



The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel

LIFENEWS

And a Happy New Year...

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We just came to the end of another year, and as we look back on what's taken place. Every one of our experiences has been unique, but it's safe to say that your year was a mixture of highs and lows, excitement and disappointment, sadness and joy. I'm not sure how your year ended, but I do want to encourage you on how to begin.

Start the year by making one resolution: put Jesus at the center of your life. I don't know what that will look like for you or what that will require from you, but it is truly the only way forward. During Advent, we were reminded of the hope, joy, peace, and love that are ours in Jesus, and we lit a candle for each one. But unless the light of Christ is burning at the center, we only see and experience a shadow of these things in our lives. When we keep Jesus at our periphery while trying to live in this world, we will become frustrated and disillusioned. Having Jesus at the center of our lives means that we look at life through Him, not around Him. By His light, we have the illumination and strength we need to endure each day.

It also means that we look to Him first and foremost. We can often turn to family and friends for advice, which Scripture encourages us to do. However, as wise and worthwhile as their counsel may be, Jesus is the true source of wisdom and understanding. Many of the answers we seek to the daily dilemmas of life have already been given to us in the Bible. And where we may not see a direct answer, we see the principles in God's Word that do speak to our circumstances. In addition to that, we have the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into truth. **James 1:5-6**, "*But if any lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But He must ask in faith without doubting, for he who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*" The question we must ask is if the advice we receive from others is advice we would receive from God.

Having Jesus at the center of our lives also means that we are yielded to His will for our lives. Sometimes, we find ourselves in conflict between our flesh and spirit. We are conflicted between the desires that please our feelings and the desires that please our Lord, and we create for ourselves a false dilemma. We believe that the things which make us happy are those which God is not pleased to give us. However, this is not correct, at least not entirely. When our desires contradict the nature and morality of God, this is true. But when we remember that we are made by Him, then we can comfort ourselves in knowing that He knows what actually pleases us most and gives us the most joy. Again, James speaks to this in **James 1:16-17**, "*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good and perfect gift is given from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation and shifting shadow.*"

When the Psalmist says, "*Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart*" (**Psalm 37:4**), he is reminding us that God will transform our hearts to desire Him more and more when we take our joy from Him. We receive from God pure desires and honest longings for Him and His holiness, which overcomes our selfish and evil appetites. Delighting in the Lord is essentially the same language as having Jesus at the center of our lives. We set our hearts and minds on looking for and loving Him so that in His goodness, we are filled with hope, joy, peace, and love. These are of far greater value than anything in this world because they can never be taken away. Unlike the temporary treasures of this world that fade, rust, and spoil, the riches of knowing Christ last forever.

Because of Jesus, have a Happy New Year,

Pastor Nigel