

“Open the Door to 2021 & Put 2020 in the Rearview Mirror”

Dear God, we thank you for being faithful, for giving us the courage to push through the last days of 2020. Despite the unprecedented challenges, struggles and loss of 2020, you promise that you will never “leave us nor forsake us” (Deuteronomy 31:8). You are a faithful God. You tell us that “those who put our trust and faith in you cannot be shaken” (Psalm 125:1). Thank you that even when our world was shaken in 2020, we serve an unshakeable God. We ask that in times of doubt and questioning, you would remind us to “lean not on our own understanding, but trust in you, and you will direct our paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6) We ask that you remind us to rely on your wisdom, which is far greater than our own. In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we humbly pray. Amen.

Zoom, Zoom and Zoom. Masks, masks, and masks. Sourdough starter and short-order cooking. In these “troubled times,” in our sweatpants and the isolation we endure “out of an abundance of caution,” there isn’t much not to be over as 2020 comes to a longed-for halt.

With the national election behind us, approval of COVID-19 vaccines and cries of hunger fueled by food insecurity, the year was a mess of common horrors and inconveniences driven by political divisions, racial injustice, and the deadly and persistent pandemic, with long-lasting hurtful language to match.

The horrific death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed a knee into his neck for several minutes catapulted more white people to the realization that racism is real and present. Quppies (as in quarantine puppies) and Quittens (the feline equivalent) have enriched millions of lives. Family dinner is back on the table and coronavirus pods have turned friends into family.

Here’s a few more things we’re over as we lurch into 2021, and a few things we may just remember fondly: Distance learning. Let’s work on decent, affordable Wi-Fi for all. Oh, the bread. We made bread. We made bread! WE MADE BREAD. Yes, we did. And now we’re thinking it might be time to stop. As the pandemic brought on baking – and hoarding – madness in March, flour was in short supply for a time, along with yeast. Some companies reported the biggest spikes in sales were for bread flour. With nothing but time at home for mixing and chilling of dough, many in quarantine tried their hand at bread. But the thing is, we did it!

The great outdoors. We’ve hiked. We’ve walked. We’ve dined outdoors. As winter descends in cold-weather environs, we continue seeking space free of walls. The great outdoors has led some to rediscover what’s right in front of them: their local parks, their backyards, their decks, their porches. And they’ve spent some of their newfound time sprucing them up. Work from home office views are now trees and gardens and birds for many.

REAR VIEW MIRRORS & WINDSHIELDS! Both are necessary in driving a car and living a life. Someone has said, “Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.” I think that is true of our lives in a lot of ways. So, it would profit us to look in the rear-view mirror of our lives and see how we lived in this current year so that we can avoid any faults and failures that occurred that it may help us to not repeat them in the New Year. But we should not spend so much time looking in the rear-view mirror that we fail to look through our windshield of the year ahead. If you concentrate too much on your rear-view mirror and forget your windshield tragic accidents can occur.

As we look through the windshield of the approaching year rushing toward us one thing, we see is this, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” (1 Peter 1:3 NIV). Just as Christians experience a new birth and a new living hope when they find salvation in Jesus because of His death and resurrection and His mercy toward us so we face the birth of a New Year and we should enter the New Year with excitement because of the living hope we have in Jesus. Just as all praise goes to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation so should we enter the New Year with that same praise on our tongue. And just as we enter the Christian life with great expectations because of God’s great mercy so should we enter the New Year with great expectations because we are children of the King.

Once you've stopped living in the rearview mirror, where should you put your focus? Forward! That's where the prize is and that's where true peace and victory are found.

Unbelief looks at the past and says, "See, it can't be done." But faith looks at the future and says, "It can be done, and according to the promises of God, it is done!" Faith steps out, knowing that the victory has already been won. If you'll take God at His Word, you can wake up every morning to a brand-new world. You can live life totally unhindered by the past. So, do it! Replace thoughts of yesterday's mistakes with scriptural promises about your future. As you do that, hope will start taking the place of depression. The spiritual aches and pains that have crippled you for so long will quickly disappear.

A life free from the bondage of the past is within your grasp, so begin implementing these three steps and look to a blessed and bright future. Put the past behind you and start your new life today!

Open the Door to the New Year! Revelation 3:20 says, *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.* Crossing the threshold into what God has in store. Consider this past year, where have you been? How was your journey? Was it a season of OPEN DOORS or CLOSED DOORS? Was it a season of slammed doors, or doors opened in invitation? Look around you. Consider the doors you can see. What kind of Door represents your last year? What kind of Door represents the year ahead? Consider the Door into the New Year: Is the door squeaky? Is it creaky? Is it hard to open? Is it locked and do you have the key? Or maybe you need a new key? Is it a new door? Are there windows in the door or is it totally solid? When you look inside, is there a room filled with light, warm and inviting, or do you feel the space inside is dark and filled with unknown obstacles?

As you approach and cross the threshold and open the door to the New Year, what do you need to leave behind? What do you need to drop? We cannot receive new gifts from God if our hands are full. CS Lewis says, "if our hands are full of too many packages, we cannot receive any new gifts." Are you carrying too many packages? What packages do you need to drop? Talk to God about this. Allow God to show you what you need to put down, what you need to let go of to move through the new door of your once in a lifetime New Year, 2021.

Spend some time with God and ask God to show you what door you are in front of and how you need to walk into the New Year. Take time to ask the questions "How do I need God to open doors for me in the New Year?" And "What doors do I need God to close for me this next year?" Pray and talk to God about this. Take some time consider the doors. Those behind and those ahead. And consider how you can open the door more to Jesus in the New Year!

Will the New Year be the year of the Lord's return? Will the New Year be the year of spiritual revival in the United States? Will the New Year be the year those friends and relatives of ours who do not know Jesus will finally meet Him face to face in a salvation relationship? Will the New Year be the year God uses you in a great way to minister in His Kingdom's work and make a difference in the lives of many people or at least a few? Will this be the year we unexpectedly meet the Lord face to face in glory? Whether we are young or old we should enter the New Year looking for God's guidance and direction for our lives and we should do it with great expectations of God doing something great in our lives as He desires. What is just beyond the windshield in the approaching year? Keep your eyes open because God will be working in your life. Tear off the rear-view mirror because no one wants to look back at 2020.

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Prayer: As James 1:5 says, "if any of you lacks wisdom, ask you and you will graciously give it to us." So, Lord, we ask for wisdom on how to navigate through the rest of 2020. We ask that in all our decisions you would give us wisdom to end 2020 the way you desire us to. We ask that you give us wisdom in the coming year in all that we do. We trust that you are in control and that even if we don't see the end of this world pandemic soon, that you are working and that you know exactly what's to come. Thank you that you have gone before us, that you are with us, and you go behind us.

Thank you for being the only source of security in this insecure world we experienced in 2020. **“Open the Door to 2021 & Put 2020 in our Rearview Mirror”** In Jesus’ mighty name, we love you and ask these things, amen.