

# LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

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## Text: Selected

This is the time of year at which we see or maybe have seen the “Year end” issues from magazines, newspapers and television shows relating to the past years entertainment events, politics, and current events. The images on television are usually set to music as they review past events and famous people who have passed away.

These retrospectives are sometimes funny and sometimes emotional. They inspire us to look back over the past events of our own lives. Sometimes we find ourselves asking ourselves questions about what we have seen and what we have learned. This is usually followed by the inevitable question, “What does this new year hold?”

### **Are you hopeful? Are you fearful? Are you determined to change?**

It’s not uncommon for a person to stop and take inventory about what is truly important to them in life—to look at what has worked and what has not—to consider where one has been and where one is headed.

**George Santayana famously warned that**, “Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it.”

**Other words of wisdom Dale E. Turner tell us**, “Some of the best lessons we ever learn are learned from past mistakes. The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future.”

**Of course you *have to ignore some people’s wisdom, such as***, “You tried your best and failed miserably. The lesson is: never try.” -*Homer Simpson said that.*

**Nevertheless, learning the lessons of life is a common theme of scripture.** In fact, there are too many examples to cite. But, let’s consider a few guiding principles from scripture that address these issues.

He scripture tells us that...

## **I. God wants us to learn from the past—not live in it.**

### **A. When the events of the past consume us, we have little interest in the future.**

**When they were stuck in the past, God said to Israel in Isaiah 43:18-19**, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new

thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”

**B. God wants us to learn the lesson of the past, but keep moving.**

**The Apostle Paul cited the stories of God’s people in the Old Testament to make the point that we are to learn from the past. He writes in 1 Corinthians 10:11-13,** “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

## **II. God wants us to remember to carry life’s important values into the future.**

**A. Spiritual truths and spiritual values are some of the few things worth carrying into the future.**

**1 Corinthians 11:23** “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**B. People who are always dissatisfied in life are often uncertain about what is important.**

A 14-year-old boy named Jason Lehman wrote a **poem** about an unsatisfied person called,

### **“Present Tense”**

**It was spring,**

But it was summer I wanted,  
The warm days, and the great outdoors.

**It was summer,**

But it was fall I wanted,  
The colorful leaves, and the cool, dry air.

**It was fall,**

But it was winter I wanted,  
The beautiful snow, and the joy of the holiday season.

**It was winter,**  
But it was spring I wanted,  
The warmth, and the blossoming of nature.

**I was a child,**  
But it was adulthood I wanted.  
The freedom, and the respect.

**I was 20,**  
But it was 30 I wanted,  
To be mature, and sophisticated.

**I was middle-aged,**  
But it was 20 I wanted,  
The youth and the free spirit.

**I was retired,**  
But it was middle age I wanted,  
The presence of mind, and the good health

**My life was over, but I never got what I wanted**

### **III. God wants us to move forward without fear.**

#### **A. Worrying about the future will not help us accomplish anything.**

**Remember Jesus' well-known words in Matthew 6:28,** "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

#### **B. The key to confidence is in being in God's will, not in having all the answers.**

In the book of James, James cautions us in chapter 4:13, "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'" <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast and brag. All such

boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.”

## **Conclusion**

### **Author John Claypool shares this story:**

Years ago a thunderstorm swept through southern Kentucky at the farm where my Claypool forebears have lived for six generations. In the orchard, the wind blew over an old pear tree that had been there as long as anybody could remember. My grandfather was grieved to lose the tree on which he had climbed as a boy and whose fruit he had eaten all his life.

A neighbor came by and said, “Doc, I’m really sorry to see your pear tree blow down.”

“I’m sorry too, said my grandfather. “It was a real part of my past.”

“What are you going to do?” the neighbor asked.

My grandfather paused for a moment and then said, “I’m going to pick the fruit and burn what’s left.”

That is the wise way to deal with many things in our past. We need to learn their lessons, enjoy their pleasures, and then go on with the present and the future. (Rowell, 151)