

# New You for a New Year

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Beginning with God's creation in Genesis through His promise in Revelation 21:5 (*I am making everything new!*), God continually offers to make us new, transformed people. If we're "standing on the promises," **what keeps us stuck** in old habits and hang-ups? What stops us from living as the *new creatures* of 2 Corinthians 5:17?



1. Our **thoughts**: whatever "has" our minds "has" us. Changing what we think transforms our world! Life changes when we're continually *fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith* (Hebrews 12:2a).
2. Our **focus**: *We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us* (1 Corinthians 13:12, MSG).
3. Our **hearts**: When we won't let go of the past or trust in God, we're stuck in the quicksand of "old things." In Ezekiel 11:18-20 (MSG), God says His people will *throw out all the rotten images and obscene idols. I'll give you a new heart. I'll put a new spirit in you...* Ezekiel 36:26-28, God repeats His promise to give us a *new heart*, adding a second promise to *put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed. I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands... You'll be my people! I'll be your God!*

We make choices every day, often without consciously realizing even seemingly small choices help determine our future. How can we decide what to choose? James 1:3 says, *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

Friends fail; circumstances disappoint; only God never changes! *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8, ESV).

*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength* (Isaiah 40:8, 28-29, ESV).

We can believe God when He tells us we're new: *Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life emerges! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other* (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, MSG).

<b>Staying Stuck in TTWWADI*</b>	- or -	<b>Living an Authentically New** Life</b>
Complain about the way things are.		<i>Rejoice in the LORD always. I will say it again: Rejoice!</i> (Philippians 4:4, NIV)
Expect the worst of others...and of God.		Expect the best! Notice God's good provision.
Let your feelings tell you what to do (and how and who you are)		Allow your feelings to provide needed information while being directed by God's Word.
Resist change.		Challenge yourself to grow.
Be governed by fear...		Allow God to repeatedly deliver you from fear.
Focus on others' flaws.		Focus on God.
Worry.		Resolutely stop worrying!
<i>*That's the Way We've Always Done It</i>		<i>**New = being other than the former or old</i> <small>(Merriam Webster)</small>

Paul provides the ultimate contrast between old and new living in **Galatians 5:19-21** (MSG). First, the old: *It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community.*

**Verses 22-24** depict the beauty and joy of living a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than the flesh. *But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.*

**The new life needs a starting point!** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (1 Peter 1:3). John 3: 3-16 explains how to begin the journey by believing in Jesus. Throughout God's Word, we learn how to successfully continue the incredible adventure of new life.

2 Corinthians 5:7 says, *we walk by faith, not by sight.*

*I sought the LORD and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears* (Psalm 34:4, NASB).

Throughout each day, we can turn to Jesus for hope, life, and rest. He says, *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest* (Matthew 11:28, NASB).