

An open notebook with a calendar grid is shown. The pages are white with a grid of dates. A pencil is visible in the upper right corner. The text "PERSONAL ANNUAL REFLECTION AND PLAN" is overlaid in the center in a large, bold, black font. A light blue horizontal line is positioned below the word "PLAN".

PERSONAL ANNUAL REFLECTION AND PLAN



Annual Reflection and Plan

One of my favorite rhythms in our marriage is our annual conversation and reflection on the year that was and the year that is coming. It was in these moments we prayed about starting a new missional community, we prayed about moving to Los Angeles, and when Mirela told me we were expecting our second daughter. Those were great moments.

The main reason I treasure our annual reflections is they draw us to listen to God backward and forward.

We focus our hearts on seeing God's work and presence in the past. We hear the Spirit leading us forward. We resubmit to Jesus as King of our lives. I want to urge you to take time to think, pray, and process heading into the new year.

Surrounded by family gatherings and parties, the frantic holiday season typically drowns out the beginning of the new year. Wedged somewhere between layovers, hangovers, and leftovers, you might make a new year's resolution, say a prayer of thankfulness to be done with the last year, or jot down a few things you're looking forward to. Most of us kick off the year as exhausted and frantic as we ended the last one. Our culture drives us to move from one thing to the next without giving thought to the events that just happened. When we do this, we never engage the happiness, pain, fear, or struggle with our hearts or minds—our bodies are simply moving through it.

However, the flipping-over of the calendar year offers us an exceptional time to pause and reflect on what God has done in and through your life and what you pray for God to do in the future.



WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Set a time. Put it on your schedule. This is what's kept us from doing this in the past. If you're going to do this with your family or spouse, coordinate! There have been years when we had the space to carve out two or three nights to walk through these reflections and dreams. Other years, we've given a whole day to this while dear saints cared for our kids. However you do it, block off a specific time.

Focus your hearts on God. This is more worship service than strategy session. Praise Jesus for His presence, love, grace, and mercy. Think back and look forward to tune your life to see God's interruptions, interventions, and sovereign hand shaping us into the image of Christ. We become active agents in reconciliation when we become observers of God's redemptive plan in our lives, communities, and cities.

Spend time praying, writing, talking, and dreaming of what you would love to see God do in and through you. Give your year a theme or big-picture goal. Make one regular shift to your weekly rhythms to reflect that annual theme. Perhaps the best way to do all of that is by asking good questions. Throughout the years we've gathered these questions to lead our time.

QUESTIONS THAT FOSTER REFLECTION

I know reflection can be a daunting task. We believe in the strength of these moments so much that we've created a simple two-page template on the last couple pages in this document. Feel free to print this off and use the spaces provided to write down your reflections and plans.

- What were the lowlights and hard things last year?
- What were the highlights and clear blessings last year?
- What did we see God doing last year (in personal life, family, work, community, church, etc.)?
- What is God doing in our lives right now? What do we see as our purpose? Why are you where you are and doing what you're doing?
- What is unresolved from last year? What pains, struggles, and doubts do we carry into this year?
- What hopes and dreams do we carry into this new year?
- What do we hope to see happen this next year?
- What things do we pray for God to do within us this next year?
- What are our fears with this next year?
- How do you hope and pray to be transformed this next year?



HOW TO GIVE YOUR YEAR A THEME

This is a big-picture goal for your own discipleship growth. After you think and pray through the above questions, try to highlight any recurring themes. You might see that God's been really challenging you to find contentment in your current circumstances, so you might make your big-picture goal to "grow in joy." Maybe you know Jesus is calling you to give your whole life, so your big-picture goal might be to "increase my generosity with my time, talents, and resources to give my life to the mission."

MAKE PLANS TO LIVE YOUR THEME

Below that big-picture theme, give yourself some direct next steps or adjustments that could help you realize that theme. For example, if you were praying to grow in generosity, you might have some next steps such as: make a budget for your time, do a gift inventory, explore ways to use your gifts to help others, make a financial budget to give more resources away, etc. If your goal was to grow in your identity as a missionary, you might make these direct goals: pray for neighbors and friends, spend relational time with them, share your story with someone who doesn't believe.

CREATE A RHYTHMIC GOAL

Finally, give yourself a tangible recurring next step. Following the generosity example above, you might give \$20 away each week to someone in need. If your theme was joy and thankfulness, you might write a thank-you note each week. If your theme was to grow in your missionary identity, you might have dinner with unbelievers every week.



Annual Reflection Sheet

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What were the lowlights and hard things last year?

What were the highlights and clear blessings last year?

What did we see God doing last year (in personal life, family, work, community, church, etc.)?

What is God doing in our lives right now? What do we see as our purpose? Why are you where you are and doing what you're doing?

What is unresolved from last year? What pains, struggles, and doubts do we carry into this year?



What hopes and dreams do we carry into this new year?

What do we hope to see happen this next year?

What things do we pray for God to do within us this next year?

What are our fears with this next year?

How do you hope and pray to be transformed this next year?



YOUR THEME FOR THE NEW YEAR:

NEXT STEP 1

|

NEXT STEP 2

|

NEXT STEP 3



YOUR WEEKLY RHYTHM:

Based on your theme, what will your weekly rhythm look like in the new year?



WHO WILL YOU TELL?

Consider sharing what you've discovered and are committing to this next year with a close friend, spouse, mentor, etc. Ask them to pray through it with you and continue to check in with you throughout the year.

