

Looking Ahead
2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:13-14

Professional golfer and Christian, Tom Lehmen, said several years ago in an interview, “Everyone needs three things to live well: *something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to.*” Everyone needs a purpose and a person to love. Today, we will focus on Lehmen’s third point: *Everyone needs to look forward to something.*

Advice: Make sure there is something on your calendar every month to which you can look forward to doing.

Robert Louis Stevenson said: “*To travel hopefully is better than to arrive.*” So that is our challenge every year at this time; *to look forward in hope to what the new year will bring.* It won’t all be easy; there will be challenges and disappointments, as there is every year. There are, however, two great truths about living as followers of Jesus that help us to face the new year with confidence and hope: *A Christ-follower has no regrets concerning the past, and a Christ-follower is shaped by the future and not the past.*

A Christ-follower has no regrets concerning the past.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Past sins and mistakes are buried in the sea of God’s forgetfulness: What do we mean by God’s forgetfulness? It means He does not literally forget your sins; He just does not hold them against you.

Psalm 103:12 says our sin is removed from us “as far as the East is from the West.”

Romans 8:28 - “All things” includes everything, even our own stupidity! We learn far more from our failures than from our successes. So, in God’s economy, everything belongs.

John 6:12 - Many of us feel like broken pieces thrown on the scrapheap of life. Sometimes it’s because of hurts done to us by others, or it may be the brokenness that comes from our own poor choices and sins. Either way, Jesus says, “Let nothing be wasted; gather up the broken pieces.”

Phil. 3:13-14 – Paul tells us to forget the past and strive for the future. Press to the goal of heaven and life with Christ.

A Christ-follower is shaped by the future, not the past.

B.F. Skinner, in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), tried to prove that human behavior is completely controlled by environmental, or external, factors. He believed that no human being is making real choices about their behavior—they are just responding as they have been conditioned to respond.

Not so for the follower of Jesus—the ones who have experienced new creation through faith in Christ. Who we are in the present is determined by our future, not our past.

1 John 3:2-3 and Romans 8:24-25 - *Hope for the future is what transforms us in the present.*

Fleetwood Mac was right: “Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow.” If you do, you’ll die. The best is *always* yet to come!

Objection: “But my plans never seem to work out.”

It doesn't matter. It's the plans themselves that have the power to shape who you are in the present. It's like asking a little kid what they want to be when they grow up. Their answer doesn't matter. It may change every day. The important thing is to keep them thinking about the future.

Hebrews 11:13-16 – The Old Testament patriarchs were aliens on this earth. They were looking for a permanent homeland. They had abandoned their country of origin. The city they seek is in heaven. God approves of their quest and will give them what they seek.

1 Corinthians 11:26 - There is the one event in the past, however, that we are encouraged to remember: Jesus' death on the cross. But even then, it is tied to our hope for the future. This event stands outside of time altogether, tying past, present, and future together in Christ.

Christ is our past, present, and future!