

# Look Backward, Upward and Forward

by Zac Poonen

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*To live a life of faith and humility, we must learn to look backward with gratitude, upward to the glory of the Lord, and forward in faith to God's wonderful plans.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 3:13, Hebrews 12:2, 2 Peter 1:9, Revelation 1:17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Faithfulness Of God"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the importance of looking backward, upward, and forward in our spiritual journey. Looking backward helps us remember God's faithfulness, forgiveness, and mercy, strengthening our faith and gratitude. Looking upward allows us to see more of the glory of the Lord, humbling us and keeping us in brokenness and humility. Looking forward in faith reminds us that God has great plans for us and encourages us to focus on doing His work on earth.

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## Transcript

Looking Backward:

We need to look back. Many times in my life I have looked back over how the Lord has led me - and that has renewed my faith. When I face a difficult situation and it looks as if there is no way out, I remind myself of the promises in the Bible and listen to the encouragement that other believers give me. But the thing that strengthens my faith most of all is when I look back. The Lord asks me, "Have I ever let you down even once so far?" I have to reply, "No, Lord. Not even once." Then He says, "I won't let you down now either." The backward look encourages me more than anything else.

Have you fallen again? Look back and see how the Lord forgave you in the past. When He forgave you, didn't He know that you would fall again? Was that a surprise to Him that you fell again? No. Then He will forgive you again. Look back with gratitude. That will strengthen your faith. Be thankful for the Lord's mercy. When you look at your failures in the past, you will learn to be merciful to other believers around you who fail. But there is another way in which we must not look back. Paul said, "Forgetting the things that are behind." (Phil.3:13). If we look back in a wrong way, we will get discouraged and think that we are useless and a failure in life, having wasted so many years of our life. Let me give a word of encouragement to those who feel they have wasted their lives.

Jesus told a parable of some labourers who did not work for 11 hours out of 12 in a working day. At the 11th hour a man called them and asked them to work in his vineyard. They went and worked for just one

hour. But Jesus said that they got their wages first of all! Those who worked for 12 hours got their reward last! I hope that encourages you.

We should not look back in discouragement. Neither should we look back in pride. "Forgetting the things that lie behind" relates to both the things that discourage us as well as to the things that make us proud. If you can think of anything that discourages you or makes you proud, I would ask you to forget it as soon as possible. We need to look back with gratitude to God for what He has done. That's the backward look I am talking about. Peter says that those who don't look back but forget their purification from their sins are blind and shortsighted (2 Pet.1:9).

Looking Upward:

We also need to look up. We must never stop looking upwards and seeing more of the glory of the Lord. There is much of the glory of Jesus that we still haven't seen. We must hunger for this, because that's the image into which the Holy Spirit seeks to transform us. As we see the Lord's glory, it will humble us because we will see our own need. This is the secret of remaining in humility, till the end of our lives.

It is very easy for one whom God has anointed and used mightily to become proud. I have seen a lot of preachers like that. Because God has used them they are so proud and they are very distant from people. What is it that can keep us in brokenness and humility till the end of our lives? Only one thing. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. When we look at Jesus it is impossible to be proud. A man becomes proud when he starts looking at other people, and imagines himself to be better than them, or more anointed than them, or more used than them etc., If however he looked upwards at Jesus, he would fall on his face in the dust in repentance - like the apostle John did on the Isle of Patmos. And if he keeps looking at Jesus, he will keep his face in the dust forever. All of us need to learn to keep our faces in the dust at all times. That's the place of safety.

So if you want God to be happy with you until the end of your days, keep looking upwards. We should never look inwards first. We must always look upwards first. We must look at Jesus and as we see His glory, we will see our sin. That's the best way to see our sin. Otherwise we will be discouraged.

Looking Forward:

We need to look forward too - in faith. God has wonderful things in store for us. He has a great job for us to do. We don't know when we will have to leave this world. But before the Lord comes, we look forward to doing something useful for Him on this earth. Most people in the world look to the future with fear and anxiety. But we look forward in faith.

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