



Reflection Guide

December 30-January 16

By: Vanessa VanNote & Emily Carroll

Weekday Reading

WEDNESDAY, JAN 1 - THURSDAY, JAN 2

Happy New Year! Let's be intentional with our year. Let's be less focused on societal goals and resolutions and more focused on being saturated in God's LIGHT. To do this we need to spend more time in God's Word. Instead of making New Year's Resolutions (let's be honest, we don't keep them anyways), let's set ourselves a word/verse for our year. This word will be based on God's Word and will help us abide in His LIGHT all year long. This word/verse will be something we use to help make decisions and guide our homes. We can cling to this word/verse as we go about all of the year's challenges. It will become our anthem for the year. An anthem reminding us of God's truth and presence in our lives.

Read [Romans 13:11-14](#).

As part of *putting on* God's armor of LIGHT, we must abide in His Word. Think back to how we've talked about abiding in previous Gatherings... In order to move forward (and process what your word for 2020 might be), it's also important to look back. Ask yourself these questions as you get ready to step into the new year:

Journal:

- **Spend some time reflecting on 2019... What are you most proud of in 2019? What were some of the challenges of 2019?**
- **When thinking about the challenges of 2019, is there a recurring theme/feeling that surfaces? For example, were a lot of your challenges marked by fear? Busyness? Something else?**
- **Let's shift our focus to the new year. What are you most excited for in 2020? What do you feel will be the most challenging part of 2020? Do you expect the same recurring theme/feelings to be a part of 2020's challenges as they were in 2019?**
- **How do you want to make 2020 different than 2019?**

Personal examples:

As my (Vanessa) family and I are approaching a season of great change with my husband getting out of the Army I am forced to reflect on my journey this far. I am forced to accept this new way of life that is so foreign to me. I came across [Isaiah 43:18-19](#). I am clinging to His promise that he has already begun something that I may or may not see the fruition of. I cling to His promise that He WILL make a way. As we are quickly approaching the end of my husbands Army career, I return to this verse and find peace in His promise.

Additional Verses to reflect on:

- Mathew 5: 16
- Romans 13:11
- Lamentations 3:22
- 2 Corinthians 5:16

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Weekend Reflection

FRIDAY, JAN 3 - SUNDAY, JAN 5

"A New Year's pep talk:

I pretty much think you're fine just the way you are.

Sure, you might benefit from a crash course in assertiveness. It might do you some good to cut the sugar, to read the classics, to schedule yourself a detox bath twice a week.

But it might not.

It might just make you feel gloriously defeated when you fall into bed at the dead of the night to find *Catcher in The Rye* gathering dust (again).

It might offer the false assumption that you are what you do, that you're only as strong as your weakest habit, that you're incapable of change.

I don't believe this to be true.

I think there is inherent worth in change, and I think there is inherent worth in the decision NOT to change.

I think there is a certain beauty in taking stock of yourself, in peering into your own eyes, in surveying the wrinkles and the grays and your innermost imperfections and saying to you and you alone: You know, NOT BAD.

Perhaps you're still sensitive, still a thin sin. You still eat too much cheese. You still forget to exfoliate. You still need an Introvert Time Out at family functions. You still can't multi-task, still haven't mastered a yoga headstand, still haven't learned all of the words to *We Didn't Start the Fire*.

Maybe you weren't meant to yet.

Maybe you weren't meant to at all.

Maybe you were given your precise body, your very nose, that freckle on your left knee, as little more than a meant to wander and watch and observe something larger than yourself- flawed eyes in a flawed world. Perhaps this isn't about you, not really. (Perhaps it never was.)

In a month where we're encouraged to pick apart bits of ourselves, may we step back and see the landscape we're given. May we resist the arrival checkpoint, plunge deep into a sea of grace.

For ourselves.

And mostly, for each other."

- By: Erin Loechner Author of *Chasing Slow*

Journal

➔ **How do these words by Erin Loechner resonate with you?**

➔ **Write down a few ways you can step into "a sea of grace" this January...**

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Weekday Reading

MONDAY, JAN 6 - THURSDAY, JAN 9

So hopefully you've picked your word/verse for the year and now you may be wondering what to do next? First, remember this is a year long journey. You don't need to learn everything about your word this week! You have the entire year! There are many ways to focus on your word/verse.

My **first step** to learning about the word I have prayerfully chosen for my year is to start in the index of my Bible. If your exact word isn't listed, think of common synonyms. For example if your word is "trust" or "joy" - you are sure to find plenty of Bible verses that coordinate with that word. However, if your word is "simplify" you may have a harder time at finding a verse listed. So, I'd encourage you to take some time to list out synonyms for that word or coordinating thoughts (take full advantage of the dictionary and thesaurus). For example I would look up verses on "contentment," "quiet," "greed," and "stillness." I

would write down the Scriptures that stuck out to me and would study their historical context then their modern day implications for me.

Next, create a list of books, podcasts and sermons that center around the theme of your word/verse. Take your time digesting the information from each resource, reflecting on the lessons and teachings and how it pertains to the word/verse you've chosen and your current life stage.

Third, create a monthly quote list. Find 12 quotes with your word in them (or a common theme) and pick one for each calendar month to add additional reflections. If you have chosen a verse instead of a word, you could do this with coordinating verses. I love the practice of memorizing a verse/quote each month as I follow the journey of my word throughout the year.

Lastly (especially for you creative types), create a vision/inspiration board of pictures. I (Emily) have never done this, but I thought it was a really neat idea. My word for the year is "simplify." So, if I was to create a vision board, I'd pick photos that display simplified living to me. I may choose a photo of a calendar with empty space, a photo of someone relaxing outside or a photo of a simplified home. I may even add photos of my kids at the park or on trail walks - two things that rarely happened in 2019 because I kept us too busy! I'd use this board of pictures when making decisions in 2020..

Journal

- **Write down a plan on how you will learn about your word. Which of the above suggestions sounds most appealing to you? Set a few goals and make a timeline to hold yourself accountable for continuing with your God given word/verse in 2020.**

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Weekend Reflection

FRIDAY, JAN 10 - SUNDAY, JAN 12

Let's use this weekend to pray and reflect on this excerpt from *Irresistible Faith* by Scott Sauls:

"Because you love us, you include us - along with all your children everywhere - in your mission of loving people, places, and things to life. Because we are your beloved ambassadors, you send us out to "so love the world" with the goal of leaving the world better than we found it. Please include us in your good work, helping us to add such irresistible value to our cities and towns and neighborhoods that if Christians disappeared, our cities and towns and neighborhoods would weep. Lord, Hear our prayer"

Let's take a moment to journal your thoughts. Here are a few questions to get you going:

- **Write out the prayer with pretty colors or designs. Bold or use all Caps for the words or phrases that stand out most to you.**

- ➔ What does it mean to you to be an ambassador of Christ?
- ➔ Is it easy for you to love ALL Gods children? Why or why not?
- ➔ How are you feeling moved to pray or act today?

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Weekday Reading

MONDAY, JAN 13 – THURSDAY, JAN 16

Now that we've picked a word/verse for our year to help us dwell in the Light, how can we use that word/verse to help us shine His light onto others?

"Indeed, we are the salt of the earth, the city on a hill, and the light of the world – but the light we shine is his light and not our own – just as the moon, having no light of its own, nonetheless was created to reflect the light of the sun in such a way that it illuminates the darkness of night. His light is available to us every single day. All we have to do is walk outside, bask in it, and receive it"

– By: Scott Sauls *Irresistible Faith*

If we are to be a reflection of His LIGHT, the next question you might ask yourself is HOW? What will this look like in your current season? I used to feel guilty hearing how all these amazing people created these charities and opened an orphanage in Africa for young girls... Yet God doesn't call us *all* to be international missionaries. God calls us to be missionaries right in the place God has placed you to be *in the moment*. Maybe this is to take the next step and serve in your local church? Maybe it's to get involved with a local non-profit? Or just maybe it's to offer a friendly smile to a stranger and ask them how they are? Wherever God is leading you is no less important than others you hear about. We are all called to serve His Kingdom in a variety of ways that are all just as valuable and important as the next.

Read through the following Scriptures to help. Read a couple per day, read all of them at once, or simply read one the whole week. It's up to you. Grant yourself the freedom to read what you can in the time that you have, all for the goal of connecting with God.

- ➔ Matthew 5:16
- ➔ Acts 13:47
- ➔ 1 Peter 2:9
- ➔ Ephesians 5:8

- ➔ Luke 8:16
- ➔ Mathew 5:14
- ➔ Isaiah 42:6
- ➔ Colossians 3:17

Journal about the Scriptures you read:

- ➔ **What STUCK OUT most to you?** This could be something new or a reminder of something you've forgotten...

- **Did any Questions come to mind?** Pray and ask God about it. If it lingers, talk about it with someone you trust and respect.
- **What are you learning about the CHARACTER OF GOD in this passage?** This could be something that helped you to better understand the person or actions of the Almighty. It's something that stirs you to feel more connected and love him more.
- **How are you moved to PRAY today?**

Optional Family Activity

Get your kids and/or spouse involved in what you are learning, reading, and reflecting on through MomLife! Each Reflection Guide will include a space like this with ideas and notes for how to read and have discussion/activities with your family around Scripture.

Family Word/Verse of the Year

Get your kids involved in selecting a word/verse for 2020 by discussing the following questions:

- What was your favorite part of being in our family in 2019?
- What do you hope we do together as a family in 2020?
- If you could describe our family in a few words, what words would you use? Or, (especially for older kids): think about how your friends or other people might describe us? Is that how we *want* to be known? If not, how can we help how we want to be known with how we are actually known better align?
- Discuss what will be going on in your family in 2020... Is there a new baby coming? Is anybody starting a new school? Will you be taking a fun vacation? Moving? Job transition? Help cast the vision of your upcoming year and be prepared to answer questions!
- Ask your children how the family can help each other through each of those changes.

After asking the above questions there will more than likely be a common theme that surfaces. If so, pick a word that describes the year, but be sure to keep it positive! So if the theme is *change* perhaps pick EXCITEMENT, TRUST or ADVENTURE as your word. For example, Emily has chosen the word "simplify" for 2020 for both herself and her family. This concept will be easy for her kids to grasp as they learn to live and do less in the pursuit of more.

For a couple more tools to help process 2020, check out:

→ Jennie Allen *Dream Guide* @
jennieallen.com/dreamguide

→ Jennie Allen's *Made For This* podcast,
[Dec 31: How To Dream Bigger](#)