

GROWING IN WISDOM

looking back & looking forward

For Pastors' Wives



Running on a treadmill... going through the motions...getting through the day...minimizing damage...just surviving.

Those are not how ANY of us would decide to spend the next year, in our own personal lives, our marriage lives, our family lives or our ministry lives. But it's where some of us will end up at the end of 2024, looking back at a year that was spent..., but not invested. I know that God has plans for me, for you, for us this year. Plans to prosper us. Plans to give us hope – in the deep places that need it. Plans to **grow us into the good works that He has already laid the groundwork for us to do.** I want to be ready for that!

Intentionality has become a common buzzword in secular and Christian circles. Most people love the idea of moving with purpose and investing in efforts that will move them forward towards their destinations. But there are fewer who **actually take the time and energy needed to discern their destination and set their course, based on careful reflection on what has been and prayerful inquiring of the Lord as to what will be.**

LOOKING BACK

Here is a tool to help you reflect and inquire of the Lord as you learn from this past year. **Without reflection, our journey through the difficult will just yield tired muscles instead of the wisdom we desire.** It's crucial to look back before moving forward into this next year. I challenge you to write out your responses and share them with a mentor or close friend. Resist the urge to answer a question just to get it done. But instead, purposefully ask the Lord to show you what He has done and what He wants to accomplish in you as you think about this next chapter.

GROWTH

As you look at the past year, where has God allowed you to see growth...

In the lives of those in your circle of influence? (<i>think about women you invest in, work with, serve with</i>)	
In your congregation?	
In your children?	
In your marriage?	
In yourself? (<i>if this is difficult, think about areas you have struggled with this year and what have you learned?</i>)	

STEWARDSHIP

What did you invest work and energy in that yielded fruit?	
What did you invest work and energy in that has not yielded fruit yet? Why do you think that is?	
What was the biggest time waster for you this year?	
What was something that you spent money on that was a good investment? Did you have a bad investment - something you don't want to do again?	
What is something INSIDE YOU that was holding you back from being all that God created you to be?	
Is there anything OUTSIDE YOU that you think is holding you back from being all that God created you to be? Do you have any ability to change it? Is God calling you to do anything about it?	

LOOKING FORWARD

God desires us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. But in order to do that, we must be healthy emotionally, spiritually, physically, intellectually and socially (relationship is how God often orchestrates growth). Healthy things grow. So take a few minutes to think through what growth might look like in the following areas:

EMOTIONAL

How do you depend on your emotions to drive your faith? What happens when they are not there? Or they are deceptive?

What difficult emotions have you been experiencing that might be calling attention to something that needs attention?

Do your emotions take you (and maybe others?) on a roller coaster?

How might God want to grow you in steadfastness and stability?

What are ways that old wounds might be affecting how you are showing up in new relationships? How can you take a step towards allowing God to heal you?

SPIRITUAL

Take a few minutes and ask the Lord how He wants to grow you this year. Ask Him to show you character traits or disciplines that He wants to become who you are.

Remember some of the fruits of the Spirit and qualities He's told us He wants to cultivate within us like: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, humility, forbearance...

CHARACTER TRAIT:	STRATEGY:

What is your plan for growing in God's Word this year? Maybe break it into season: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall.

WINTER	
SPRING	
SUMMER	
FALL	
Are there other ways you think the Lord is wanting to grow you?	

PHYSICAL

Are your body care practices (things you do OR don't do) helping or hindering your ability to do what God has called you to for the long haul?

How are you caring for your body? (*your "earthly tent" 2 Cor 5*)

Diet Are you intentional about what you are putting into your body?	
Exercise Are you training your body to keep up with God's call on your life?	
Time Outdoors Are you experiencing God in His creation?	
Attending to Problems Are you ignoring or attending to problems in your body?	

INTELLECTUAL

God wants us to remain alert and watchful, which means we need to stay sharp. Being a life-long learner also cultivates humility.

What is an area you are curious about?	
What is a practical way you could learn more about this?	
What is a new skill you'd like to learn?	

SOCIAL

In our own lives, growth happens in relationship, up close and over time. As Pastor's Wives, we often have many who know us but we are truly known by very few. Take a few minutes to do an inventory of the relationships that God is calling you to invest in.

POURING IN

Who are 1-2 relationships that are life-giving and that pour energy, faith, and hope into you as much as you pour into them?

If you are in a season where there doesn't seem to be anyone that is pouring into you, ask the Lord to provide someone. Then, decide what is one step I can take to discover her?

POURING OUT

Who are 3-5 "pouring out" relationships God is calling you to invest in this year? These are people that God is calling you to regularly invest in. If you have more, list them. But be careful that your worth isn't tied to how many you can list. Jesus limited His intentional, regular investment to a few. So should you.

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MENTOR

Who is one person that is further down the path of faith and ministry than you, that you can go to for wisdom and perspective when needed?

Does this person know that they are "that person"? If not, what's your plan for that conversation?

Having a conversation about them being that person in your life helps to establish clear and realistic expectations between the two of you. If you haven't had that conversation, simply saying, "Hey, I need a person in my life that I can call occasionally for wisdom and perspective. Would you be that person?" You can decide if that means meeting regularly or only as the need arises.

HOLY IMAGINATION

What do you dream of God doing in this next year? Maybe its in your family, your work, your home or your community. Or maybe its in the deep places of your soul that really need His touch.

Now save this or print it out and keep it in a place where you can regularly revisit it. Talk through it with a friend and/or your spouse.

You have taken a concrete step towards living more intentionally. I'm looking forward to seeing how the Lord reveals the plans He has for you as you watch with eager expectation and confident hope.