

How to 'Number Your Days' as You Enter a New Year

At the end of every year, I set aside time to reflect and evaluate. I look at photos from the past year, savor the good memories, grieve for the sad moments and celebrate the victories. 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: "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).

We usually avoid looking inward because it can be painful. British pastor 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."

Don't rush through life without taking time to rest and assess. Grab a pen and a journal and write down the answers to these questions:

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– "What were the highlights of my year?" Think about all the ways God blessed you and how He answered your prayers. And don't forget to list the people who helped you during 2023. You should also take time to thank them.

– **“Is time alone with God my 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 2023, make a decision to rekindle your devotional life.

– **“Are there sinful habits I need to repent of?”** 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? God wants to take you to a new level in 2024. 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.

– **“Do I need a mentor to help me?”** We live in do-it-yourself culture. But you can’t get where you need to be by yourself. We all need role models, teachers and encouragers. I love to spend time with passionate Christians whose spiritual heat is contagious. Sometimes I make appointments with them so I can glean from their wisdom and experience. Get close to those who can help you grow.

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– **“Am I using my spiritual gifts?”** Every Christian has spiritual gifts. Do you know what your gifts are—and are you using them? Take time to identify your gifts, and ask friends to help you see the different ways God uses you. There’s no greater joy than being an instrument of the Holy Spirit to bless people, but you must step out in faith if you want God to use you.

– **“How did I influence others for Christ in the past year?”** My greatest joy 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.

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

– **“What is God saying to me as I enter this New Year?”** God loves you, and He knows your future. He also knows the challenges you will face in 2024. If you seek Him, He will speak a word to your heart; it might be a chapter from the Bible, one verse or a single word or phrase. One word from God has the power to propel you into a new season!

Moses prayed in Psalm 90: “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom” (v. 12, NASB). The word “number” can mean “to prepare or set.” We should seek to live with purpose, to make right choices and to set our internal GPS to achieve God’s goals for our lives. I pray you will wisely set your days, and that 2024 will be a year of growth, answered prayers and special encounters with Jesus.
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