

Looking Behind to Look Ahead

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Introduction: What can I do to bring a fulfilling future?

- A. Some at the start of a new year think about this question and make decisions (resolutions) about *the next steps* they should take.
 - 1. While this is a good thing to attempt, there are many flaws to this annual approach. Have I developed the “skill set” *to know what to do?* **(Heb 5:14)**
 - 2. The ability to know the wisdom of God at the end of the year depends upon a daily pursuit of wisdom *in the year that has just passed.* **(Acts 6:3)**
 - 3. The ability to live a life of daily repentance that allows one to change, to break out of a pattern of failure. This is *serious business and not a game!*
- B. The foundation of all wisdom is being *a true disciple of Christ.* **(Lk 9:23-24)**
 - 1. The softness of this culture had brought a “soft Christianity” which is *not God’s way at all.*
 - 2. We must first die to ourselves and then passionately pursue God. God will *provide for and protect His people* in the present and future!
(Deut 5:33; 10:12-14; Josh 22:5)

I. Why I must look first to the past

- A. I need to know what God has done! **(Isa 45:12, 18)**
 - 1. God wants us to know with certainty that He created all things.
 - 2. I need to know the awesome power, wisdom and presence of God. God does not make mistakes. **(Isa 40:21-23; 28-31)**
 - 3. This understanding teaches me that God loves me and will provide, but I must *trust Him and choose His revealed ways.* **(Deut 11:22)**
- B. When I learn about the character of God in the past, then I know He is the same today! **(Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8)**
 - 1. This is why I need *to read and understand* the Old Testament. **(Rom 15:4)**
 - 2. What has God revealed about His character in *His dealings with men?*
 - 3. The essence of worship is retelling to God what he has revealed about Himself.
 - 4. There is nothing new under the sun. Where *am I to be found* in the men of the Bible?
- C. I need to know the old paths that God has given. **(Jer 6:16-17; Jude 3)**
 - 1. When God revealed His will for the Jewish people in the Old Testament, He allowed *their history to be recorded too?* Why?
 - 2. Both the good and the bad can be seen! The major battlefield is winning the battle for *the mind and heart.*
 - 3. There are *revealed consequences* for the kind of heart we have cultivated.
(Prov 10:8-11; Prov 16:5-6)
 - 4. When Jesus looked to the past to teach others, He asked a question: “Have you not read?” Are *we reading and thinking?* **(Mt 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42)**

II. How learning from the past prepares us for the future

- A. We see the ultimate victory of the people of God. **(Heb 11:32-35)**
1. Because of God's word we see the same battle in every generation under various circumstances. God's people have made the right choice!
 2. During the time of the battle the odds seem insurmountable, and the man of faith appears foolish and out of step with worldly wisdom!
 3. The ultimate end is the resurrection of the dead. God's people will be victorious. **(Rom 8:34-37)**
- B. We today should be seeking to "restore New Testament Christianity."
1. What does this mean? It means to first go back to the foundation of the apostles and prophets. **(Eph 2:20)**
 2. It is a common theme in Bible history and in church history to see "another generation arise" that leave God's word while still claiming to serve God.
 3. What kind of life will we live? What should a local church be doing and teaching? What message did Jesus deliver through the apostles? **(1 Pt 4:11)**
- C. We need to learn from faithful men that have been involved in our lives!
(2 Tim 2:2; Acts 20:27-32)
1. How did you become a Christian? What teachers have influenced you?
 2. Do you remember being a part of a strong local church?
 3. What good memories do you have of godly men and women? Have they served to become part of your "cloud of witnesses"? **(Heb 12:1)**
 4. Consider the example set by our brother Don Pettit. There will be others. Can we be determined to cross our finish line in a like manner? **(2 Tim 4:6-8)**
 5. Who will serve as examples for the next generation?

III. What should I determine to do and be today?

- A. I need to let go of the things that do not matter. **(Phil 3:13-14)**
1. Godly wisdom will teach us what is valuable and what is harmful.
 2. I learn what I cannot change and what I should give to God. **(Mt 11:28-30)**
 3. When I trust God, I can let things go that I should. This takes a strong faith.
 4. If I become overburdened, I often cannot think.
- B. What must I do to stand firmly in the word of God?
1. I must personally develop a love for reading and thinking about God's word.
 2. What kind of time priorities and commitments must I make? Where can I find the help to change my interest and learn how to discern?
 3. I need to discern what local church to be a part of.
 4. I should set the goal of becoming a leader by developing the gifts God has given me!

Conclusion: Let us develop the courage and commitment to live a life of true repentance