

## We should look backward with gratitude and forward with hope

Only human beings have the ability to contemplate both the past and the future. None of the lower creatures in the world can do this. But although being able to reflect on the past and anticipate the future is a great gift, it is one that must be used wisely. If we are Christians, we must not only think about these things; we must do so in ways that glorify God and help us in His work. Both our memory and our imagination must be governed by God's will.

Perhaps many other things could be said about our attitude toward time, but for our study this week, let's meditate on this: ***we should look backward with gratitude and forward with hope.*** Whatever is behind us, our main perspective should be that of gratitude, and as far as the future is concerned, we should be motivated by hope, even when there are difficult things to be dealt with.

All of us have things in our past that we regret. Very often, however, those regretful things helped to produce the better person that we are today. At the very least, we can be grateful for the grace and patience with which God has preserved us until today. We should give thanks for the opportunity we have today to learn from the past and begin making better decisions.

But what about the future? With all that is going on in the world, it is hard to think of the future without having grave concerns for our children's and grandchildren's lives. But as with the past, we can be grateful for the good things that will come from meeting hardships in the future. And not only that, but we live each day trusting that God, who created the world, will guide it eventually to a conclusion that will glorify Him. For those found in Christ on that great day, an eternity in God's presence is waiting. There should not be a day when our eternal hope does not move us to keep obeying the Lord and waiting for the joyous day when we will see His face.

This week, at the end of this year, let's look backward, and then let's look forward. Let's be thankful for every expression of God's grace in our past (and there have been many), and let's determine that we will hold on to our hope in Christ, no matter what happens. Gratitude and hope. These two ways of thinking will keep us faithful — and they will see through the darkest days ahead.

### Monday: Colossians 3:17

**Key Idea:** If we are the Lord's people, thankfulness will be a part of everything we do in Him.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In the first part of this verse, what is the principle that should guide our conduct? In the last part, what are we encouraged to do? For those who are following the Lord and doing His work, why is thankfulness in all things so important?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 30:32,33.**

## Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

**Key Idea:** We should be thankful for our own blessings and also for the blessings of others.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In view of the many problems in the church at Corinth, how could Paul still give thanks for the grace that God had shown them? Are there any members of the Lord's body for whom we cannot give thanks in some way?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 31:1-3](#).

## Wednesday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Key Idea:** We can be grateful that God has been patient in bringing us to the present moment.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In [vv.12,13](#), what was Paul thankful that God had done? What point did Paul make in [v.16](#)? When we have failed to do what was right or we have suffered some kind of hardship, what are some of the things in those situations that we can be thankful for?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 31:4-7](#).

## Thursday: 1 Peter 1:3-9

**Key Idea:** In Christ, we are born again to a living hope — the hope of an eternal inheritance.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In [v.3](#), through what has our hope in Christ been made possible? How does Peter describe our inheritance in [v.4](#)? In [vv.6,7](#), what is said about the Christian's ability to rejoice? According to [v.9](#), what is the main goal or outcome of our faith?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 31:8,9](#).

## Friday: Romans 13:11,12

**Key Idea:** With each day that passes, salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If we have already been saved, what is the point of saying that salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed? What are some of the things that can discourage us? How does it help to know that we are drawing nearer to our eternal home?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 31:10-31](#).

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