

DISCIPLESHIP

New Year - New Me - New You

Discussion

As we begin another new year, I thought that a short discussion on self-improvement might be in order. If you are thinking about forming some New Year's resolutions, consider looking inward and praying for real change in areas of your spiritual life where you need improvement.

The five topics below are things that I am always struggling with. Perhaps the verses below will help you as much as they have helped me. The verses are from the NIV translation.

1. **Anger:** Controlling our anger, learning to be patient, and knowing God's will all go hand-in-hand. We cannot possibly know God's will if we are angry, anxious, or so busy that we don't take time to hear God speak to us. One of many scriptures that really spoke to me years ago—and it still does today—is James 1:19-20. It is difficult to put into practice, but it is priceless advice if you want to mature and grow as a Christian.
 - a. James 1:19-20 - "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."
2. **Fairness:** Today's world is, in many respects, no different than that which existed at the time of Christ. The world around us is full of people who lack fairness, who believe the world revolves around them, and who look to exercise power over other people at every turn—especially their workers if they are in a managerial position. Do not get so caught up in man's world that you forget we are "all" created equal in God's eyes. Whether you are a subordinate or a manager, we are to treat everyone equally and fairly. Let fairness be a word that you focus on this new year.
 - a. Colossians 4:1 - "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."
3. **Honesty/Integrity:** Hand-in hand with fairness is honesty and integrity. If you are a follower of Christ and the Holy Spirit is living in you, then honesty and integrity should form the basis for your character. I once heard someone define character as "who you are when no one is watching." Without honesty, we are lying both to ourselves as well as to those around us. Don't compromise your walk with Jesus for quick and dishonest gains. Don't trick someone in order to take advantage of them. Let's commit today to live the new year with honesty and integrity.
 - a. Deuteronomy 25:15 - "You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."
 - b. 1 Chronicles 29:17 - "I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you."
 - c. Proverbs 16:11 - "Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making."
 - d. Proverbs 16:13 - "Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth."
4. **Respect:** In today's world, we seem to be surrounded by those who can be described as "self-absorbed" people. These people are so caught up in their own small personal world that everyone and everything around them is beneath them. They are the ruler of their own little universe. Let's re-examine ourselves in the New Year, making sure that we are placing others above ourselves, and not below. Of all the things that Jesus teaches us, love for one another is the most important. If we place others below us, that love is missing. However, if we place others above us, it will allow the love of God to shine through, and He will be glorified in our lives.
 - a. Romans 12:3 - "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."
5. **Speech:** If ever there was a time when all manner of speech is evident in the world, now is it. Between the books we read, the media we watch, and the divisive country that we find ourselves living in, it is easy to compromise our walk by adopting the language and speech that creeps into our daily lives on so many levels. Nothing hurts our witness more than bad language, crude jokes, and off-color comments about others. Let's take a step back as we enter the new year and re-examine our speech. With the help of the admonitions found in James 1:19-20 (see No. 1 "Anger" above) and Ephesians 4:29 (below), we need to let our speech as well as our actions reflect the love of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives in this new year.
 - a. Ephesians 4:29 - "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

In Christ,

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