

January Devotions

Transformational Resolutions

What are your resolutions?

Want to be more successful? See ***Colossians 3:23-24***

Want to stop living in the past? See ***Isaiah 43:18-19***

Want a fresh start? See ***2 Corinthians 5:17***

Want peace that transcends all understanding? See ***Philippines 4:7***

Recent research indicates that only 9% of Americans keep their New Year's Resolutions for the entire year while 88% give up within the first two weeks!

People don't plan to fail - they just fail to plan. But God has incredible plans for us. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" **Jeremiah 29:11**

Jesus reveals the key to experiencing God's plans in **Matthew 6:33**. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Notice the words "Seek first." That means He needs to be your top priority. Your relationship with God is THE most important thing in your life. So, let's seek His Kingdom and His righteousness above all else.

The way to keep your resolutions going is to transform your life by having an intimate relationship with your Creator/Redeemer. Get to know Him and His voice. Communicate with Him daily and listen to what He has to say. Read His Word to learn more about Him and about the plans and promises He has for you!

As you set your resolutions for 2025, remember to place your full confidence and trust in Christ. He has the power to transform you by the renewing of your mind.

Prayer Points:

- Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness.
- Ask God to show you any areas in your life that need transformation.
- Meditate on His promises and lean into His glory.

More Than Wonderful

“All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent.” **(Isaiah 28:29 NIV)**

The calendar has turned the page on the past year, so we are hopeful and filled with optimism as we begin a new year. A new year, a new longing to know Jesus. The Bible declares: “His name shall be called Wonderful... **(Isaiah 9:6)** In His presence, you are wrapped in His wonderful love. He has always loved you. “Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” **(Psalm 40:5)** Lord, Your ways are wonderful. Your thoughts towards me are wonderful. Your presence is more than wonderful. Your words of life are wonderful. It is beyond wonderful that Jesus gave His life to save us from sin. How wonderful it is to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Yes, Your name is “WONDERFUL”. Joy fills our heart because we know how wonderful You are. “I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” **(Psalm 139:14)** How wonderful it is to know that You are with me forever. “O Lord, I will honor and praise Your name, for You are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago and now You have accomplished them.” **(Isaiah 25:1 NLT)**

Prayer: Lord, You are wonderful, and I want to tell You, that You are more than wonderful to me. Lord, I love You. Amen.

Ephesians 1:17, Jeremiah 31:3, Psalm 139:18, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 119:1

Exposure Isn't Enough

Have you ever listened to a great sermon but forgot what the pastor said by the time you got home from church? Or have you read the Bible but not applied any of the teachings you learned? How easy is it to discuss what Scripture means while not living out its meaning.

It's not enough to merely read the Word of God. Even memorizing Scripture isn't enough.

Exposure to God's Word is not enough. Yes, we must read the Word but we must take action by applying it and allowing it to transform our hearts and minds in obedience to God.

As we learn more about our Creator/Redeemer, we should be applying the teachings to our daily lives as evidenced by the changes in our thoughts, words and actions.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he encouraged them to keep putting into practice everything they heard from him and saw him doing. (*see Philippians 4:9*)

In practical terms, how do we put what we learn into action? We ask God to help us through His Spirit that indwells us. He will give us the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. We will find our way to a changed and obedient life when we submit to His will and let Him work in us and through us.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to help you both *do* His will and *desire to do* His will. (*see Philippians 2:13*)
- Seek God's will in all you think, say and do.
- Pray for the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to change your desires to be more like Christ's.

Deeper Place

“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” **(John 10:10 NLT)**

Jesus came to fill the emptiness of the longing soul. Do you feel like something is missing? Jesus came to bring joy and to satisfy your deepest longing. There is new life for everyone who receives Jesus as Lord and Savior. When Jesus died on the cross, He died for you and all of mankind. “Behold, I will do a new thing...” **(Isaiah 43.19)** There’s a new beginning when you are walking with Jesus by your side. He will be with you every day of your life to guide you, protect you, and comfort you. He will go through the “fire” with you, and you won’t be harmed. He will take away your shame from the past and restore your soul. Jesus “...is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” **(Proverbs 18.24)** Your spirit longs for that deeper place in Him. “Deep calls unto deep...” **(Psalm 42:7)** Seek His face and find lasting peace. He will never leave you. Think about this: He loved you even when you were dead in trespasses and sins... **(Ephesians 2:1)** When you were at your lowest, He loved you. He still cared for you. Now, you can start afresh and seek to know him. “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.” **(Jeremiah 29:13 NIV)** Spend time in the presence of the Lord. The world offers the crumbs of life compared to the riches of Christ. Don’t hold your heart back. Seek Him daily and be filled with His presence.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I want a deeper spiritual relationship. Lead me in my longing heart and fill my soul in the deepest place. Amen

Psalm 32:8, Isaiah 43:2, Luke 1:25, Psalm 27:8, Hebrews 13:5

As the East is from the West

Psalm 103 is such a beautiful chapter filled with David's praise to God for His righteousness, forgiveness, redemption, compassion, mercy and His unfailing love.

Verses 8-12 reveal how God handles our sin. The last verse in this passage tells us that He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is to the west.

Since east and west can never meet, this illustrates that God not only forgives our sin when we repent, but He also separates it from us so that it can't come back to condemn us!

We don't need to wallow in the past and continuously beat ourselves up over our mistakes. God has fully and completely forgiven us. So, if we find ourselves dredging up our ugly past, those thoughts are not from God. He doesn't accuse us, punish us or deal harshly with us. He has wiped the record clean!

As followers of Christ, we must also offer forgiveness to others. Paul reminds us to be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven us.

Ephesians 4:32

In fact, Jesus said, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." **Matthew 6:14-15**

It isn't enough to just say that we forgive someone, Jesus tells us to forgive from our heart.

Matthew 18:35

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to reveal any unforgiveness you have in your heart, and then truly forgive.
- If you struggle to forgive someone, wholeheartedly ask God to help you forgive them, and He will give you the strength to do it.
- Meditate on how much grace God has given to you so you can freely extend grace to others.

His Mercy

“Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in you.” **(Psalm 33:22)**

The Lord’s mercy is “...new every morning.” **(Lamentations 3:23)** He delights when He hears your voice. Pray often and praise Him often. Seek His face daily and your relationship with the Lord will grow deeper and stronger. It is the delight of the Lord to be merciful and show His goodness to you. He is “...able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” **(Ephesians 3:20)** Sometimes we get lost in the wilderness of our own thinking and get off the path that honor’s God will for us. But...His mercy will draw you back into His loving arms. He will shower you with mercy and grace even if you set out on your own journey without Him to guide you. His mercy is unwavering, and He will be waiting for you to turn around and run to Him. “He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.” **(Psalm 40:2 NLT)** His mercy never ends. “And therefore, will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him.” **(Isaiah 30:18)**

Prayer: I give thanks to You, Heavenly Father for showering my life with mercy. Where would I be if not for Your mercy? Thank You for a new day and new mercy. Amen

1 Thessalonians 5-17-18, Psalm 105:4, Psalm 100:5

Believer's Benefits

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he shared five benefits God gives all believers through Christ.
Colossians 1:12-14

1. He has enabled us to share in His inheritance (*see also 2 Corinthians 5:21*)
2. He has rescued us from Satan's kingdom of darkness and made us His children (*see also Colossians 2:15*)
3. He has brought us into His eternal Kingdom (*see also Ephesians 1:5-6*)
4. He has purchased our freedom from sin and judgment with His blood (*see also Hebrews 9:12*)
5. He has forgiven all our sins (*see also Ephesians 1:7*)

Jesus never sinned, yet He became the offering for our sin so we could be made right with God through Him.

God loves us so much and is so rich in goodness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His One and Only Son, and He forgave our sins. He secured our redemption forever.

He did that for us!

So, let's praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His Son.

Prayer Points:

- Give praise and glory to Father God for loving you so much that He purchased your freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave your sins.
- Ask God to position your heart so you can freely share the Good News with others so they can also receive God's benefits.

The Solid Rock

“I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” **(Psalm 34:4)**

When unexpected bad news comes from seemingly out of nowhere...stop, look to the Lord and fear not. There is no need to panic but instead look to God's word for an answer. Maybe it is a blessing in disguise. You won't have all the answers at the start, but you have "the Rock." Is your foundation built on sand or built on a rock? Jesus gave us a parable of two builders. "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." **(Matthew 7:24-25)** Then on the other hand, Jesus told us about the builder who built his foundation on sand. You know the end of that...the house fell. So, what is your foundation built on? The enemy may bring the rain, the storm and even a flood on you but if you are standing in faith, on the solid "ROCK" you can ride out the storms and have peace during life's trials. Where do you think you stand? Will you be ready and standing on solid ground when the next trial comes your way? God's word is your shield and your strength. Build on His word daily and you will have that solid foundation to withstand the unexpected trials and pressures of life. The Lord says to you: "So do not fear, for I am with You; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you: I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." **(Isaiah 41:10 NIV)**

Prayer: Lord, You are my rock and I am building my foundation on the word. Lead me each day in a plain path as I pursue your righteousness, Amen.

Matthew 7:24-27