



LIFE NEWS

2023
A FRESH START



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By far, my favorite holiday is New Year's Eve. I enjoy other holidays, but there is something about New Year's Eve. It is not the staying up late (I am in bed by 10:30 or earlier every night, and I must nap to make it to midnight!). It is not the parties with the specialty foods or watching the ball drop. For me, it is the start of something fresh... something new. A chance to leave the old behind and start anew.

A fresh start is one of the themes of the Christian life. Jesus pays for all my sins, and when I enter into a relationship with him, as Psalms puts it, my sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. In Christ, we are a new creation, the old has gone, and new has come (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). When I do sin again, I can confess, and God is faithful and just and will forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness (See John 1:9). No matter how my day went today, his mercy is new every morning (see Lamentations 3:22). There is this ongoing grace of returning to a right relationship with God. New Year's Eve is a reminder of this to me.

The other reason I love this holiday is that it allows me to reflect on the previous year and hear what God is calling me into in the new year. In a previous article I mentioned questions that one of my mentors gave me, and I find them to be super helpful. There are two questions with three parts in each:

1. **What** are the things, **who** are the people, and **where** are the places that **God is calling me to** in this season to make me more like Jesus?
2. **What** are the things, **who** are the people, and **where** are the places that God is calling me to **surrender** in this season?

The first set of questions is a call to examine how God is calling you into the next year. Maybe he is calling you to focus on building a certain friendship. Perhaps there is a person who is always pointing you to Jesus, and you need to spend more time with them. God might be calling you to go more often to a place where you hear him clearly (beach, mountains, a campground, or a special corner of the living room, etc.). Is He calling you to do something different in your Bible reading instead of going through it in a year? Is He calling you to fast? There are hundreds of different ways to answer this set of questions. What God is calling me to do is probably not the exact same thing he is calling you to do. He knows you and what things will transform you to be more like Jesus this year.

Let us briefly look at the second questions: These relate to things, people, and places that God is calling me to surrender in this season. These are not necessarily sinful practices (if they are: repent and turn from them), but they could be things that need to be pruned. Are you always turning on the TV instead of engaging in relationship? Maybe God is calling you to give it up for a while. Maybe you are spending time on your hobby instead of doing what God is calling you to do. Hobbies aren't bad, but if they get in the way of what God calls you to do, they will need to be pruned. Are you hanging around negative people, and it is affecting you? Is going to the coffee shop causing you to gossip? These are just examples. This question needs to be answered between you and God.

In the next couple of days, I encourage you to set aside time to listen and reflect on these questions. This isn't a to-do list in order to be a better Christian. It is an invitation to allow the Spirit to speak to you about being transformed into the image of Christ. May this year be a year of great growth and a fresh start for you.