



Innovista

Learning from lockdown: reflecting on your family life

We have been designed in God's image to live in community with one another, and not just the members of our own household. This past year has forced many of us into isolation, social distancing and mask wearing – something that we've done out of love for our neighbour but have paid a great price for. Let's not leave this lockdown without taking time to consider the impact that it has had on us and our families.

Try to set aside at least 45 minutes for this; easier said than done at the moment, but making time for reflection as we come out of lockdown will help us to shape our lives with intention. Decide whether you want to reflect as a family unit, with your spouse, or a close friend if you are single parent, or on your own.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."
(Romans 12:2)

Start your reflection in prayer, dedicating the time to God and asking for his wisdom. Be honest with him as you lay at his feet the joys, struggles and sorrows you have experienced. Ask God to surprise you, to turn the things which have harmed you into sources of healing, and to shed light on the questions and frustrations that bubble up.





Looking back

Family life in lockdown; the highs and the lows

Write down the features of life in lockdown which have been beneficial – perhaps less pressure from a packed schedule of activities, more quality time as a family, better team-work with a spouse, new opportunities to serve your community, or having more time to pray, to study or to engage in a new hobby.

Take time to thank God for these blessings! You could make a big noise reading Psalm 150.

Look at your list. Some things were specific to last year and will naturally draw to an end. Highlight the ones which could be carried forward into the future.

Now note down on the features of family life which have been hard this year – these might include a lack of space or resource, difficult relationships, loneliness, the complex needs of a family member which couldn't be met adequately, or bereavement.

Take time to grieve what you and your family have lost and suffered over the past year. Remember "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted" (Psalm 34:18).

Look at your list. Some of these things will naturally ease as lockdown lifts. Highlight the ones which need to be addressed more proactively.



My own life in lockdown; the highs and the lows

This past year has been a time of sustained pressure on parents to juggle family life, parenting, work and homeschooling, with little (if any) help from outside the home. It may well have been a time shaped by the sting of bereavement and grief, or acute anxiety about money, or it might have put pressure on a relationship already in crisis. Take some time to reflect on your own well-being. Here are some questions to help you:

- Have you been eating, sleeping and exercising well?
- How has a lack of social contact affected you?
- Who are the people, and what are the activities, that you have really missed?
- How is your prayer and spiritual life after a year of attending church remotely/not at all?

Now think about what you need in order to recover from this year.



Looking forward: when life “returns to normal”?

What are the top three things that you and your family are looking forward to doing again when restrictions ease? How can you prioritise them as life starts to get busy again?

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What could the dangers be for you and/or your family at that point? What could you put in place to protect you or prevent these dangers?

How will your family serve God together as restrictions lift?



Look back on your lists of good things to build into family life, difficult things which need to be addressed, and what you personally need in order to recover from the past year. What do you need to put in place? What needs to change? Who can you ask for help?

Note down your key learnings.

Looking up

What do you think God has been saying to you throughout lockdown?

Is there a word, a picture or a bible verse that embodies what you want to take with you as you journey out of lockdown?

Spend time in prayer, committing your thoughts, plans, hopes and intentions to God, asking him to shape a new phase in the life of your family.

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” (Proverbs 16:3)

