

ENCOURAGE

“So that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” - Eph. 6:3

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR ALL THE SEASONS

Jesus' beauty is boundless;
His mercies are matchless;
His faithfulness is flawless;
His truthfulness is timeless...
He is the reason for all seasons.
His lordship is limitless,
His fellowship is faultless,
His great grace is guiltless,
His championship is changeless...
He is the reason for all seasons.
His compassion is countless,
His peace is pure and priceless,
His miracles are measureless,
His excellency is endless...
He is the reason for all seasons.
Jesus' joy is unspeakable,
His favor is unfathomable,
His wealth is unbeatable,
His authority is unquestionable...
He is the reason for all seasons.
His miracles are unimaginable,
His flaming love is unquenchable,
His blessings are uncountable,
His understanding is unarguable...
He is the reason for all seasons.
He inspiration is indelible;
His impressions are impeccable.
His movement is unstoppable,
His victory is undeniable...
He is the reason for all seasons.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
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AND MORE



And so, it is that the calendar will soon be flipped and we have begun a brand-new year. This year, 2023 – with its mix of joys and sorrows, goals met and goals missed, friendships gained and friendships lost – is mostly behind us. For many, the end of the year and New Year's is just another set of holidays. For others, it's a time of deep reflection, both on the past year and on the one ahead. For followers of Jesus, it has no unique significance. There's no central biblical narrative informing our celebrations.

But this doesn't mean Christians shouldn't pause and reflect on the turning of the calendar. Moses asked of the Lord, "Teach us to number our days, so we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). Time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years) is a gift to us from a good God. To wisely follow him, then, is to redeem our time (Eph. 5:16). The upcoming new year can also remind us of the new birth. In a sense, each day with Jesus is a chance to turn the page on an old way of life and embrace a new one. We are, after all, new creation people, and we serve a King who renews us daily by the Holy Spirit.

Setting goals for a new year are an important sign that we're intentional about glorifying God in our callings –work and business, home and church, private and publicly. When we work and plan, even

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GOD CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR NEW YEAR'S GOALS

At the beginning of the year, most people begin to reflect on their life and how one can improve it. All around us we see advertisements, graphics, social media posts and more about how you can be the "new you." Whether it is financial goals, weight loss, exercise apps on your phone or how to be more organized, we want to try to be better.

However, at the end of the year, we look back and most people have returned to some old habits. Most of the time, this happens because we think we can change all by ourselves. We forget to seek the help of the Lord when it comes to making changes in our lives.

This year, examine your life and identify one thing you need to do to change something for the positive in 2024. Perhaps it's the one thing holding you back from a stronger walk with the Lord. Or maybe it's holding you back from having a relationship at all with God. Then, ask for God to go help you and give you strength. God loves us and wants us to pray and talk to him. With his help, anything is possible (Matt. 19:26).



CONTACT INFO

NEW OUTLOOK

As you approach the New Year, think about this. Starting over turns into making resolutions. The New Year is a perfect time to dig up the roots of trouble with the power of the Holy Spirit. Confess to God what and let repentance lead you to a life of peace (2 Cor. 7:10). Then remember the Lord for all he has done. Our greatest joy comes from the Lord (Romans 8:18). Remember to celebrate the new year because each day is the day the Lord has made for us (Psalm 118:24). Finally, know that we are one step closer to Christ's return. No matter how messed up your 2023 was, or how great you expect 2024 to be, remember, Christ is coming back to claim his own, and the best is truly yet to come!

FUNNY SIDE UP

New Year's Resolutions from Bible Characters:

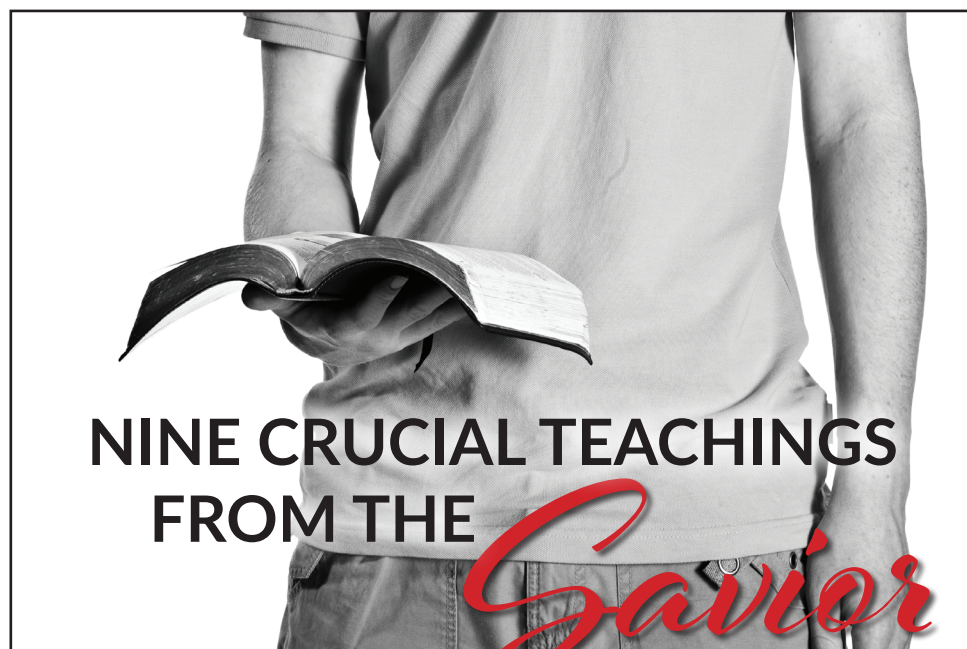
Adam: Some people want to eat more fiber. Not me. I'm plan to eat less fruit this year.

Lot's Wife: Don't long for the past...never look back!

Peter: Fish more this year. Men are more important, but not as tasty!

Author of Hebrews: I have got to remember to sign my name on the next thing I write.

James: No matter what happens this year, count it all joy. No,



NINE CRUCIAL TEACHINGS FROM THE

Savior

Here you will find nine crucial teachings of Jesus that are good for every season of life.

1. You cannot serve both God and money. – Luke 16:13
2. Love and pray for your enemies. – Luke 6:27-28,35
3. Turn the other cheek. – Luke 6:29
4. Deny self, take up Christlike suffering. – Luke 9:23
5. Following Jesus is more important even than family. – Luke 9:57-62, 14:26, 21:16-17
6. Hell is real. – Matthew 7:13, 13:50, 25:46
7. We cannot be loved & accepted by both Jesus and the world. – Luke 21:17
8. Forgive others. – Matthew 6:14-15
9. Deny Jesus before men, and God will deny you. – Luke 12:8-9, Matthew 10:32

20 BIBLE VERSES REMIND US ABOUT JESUS IN ALL SEASONS

John 3:16	Zechariah 9:9	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-35
Matt. 1:18-25	Isaiah 9:6-7	Luke 2:8-14	Matt. 2:10-12
Galatians 4:4-5	John 1:14	John 14:6	John 1:10-13
Psalms 103:11-13	2 Cor. 9:15	1 John 1:5-9	Phil. 2:8-11
Romans 10:9-13	Psalms 107:1	Romans 15:13	Romans 6:23

OPERATE IN JESUS' NAME IN ALL WE DO

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

– Colossians 3:17

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

– Proverbs 3:5-6

THE NEW YEAR IS COMING (CONT.)

in seemingly insignificant endeavors, we're fulfilling the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). In this age, we're blessed with an abundance of resources to help us to maximize our time: digital tools, productivity experts, inspirational blogs and more.

But before we write out our goals, we should begin in the heart. The temptation for Christians is to make our plans and add a dollop of Jesus on top, rather than allowing him to form in us the desires and motivations to do his work. So, whether or not we're making concrete goals or more abstract ones, whether we're writing down resolutions or foregoing them altogether, here are a few important steps we can take, as we peer into 2024, to draw closer to Christ.

Remember:

The wise man of Ecclesiastes said, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Eccl. 12:1). In January, the year is young and the opportunities seem fresh. So many productivity men preach a gospel of self-empowerment, but as gospel people, we know the fragility of human life. We know every breath is a miracle, a gift given to us by our Creator. In a cursed and tumultuous world, creation itself reminds of God's great faithfulness. Every new season is a testimony, a signpost, to grace. So, the proper response to the past year, whether good or bad, is not "I made it through" or "Look what I achieved." It is "Thank you, Lord."

Repent:

Our worship of God for his faithfulness and majesty, evidenced by the changing of seasons, should then lead us to repentance. His goodness breaks us in fresh ways as our sin is exposed by the light of his glory. To repent is to rejoice. We claim the promise of 1 John 1:9 because we know our forgiveness has already been purchased at the cross.

Beginning the new year with repentance is to draw closer to Jesus, to appropriate the fresh grace that is ours in him. This is why confession always brings relief and joy. It is the



gateway to greater intimacy with God.

Renew:

New Year's should also be a time of renewing old commitments, like marriage, family, and church. Before we begin grand plans to lose weight or develop a new skill – good creational goals – let's begin by renewing the core commitments we already have.

Our most vital work is what we do within the walls of our homes: loving our spouses and raising our children in an atmosphere of godliness and grace. We live out the gospel best when we live it out in the daily rhythms of repentance and forgiveness with loved ones. We must reject the lie that says success requires abandoning family commitments.

We should also renew ourselves to the faithful body life of our local Bible-treasuring, gospel-preaching church. The local church is the locus of God's mission in the world, where we gather in community to declare Christ's kingship each week, and where we work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12) with brothers and sisters in Christ.

– Faires Austin

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

– 1 John 1:9