

A Fresh Start

✖ What happens in our hearts and minds as we stand at the threshold of a new year is amazing. It's as if we've been given a fresh new canvas on which to paint—a blank page—that provides us with a new, unblemished beginning in life. Suddenly we are inspired; our priorities and values become crystal clear.

We know where we are going and what we want to accomplish. We create a plan to get there and resolve not to fail (because THIS time we've worked out the kinks in our plan, and the improved strategy is infallible). Our valiant, newfound sense of determination, inspiration and desire appears as often as January itself, an ever-faithful companion of each new year.

But let's be honest: It's not really January that brings this new impetus as much as it is the mind-set that accompanies it. There is something invigorating about the idea of a new beginning that causes an awakening in our souls. Somehow all the mistakes and struggles of the past become diminished when we look ahead at a bright and untouched "clean slate." No matter what we have done or gone through, we dare to open up the sails of our hearts, allowing a fresh wind of purpose to fill us and send us forward into all that life has. In other words, the release from the past gives us courage to face tomorrow.

Perhaps that's why God gave the people of Israel two New Year's celebrations. The first one was the physical new year, which, much like our own began with the first day of the first month of the calendar year. For Israel this was in the spring, the season of newness.

In the seventh month, however, they were given another new year. The celebration, held on the first day of the month of Tishri, represented their spiritual new year and was called "Rosh Hashanna," or Feasts of Trumpets. It was instituted for the purpose of giving them a fresh start.

During the celebration a trumpet would sound, and all of Israel was awakened and summoned to a new level. Then came a call for repentance, followed by the declaration of God's covenant and His promises to Israel. Afterward the trumpet was blown again as a war cry to their enemies.

At this point the people of Israel would declare their victory in God and then prepare for a new wind of refreshing. They positioned themselves for such an experience because they had been taught to believe it would accompany every new year, which was a commemoration of the day on which God had first created man and breathed into him His own divine breath, making man a living soul.

This January as you take inventory of your life—with all your successes and failures—and make goals for the future, remember that God is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Heb. 13:8). If He

gave new

beginnings to the stubborn people of Israel, imagine what He will do for you!

Those of us who are in Christ, however, do not have to wait until the first of the new year to have a fresh start; we can have one every day of every month! The Bible tells us that God's compassions are new EVERY morning (see Lam. 3:22-23). God will breathe His divine, life-giving breath into our tired and weary souls, refreshing us and raising us up to the next level of victorious living.

So today, on your "new year," He will sound the trumpet for you, declaring you to be victorious over all that tries to defeat you, reminding you of His glorious covenant to you because you are His child, and declaring that the accusing voice of the enemy has already been silenced! As the apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "God says, 'At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.' Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. TODAY is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2, NASB, emphasis added).

The canvas is clean, and it's time for a fresh new start! Why not avail yourself of God's mercy, compassion and aid right now, and find His direction for the coming year?

PRAYER POWER WEEK OF 1/17/2011

Thank God every day this week for a clean canvas and a fresh

start. Ask Him to direct you in
His purpose each day and allow His joy to be your strength.
Approach your prayer time with faith
and courage as you pray for global revival. Continue to pray
for wisdom and
protection for our president and all of our nation's leaders.
Pray for those
recovering from the vicious shooting in Arizona and remember
those who lost
loved ones in that event. Ask Him to turn that which was meant
for evil into
good. Pray for unity among Christians to work together to
expand His kingdom
and be part of the solution and not part of the problem. (2
Cor. 6:2; Lam.
3:22-23)