



A Guide for Reflection from Sacredise.com

Thank you for downloading the *Preparing for the New World in 2022* reflection guide!

I know the last two years have been incredibly challenging for almost every church leader across the world. Seminary didn't train us to navigate a pandemic, a sudden decline in attendances, economic challenges, lockdowns, conspiracy theories, conflicts about masks and vaccines, and shifting our whole ministry online! Many ministers are exhausted and a significant proportion have even decided to leave the ministry.

The truth is that almost all of the changes we've had to navigate were already happening before the pandemic hit. COVID simply accelerated what was already in motion pre-2020. While this is distressing because it shows that the Church has been struggling for a long time, it is comforting because it gives us the information we need to prepare for the pandemic-altered world ahead. I bet that right now you are looking for direction and hope for the New Year. That's what this reflection guide is for.

The five questions below can help you to find clarity on your own thoughts and feelings. They can guide you to insights about your community and ministry. And they can give you some clear and practical steps to set yourself up for a creative and effective ministry in 2022.

I recommend that you set aside at least an hour to work through this reflection guide. Be as honest and detailed as you can be. And make sure that you journal your insights and plans so that you can easily access them again in January. You may also want to share this guide with your leaders so that you can create a shared plan for the future.

May you be inspired and empowered as you do this work!

Question 3

What are your most important learnings from 2021? How will you remember them and keep them in front of you so that they can inform your life and work in 2022?

It is often said that the best way to fail in the present is to keep doing what you've done in the past. There is some truth to this, especially when we are facing the kind of disruptive change that the pandemic has brought. But that doesn't mean we can't learn from the past and use its wisdom to guide our way forward. One of our challenges is how easily we forget or lose sight of what we learn in the school of life. This question is designed to help you access the wisdom that you have gleaned from the last year and make sure that you preserve this wisdom so that it can guide you in the year ahead.

Question 4

What strengths do you and your community take with you into 2022?

When we're navigating a tough situation our most effective response will always be to play to our strengths. Most of us are fairly comfortable with our own personal strengths. Although in ministry we are often taught to focus on growing our weaknesses and becoming the best general practitioner we can be, now is not the time for that (if it ever really is). But as you work with this question think also of the strengths in your church, in your leaders, your people, your resources, etc.

Question 5

What three priorities will you set—systems to implement, knowledge to learn, skills to develop, things to change or stop doing, etc.—in order to enter 2022 with more confidence and direction?

This question should be informed by everything that has gone before in this reflection guide. I would recommend that you begin by brainstorming everything you can think of that you can plan to do, learn, develop, or change in the New Year. Then narrow the list down to your top three items. Then set these as your priority for the first quarter of 2022. Keep the others somewhere safe—you may want to return to them later in the year when you feel comfortable with your progress on the top three.

Brainstorm:

Top Three Priorities for Quarter One 2022:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I pray that using this reflection guide has been helpful for you as you prepare for 2022. My hope would be that spending a little time working through this guide will help you to enter the Christmas season in a more relaxed and confident way, knowing that you are prepared to get to work with new direction and inspiration in January.

May you be filled with joy and creativity as you celebrate Christ's birth. And may your New Year be a celebration of a new opportunity to partner with God in bringing God's life, grace, and love to your community.

Grace
John