of reading and cannot sing anymore, I just sit still and let the Lord love me!”

ABOUT GOD

TO DO