

When You Feel Hopeless and Helpless, Trust in This Timeless Truth

Out with the old and in with the new?

At least that's the mindset the world seems to be in on the first day of the new year. Goals are renewed and hope springs forth for what could come to pass in the next 364 days.

Better health? Adventure? A better job? Enjoyable relationships? It all seems possible once again.

And while the new year is worth celebrating, it's also worth remembering that as believers, we have opportunities for new beginnings every single day because of who our God is—the eternal one who sits outside of time and makes all things new. We have the opportunity for new beginnings *in* God and *with* God, because of God.

The psalmist asked of the Lord to “teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom” (Ps. 90:12), knowing that time really is more fleeting than we realize, making it necessary for us to know how to use it wisely. This same fact is acknowledged in the New Testament: “Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

The life we have in this body is short compared to what awaits us as children of God. But even in its brevity, it is worth living and enjoying, because Jesus came that we would be able to live out that “life more abundantly” in fellowship with our Father. That feeling can be most evident around New Year's Day. But as days progress, it's not too long before the cares of this life and the enemy try to creep in and steal this

truth, kill our hope and destroy our vision for the future.

A history with past mistakes doesn't help either. We can look at some of the more monumental mistakes of our lives and understand why the oldest of the religious leaders were the first to drop their stones in the dust and turn away, instead of stoning the woman caught in the act of adultery.

We've all messed up. From the small mistakes to the big ones, we still regret and wish we could undo. We're acquainted with the ravages of sin in this life. They can leave us tainted with the residue of regret, causing those same familiar questions to arise: *Why would this year be any different for you? You weren't successful last year. What makes you think things will be different now?*

We can give in to the despondency these questions are trying to bring, or we can remember the one who loves us and has called us His own.

Yes, many New Year's Days—and entire years—have come and gone, but that does not negate the possibility of what the Lord has for His children this year, because of who He is, how He works and how He loves us.

“See, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not be aware of it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isa. 43:19).

He is still the Lord God gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. It's a phrase of Scripture we may have memorized, but when the weight of it impacts our hearts again, it completely changes the way we think and affects the things we do.

This simple, yet profound truth is what has changed the entire course of humanity and has made salvation, true love and an eternal family available to those who would consider themselves the chief among sinners, the outcast and the

unclean.

Even Abraham and Sarah's story would not have been possible without the truth of God's nature exhibited toward this couple who blew past God's timing to take matters into their own hands. It may have taken some time to believe that God would give them a son, but when they decided to loop Hagar into their plans to "help" God along, His gracious and kind heart allowed for a new start.

God not only kept His word to Abraham and Sarah, renewing their faith and strengthening them, mind, body and soul, but He enacted His plan without shaming them and without having to start over with a different couple who were younger and "free" from faults and mistakes.

He proved He is truly more than able to be God and bring about new possibilities in even the most challenging scenarios.

This is great news for us, because we all have challenging situations that can cause us to wish we could undo our mistakes. But there is no Control+Z (or undo) button for our blunders or sinful choices.

As children of God, we actually don't need a Control+Z button, because we have God. He is the one who makes all things beautiful in their time. He is the one who gives beauty for ashes.

He doesn't expect us to clean ourselves up to come to Him for salvation. And after we've accepted Him as Lord and Savior, He doesn't expect us to sanctify ourselves to live perfect lives. Holy lives—now that's the goal, but it can only be achieved through Him, by His grace and through the power of His Spirit on the inside.

More than an attempt at just erasing the past, there's an invitation for rebuilding, for digging deeper and bringing to light the old things that have hindered the foundation. An

invitation to reach higher and believe for more than the small-prayer requests (small requests because that way, it's easier not to feel devastated when we "don't receive" the answers).

The God of heaven and earth, the maker of all things, the Ancient of Days, the one who has all power and all authority has made it possible to not just have a glimpse of what our lives could be, but to fully enter into the newness of life with our hand in His.

Even when the circumstances around us seem to be the same, He has opened the door to new possibilities. We can have new habits for dealing with the familiar routines of life. When we're tempted to stray away from what we know to be good for us—opting between the fruit or the cookie, or even the one cookie versus the 11 cookies after dinner, or getting up early for the morning run instead of pressing snooze seven times—we can choose to engage in new and different habits that lead us toward God's best.

When work meetings seem unnecessarily challenging or our unsaved children continue to be disobedient, we can choose to respond differently, with love and kindness in trying situations, instead of muttering and complaining.

And when those we pray for seem to be moving in the opposite direction of our prayers, we can choose to have a new mindset, believing God is still working and that really nothing is impossible for Him. He still answers the smallest of prayers for the biggest things.

A new life is only found in Him—on Jan. 1 or Dec. 31 and every moment in between. So we can celebrate at the start of the new year and continue the celebration throughout all the days following it, because our God has given us newness of life, and He makes all things—even the most stubborn habit or hardest relationship—new. This is His promise and His heart

toward His children. "He who was seated on the throne said, 'Look! I am making all things new'" (Rev. 21:5). {eoa}

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