



InterVarsity

Spiritually Formed for the

NEW YEAR

MOVING FORWARD
BY LOOKING BACK
A Mid-Year Reflection Guide

Introduction

Congratulations!

You made it to the end of 2021!

And double congratulations - you have taken a meaningful step in your spiritual growth by getting this guide so you can transition into 2022!

But in order to move forward, we have to look back. Scripture is full of exhortations to celebrate and mourn what has happened in the past. It's how God prepares us for what is next!

Have you been asking any of these questions?

What does He want me to learn from this past season in ministry?

What do I still need to celebrate or grieve from 2021?

What does He have in store for 2022?

If so, I want you to know you're in the right place. This guide was created to help lead you journey from 2021 to 2022 in a thoughtful, intentional way!

Consider taking a half day or full day retreat to reflect on these questions if you can. If not, consider breaking each part up into 20-30 minute increments over the next few days or weeks.

Don't feel pressure to answer every question or finish by the ball drop. The goal isn't to finish. The goal is thoughtful reflection to lead you from one season to the next. So if a question isn't helpful - skip it! But linger with the ones that are!

My prayer is that as you take the time to pray and reflect, that God will meet you and uncover what He is preparing you for this next semester!

Looking for something for Advent?

Check out the Christmas Challenge with Danielle Strickland and myself that launches December 5th! More information is at the end of this retreat guide. Or go [here](#) to learn more and sign up!

Many blessings on your time with Jesus!

Bette Dickinson

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

"Contemplative action is action that emerges from our real encounters with God. It is doing what God calls us to do when he calls us to do it - no matter how afraid we are or how ill-equipped we feel...This kind of action is impossible without being radically in touch with the Source of our life through prayer and contemplation."

— Dr. Barbara L. Peacock, *Soul Care in African American Practice*

Feel free to adapt guide to fit the time you have scheduled for your retreat.

Suggested Schedule for a 3 Hour Retreat:

20 Min Settling In

10 Min Visio Contemplatio

30 min Part 1: Remember

30 min Part 2: Celebrate and Grieve

30 min Part 3: Reflect

20 min Part 4: Perceive Lectio Divina

20 min Part 4: Perceive Reflection

20 min Part 5: Look Forward

Suggested Schedule for a Day Retreat:

1 hour Silence and Settling in

20 Min Visio Contemplatio

30 min Part 1: Remember

30 min Part 2: Celebrate and Grieve

30 min Part 3: Reflect

1 hour lunch - eat slowly!

20 min Part 4: Perceive Lectio Divina

30 min Part 4: Perceive

1 Hour Contemplative Walk

30 min Part 5: Look Forward

Getting Ready:

- *Minimize distractions as much as possible.*
- *Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.*
- *Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bible.*

Settling In

Once you arrive at your retreat location, it can be helpful to take some time to settle in and quiet your body and spirit. We have often come to our retreat from a busy schedule of ministry and daily life, or a hectic morning. Take some time to calm yourself and settle in - perhaps 15-30 minutes.

Relax

Breathe slowly: Settle in and relax. Take slow, deep breaths and allow yourself to slow down.

Begin the retreat by finding a place to settle. Take several deep breaths. As you exhale, try and release any tension you are carrying in your body. Relax. Breathe in the peace of Christ.

Write down all the things that are on your mind. What are you concerned will be forgotten if you spend this time in prayer? Write them down, make a list. You can return to these items after we are done.

What do you come seeking today? Before moving on in the retreat, sit quietly with Jesus, listening for God's voice and being aware of God's presence.

"Some Centering Moment" by Howard Thurman

"We wait in the quietness for some centering moment that will redefine, reshape, and refocus our lives. It does seem to be a luxury to be able to give thought and time to the ups and downs of one's private journey while the world around is so sick and weary and desperate. But, our Father, we cannot get through to the great anxieties that surround us until, somehow, a path is found through the little anxieties that beset us. Dost Thou understand what it is like to be caught between the agony of one's own private needs and to be tempest-tossed by needs that overwhelm and stagger the mind and paralyze the heart? Dost Thou understand this, our Father?"

For the long loneliness, the deep and searching joy and satisfaction, the boundless vision - all these things that give to Thee so strong a place in a world so weak - we thank Thee, Father. For whatever little grace Thou wilt give to Thy children even as they wait in confidence and stillness in Thy presence, we praise Thee. O love of God, love of God, where would we be without Thee? Where?

Amen "



Enter into this day by soaking in the [Magnificat in Latin](#) by Arvo Part
Consider listening while you gaze on the painting on the next page



Making Room for Justice by Bette Dickinson

Visio Contemplatio



8 min

Listen to a guided meditation on this painting
by the artist, Bette Dickinson for her upcoming book,
Making Room in Advent: 25 Devotions for a Season of Wonder
with Intervarsity Press (releasing Fall 2022)

PART 1

Remember

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

SOCRATES

Review

Your Calendar: What stands out to you as significant events from this past 6 months?

Your Pictures: What are some memories you made with family or friends?

Notice

What emotions surface as you reflect on this past 6 months or year? Notice without judgement, but with curiosity.

Note any significant God sightings as you reflect. Were there times you felt particularly close to God or wondered what He was up to? How have you seen him at work most in the ministry? What are some sparks of revival in the communities you serve?

What particular experiences shaped you the most?

PART 2

Celebrate & Grieve

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell
what he has done for my soul."

PSALM 66:16

Celebrate

As you consider this past season in ministry, what do you want to celebrate and give thanks to God for? What kind of transformation have you seen in those you lead? What are some God moments of breakthrough? A special way He provided? A story of redemption on campus? A sign of hope?

What are some unexpected gifts that came even amidst the limitations and challenges of doing ministry in 2021?

"For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of
the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but
has listened to his cry for help."

PSALM 22:24

Grieve

Personal: Where have you personally experienced loss or disappointment in this past season? What thoughts or feelings surface as you think about those? What were you hoping to happen in the ministry that didn't happen?

Communal: What kind of losses have you witnessed in the world? In the community you serve? What thoughts or feelings surface when you consider the experiences of others?

If you have some unresolved areas of grief, consider taking some time to lament those to God through this [lament guide](#).

PART 3

Reflect

"We do not learn from experience...
we learn from reflecting on experience."

JOHN DEWEY

Consider Your Growth

What are some ways you have grown in Christ in this past six months? How do you view God, others, or yourself differently? How do you look more like Jesus than you did last semester?

What are some things He has been teaching you about the way He made you - your gifts, strengths, weaknesses, passions, and dreams?

Who are key people He has put into your life? How have they played a role in shaping you? Who are key partners God has brought alongside you? How are they helping shape the ministry?

At staff conference 2020, we started praying about what role God has each of us to play in the coming revival. Have you gotten more clarity on this? What are some ways you have been leaning into this calling?

How are you a different person heading into 2022?

Father,

Every day ordained for me was written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:16). Only you know the reason for everything that has transpired in this last year. Help me to see what You see from this past year. Help me to see past the surface of what happened, but perceive Your hand at work.

Amen

PART 4

Perceive

"He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the discerning.
He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what lies in darkness
and light dwells with him."

- DANIEL 2:20-22



[Guided Lectio Divina](#)
[\(17 min\)](#)

According to Daniel 2,

God is the revealer of mysteries.

2021 might feel like a great big mystery to you. But be encouraged by James 1:5,

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

God invites us to ask Him when we need wisdom about our current circumstances or our past. Invite Him to show you what He sees. Consider asking Him the following questions. Pause to listen to what He says. His answers may surprise you. Write down whatever comes to mind and test it later (against Scripture and in community) to discern if it's from God.

Ask Him:

- What do you want to draw my attention to regarding this past six months? (Consider reviewing your lists from Part 1).
- Is there a particular event or pattern that You want to bring to my attention?
What do you want me to know about this?
- Can You show me your perspective on this last season? How is Your perspective different from mine? Can you show me how You've been at work in my heart and in the world in ways I cannot see?
- What do you want me to know about how ways You are working in the ministry? How do you want me to come alongside that? What do you want me to shift or change?

PART 5

Look Forward

"Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."

PROVERBS 19:21

A Theme or Word for 2022

Ask God to make you aware of anything that he hopes will guide you, thematically, through this year ahead. For example, is there a guiding principle or image that He wants you to meditate on for the year? Or a way of being during the year?

Or, alternatively, is there a word or phrase that represents what He has for you this year?

Take some time to allow this to surface.

Reflect

- What theme or word surfaces as you spend this time with God? What is your reaction to it? What excites you? What scares you?
- What do you sense that living out this theme or word might present to you in the coming semester?
- If a 2022 theme or word is not surfacing, you might want to ask God to share with you the theme He feels your life demonstrated in 2021 and how He would like to either further that or change it for 2022.
- If God has given you a theme or word, just sit with it – don't start trying to make sense of it or make plans about how to play it out. Thank God for it and ask Him to show you how He is presenting you with opportunities to live into the theme.

An invitation to the



Join Danielle Strickland and myself as we launch the Infinitum Christmas Challenge 2021. The Christmas challenge is about JESUS. December is one of the busiest and most chaotic months for people. And yet, it is the month we set aside to focus on Jesus and what His presence and life means to us. What if we centered Jesus in the midst of chaos? What if we made room in our lives and calendars and hearts for Him? It could be the best Christmas ever. How?

LIVED OUT and PRACTICED FAITH leads to mutual transformation. The Christmas Challenge is designed to take our beliefs and LIVE THEM OUT in community.

- Daily Prayer
- Spiritual Practices
- Healthy Rhythms
- Meaningful Connection

All are part of what it takes to put Jesus at the center of our everyday lives and take us all deeper and wider together.

As a part of this challenge, join me and Danielle Strickland as we discuss the 4 paintings that will be a part of this series and get a little sneak peek at the upcoming Advent book, Making Room in Advent: 25 Devotions for A Season of Wonder (releasing with InterVarsity Press in Fall 2022)!

To sign up for the Christmas Challenge and the December 8th prayer day, go [here](#):

Bette Dickinson



You did it!

That was a lot of heart work. You took the time to prepare your heart for this next year, and I know it'll make a huge difference in how you enter 2022.

I am praying this next year will be a year full of unexpected gifts and growth in your life. May you receive the new thing He wants to do in your midst!



Bette Dickinson

About the Artist & Author

Bette Dickinson is an artist, writer, and speaker who invites audiences to connect with God through visual parables of the spiritual journey. Through creative communication, she helps her audience awaken to the beauty of God and His Kingdom and see more clearly the eternal realm in the heart and in the world.

Through her work, Dickinson helps her audience connect the inner life of spiritual formation with the outer life of mission.

Bette earned her Masters of Divinity with an emphasis in Pastoral Studies, is ordained in the Reformed Church in America, and serves with Danielle Strickland's Team Boundess as an Artist in Residence and with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship as the Assistant National Director of Spiritual Formation