

10 Powerful Questions to Ask as You Start 2019

When a year ends, I always take time to evaluate what God did in my life. I celebrate the highlights by looking at photos, savoring memories and writing down the best moments. Then I mourn my losses. I also carefully consider any mistakes I made and how I can grow spiritually in the coming year.

I see this principle of self-evaluation in Psalm 119:59, which says: “I consider my ways, and I turn my feet to Your testimonies.” Lamentations 3:40 adds: “Let us search and try our ways, and return to the Lord!” And the apostle Paul told the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves, seeing whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Cor. 13:5a).

Yet I hear few preachers today urging people to make serious self-examinations. Today, we are the armchair critics of everything else, but we rarely look inward.

British preacher Charles Spurgeon told his congregation in the 1800s: “Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look. To study oneself in the light of God’s Word, and carefully go over one’s condition ... would be a very healthy exercise.”

As you begin this new year, conduct your own self-examination by asking yourself these tough questions:

1. Have I made time alone with God a priority? Fires don’t last long if you don’t regularly pile wood on the flames. You can’t survive spiritually without regular communion with the Lord. If you neglected prayer or reading God’s Word in 2018, make a decision today to rekindle your devotional life.

2. Did I develop bad habits that need to be broken? Paul told

the Thessalonians, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). Are you doing anything that is extinguishing the Spirit’s flames in your life?

3. In what areas do I need to grow spiritually? 2 Corinthians 3:18 says you “are being transformed ... from glory to glory.” God wants to take you to a new level. Have you been struggling with anger, anxiety, fear, doubt or resentment? Are certain attitudes dragging you down? Identify the spiritual strongholds in your life and ask Jesus to replace them with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

4. What are my spiritual gifts, and am I using them? Every Christian has spiritual gifts—and you are no exception. Don’t bury your talents. You must face your fears and stretch your faith as you begin to step out, but soon you will find there is no greater joy than being an instrument of the Holy Spirit to bless people.

5. Do I need a mentor to help me? You cannot get where you need to be all by yourself. We all need role models, teachers and encouragers. I love to hang around zealous, passionate Christians whose spiritual heat is contagious. Sometimes I make appointments with them so I can glean from their wisdom and experience. Get as close as possible to those who can help you grow.

6. How did I influence others for Christ in the past year? My greatest joy in life is investing in others—especially as I grow older and realize that life is “not about me.” Jesus said our mission is to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), yet most Christians never really make a mark on anyone. If you aren’t currently making disciples, look around and ask God to show you your harvest field.

7. How can I avoid the mistakes of the past? You don’t have to stay stuck in the ruts of 2018. Repent for your moments of weakness. Turn away from your willful sins and then run back

into the Father's arms. God has forgiven you, and you can move forward! Your new year can truly be a new beginning.

8. Am I aligned with the right people? God called us to be in community. Don't live in isolation. But make sure you are in a church that is on fire for God. If your church compromises God's Word or ignores the Great Commission, you should find a new church home.

9. What is God saying to me as I enter this New Year? God knows you, and He knows your future. He also knows the challenges you face and the storms that may come this year. Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." God loves you. If you seek Him, He will speak a word to your heart—and that word will propel you into a new season.

10. What goals do I need to make? People with goals have a sense of purpose. But those with no ambitions wander aimlessly. Setting a goal is the first step toward success. But make sure to write your goals down. State them clearly, and then aim at them. The prophet said in Habakkuk 2:2b: "Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he who reads it may run."

I pray God will give you fresh strength to run the race of faith in 2019.