

A Successful New Year
(A New Year's Message)

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I used to own a car that had a windshield wiper blade on the back window. Of course, the rearview window and wiper are not nearly as big and good as the front window on the car and the two front windshield wipers. I realized that the designers of my car wanted me to be able to see much more of what was out in front of me than what was behind me. This design tells me that where I am going is much more important than where I have been!

As we approach a New Year, the same is true in our own personal lives. Where I am going is more important than where I have been!

- ✓ Where are you going in your Christian life?
- ✓ What direction are you headed?
- ✓ Has your life changed since last year?
- ✓ It is for the better or for the worse?
- ✓ Have you been living a successful Christian life?

We all know that business owners are busy at the end of the year taking inventory. This is a painful but necessary reality so they can know if they made or lost profit. They take the information they receive and make adjustments for the coming year. As Christians, we need to also stop at the end of the year and measure our progress. Sometime this is a very painful thing to do. But this is what I am going to ask you to do today as we study the Scriptures together.

My theme is "A Successful New Year." The world has its own ideas about success but God's Word informs us what true success is in relation to the Christian life. For many today success means to have more money and better health and this is what the Health and Wealth Movement has been teaching for years. There are many Christians who think that if one is wealthy and healthy that they have achieved success and have God's favor and

blessing upon their life. Not so! True success has nothing to do with these things.

God wants us to experience a successful New Year.

There are 10 keys to a successful New Year.

Some of our Biblical points may overlap in some areas but they are all important when it comes to having a successful New Year. We are talking about success from God's viewpoint. We are talking about Biblical or spiritual success and true progress in our Christian life.



Fellowship with GOD

1. Fellowshiping

A successful New Year begins with fellowshiping or communing with God. You will have a lousy year from a Christian perspective if you fail to fellowship with God and stay close to Him. If you want to have a spiritually successful and meaningful year, then stay close to the Lord.

1 John 1:7

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

The expression “fellowship one with another” looks back to “fellowship with him” (God) in verse 6. This is a reference to God and experience personal intimacy with Him as His child. How close are you to God? Be honest with yourself. Do you sense His presence in your life? Has God been real to you? Are you walking in communion and fellowship with Him?

Frances Ridley Havergal wrote:

“What shall I wish thee?
Treasures of earth?
Songs in the springtime?”

Pleasure and mirth?
Flowers on the pathway?
Skies ever clear?
Would this ensure thee
A Happy New Year?

What shall I wish thee?
What can be found
Bringing thee sunshine
All the year round?
Where is the treasure,
Lasting and dear,
That shall ensure thee
A Happy New Year?

Faith that increaseth,
Walking in light;
Hope that aboundeth,
Happy and bright;
Love that is perfect,
Casting out fear;
These shall ensure thee
A Happy New Year.

Peace in the Saviour,
Rest at His feet,
Smile of His countenance
Radiant and sweet,
Joy in His presence!
Christ ever near!
This will ensure thee
A Happy New Year."

How do we live the Christian life? We are called upon to live the Christian life by having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21). We walk with Him, depend upon His power, and stay close to Him. Have you sensed that you have been drifting in your Christian life and missing out on

your deep communion that you can have with God? During the New Year you might need to make a new commitment to live in the presence of God in a greater way - walking with Him, talking to Him, enjoying His presence. Are you in tune with God?

Every year around Christmas we have a piano tuner come and tune the church piano to keep it sounding in tip top shape. Sometimes we need to be tuned up again. When living a successful Christian life, I will experience Christ's presence, power, and personal fellowship. My life will revolve around a relationship with Jesus Christ and not around other things such as personal gain, worldly things, and carnal endeavors. In living the Christian life, I will stay in touch and tune with Jesus Christ and experience His personal presence and power operating in my life. I will have a daily relationship with Him as the branches are nourished on the vine.

The text in 1 John 1:7 states that I can have fellowship with God when I walk in the light of God's holiness! It is impossible to walk in light and darkness at the same time. Therefore, if we walk in darkness, we are not walking and fellowshiping with God. Stop fooling yourself. If you are playing around with sin you have not walking with God.

If you sinned in some way, remember that confession of sin is the way of restored fellowship (1 John 1:9). Confessing my sin means facing it and naming it! This keeps me in tune with God, so I can enjoy His presence, so I can sing praises to His name and experience His life in mine. If we walk in fellowship with Jesus Christ we are living in open confession before Him.

We must practice the presence of God!

“My God and I go in the field together;
We walk and talk as good friends should and do;
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter;
My God and I walk through the meadow's hue.
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter;
My God and I walk through the meadow's hue.”

2. Serving

A successful New Year from a spiritual perspective is a year when we actively engage in serving the Lord. There are many ways we can serve the Lord such as prayer, evangelism, using our specific gifts



for the Lord, giving, being part of the local church ministry, reaching out to those in need. As we grow older we can serve the Lord in different ways! We can pray more, volunteer more, disciple more, etc. It's a wonderful privilege to serve the Lord.

Romans 12:11 gives us this command:

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”

There are three truths presented here.

a. Laziness is not a virtue: “Not slothful in business”

Paul is talking about the Lord's business! Don't become a couch potato when it comes to serving the Lord. We need to get out of our Lazy Boy chair and something for God. There is much to be done and many opportunities. Furthermore, we should funnel many of our energies into the local church to see God's people blessed and the church growing.

I distinctly remember watching a Moody science film on a New Year's Eve service many years ago. It was talking about an animal called the “sloth.” A sloth is slow-moving tropical American mammal that hangs upside down from the branches of trees using its long limbs and hooked claws. Friend, don't be a sloth in the coming New Year! Don't just hang around and not really serve God faithfully and with all of your heart. Don't be lazy. Don't be a sloth. Don't be sluggish and lethargic in your outreach and service for the Lord. The believer should not approach life in a lackadaisical, easy-going, slow-moving fashion. Don't give in to sluggishness and complacency.

Beware of this! He must serve the Lord with diligence, zeal, and earnestness. He must be enthusiastic in God's work and service.

b. Zeal is contagious – “fervent in spirit”

The idea behind the word “fervent” means to be hot. It was used of the boiling point and figuratively teaches that Christians need to be on fire for Jesus Christ. We need to be zealots for His cause and work. A zealot is a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of his desires and goals. If someone calls you a “Jesus freak” you should say “thank you” to them!

c. Serving is a privilege – “serving the Lord”

Instead of serving ourselves and our own interests, we need to concentrate on serving the Lord and doing His bidding for our lives. We need get with it, get involved, and get going for Jesus Christ.

- ✓ What have you been doing for the Lord this past year?
- ✓ In what ways have you been serving Him?
- ✓ Are you ready to make a commitment to serve Him in some new and greater way this year?

John Wesley said:

“Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you can.”

God may very well want you to do some new things for His this coming year. What might they be? Has God been speaking to your heart about something specific? What new kinds of service does He want you to accomplish this coming year? We need to respond to God's direction for our lives and step up to the plate and serve Him in a greater way this year. There is plenty of work to be done. Are you ready for the task? Will you be part of the answer to seeing the local church grow and doing various acts of service unto God? If you are tired of serving the Lord – you need to refocus!

1 Corinthians 15:58

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Someone wrote these lovely and meaningful words:

“I will serve Thee because I love Thee
You have given life to me.
I was nothing before You found me,
You have given life to me.”



3. Giving

A successful New Year also involves giving to God’s work in a faithful and committed fashion. We need to be reminded of this from time to time. Christians can become sloppy and stingy in their giving.

1 Corinthians 16:2 declares:

“Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

This is a good reminder as we begin the New Year. We must continue to band together in the ministry and privilege of giving to the local church.

There are several types of giving mentioned here:

a. Sunday giving

When is the offering to be received? The Bible says "Upon the first day of the week" which is Sunday. According to the Jewish calendar, the first day of the week was Sunday. The Jews, of course, worshipped on the Sabbath, but the early Christian believers began to worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Their primary reason for switching the day of worship was to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord.

b. Inclusive giving

Who is to give? The Bible states, "Every one of you." God has not left you out! You cannot wiggle out of this one! God has called all of us to give to His work and ministry. God's people should support God's work through systematic financial giving. Yes, we can and need to support God's ministry with our prayers but also with our pocketbooks!

c. Regular giving

The believers were not to make only occasional offerings, they were to give regularly, every Lord's day: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." In other words, save during the week so you have money to give to the Lord on Sunday. We are to lay the money aside at home during the week, so that we will not spend the Lord's offering. Paul explicitly says that it is to be given to the church every week so that there will be no need for a special gathering to take up an offering when he comes to the church. Every church needs weekly givers.

d. Proportionate giving

The Bible goes on to say, "as God has prospered you." Not everyone can give the same amount but we are to give in proportion out earnings. And what we give should be a sacrifice and commitment to the Lord. Remember the widow's mite? She gave more than anyone because of her sacrifice.

Someone said:

"If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving."

Ask yourself some questions.

Have I been giving systematically and sacrificially to God's work and ministry?

We are to give till the cows come home! We are to give in times of plenty and times of little. Jesus taught that it's more blessed to give than to receive.

You can give without loving God but you cannot love God without giving. This being said, giving is often the barometer of one's relationship with God and love for God.

J. L. Kraft, head of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, who had given approximately 25% of his enormous income to Christian causes for many years, said, "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord." He's right! We need to remember the eternal dividends (reward and blessing) that comes from giving to God's work and ministry. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!



4. Obeying

A successful New Year from God's perspective is when we are obedient to Him. Joshua was given this reminder as he and the children of Israel were entering the land of promise. God wanted them to know that if they would follow Him in obedience, they would experience His success. All that Joshua and the Israelites put their hands to would prosper and be successful. This would include things such as their conquest of Canaan and all that they sought to do for God.

Joshua 1:8

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

There basic premise of this Bible verse is as follows: when are obedient to God, we will be successful in our living and service for God. Of course, our obedience stems from God's Word. As we read it, study it, meditate upon it, and obey it, it's only then that God will bless our lives. It is not just physical success but spiritual success that comes from the Lord which is important.

Here is an outline you can follow for this verse:

- a. Sharing God's Word ("This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth") - telling others about it
- b. Reflecting on God's Word ("but thou shalt meditate therein day and night") - meditating on it
- c. Obeying God's Word ("that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein") – walking in light of it

We should never view Bible study and memorization as an end in itself. We must obey what we learn. Being in the Word and obeying it results in our spiritual success! The key to their success was obedience! The same is true for us today.

If we want to have a successful Christian life of service and outreach, then we must obey God's Word. We must be obedient to what God tells us to do. When we meditate on what God wants us to do, and then do it, we will have a spiritually profitable life of service and ministry. We will have God's blessing in the coming New Year.

Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience.

Dr. B.J. Miller once said:

"It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it."

- ✓ Are there some areas of disobedience that you need to make right in the coming New Year?
- ✓ What changes do you need to make in your life?
- ✓ Can you put your finger on some specific areas of disobedience?
- ✓ Are you ready and willing to make these changes?

We must change our “No” to “Yes!” What have you been saying “no” to in your Christian life? if we want God’s true blessing and spiritual success in our Christian life.

5. Loving (God and others)

A successful New Year also involves loving God and others. Life without love is zero!

Jesus taught in Mark 12:30-31:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”



There are no other commandments greater than these. These are the two greatest commandments to follow. This is what Jesus said. And if these two are at the top of His list – they had better be at the top of our list! These two commands go hand in hand. They are like two peas on the same pod! If we love God, we will also love others (our neighbor).

a. Loving God with our heart – our *inner* life (what we desire)

The terms “heart” and “soul” are not easy to differentiate but Jesus may be referring in general to the inner life (control center) of a person when talking about the heart. The heart is talking about our inner affections, desires, will, and ultimately the intensity of our love for God (Prov. 3:5). We are to love what God loves and in doing so we will love God. The point we must remember is that love begins on the inside and extends to the outside. A life of legalism (rules without a love relationship with the Lord) occurs when we try to artificially adhere to some rule without truly loving God in the inner heart and life.

Revelation 2:4 gives us this reminder:

“Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Perhaps this is where you are at in your life. Maybe this is why you have lost your way and the wonder of it all. You have lost your first love (honeymoon love) for the Lord. The good news is that you can get back to God's way for your life when you start loving Him again.

The beauty of Christian living is that we are to love God from the deepest depths of our heart – with all of our affections and desires. Our love for God, which in this case is what is going on inside of us, should be the driving force of our entire life in whatever we do.

b. Loving God with our soul – our *outer* life (what we do)

The soul can sometimes refer to the inner life (the entire inner being of a person – affections, desire, will) but here it is contrasted to the inner life (the heart) and likely references the individual's conscious, outward life in the world. In other words, here the word "soul" is being used of the physical life of man. The soul is referring to a person's human existence in the world and how a person functions in his body. In one sense, we are a living soul, a physical being that possesses a human body that should be used of God (Gen. 2:7; Rev. 20:4).

Jesus is teaching that what begins on the inside (heart) must translated to the outside in our everyday actions and living (soul). In short, we are to love God with our physical life, which includes our body, and exist for His honor and glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Our entire life and body should be dedicated to God's holy purposes (Rom. 12:1-2). In fact, we must surrender ourselves to the Lord on a daily basis. Our inward love and loyalty to God is always seen in our outward obedience and surrender to God. Our outward life and actions speak volumes about our love for God.

I was watching some talk show on TV at lunch time and someone said, "We must just follow our dreams. Everyone should follow their dreams." That was about the biggest bunch of fluff I've heard in a long time! We don't follow our dreams – we follow God's will for our life! We follow His purpose, desires, and what He likes. This is how we are to live the Christian life and this is how we can have a successful New Year.

c. Loving God with our mind – our *intellectual* life (how we think)

Of course, this refers to how we think. We are to love God with our mind by thinking wholesome thoughts, worshipful thoughts, and thoughts that reflect His nature and character. This is the type of thinking that glorifies God and demonstrates our love for Him. How or what we think about, where our mind takes us, is an indicator of how much we love God. If we are reflecting on the spiritual trash of the world system, instead of righteousness, holiness, and purity, then we are not expressing love for God with our mind (thought processes). We can love God with our mind by reflecting upon Him and truth.

d. Loving God with our strength – our *physical* life (might, strength, power)

This refers to loving God with our might, strength and power. It involves giving our strength and abilities in serving the Lord and giving back to Him. Our efforts, drive, and determination to live for God demonstrate how much we really love Him. Many Christians give so little of their strength and time in being a servant of the Lord.

“Give of your best to the Master;
Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul’s fresh, glowing ardor
Into the battle for truth.
Jesus has set the example,
Dauntless was He, young and brave;
Give Him your loyal devotion;
Give Him the best that you have.”

- ✓ How have you been engaged in the work of the Lord?
- ✓ What have you been doing for God?
- ✓ In what ways have you been serving Him?

One more question. How many hours are in a day? We use many of these hours for physical work, hobbies, and other pleasures. But how much time, effort, and service do we actually give to the Lord? How much do we sacrifice and give of ourselves in the Lord’s work?

Jesus also taught in Mark 12:31:

“And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

As a result of our love for God, we will also express love for our neighbor, which means we are reaching out to those who are in need (1 John 3:14; 4:7-8). Loving our neighbor means that we are expressing concern for others that we come in contact with and are willing to sacrifice our time and treasure for those that we can help and serve.

Friend, loving God and others will result in having a successful New Year. We need to stop living a self-centered life! If we are not careful, we can dig our own hole (or grave!) and live in it. We can build our own house and put a fence around it and stop reaching out to others.

Somewhere in North Dakota a man, on Christmas Day, dug through a drift of snow and jumped inside the hole he dug. It was on the news the other day. The drift was so deep you could only see the top part of his head. What is the moral of the story? Don't move to North Dakota! And don't bury yourself in your own problems to the point that you lose sight of loving God and others. When we love God and others we will live a very successful and rewarding life.



6. Walking (in the Spirit's presence, power)

A successful New Year involves walking in the Holy Spirit's daily presence and power. This is the hallmark of New Testament Christianity! It's the new work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of New Testament saints.

Galatians 5:16

“*This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:25

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Walking requires a moment by moment dependency upon the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. Walking in the Spirit means to keep in step with the Spirit. Many times we lose our step and way because we have not been following the step or leading of the Holy Spirit.

Remember:

“Some people TALK the walk while other WALK the talk.”

How do we live the Christian life? The Bible speaks in a very clear fashion on this matter. We walk in the Spirit’s power and provision. We experience the transformation of the Spirit’s work in our lives. We need to be dominated or controlled by the Spirit this coming year.

- ✓ Have we concisely been walking in the Spirit’s daily power?
- ✓ Have we been manifesting His fruit, power, and transformation of the Holy Spirit in our life?
- ✓ Are we actively engaged in tapping into the Spirit’s ministry in our hearts and lives?

Spirit dominated living is fruitful living, dynamic living, victorious living, vibrant, controlled living! This is the kind of living we need in the New Year! Beware that you do not "throw water on the flame" of the Holy Spirit’s work in your heart! The Bible says that we can “quench the spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19).

Maybe you need to rekindle the flame again! Has your fire gone out? Has you passing for spiritual things been waning? Perhaps your flame is flickering and in danger of going out. The Spirit’s work and ministry in our hearts is vital so we might have a successful New Year.

“Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.”



7. Growing

1 Peter 2:2

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

A successful New Year is a year where we are growing and moving forward, making spiritual advancements in our life. Don't become a musty and dusty Christian! Growing up (spiritual development of character) in our attitude and actions is necessary for living a successful Christian life. Growth and stability is very important to the Christian life. Without continued spiritual growth we can very easily be diverted from the right way, the renewing way, and the way.

1. The reason for growth - “As newborn babes” - 2a

This goes back to the closing of the last chapter where Peter talks about the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23). We are called upon to put off our sins and grow up since we are born again children of God. The emphasis of “newborn babes” means that some of the readers were recently saved or born again. Now, they were to hear, study, and apply the Bible to their lives so they could begin to grow in their Christian life. Born again people are to live like born again people! We are to manifest spiritual life and traits before others because we have God's life and nature within us. We can learn how to live and act when studying the Bible and applying it to our daily lives. This brings us to our next point.

2. The way of growth - “desire the sincere milk of the word”- 2b

The reference to milk in verse 2 is the Word of God (the Bible).

There is:

a. Passion for the Word – “desire”

The word “desire” is a strong word. It means to intensely crave something. The word used here denotes a very strong emotion or passion fixed upon something. The Bible is likened to the milk that a baby craves and hungers (“newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word”).

When the baby wants milk– he or she wants it!! The baby will let you know! How hungry are you for Bible truth? Our church attendance is often a sign of how hungry we are to hear, learn, and apply God’s Word to our lives. How often we open the Bible for devotions is also a sign that speaks of our hunger to hear, apply, and obey the Scriptures. How often we take the truth of the Bible and pray for spiritual direction is another sign of how important the Bible is to our personal life.

I want you to think of a time when you were really hungry. I mean, really hungry. I remember a time when I was so hungry, I made a sandwich with lightning speed and began eating it. About half way through the sandwich, I realized that in my frantic pace to feed my face, I had forgotten the meat on the sandwich – the most important part (unless you are a vegan). Where’s the beef? Here is my point. It is sad when Christians have no appetite for God’s Word (the spiritual beef for Christian living), but must be “fed” religious entertainment instead of Bible teaching. There is a lot of this going on today in the church.

- ✓ What are your deepest longings and desires?
- ✓ What do you desire most in life?
- ✓ How often do you open the Bible and attend church?

Peter says we need to develop an appetite for God’s Word instead of the junk food of this world! We should want to know it, obey it, and apply it to our daily lives. Ask God to give you a greater appetite for His Word.

b. Purity of the Word – “sincere milk”

Peter also likens the Bible to “sincere milk.” The word sincere speaks of something that is unadulterated or uncontaminated which means that it is pure, unmixed, undiluted and is therefore good for us. God’s Word is true.

There is no deception in it! It is for our spiritual profit when we follow it (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Since the Word of God is pure and without mixture, we should not add anything to it. In other words, we should not add secularized psychology to it, Maslow's theories, pyramid structures one must follow in addition to the Bible, and so on and so on! What we need today is the Bible without preservatives! We need the pure and wholesome Word of God without the additives which water down the truth, change it, or replace it in some way.

In Bible times traders with no scruples would actually water down the fresh squeezed juice. They would then peddle fresh squeezed juice that was watered down! Peter is concerned that the same thing does not happen to God's Word. We should not water down the truth with manmade teachings and by introducing error into the Bible.

3. The goal of growth - "that ye may grow thereby" - 2c

The daily habit of reading the Word of God, recognizing its sufficiency for our growth, maturity, fruitfulness and then doing what it says by God's enablement is absolutely necessary for protection against spiritual erosion and deception.

What should be our goal in life? It should be to keep growing and grow up into a spiritual Christian in our attitudes, longings, and actions. Again, we grow by studying the Word of God and applying it to our daily living and circumstances. There is no growth or spiritual development apart from the Word of God. This is why we need to keep attending church faithfully, keep reflecting on the Bible daily, and learning from it doctrinally, devotionally, and discerningly. Our goal this year should be to grow and develop in our Christian life.

A pastor shared this true story. "A young man who was a local leader in promoting the Emerging Church Movement came in to see me one day. Previous to that, I was praying about how I could explain some things to him and perhaps help him to get back on track with God's Word. As we were about to start our conversation, I said that I thought it would be very helpful

if we acknowledged to what spiritual authority each of us was submitting. With my Bible squarely in front of him, I said, 'This book is my authority. What's your authority?' He looked around, and looked around, as though searching for a response, and then finally said, 'My God is bigger than that book.'

"I wasn't shocked by his answer because I've heard it a number of times. Nevertheless, I followed that by responding that he must therefore have *other authorities*, and who might they be in whom he was trusting in place of God? Needless to say, our conversation went nowhere worthwhile after that. Most Christians tend to hang on to the belief in the authority of God's Word, but functionally they bail out on it. This is because they don't really believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. They look for other things to find answers, lead and direct their lives, and fulfill their needs."

We grow by the Word of God!

- ✓ Have you made spiritual improvements from last year?
- ✓ Where are you at in terms of your growth?
- ✓ Are you growing or have you gone dormant in your Christian life?

If you look outside this time of the year, everything is dead. Nothing grows. January is winter's dormant stage. If we are not careful, we can move into this type of spiritual dormancy in our Christian lives. Our growth might be stunted because we are not attending church regularly or staying in the Word and responding to the Bible.

We can only grow in our Christian life by hearing and responding to the Word of God. The Bible and spiritual growth are inseparably bound together. We grow in doctrine, practical Christian living, and discover God's will and purpose for our lives as we keep learning the Bible. True growth can only happen in an environment where the Bible is really being taught and when we are responding to the Bible's instruction. Let us never forget this as we pass through the New Year.



8. Committing

A successful New Year involves committing and consecrating ourselves to God and Church ministry. If you want to be truly successful, then commit your life to God and church ministry. Both are intertwined together. A person who is not

committed to God's House is normally not committed to God's service.

Joshua 14:8-9

“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.”

Joshua 14:14 repeats this:

“Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

The word “wholly” speaks of consecration and commitment to God's cause and holiness. Wholly following the Lord speaks of being committed to the Lord, His work, and His Word. It's saying no to everything else that gets in the way of doing what is right and being faithful to God, His Word, and His House (church ministry).

- ✓ What is getting in the way of you “wholly” following the Lord?
- ✓ Is it your job?
- ✓ How about your hobbies?
- ✓ Maybe it's your wife or husband?
- ✓ What is it?

Jesus taught in Luke 14:26-27:

“If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

Whatever is keeping you from serving the Lord and doing what is right, you need to face it head on. You need to pinpoint whatever or whomever is standing in the way of you “wholly” (totally and unreservedly) following the Lord. Is there one thing or many things that are keeping you from really giving God your total heart and life?

Whatever happened to commitment? Many Christians are not committed to the local church. They are “floaters” (moving about from one church to the next) and what someone has termed “ecclesiastical hitchhikers.” Some Christians are like caterpillars: they crawl in and crawl out of church and never do anything.

Have we forgotten what commitment and loyalty means? We are committed to many things but are we committed to church ministry, Christ’s cause, and living for Him? This is what really matters in the end and when we stand before the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10).

Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty.

Thomas Nelson's home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and mill were destroyed. For over a year, he lived in forest and caves, returning home only to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.

These men were committed to do what was right for this country. As we have read, Joshua and Caleb were fully committed to the Lord. These men wholly followed the Lord. They were not “happy go lucky” Christians or half-hearted, half-committed, and half-baked saints. They put the plow to the furrow and did not look back!

- ✓ Are we going to be committed this New Year to doing what we know is right?
- ✓ Are we ready to recommit ourselves to God’s work?
- ✓ Will we commit ourselves to God’s House by once again attending church faithfully?
- ✓ Are we ready to follow God’s plans and purposes for our life again?



9. Accepting

A successful New Year involves accepting God’s providential purpose for our life and ruling over all the circumstances of our life. Instead of complaining about our problems and difficulties, we should be accepting them

from the hand of God, understanding that He knows what He is doing and is in charge of

You might ask God, “I just cannot understand why I had to go through this whole ordeal this last year Why me? God, why me?”

Psalm 115:3 gives the answer:

“But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

This verse (among many others) speaks of the sovereignty and providence of God over your life. God can do whatever He wants to do, whenever He wants to do it, wherever He wants to do it, with whomsoever He wants to do it. Why? It’s because He is God! He is in control of the events associated with your life, both the ups and downs, the twists and straight paths, the mountains and the valleys.

- ✓ Are you willing to accept His purpose for your life?
- ✓ An illness?
- ✓ A time of trial and difficulty?
- ✓ The loss of a loved one?
- ✓ A change in your salary?

Are you ready to say, "I don't understand it all, but I will accept this illness, this heartache, and this difficult situation as being part of Your greater purpose and plan for my life."

Ron Hamilton wrote:

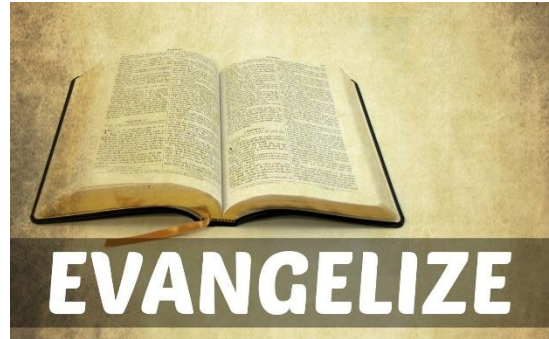
"God never moves without purpose or plan
When trying His servant and molding a man.
Give thanks to the LORD though your testing seems long;
In darkness He giveth a song.
I could not see through the shadows ahead;
So I looked at the cross of my Savior instead.
I bowed to the will of the Master that day;
Then peace came and tears fled away.

Now I can see testing comes from above;
God strengthens His children and purges in love.
My Father knows best, and I trust in His care;
Through purging more fruit I will bear.

O Rejoice in the LORD
He makes no mistake,
He knoweth the end of each path that I take,
For when I am tried
And purified,
I shall come forth as gold."

10. Evangelizing

A successful New Year involves keeping our witnessing (evangelism) alive and hot. Sharing Christ with others will result in us having a spiritually successful New Year. We may not always see the fruit of our witnessing, but sharing Christ with others and obeying the Great Commission (Mark 16:15) will result in new blessings for the New Year.



Romans 10:15

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

How can a person call on Jesus Christ if he has not believed in Him? It is impossible. How can a person believe in Christ if he has not heard about Christ? This too is impossible. How can a person know that Jesus Christ came to earth and died for his sins and that Jesus Christ arose from the dead conquering death so that he might live eternally? It is only through you and me who are willing and ready to share the truth with them! We need to start moving and get sharing the Gospel with the unsaved.

A man I knew was witnessing to an ornery man all of his life. Later on in life the unsaved man said to the Christian, “You missed your calling, you should have been a preacher.” Well, he did not miss his calling for all of us are in one sense called to be preachers! We may not be called in an official way to preach the Bible in a church but all of us can herald forth or announce the Gospel to the lost. And this is what the word “preach” means in this context. Preaching is not limited to proclamation from a pulpit.

Those who share Christ with the unsaved are said to possess beautiful feet. Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:7 and applies it to those who are eager to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Beautiful feet! Beautiful feet are

those feet that take the Gospel to people who are lost and headed toward hell. These are feet that are willing to get up and do something for the Lord.

Jesus came with beautiful feet 1,900 years ago in order to take nails in His feet for you and me! Now it is our privilege and responsibility to go with beautiful feet to a lost and dying world. We need to rekindle the fire of evangelism as we head into this New Year. People are dying by the truckloads and going to an everlasting hell. Hell is as real as Heaven.

If we could spend one minute in a burning, fiery, and awful hell – our evangelism would never be the same! You would not and could not refrain from sharing Christ with others. Read some Bible passages on hell and you will get an idea what it will be like. We need to have a fresh vision for the lost! Christian friend, get moving, talking, and sharing the liberating Gospel message with the lost.

“Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord,
A passion to save the lost;
O that Thy love were by all adored,
And welcomed at any cost.

Jesus, I long, I long to be winning
Men who are lost, and constantly sinning;
O may this hour be one of beginning
The story of pardon to tell.”

God wants us to experience a successful New Year. We have seen 10 keys to a successful New Year. There may be more but these are the main ones. What kind of year are you going to have? It depends on how much you incorporate these important spiritual keys into your own life in the coming year.

An anonymous writer wrote this:

Just One Request
"Dear Master for this coming year
Just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness,

Or any earthly thing—
I do not ask to understand
The way Thou leadest me,
But this I ask: Teach me to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.

I want to know Thy guiding voice,
To walk with Thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear
And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin
A happy year will be—
If I am seeking just to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee."