



JANUARY

Rhythm, radiance and changing the world

"Do all you can with what you have in the time you have
in the place you are."

– Nkosi Johnson, AIDS activist, b. 1989 d. 2001



A no-fear new year

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; He will neither fail you nor abandon you.

Deuteronomy 31:8 NLT

Moses said it brave before all Israel – that Joshua should be strong and courageous – because he knew what it was to stand on the brink of the future. He also knew the God who already wholly knew the unknown days that lay ahead.

And today you're stepping onto the blank pages of a new year. You've never come this far, and it can be kind of terrifying to think about inking the future. Like Joshua and like Moses before him, you don't know what might be waiting when you turn the pages.

But this brand-new year can be your fearless worship. Your gift to God of 365 small steps of obedience. Your living declaration that faith and fear can't coexist in your heart. And, like worship often is, living this year may be difficult and devastating and exhilarating and deeply satisfying. But when you wake up each new day to weave your moments and movements, your thoughts, words and whereabouts, into the rhythm of spirit-and-truth real-life worship, thank God for the potential preloaded in the months ahead. And remember that He is 365 steps ahead of you. And then some.

What big or small fear for the year can you surrender to God today?

*Jesus, I give You this year and my fear.
Please make something beautiful. Amen.*



Look forward to looking back

... just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him. Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6-7 NLT

JANUARY 2

As you set goals for this year, consider what you want to be most grateful for twelve months from now. Pick a theme for the year – like gentleness, wisdom or consistency – that will help keep you on track. Getting into the habit of living out of a particular idea informs your priorities and decisions. Like, I'd love to get to the end of this year and say, "I'm so grateful that I was patient with my kids!" So I'm picking patience as a theme.

The themes of this devotional are *truth, courage, excellence and beauty*. Maybe start there. What could these themes look like for you? In which areas of your current context could you be brave enough to face up to the truth, seek to live excellently, and create beauty – for God's glory? What is God putting on your heart about this year, and about where you should spend your time, money, energy and emotional capacity? Listen. Obey. You'll be glad you did.

What do you want to be thanking God for a year from now?

Jesus, help me to make character decisions today in line with what I want to be praising You for in the future. Amen.



Stop and ask

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT

This is an extreme command: surrender to God completely in absolutely every facet of your life. Yet it comes with a radical, life-altering promise: He will give you clear directions.

We can't afford to miss this. Don't head out any further into another year's spaghetti maze of bright light highways, overhead flyways and oncoming traffic unless you've surrendered to God.

Decide today to risk everything on Jesus – your inside and your outside life. And don't convince yourself that you know exactly where you're going – that you don't need to stop and ask for directions. No one has a totally reliable moral compass.

Rather – at every meeting of great minds or mundane trundling through frozen food aisles – keep asking God to show you His will, His way, in His strength, and for His glory. And then breathe deep peace and know: He will give you the coordinates you need, at least for the next step.

If you know you're scared and stalling, or if it feels like you're falling into this new year – flailing and failing – would you take a moment today for quiet surrender?

God, I'm struggling to trust You. I want to go my own way. But I know You see things that I don't. Please pick out the right path for me. Amen.



Simplify

JANUARY 4

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things ... But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Philippians 3:12-14 NLT

Paul had a way of distilling pure truth from the muck of life. He understood that he couldn't change his past but he had the courage to face it down and put it in its place – which was, behind him. He understood that, facing forward, his highest, simplest priority was to become more and more like Jesus.

Remembering what will really matter in the end helps to simplify – beautify – your life today. It quiets the noise of the present and the voices of the past. It gives clarity and perspective and scatters distractions that yank you in dead-end directions. And a new year is a gift – a chance to clear the trappings and to weight things wisely: your relationships, work, ministry and other time and energy expenses. Channel every decision, every interaction, in the direction of setting your hope simply on Jesus.

Could you do one thing today to simplify your life?

*Jesus, let the truest, most beautiful thing
about me be that I simply follow You. Amen.*



On-purpose people

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.

Romans 12:9 NLT

Love isn't fake or feeble. Jesus said that it's our real, hard-core love that sets us radically apart from the world (John 13:35), which rests unsteady on appearances and selfishness. Christ's love is heavy and sure. Solid and stable. And His love compels us to see the people who cross our paths and parking lots or who arrive in our inboxes and at our front doors as *on-purpose* people. As in, they fill our days, on purpose.

Your heavenly Father already knows the people who will be written into your story this year. Pray for discernment, wisdom and insight to read them right. Get a sense of where they're coming from, where they're going and how they're getting there – practically, emotionally and spiritually. Pray that God will give you His heart for them, so that you will really see them, and really love them.

Whether you're shaking the hand of a statesman or greeting the cleaner in the ladies' room, learn to take those moments – contrived and intentional or random and seemingly insignificant – equally seriously. Set the gentle, striking example to others of spending less energy trying to be interesting and more energy being interested in others.

Are there people in your life that you tend to overlook? How could you start seeing them and loving them on purpose?

Lord, let me not waste a single interaction by offering anything other than warm words of life. Amen.



Open your hand

Then the LORD asked him, "What is that in your hand?"

Exodus 4:2 NLT

JANUARY 6

Moses doesn't think he has much to contribute to God's master plan for His people. He's just a shepherd with a staff. And yet that's exactly how God uses him. He dares Moses to take *just what he has* and trust God to use it in ways Moses can't imagine. God turns the staff in Moses' hand into a snake, and it's the sign that gets Pharaoh's attention. Eventually, Pharaoh lets God's people go. And the rest is history.

You have something in your hand too. Something to offer. It may not be much, but that's the wonder of it. Because God can transform what is simply surrendered to Him into something dazzling – something astoundingly beautiful and effective.

Make it your simple act of obedience this year to open your hand and sow whatever seeds you're clutching there. Sow truth. Sow excellence. And when your hand is empty? When you think you have nothing left to sow, you may be surprised to find another bag of seed at your feet. Dip your hands back into that bag. Dig for more seeds. Drop them into the soil you're standing on. Trust God for the harvest. Then do it again.

What are you holding? Will you give it to God – let Him use it?

*Jesus, this is all I have in my hand. I'm giving it to You,
and trusting that You can turn it into Your glory. Amen.*



It starts with you

The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.

Proverbs 4:18 NLT

It's a breathtaking paradox that we grow more effective and more beautiful the older we get, because we grow into the fullness of Christ. We *never* no longer have what it takes to change the world.

And you do want to change the world, right? You want honest politicians. Superb schooling. Nature conservation. Accessible medical care. An end to domestic violence and child abuse. Yet each society's evils devolve into more and more sinister shapes and forms unless the people in that society change. So before it's possible to start righting the wrongs, we need Christ's light to dawn in people's hearts. Because changed hearts change behavior – which changes society.

It starts with you. In the Hebraic tradition of reaching others for change and influence they say, "One is obligatory. Two is a privilege." You are the obligatory one. And the lives you touch are the privilege. Because if *just you* can change the world will be different. And if *just one other person* whose life rubs up against yours can change, the difference doubles and suddenly you're not just a dreamer, you're a revolutionary leaving the planet better than you found it.

Are you intentional about glowing brighter by the day – inspiring others to look to Jesus as the source of positive change?

Jesus, You are the hope of the world. Use me. Amen.



What stops you being you?

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

JANUARY 8

You're God's masterpiece. So what holds you back from being and doing what God planned long ago for you to be and do, today and all your numbered days to come?

If what's true for me is true for you, then you've lived things that make you long for the world to be different. You carry things in your heart that you wish you didn't have to. You get discouraged, and not taken seriously. Some days you dream dreams and close deals and some days you scrape last night's projectile vomit off the bunk beds. You look back with regret. You look forward with fear. And you live a mediocre present. You allow the fear of not mattering much to keep you from what matters most.

You could decide today to be done with wasting your time and potential. You could start to decode the God-dreams woven into your DNA because He has grown in you a passion for His glory and because He calls you a masterpiece – made new for Kingdom assignments preplanned by the Creator. That is some kind of wonderful.

Are you living the truth that, despite the external and internal challenges of life, you've been made new and God has planned your purpose?

Lord, let me be and do what You shaped me for. Amen.



Living the wonder

He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them ...

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 Corinthians 5:15, 17 NLT

Take a moment. Let that sink ... and settle: *A new life has begun.*

Jesus took on Himself the punishment that you had coming so that you could walk free and clean into the destiny He designed for you. The pressure's off to earn your future.

And you – beautiful new you – have been uniquely crafted and gifted. There are things in you uncommon to any of the seven billion other people crowding these continents. You have unique opportunities and a unique calling. You get to live this new life for Jesus in a unique area of influence. Of course, the wonder that surrounds your life like so much stardust is there because God broke into darkness with blazing hope to call you Redeemed. Beloved. And all your wonder shines wondrous only when you know that you are not the main character of the story. When you live the wonder for His glory, not yours.

Looking back, can you trace the truth that the old life is gone and a new life has begun?

Jesus, thank You that Your sacrifice made wide-open wonder-spaces for me to live for You. Amen.



Shoot for perfect, walk in grace

Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

John 8:10-11 NLT

JANUARY 10

Jesus always pointed to the ideal – how people should live. Yet He never condemned those who fell short of it. He never lowered the bar or made excuses for sin. Rather, He called people to holiness. He pressed them to repent with the urgency of a compassionate God, so that they would know the freedom of redemptive grace. His forgiveness of the woman caught in adultery is absolute, yet His charge is insistent: "Go and sin no more."

Your life may look totally different from hers, but living out your gratitude for God's lavish grace by loving and honoring Him – it's what will change you too, and change the world. Because changing the world depends on a commitment to obedience that demands truth and courage. What needs to be done (truth) needs to be done (courage) and the doing is beautiful obedience. You need to be brave to lean hard into truth, but it will set you free to live fully – in the kitchen or the car or the boardroom or the bedroom. And you – living fully, free, forgiven – that's where change begins.

Have you accepted God's gift of total forgiveness?

Jesus, thank You for setting me free. Strengthen me to use my freedom to glorify You before a watching world. Amen.



You can once you realize you can't

"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart."

Ezekiel 36:26 NLT

JANUARY 11


Trying to change your own heart is like trying to steer a motorboat that's been put on autopilot. You can override the set of the steering wheel for a while – force the boat to go in the direction you choose – but eventually your arms will get too tired. You'll have to let go. And the boat will go right back to heading in the direction it's been programmed for.

Maybe you've tried heart change on your own – tried to override your heart's autopilot – grown weary – and let go? Because the truth is you can never change yourself. You can never create your own "tender, responsive heart." But the sure hope you have is that you can build canals to channel the staggering floods of changing grace.

True and lasting heart change will happen when you surrender to the Savior your beauty and your brokenness, trusting Him to bring about the change so that the space and potential you have for Kingdom influence can become a stunning and significant reality.

Have you been trying too hard to change bits of you – to be "good enough" – instead of trusting God to do the changing?

Father, I can't change me. Change me! I need You to give me a new heart, and a new spirit. Amen.



The irresistible rhythm of beautiful routine

Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't
lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Matthew 11:29 MSG

JANUARY 12

Routine has a bad rap. It's lumped with the boring and ordinary. Like it's dull. Unexciting. Life over-rehearsed. But if you dare to dig deeper than the daily mundane you'll discover the glittering truth that routine is essential for creating rhythm, and there's nothing tedious about rhythm.

It's regular rhythm that draws people in and onto the dance floor. It's what makes us laugh easy. It's what gets into the soul, lifts the mood, lightens the spirit. You can't dance spontaneously unless you can hear a steady beat.

And Jesus said that if we walk with Him – the daily one-foot-in-front-of-the-other routine of following Him – it wouldn't be heavy, or boring, or ordinary. He said He would lend rhythm to our steps, and it would be something beautiful. Because the excellence and beauty of our routine determines the excellence and beauty of our freedom.

What's your routine like? (If you have one?). Do you see it as something that ties you into the ordinary, or sets you free to enjoy the extraordinary?

Jesus, I want to walk with You, work with You, watch You. Choose my rhythm and routine. Turn my life into a beautiful beat that people can't ignore, and that draws them to You. Amen.



Momentum

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

Galatians 6:9 NLT

Routine creates momentum. If you are in the habit of doing something every day, it's easy to keep doing it every day after that, because the habit – the routine – has you riding a wave of your own making, simply because you kept on choosing to ride it.

Momentum also saves you from making a bunch of decisions that can take care of themselves. Like, you don't really decide each morning to make coffee or brush your teeth. These doings are just part of your routine, so you don't waste time or energy pondering them. And the time and energy saved through good habits and healthy routines free you up to get busy changing the world.

Never underestimate the power and significance of your routine, even as you wonder if this year's routine is going to look much the same – and equally dismal – as last year's. Appreciate how the stability, predictability and momentum that routine brings can set you free to take on the challenges and adventures of life, and unlock your potential in more stimulating ways.

Are you brave enough to create excellence this year, by committing to a routine?

*God, help me not to grow weary of day in,
day out doing good. I trust that in due course
I will reap the freedom fruits of momentum. Amen.*



Keeping time with time

"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged,
for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.
I will hold you up with My victorious right hand."

Isaiah 41:10 NLT

JANUARY 14

We read Scriptures like this all the time, yet we don't seem to believe them. We don't *really live* as if we believe that there's nothing to be afraid of. You may be in a season of looking eagerly to the future, whiling away the present with breathless expectation. But a time will almost certainly come when the future will loom ominous and reach into the present to steal your joy. When that happens, hold tight to the truth that God holds you tight where you are, strengthening you and helping you.

Keep your thoughts in today. The future will arrive in good time. It cannot and will not get to you a moment sooner than it's due. You are and only ever can be present *now* – alive in this moment *now*. Walk at time's pace. Don't lag in the past, and don't rush ahead.

Are you prone to the crippling fear of the future? How can you remind yourself today that today is all you know for sure, and that God is with you?

*God, I'm so glad You're in my present circumstances.
Give me the courage to make an excellent, beautiful now.
Thank You that You're already in my future, and
we can talk about it when I get there. Amen.*



Beat your own drum

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 NLT


Being told to mind your own business usually comes with a bit of aggression. It's a warning to back off. But Paul's instruction here to the Thessalonian believers is beautifully liberating. He's urging them to get down to their gifting, live it out and enjoy it, without looking around to see who else is doing what, and what else is going down.

Your capacity and your priorities will vary depending on your stage of life. Whether you're single, an empty-nester, or the mom of three toddlers – this may affect, say, how you host a dinner party. (Or if you host a dinner party.)

Don't beat yourself up because your friend or your mom-in-law or your boss has all her ducks in a row, and you're not even sure you have ducks anymore. Stop trying to tap your foot to a rhythm that's not right for your life. Be brave, and find the pace – and the peace of mind – that works for you in your current season. You're not your most excellent, or your most beautiful, when you're dancing to someone else's tune. Dance to your own.

Are you trying to beat out the rhythms of your life according to someone else's schedule, gifting, life circumstances or apparent capacity?

*Creator God, help me do what You would have
me do, excellently and beautifully. Amen.*



Forecast: Change, with a chance of curveballs

For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT

JANUARY 16

Change shouldn't surprise us as much as it does, because it's synonymous with time. Or rather, change is how we know that time has *happened*. Like, the microwave pings something warm. Suddenly, the world is slightly different from what it was a few seconds ago, because what was frozen is now defrosted. Change has taken place, which shows that time has passed.

The reason change sideswipes us is because we hang our hopes on our circumstances, which we naively convince ourselves will *not* change with time. Then, when they inevitably do change, we're horrified.

While we can and should appreciate our circumstances, we need a healthy awareness that they are not forever, and subject to the changing influences of time. A safer bet is to stack all our hope on Jesus, then watch expectantly, and without fear, for the weather to change.

What changes are blowing in with the weather in your world? What courage do they demand of you?

*God of time, help me remember that change isn't
just likely, it's inescapable. Give me the grace
to dress accordingly when it happens. Amen.*



Flight, fight or freeze

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:8 NLT

JANUARY 17

The truth is that as much as we all want to do what we can to see the world become a better place, negative change – adverse change beyond our control that alters our reality – can paralyze us and stop us making the positive change we long for. Negative change makes for a shape-shifting, unpredictable reality. Things we thought we could count on can disappear or morph into unrecognizable horror.


Negative change – like retrenchment, or an autoimmune disease that has reshaped your life irrevocably – can have you backing into a cave, wasting your energy on fury. Or running to anywhere but here and now. Or stagnating into same-old-same-old. You fight, take flight or freeze.

If you *choose* change – like swapping your aisle seat for a window – then great. But change that you *don't choose* is threatening. It's a force outside of you that snuffs your resolve to give your best self to the world because suddenly the world isn't what it was. Suddenly the calm assurance and confidence you'd fostered around a set of circumstances falls away. You spend emotional, intellectual and spiritual resources recalibrating. It costs you time to adjust.

When the swirling world around you changes, cling brave to the truth you are anchored in the One who *never* changes.

Are you facing difficult changes that have you fighting, fleeing or freezing up?

O God, thank You that You are my constant. Amen.



A change is (not always) as good as a holiday

Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready.

In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Joshua 1:10-11 NLT


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The Israelites, under Joshua's command, weren't crossing the Jordan to picnic in a new spot. They could scarcely guess the magnitude of the culture-altering changes ahead of them. They were heading into battle after battle in unfamiliar enemy territory. And yet God had plans to use this season of hostile change to change and restore the hearts of His people.

The changes you face in your life won't always be pleasant or convenient. They will likely leave you hurt, confused, angry or dazed. But you can trust that God will use the changes to give your faith a strength and elasticity that it could never otherwise attain. You can also trust that although you experience your life as a surprising, spontaneous, strenuous adventure – it's none of those things to the God who is never taken by surprise, and whose plans are from eternity past.

If you aren't facing hectic, disorientating change right now – do you know someone who is? How can you cheer for her, today, so that she's encouraged to be brave through this season?

Jesus, I pray for peace amidst the confusion of change, and I trust that You are using all this change, to change me. Amen.



Where is your hope?

"Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who hope in Me will not be disappointed."

Isaiah 49:23 NIV


JANUARY 19

When you've been hit by the shock waves of change, you've probably asked angry questions and shaken angry fists. Maybe you've thought about running away from the changes. Maybe you've even tried to subsist in a kind of cold indifference. If you've mentally mined the shafts of fight, flight and freeze, you'll have realized that they're all dark dead-ends. None of them change you, or the world, for good. If you've tapped at their source where fear froths hot and irrational and tunneled deeper still to the soul-pit where things hurt and heal, you will have heard that the God-whisper is always the same: *Where is your hope?*

Hoping that the things of this world will stay the same, or change to suit your comfort or convenience, will only ever lead to disappointment. The fear might shrink back a bit. But probably it will swell and return vicious. Because if you put your hope in anything or anyone other than the Creator of serenity and stability, you'll be let down. How incredible to know that Creator, and know that you need never live a life devoid of purpose or hope.

Are you brave enough today to ask God to shine a light on your heart and show you if you're putting your hope in something other than Him?

God of power and peace, I put all my hope in You. Amen.



How the unchanging God changes everything

With Your unfailing love You lead the people You have redeemed. In Your might, You guide them to Your sacred home.

Exodus 15:13 NLT

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On the other side of the Red Sea – bondage behind them – Moses praised God for rescuing His people. There's beautiful irony in the fact that the massive change He had brought about for them was in accordance with His changeless love and faithfulness – His immutable character of holy integrity. Because only the changeless God can bring about lasting change.

So when you have your own sea to cross, trust the sovereign God who *never changes*. If your peace and your pace come from Him, if you believe He is who He says He is, and if you trust Him to shepherd and shape your calling and the conditions of your life – then you needn't be afraid. God speaks light, flings stars, multiplies cells and sets the fetal heart beating. He's way ahead of online cultures that morph and mushroom overnight. He's bigger than politics, bigger than physical safety or danger, bigger than what's trending today and forgotten tomorrow, bigger than the landscape and the velocity of change. He's far, far bigger than fear. And He can part the waters.

How has the unchanging love of God changed your own heart? Does it make you brave to accept – even embrace – change in the world around you?

Jesus, I want Your changeless character to change me – so that I can bring about God-honoring changes in this world. Amen.



Catalyst

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.

Hebrews 11:8 NLT

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If change leaves you dazed – insecure – ineffective – think about the people throughout history who were confronted by change and became revolutionaries.

Like, Abraham and his wife who left their homeland *not knowing where God was taking them*. They built a nation. Moses got that nation to follow him into a desert. God gave him a timeless covenant that has shaped cultures for millennia. Ruth lost her husband and her home and followed her mom-in-law to strange territory. God gave her new love and a place in the lineage of Christ. Some friends watched their only Hope bleed on a cross. God raised that Hope. He filled those friends. He sent them. And they changed the world.

So maybe change is the catalyst. Maybe unsolicited change at its scariest is handing you unprecedented opportunities to effect the change you hope for. Strangely, the chaos of change can suck you into the eye of the storm where things are quiet. Perspective is distilled. Truth becomes clear. You can resolve again to maximize your time. Search for what God has put inside you. Because changed circumstances demand that you find the courage and conviction to act.

How has catastrophic change mobilized you or others for good?

*Lord, make something beautiful from
the changes all around me. Amen.*



No surprises

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT

JANUARY 22

There's incredible peace and relief in the truth that nothing – not even the disastrous or the devastating upending of your life plan and picture – takes God by surprise. We label certain circumstances as 'change' because they have turned out differently to how we thought or hoped or planned or expected them to turn out. We forget so quickly that, with God on the throne, they've turned out exactly the way He knew they would.

You can be sure that, so long as you're still part of life on this planet, you'll be part of more changes too. Negative, blindsiding changes that will steal your keenness to make some positive, beautiful changes. In some parts of the world infrastructure will crumble and in other parts of the world castles will be built on complacency. But rest in the big picture reality that in every part of the world there is Jesus. Where lands and lives are decimated, He plants hope. Where change razes, He raises. And He knows the plans He has for you.

Are you wondering if God really has your best interests at heart? Are you wrestling with the truth that He saw your present circumstances coming, and He did nothing to avert them? Maybe, rather ask: would it be worth trusting in a God who didn't completely know and hold the future?

God, I'm so very glad that You never say, "Oops." Amen.



You'll never walk alone

"I will not in any way fail you *nor* give you up *nor* leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless *nor* forsake *nor* let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]"

Hebrews 13:5 AMPC

If you're freaked out by change, stop trying to fight the fear on your own. Stop running. Stop hiding. Remind yourself that God is inside time – outside time – all the time. He summons each new generation from the beginning of time (Isaiah 41:4). He prepared beforehand the Kingdom ground He wanted you to plough (Ephesians 2:10). He knew the physical and spiritual contours of the continent on which He placed you long before He did the placing. He knows how the journey's terrain will change as you walk it. And He promises never to loosen His grace-grip on your life.

When Israel's troops faced their enemies, the priest would address them before battle, saying: "Listen to me, all you men of Israel! Do not be afraid as you go out to fight your enemies today! Do not lose heart or panic or tremble before them. For the LORD your God is going with you! He will fight for you against your enemies, and He will give you victory!" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4).

How would dwelling on God's abiding presence change your stress levels?

*Jesus, help me remember that, whether
I "feel" it or not, You are always with me. Amen.*



Hero

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Then, since Rahab's house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way."


Joshua 2:15-16 NLT

Like you and me, Rahab wasn't perfect. But she was a hero. In a desperate situation fraught with unforeseen change and likely disaster, she saw things clearly. And she found the courage to do the right thing in the right way at the right time.

You'll know from your own experiences that mediocrity isn't transformed into significance when the road is smooth. It's in calamity brought on by the mudslides of change that the hero in you – the world changer who isn't living for the applause of people – is brave enough to cling to weapons of truth, knowing that there is One who fights with you, and for you. Time and energy you once spent floundering in the dark of anxiety is channeled into excellence, into making a difference in the world, and a world of difference.

Where is God calling you to step out heroically, rather than shrink back fearfully?

*God, make me brave. I want to be a hero:
a difference-maker that points all the glory to You. Amen.*



Change: bring it on

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

Philippians 2:12-13 NLT

As difficult as adverse change can be, it's so important to remember that change is God's will for you. He redeemed you to change you. He longs to change you into the best, most beautiful version of you: the you that looks like Jesus. It's one of the most staggering mysteries of faith – that God is at work inside of you, changing your inclinations and your wants, so that you want to want to be like Jesus.

And He doesn't just give you the *want*. He gives you the *how*. He equips you with Holy Spirit power and Word wisdom and people in your community who care for you and cheer you on. You have every reason to be excited and expectant.

How could you show the results of your salvation today, knowing that your willingness and ability to do so are gifts from God?

Almighty God – bring on the change. Make me beautifully different – unusually excellent – for Your glory. Amen.



Moving on

Jesus came and told His disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

JANUARY 26

Jesus' disciples were faced with overwhelming change. Jesus had died, been buried and resurrected. Now He was leaving them with a new set of instructions that must have landed heavy and sobering on His friends: *Go out and change the world with the truth about Me.* And yet Jesus clearly called them into this season of change. He called them to move forward in obedience when it would have been easier to wallow in their grief or confusion – stagnant and passive. And again, He assured them of His presence.

Jesus is calling you to change too. He has Kingdom plans for you and obeying His call will mean moving – following – changing as you listen for His voice.

What does obedience look like in your life today? How are you moving forward in faith?

Jesus, thank You that I needn't fear the unknowns involved in moving on, up or forward, because I know You are with me. Amen.



Living on the edge

For we live by believing and not by seeing.

2 Corinthians 5:7 NLT

JANUARY 27

It's a common cultural quip – *Live on the edge*. When people say it, what they usually mean is, *Take a risk, Live a little, Have some fun*.

The horizon of change shifts constantly. You're on the rim of the future all the time. You're living on the edge, whether you like it or not. But as a believer, it means something so much more exciting than just living crazy or being a little daring. Living on the edge of your earthly future and eternity means conceding all your dreams to the great *I Am* – leaving your case in His hands the way Jesus did (1 Peter 2:23). It means living the spilling-over life that Jesus promised (John 10:10). It's the joyride and the faith adventure of stepping into God's best for you.

So when cliffs drop below you, paths fall away and changes erupt all around? Rejoice. You're living on the edge. Just keep your feet on the Rock that is impervious to tremors. Because *I Am* still is.

Do you feel as if God has you at the very edge of your capacity in some – or all – areas of your life? Are you thrilled? Terrified? Exhausted? All three?

God, if You don't come through for me, I've got nowhere to turn. Thank You for bringing me to this place of total dependence on You – my hope and rescue. Amen.



Contagious radiance

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm,
for God can be trusted to keep His promise. Let us think of
ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

Hebrews 10:23-24 NLT

JANUARY 28

One way to find your own rhythm and radiance is to create it for others. Helping your kids, your spouse, a friend or a colleague to find their particular cadence can calm them, energize them, and give them perspective. All it takes is being intentional – reading them right – so that you can do what you can to love them.

Someone close to you may need the upbeat rhythm of encouragement. Someone else may need to be slowed down before they burn out. And offering encouragement – putting the wind in someone else's sails – is win-win.

The spin-off for you is that you're your most beautiful – your most radiant – when you've forgotten about you, because you're pouring yourself into someone else.

How can you add rhythm or radiance to someone else's life, just today, in just one small way?

Lord, help me to see and meet the needs of those around me, so that they find the rhythm again that lends them momentum to keep on keeping on living a brave, beautiful, excellent life. Amen.



Do well what only you can do

But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:15 NLT

JANUARY 29


If you have a career, or if you volunteer at church or at your kid's school, then you have responsibilities to fulfill to avoid reproach. There are things you need to do to avoid being fired or asked to stop serving at the cake sale.

Our excellence in the workforce honors God. But sometimes, we try so hard to please third party people that we make decisions to the detriment of those who really matter – our family or friends. Maybe you're desperate for no one to think badly of you so you bend every which way to placate when you're in the public eye – and neglect the people in your life who really matter. It's a weird thought, but who are the people you're exhausting yourself to impress? They probably won't be at your funeral. The ones getting your leftovers? They will be.

There are jobs anyone can do – like being a tax attorney or selling hotdogs to ten-year-olds. And then there are jobs only you can do – like being the wife to your husband, mother to your children, daughter to your parents, or BFF to your BFF. Do well the jobs that only you can do.

Could you manage your time differently today, to bless and encourage those God has placed uniquely in your life to love?

*Jesus, help me to wow the near and dear before
I try to wow the far and wide. Amen.*



The face that launched a thousand ships

The LORD, the Mighty One, is God, and He has spoken;
He has summoned all humanity from where the sun rises
to where it sets. From Mount Zion, the perfection
of beauty, God shines in glorious radiance.

Psalm 50:1-2 NLT

JANUARY 30

According to the myth, Helen of Troy's beauty changed the course of history. Her capture led to the mobilization of a nation, and war. It's an extreme (and fictitious) example, but it does illustrate that beauty has power.

And you – believing woman – daughter of the King – you're beautiful. You've been clothed in righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). God's radiance has taken up residence in you, and you're making history. He has you and only you on your particular earthly mission. Enjoy that. Enjoy your potential. Enjoy your beauty. Use it wisely, because true beauty – the kind that can't help spilling out if it's in you – is powerful enough to bring about lasting change.

If you're not sure what to do with your unique beauty – where and how to live it out – ask yourself: In light of where I've come from, where I am now, and where I want to go – what is the wise, excellent, beautiful thing for me to do, today?

Can you think of someone whose unmistakable inner beauty has influenced those around her, and brought about positive, lasting change?

*God, I want to be really, royally beautiful,
from the inside out. Change me, so that I can change
the world around me, for Your glory. Amen.*



Compelled to be content

The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives.

Psalms 37:23 NLT

JANUARY 31

Whatever life is throwing at you, hiding this Scripture in your heart is the secret weapon you need to quell the restless discontent and find peace. Because owning the fact that God is in *every detail* of your life compels you to relax. Nothing escapes His notice. But even more than that – *He delights* in the detail.

Don't buy the lie that God is too busy running the universe to notice, never mind care about, your kid's test result, your broken washing machine or your broken marriage. He sees and cares about how that date stood you up or how someone has moved the goal posts in your career, your community or your comfort zone. Again.

We're one month down; eleven to go. Carry this priceless truth with you as the year picks up speed and noise levels rise and responsibilities and uncertainties, changes and challenges, crowd your heart and your headspace. God is in the details. Be content.

What is stealing your contentment? (Make a list.) Would you commit even the small, seemingly insignificant nagging minutia to the God who delights in your every step?

*Jesus, thank You for being in the details
of today, and all my tomorrows. Amen.*