

do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. <sup>10</sup>But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband <sup>11</sup>but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband, and that the husband should not divorce his wife.” (I Cor. 7:1-2 and 6-11 NASB)

**Sixth** — Jesus was faithful to death. Once we choose to accept our role as a Christian we can remain faithful to death. Examples of Christ and the early Christians give us ample role models to follow.

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (I Cor. 9:24-27 NASB)

**Seventh** — God has promised that the saved can live eternally with Him in heaven.

“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” (Rom. 6:22 NASB)

We can help others do the same. Just as Jesus forgives *our* sins when we are immersed in the waters of baptism, we can then reach out to others, giving *them* the opportunity to accept the Gospel and have forgiveness of *their* sins. They too then can live eternally with God in heaven and help others to do the same.

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (II Tim. 2:2 NASB)

With each passing year, we witness nature rejuvenating itself as the calendar passes from season to season. As Christians, our redemption began a new season — or life — for us.

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 3:3-4 NIV 1984)

If we begin this New Year with a *commitment* to follow Christ's example, we can experience a year of exceptional growth and indeed begin anew — again.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9 NASB)

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# DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

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## The Value of a New Year

The world of our daily life is actually a continuation — not a “start over” as each New Year — with all of its “resolutions” — might suggest. There are however, some parts of our lives that *can* in fact be started anew. The fact that a Christian is a new creature that has been *transformed* from darkness into light is a testament of the potential for change — or for starting over.

A new year offers at least an annual *reminder* that the calendar of *natural* events starts over year after year — with the passing seasons. Consider plants and animals in relation to *their* adaptation to seasons. As humans, we also engage in our *own* form of adaptation. We go from day to day pursuing goals with full recognition of the passage of time as we move through the aging process. It is often the case that as we age, we reflect on past shortcomings and vow to do better going forward — hence, the New Years resolutions that are often made. The later years of our lives, begin to bring hope that we have made a positive impact on those with whom we have interacted and encountered along the way. There seems to be a certain pressure to leave the world a better place than we found it. This feeling seems to be common to people regardless of their status or personal characteristics. Most all of us wish to accomplish good with our lives.

For Christians, leaving the world a better place can also have *eternal* impact on the lives of those with whom we have had the opportunity to share the Gospel.

Let's consider for a moment *Christ's* life in relation to the desire *we* have to do our best in this life. Just like each of us — Christ was born, lived as a child subject to some supervision, challenged those older than himself, launched out on his own work and life choice, met opposition, gained friendships, became a leader, died ( in his case killed) and was buried. Most of us can *identify* with Jesus Christ in each of these things mentioned above.

There are also of course, obvious *differences* between us and Jesus Christ. While *some* of those differences are outside of our ability to match, many *are within* our grasp. A few of the differences that are *beyond* our grasp would include:

- 1) Our birth was not foretold by prophesy,
- 2) We were not, nor could we be born of a virgin,
- 3) We do not possess the mind of God, and thus could not challenge our elders concerning Scripture at age 12,
- 4) We cannot perform miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead, etc.,
- 5) We cannot forgive sins,

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- 6) We do not live a sin free life,
- 7) We will not likely be crucified on a cross,
- 8) We will not establish an eternal organization upon our resurrection from the dead.

We *can* however, do *our* best in this life by following those things in *His* life that *are* within our grasp to emulate. So what *are* some of the ways in which we might pattern ourselves after Christ as we begin this new year?

**First** — and foremost — Jesus did the will of his Father — even when it wasn't easy and even when He really didn't *want* to.

*“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.’ And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”* (Matt. 26:36-39 NASB)

We can do the will of God through accepting the truth of Scripture and the gift of salvation provided in His word.

*“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”* (Col. 2:8-14 NIV)

**Second** — We can make every effort to live in a way that is pleasing to God just as did Jesus. Upon accepting salvation we become a part of the eternal kingdom of God (His Body, the Church). We can keep foremost in our mind that we are children of God by adoption, and therefore have access to the help of His Spirit — enabling us to live a life pleasing to Him. It is when we forget whose kingdom we are a part of, that we slip backward into our prior life and sin. We must always remember to whom we belong.

*“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are*

*children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”* (Rom. 8:15-17 NASB)

*“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”* (Gal 3:29 NASB)

**Third** — We can grow in the knowledge of scripture. Knowledge is a tool that can be gained by those willing to pursue it with determination.

*“[L]ike newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”* (1 Peter 2:2-3 NASB)

*“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”* (Heb. 12:5-13 NASB)

**Fourth** — We can develop relationships with people like ourselves as well as those far different than ourselves in an effort to reach any who will listen to the Gospel. Jesus was not discouraged from reaching out to people of any background even though He was accused of spending too much time with sinners. To be like Christ we can best reach the lost if we are *in touch* with those who are lost.

*“When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, ‘Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”* (Luke 19:5-10 NASB)

**Fifth** — We can live in a proper relationship in this life within or without marriage. If we are to remain single as did Christ and the Apostle Paul, we can do so, or if we are to marry we can do so and serve God equally well.

*“Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. <sup>2</sup>But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ... <sup>6</sup>But this I say by way of concession, not of command. <sup>7</sup>Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. <sup>8</sup>But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. <sup>9</sup>But if they*