

FINISH STRONG

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.- Psalms 90:12

The days are long but the years are short – Gretchen Rubin

Life is coming at you fast.

Take the time to slow things down. Give yourself and your family the gift of time to reflect. It's in those moments, those slow moments of reflection, that you give yourself the space to look back and appreciate the journey. At the end of a long, busy year it's time to celebrate the wins and appreciate the lessons. Notice it's the wins and the *lessons*, not the wins and the losses. Losses carry the message of defeat. But seeing as how you have survived 100% of your worst days this year, you are not defeated, you are victorious. You are someone who has gathered newfound wisdom from all the challenges you faced this year, and you get to carry that wisdom into the new year.

In order to finish strong it will require you to take the time to remember. Give yourself the time and space to remember the important moments, so that you and your family don't forget. Intentionally create a family that says thank you and nurtures an attitude of gratitude. And embrace the spirit of forgiveness to ensure that your hearts don't become bitter and hardened.

The following exercise is a step-by-step plan to help you to end the year well. You can use this as a guide for a personal retreat, a couple's project, or as a guide for your entire family to complete together.

Step 1: Choose a time.

Set aside time during the end of the year to complete each step. Choose a start and complete date to help you stay on track.

Step 2. Gather your materials.

Gather items that you can use to remember this past year, items like a personal journal, pictures, letters, calendar, etc. Sometimes even items like bills, blog posts, or social media postings can be used to help to remind you of particular details that may have been forgotten. Give yourself a few days to gather these items. And then go through the year month-by-month.

Every family will have different moments that they will most want to remember. No two projects will be the same. That's what makes each family unique and special. Enjoy this time as you pause and reflect. Resist the urge to see this as one more project you must complete and instead see it as an experience you are creating.

You are creating a dedicated time to celebrate the past year and finish strong.

The following is a list of questions to help you get started. Allow this list to inspire your thoughts and act as a springboard for additional ideas.

Section 1

Pause and reflect.

- What key themes emerged this year?
- What new milestones were crossed – (someone learned to walk, talk, read, drive, move out on their own, get married, join the military, etc.)
- List the wins do you want to celebrate from this year?
- What important lessons do you recall?
- What challenges did you overcome?
- Who died this year?
- Who was born this year?
- What books did you read this year?
- What scriptures did you memorize?
- What new friends did you meet this year?
- What new skills did you learn?
- What were some of the national wins and lessons from the past year?
- Where did you travel?
- What projects did you complete?
- What conferences, workshops, etc. did you attend this year?

Section 2

Say ‘Thank You’ to someone who took the time to invest in you this year

- Who took the time to invest the Word of God into you this year?
 - Pastor, Pastor’s wife
 - Bible study
 - Small group, life group leader
 - Podcasts, radio shows, etc
- Who taught you something new this year and b/c of it you met one of your goals?
- Who took the time to listen to you?
- Who prayed for you?
- Who supported you?
- Who showed up when you needed someone?
- Who stood by you?
- Who fed you and showed you hospitality?
- Who challenged you & stretched you?

Section 3

Create a list of the people to forgive.

- Think of every person who has hurt, disappointed, betrayed, or otherwise let you down this year.
- Be sure to include yourself on this list
- Prayerfully go through that list and forgive