

Why Your 2017 Trials Don't Have to Define Your 2018

As everyone looked back on 2017, I noticed most people put their highlights on display for the world to see. I love the celebration but couldn't help but think of those watching on who couldn't say the same for themselves. I had some big wins in 2017 but also walked through some pretty rough valleys. It was the first full year since my mother passed away, so it was the first Mother's Day without her on earth, and it's been a process walking through the grief of her passing on to heaven. Beyond that, I'm sure we are all aware of the tragedies that happened on a global scale this year: shootings and natural disasters, to name a few. We even had a shooting occur in one town over from Redding!

Whether you have a strong 2017 highlight reel, or maybe yours was one you needed to really search for the gold, I want to encourage you that 2018 can be a year of breakthrough. The truth is that even if you walk with radical faith and outrageous courage, you sometimes go through seasons when the mere frequency of things going wrong in your life can be discouraging and overwhelming. One of the worst things that can happen in difficult seasons is that you begin to expect things to go wrong. Expectation is the fruit of faith. In other words, you believe things are going to go wrong, and therefore you empower destructive outcomes.

Did a Bad Year Cause Foreboding in Your Life?

Of course, we have all been surprised when something unexpected went wrong in our lives, but it's important that you don't turn bad circumstances from 2017 into a season or lifetime of cynicism, and subsequently invite a foreboding spirit into your life.

Foreboding means, "an impending sense of doom." It's the

feeling that something is always about to go wrong. If you're having a good day, you fear a bad day is coming. Once this spirit grips your soul, you always prepare for the worst so you won't be disappointed. You usually aren't disappointed, because you believed and therefore received a negative outcome. Sound familiar?

When the Wreck Is Not Your Fault

I have watched this negative ecosystem play out in so many people's lives. For example, years ago, I had a woman working for me (I will call her Jane) who was in a car accident. She was sitting at a stoplight, minding her own business, when a drunk driver plowed into the back of her car. It destroyed her car and gave her a terrible case of whiplash. But the worst thing was that Jane began to fear she would get in another accident. Her fear was extenuated by the fact that she was a victim in the first car accident. This caused Jane to feel powerless to avoid another accident, because she didn't do anything to cause the first one.

A couple of years passed, and just as Jane was starting to feel normal, she got hit again at a stoplight. Not only did the crash re-injure her back, but it also intensified her fear of accidents. Jane worked for me for five more years, and in that short time, she was involved in four more auto accidents. Do you know what the craziest thing about this was? Not one of those accidents was her fault. I don't mean that Jane blamed her bad driving habits on other people; I am saying that none of her six auto accidents had anything to do with her driving.

Jane's fear of another accident caused her to believe she would crash again. So my question for you is: what fears are you carrying around from 2017 that could cause you to crash again in 2018? Fear is actually faith in the wrong kingdom. Since she lived by faith, Jane empowered the kingdom of darkness to torment her. I am convinced that this is how people jinx themselves. Yet Jesus died to break the curse over

our souls and give us abundant lives.

9 Keys for Breakthrough in 2018

Here are nine keys to breaking the negative ecosystem in your life and embracing faith going into 2018:

1. Look for Jesus in the midst of your troubles. He tends to hang out in hard places. Look back and see where He was even in the hard times. Remember He won't leave you in the New Year.
2. Meditate on God's past miracles and works in your life, not on your tragedy.
3. Cultivate thankfulness in your heart no matter how you feel about last year. You don't have to give thanks for everything, but know who you are and whose you are. Then you can give thanks in everything. Make a list of things you're thankful for from 2017.
4. Avoid the misery-loves-company syndrome by disciplining yourself to hang around happy people, even when you don't feel like it. Ask God to highlight a few people that you can invest more time with in 2018.
5. Pray in the Spirit, because you are "building yourselves up" when you do (Jude 20).
6. Take a mental vacation every day in the New Year. Give yourself permission to take a break from thinking about life's challenges and cultivate some happy thoughts.
7. Remind yourself that these circumstances will not last forever. Even if your circumstances aren't immediately changing with the calendar (which, being real, many may not change right away), the Bible frequently says, "It came to pass." In other words, it came so it could pass ... this season will end.
8. Don't forget that everything works out for good in the end. So if it isn't good, then it isn't the end (Rom. 8:28).
9. Refuse to partner with any thought that doesn't inspire hope because any thought that doesn't inspire hope is

rooted in a lie. You have the mind of Christ, so don't allow any thought in your mind that isn't in His. Take inventory of the thoughts that run on replay in your mind, filter them through hope, and throw out the ones rooted in lies!

Looking Forward to 2018

These are not quick fixes but ways to process life so that you don't let go of God's promises in the midst of your problems. Today, instead of focusing on your fears, I want to encourage you to take some time to imagine all the good that God can do this year. Let's break away from foreboding and embrace the abundant life I believe He wants us all to walk in this new year. Was 2017 a tough year for you or your family? How do you see these steps playing out for you in this New Year? I'd love to hear from you in the comments. {eo}

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