

The LCF Connection

January 2021

Keep the End in Mind

by Sarah Landis

Celebrating Christmas this year was extremely special for me, because all through our traditions and laughter and opening of presents I was reminded that everything could be so different. I unwrapped a pair of dancing shoes, and we talked about how thankful we were that I wasn't paralyzed from the accident. I unwrapped a pillow sewn from pieces of my favorite sweater that was cut off by an ER nurse, and seeing it again brought immediate tears to my eyes. I am so, so grateful to be with my family this holiday season.



On the night of November 30, I hit a patch of ice and flew into oncoming traffic, colliding head-on with another car. While I have healed much physically, I know that mentally and emotionally I still have a ways to go. I've only just begun to process the memories I have from that night, and from the following days. But as often as I find myself looking back to those moments, I've also begun to look forward. And as I get closer and closer to regaining a sense of normalcy, I wonder what "normal" even looks like, and whether I want to go back to the same routines or work toward the same goals as before.

Asking these questions reminds me of my years as a teacher, and of the phrase our assistant principal often used: "begin with the end in mind." In the classroom, we were encouraged to stop and look at the bigger picture, to determine the end goal and what we hoped to accomplish before tackling a lesson.

We taught our students to approach new concepts in this same way—before diving into the nuts and bolts of something unfamiliar, we'd try to help them determine exactly what we hoped to accomplish and why it mattered.

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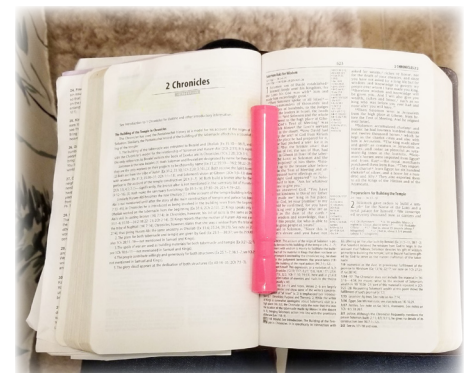
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How's Your Bible Reading Going?

by Tasha Slaubaugh

I must confess that my reason for writing the 2021 "promotion" for Bible reading plans is not because I believe myself to be qualified, nor because of extensive Bible reading that I have done over the years. Rather, the opposite! Over the past two years, I have grown immensely in my dedication to reading God's Word, and it has been a rewarding experience. That new desire, followed by faithful reading, followed by the assurance and steadiness that I have received, are things I hope each of us will yearn to experience in our journey with the Lord.



Now, I'm not here to say that my journey—listening to theology podcasts, following godly moms on Instagram, and landing on The Bible Recap daily reading plan—is THE ANSWER to all of our lackluster scripture reading. Those things were influential in getting me to read through the Bible chronologically for the first time in my life. And I am grateful for the resources! (At the time of writing this, I have completed 189/365 days, and will likely complete the whole Bible by the end of 2021.) But podcasts might not be your thing. That's okay! Try writing or typing the passages you are reading. Or maybe you are more visual or tangible. Try watching videos by The Bible Project before you start reading a new book of the Bible. Maybe you like to memorize scripture with music. Check out The Corner Room, or Seeds Family Worship. Find what works for you! Then commit to stick with it.

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Lessons from 2020

A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz



This has been a tough year, but it's when things are tough that I usually learn the most. In some weird sort of way, I think I've experienced more peace in 2020 than any year in a long time, and I think it comes from the things God has been patiently teaching me. I thought I'd use this as an opportunity to journal them for myself and share them with you.

1. God is in control.

I've known it, talked about it, preached about it, etc., but this year I've been reminded how little control we have and how much we need to trust in the Lord. Sometimes he needs to pry our fingers off of things for us to understand this. He's got it. His plan is being worked out. He has things for us to do, but his yoke is easy, his burden is light, and his peace is beyond understanding.

2. God's got the church.

This is related to the one above. I've often worried or fretted about the church, but this year I'm learning to simply trust Jesus when he says, "I will build my church." It's been good to let go of that in many ways as a pastor. He's got it and no one can stop him. What a relief! We've had to make lots of adjustments this year, and you all have done fantastic. It would be tempting to worry about what will happen to the church, but I'm learning not to. ☺

3. The church working together is a beautiful thing.

It's been cool to see new people and seasoned people alike, finding their place in the church. We are at our best when we all fill the place God has waiting for us in the body of Christ. When I see how God puts the church together, it just makes me smile. I've also realized how much I miss you all and need you all. I love every one of you and can't wait to all be worshipping together in person again!

4. Love, compassion, and empathy are the name of the game.

It's better to be kind than to be right. You know what I mean? 2020 has created great opportunities to display these "calling cards" of the believer, to all people, wherever they come out on the issues. I think we've all realized it's harder than we thought so we've got some things to learn. However, we who are filled with the Holy Spirit can do this. I know we can. I believe the church will shine.

5. We're not home yet.

I just preached this, but it's a big one for me this year. I'm a foreigner; an alien in this world, who is temporarily passing through. God has given me things to do while I'm here, and I'm glad to do them, but I'm really looking forward to going home, more so with each passing day. ☺

Thanks, LCF, for being my church family! I look forward to all that God has for us in this coming year. We don't know what may be coming, but we know that in Christ we have all that we need, come what may. I look forward to sharing the journey ahead with you! ■

Elders' Notes

by Jesse Diller

The elders team has continued to make good use of online tools like texting, email, Zoom, and messaging apps to communicate throughout the month. We've discussed various ministry opportunities like youth ministries and future interns. We also discussed our recent decision to move LCF back to online-only services when our local area saw a large spike in COVID-19 cases and our health department recommended that churches not meet in person through December 31st.

Our December elders' meeting was held via Zoom on December 8th. As usual, we began by sharing prayer requests as well as things that we are thankful for and then spent the first part of our meeting praying together.

We spent some time talking about the preaching class that Rob and Reuben are working with. They will be scheduling the members to preach on a Sunday morning in the near future!

We desire to see our church family stay connected during this time when we are not meeting together in person. We discussed various possibilities of ways to encourage connection.

We spent a good amount of time talking about the benevolence team, which has been dormant for almost 2 years. We would like to see a team be relaunched, and are talking with possible team leaders and members. We discussed what the vision for the team should be, and what community resources are available to refer people to as needed so that we are not duplicating efforts.

We closed our time with prayer, remembering the things we discussed. Our next scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, January 12th. ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The Audio Visual booth will soon be enlarged to accommodate our new streaming requirements.

As the council goes through transition, a very special thanks to Becky Hostetler for serving over the past three years. Her wisdom and discernment were highly valued in rounding out a great team. She will be missed! The council welcomes Russ Hauge. Russ brings a vast experience of business and management to the table, and we look forward to serving with him.

The council continues to be overwhelmed with thankfulness to the congregation for their generous giving throughout these uncertain times. The 2021 church budget has been completed and is ready for congregational approval. ■

"We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps." Proverbs 16:9 NLT

Happy New Year! We hope to see you soon!

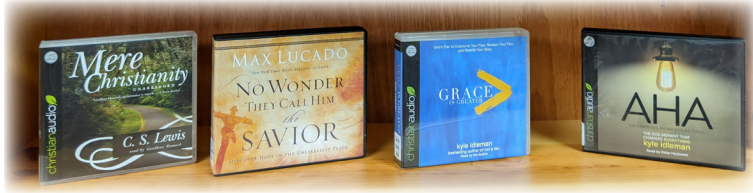
Library Link

by Linda Schlabach

How many trips do you take each week—long or short?
Grab some inspiration for on the go!

In response to requests made, audiobooks on CD are scattered on the top shelves throughout the LCF Library. Newer titles with potent messages include the following:

- How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit (A.W. Tozer)
- AHA: Awakening. Honesty. Action. The God Moment that Changes Everything. (Kyle Idleman)
- What if...God has other Plans? (Chuck Swindoll)
- Between Heaven and the Real World (Steven Curtis Chapman)



Borrowing logistics: Borrow in-person (cards or computer), reserve library items on your online library account, or email Linda Schlabach. You can access the LCF Library online catalogue from the library tab on LCF's website (lcfweb.org) with or without an account. ■



During this unique, socially-distanced Christmas season, it's been fun seeing the creative ways our LCF family has been staying in touch!

It's been reported that several of you have caught this enthusiastic elf and her adorable dog in the act of spreading Christmas cheer through caroling and "jingle bells!" (We hope the elf received "all that she was wanting for Christmas!" 😊) ■



Keep the End in Mind...continued

I find this perspective extremely valuable in looking at our own lives. So often I think we plan our future based on our past – we reflect upon our life and then use our present as our framework for moving forward. Don't get me wrong, I am a huge advocate for the value of self-reflection, and will be the first to tell you to grab onto those moments and sink your teeth into them. But what would it look like if we approached life the way we set goals: working backward from the end we hope to achieve?



Keep the end in mind. *Where do I hope to be 6 months from now? Or 5 years from now? What should my life now look like in order to accomplish that?*

Keep the end in mind. *What is most important to me? How is that reflected in how I spend my time? Or how I use my words? Or how I spend my money?*

Keep the end in mind. *When I stand before the throne of God and my life is replayed before me, what are the things that will prove valuable? What are the things that will be wasted? How can I reflect Christ now to those around me, and what are the areas I need to grow in?*

As we look forward to 2021, I encourage you to take some time to reflect. Ask yourself some questions, do some goal setting, but always keep the end in mind. Do not neglect the value of each day, because so often we forget the fragility of life and that tomorrow is not promised. This is a lesson that has become very fresh to me, and I hope it's not one that I easily forget.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to briefly offer my thanks to the people of LCF, for your love and support through the last month. I am so appreciative of your thoughts and prayers, as well as the meals and other means of assistance I have received. LCF has been near to my heart since my days at Rosedale, and it's been wonderful being back here these last several months.

Now, in the words of Sabine Baring-Gould, "Onward, Christian soldiers!" May we look to 2021 with excitement and anticipation for the opportunities we will be given to share God's love. And may we not forget to "keep the end in mind" as we go about our daily routines. ■

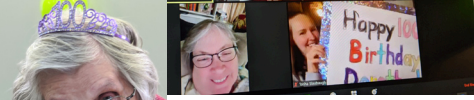
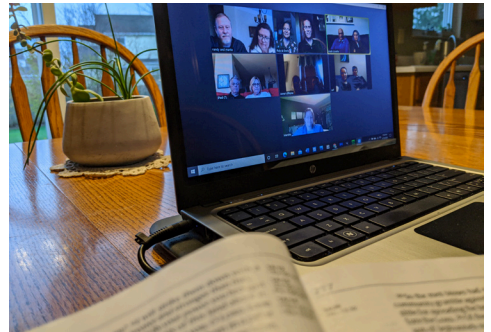
Bible Reading...continued

It is a commitment on our part. But I think we often overlook or underestimate the reward. As I have journeyed through a good chunk of the Old Testament, this year, God's character has been revealed to me over and over. His faithfulness, goodness, justice, mercy, compassion, and righteousness. What a comfort to know HE reigns over all. His Word is our comfort. It changes us. And if we allow it to change us, we can share it in order for God to change the hearts around us, and bring them comfort too. ■

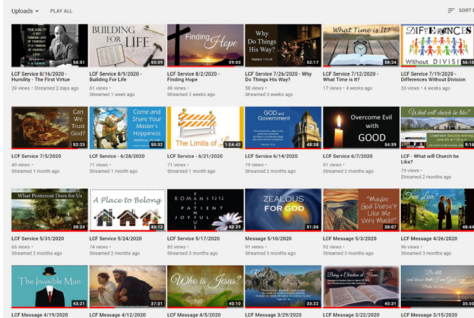
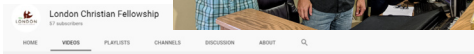
Note: You can find Bible Reading Suggestions under the Bible Teaching tab on LCF's website.



A Pictorial Review of 2020 at LCF



"Future's so bright..."



The LCF Connection
 A monthly newsletter designed to enhance communication at London Christian Fellowship

What did you think? If any of the stories in this Connection sparked an idea or opinion you'd like to share, email us at secretary@lcfweb.org. Editors: Theresa Hennis, Elisabeth Yoder, Kelli Dean, and Doris Swartz. If you prefer that we do not use photos of you in the Connection, you may opt out by emailing us.