

NEW EVERY
morning

Tamyra Horst
EDITOR

A New Song for a New Year

He has put a new song in my mouth—

Praise to our God;

Many will see it and fear,

And will trust in the LORD.

—Psalm 40:3, NKJV

I opened my eyes and literally jumped out of bed! The first day of school had finally come, and I couldn't wait! I pulled the new, cute dress my grandma had made over my head, singing a happy little made-up song. A whole new world was before me, with a new teacher, new friends, and new adventures! Of course, I was in first grade.

I didn't have quite the same reaction in seventh grade. When the alarm went off, I definitely didn't jump out of bed with a song. Now I'd have several teachers, the friend dynamics of preteen girls were challenging, and I was not at all confident about the clothes I wore that first day of junior high.

New. Sometimes we love it; sometimes we don't. Sometimes new is exciting; other times, frightening. Today, I'm so glad God's Word gives us a way to make this year one filled with hope and promise in the "new." No matter what has come before this day or what will happen in the days ahead, He invites us to sing! Psalm 98:1 says, "Sing to the LORD a *new* song, for He has done marvelous things!" (NKJV, emphasis added) Other versions invite us to sing to the Lord because He has done wonderful, amazing, miraculous, awesome, mighty things! Throughout the Psalms, we're invited to "sing to the LORD!"

But what if I'm struggling to find that song, and what if I can't sing? His Word has the solution: He'll *give* me the song! Psalm 40:3 says, "*He has put* a new song in my mouth." And in Ezekiel 36:26, He says, "*I will give you* a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (NKJV). Whatever the landscape of the year ahead, He's already there, sis! And the beautiful thing about singing a new song of praise to our God? We're told our song will create a song in the hearts of others! The rest of Psalm 40:3 tells us, "Now many will hear of the glorious things he did for me, and stand in awe before the Lord, and put their trust in him" (TLB). So He *gives* me the new song and then causes my song to bring others to Him. *Wow!* Who will hear your song today?

DeeAnn Bragaw

January 2

One Simple Thing

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

—1 Thessalonians 5:24, NIV

How long is your list of changes you need in your life? Mine used to be pretty long.

Every New Year's Day, I knew that the list was long, yet I hoped to achieve all the necessary changes. As the years rolled on, I noticed that nothing changed. Even the resolve to try changing something became less and less strong. Why bother?

Then, one day, I decided I would not write a list. I would not have a list at all. Instead, I wrote a letter to God.

I told Him, "I am done trying to change, as I'm constantly failing. I give up."

I also gave Him permission to do whatever it took to change me into the person He wants me to be.

To show that I was really serious about that, I would change one small, simple thing in my life. I could do that. One small, simple thing. I could change that. The rest—the big list—God could deal with that.

My choice of one small, simple thing still required quite a bit of will and determination. It was going to be a lifelong change. I opted for something I had heard was very beneficial for a person's health. It boosts the work of white blood cells, invigorates, and helps you get out of the shower into a cold bathroom.

I was going to finish my warm showers with cold water.

I remember that first time. *Ooo! Ayyy! Brrr! Grrr!*

Well, nothing has changed since that first time. Cold water after my warm shower still doesn't feel nice. But I still do it—for almost thirty years now.

I cannot begin to tell you how many things in my life changed after that. I am amazed to see what God performed in my life. I opened the door and kept it open by continuing to do this one small, simple change in my life, and God did the rest.

I invite you to do the same. No, not the cold shower! But find one small, simple thing you can change in your life and continue doing it daily.

Let God do the rest!

Danijela Schubert

“What Would Jesus Do?”

*Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as God also forgave you in Christ.*
—Ephesians 4:32, CSB

My friends and I had gone out to dinner to celebrate the New Year. We were not having a good experience with the waitress, but we chose to stay anyway. It was already getting late, and not many restaurants were open; it would be hard to find a table anywhere else. Besides, we had made a reservation, and it was raining and cold.

Our waitress was very rude. She informed us that we needed to order our food because the restaurant would be closing at ten o'clock. It was already nine o'clock. We quickly placed our order and asked for hot tea.

She forgot to give us utensils when she brought the tea, so we asked for spoons. She seemed very annoyed with this request. Twenty minutes later, she returned with one spoon, placed it very hard on the table, and walked away. My friends and I couldn't understand why she was so rude. Finally, the floor manager changed our waitress. I explained that all we wanted was spoons for our tea.

When she reappeared at the end of our meal, the young lady seemed to have a different attitude. She gave us our check. Since I was paying for the meal, my guests wanted to leave a tip. I objected—she didn't deserve it after the way she treated us. “No way!” I exclaimed.

Moments later, I heard a small voice in my subconscious mind asking, “What would Jesus do?” The words seemed so foreign to me. My guests insisted that they pick up the tip, and I finally agreed to let them. But there was a problem. I was paying for the check with my credit card, and they would need to put the tip on theirs. As we were discussing this, the waitress reappeared. When we asked her how to handle this procedure since the tip would be coming from another credit card, she gave us a condemning look. I then agreed to add the tip to my credit card and not cause any extra work for her.

I am reminded of our Lord and Savior as we stand before Him. We don't deserve all that His mercy and grace give us, yet He died that we might live. May we forever be so reminded when dealing with others.

Avis Floyd Jackson

January 4

Loving God

*“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*

—Mark 12:30, NKJV

Jesus spoke the words recorded in Mark 12:30 to the scribe who had asked Him which was the first commandment. Jesus’ response is an expanded version of Moses’ words found in Deuteronomy 6:5. In expressing those words, Jesus gave a holistic approach to religion. To love God with the whole heart focuses on the emotional aspect of our lives. We feel more deeply with our hearts because our emotional expressions are rooted there. The soul addresses the spiritual dimension. While we emote through our hearts, we experience that spiritual transformation through our souls. The mind accommodates the intellectual facet of our lives. We may love with our hearts, but we need the involvement of the other parts of our lives to really love fully. Finally, strength is the physical aspect. It reminds us that we are God’s creation. When we love God as Jesus requests, with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength, we will be fully surrendered to Him. Fully surrendering our lives to God means that we love Him so much—emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically—that we are willing to give Him everything, our all. When we love Jesus with our whole being, He will teach us how to truly love, and we will love others as we love ourselves.

The first year that I did not make any New Year’s resolutions was 2021. It wasn’t because I had grown cynical or discouraged by my failure to follow through with past resolutions. It was simply because I did not need New Year’s resolutions to improve my life or my relationships. During my Bible study in 2020, I revisited those words of Jesus, and they made a very strong impression on me. I also realized that if I want a closer relationship with my Savior, I need to surrender all to Him, and what better way to do so than to love Him with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength?

I, therefore, resolved in the middle of 2020 that I would love God holistically. My daily prayer, as a result, is to love God with my whole heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength. It’s a work in progress, and as the Holy Spirit guides me, I realize that I not only love the Lord, my God, but I love my neighbor as well.

Valerie Knowles Combie

Heal the Wounds

*Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.*

*Let the one . . . ,
who has no light,
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on their God.
—Isaiah 50:7, 10, NIV*

Through the years, maybe, just maybe, you have come to be like me. A happy person—a person who loves God and who trusts in His providence, power, and provision. However, at the same time, you have become a person who has scars that linger in the background. Wounds from people in our lives or from situations. These wounds effectively remind us that there is still room for growth and pain that needs to be lifted from our hearts.

Some fears do not let you be completely free to trust God in a perfect way, fears that plant seeds of doubt. My verse for 2020 was Isaiah 61:1, 2, specifically where it says, “He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted” (NIV).

By March 2020, a lot had happened in my country. After a heated political atmosphere and regional elections, we were quarantined by COVID-19. But even in the middle of all of this and without knowing what would happen tomorrow or even in the rest of the year, I knew that no matter what, God is with us, and He will use every situation to heal our wounds and free us of fear and doubt—if we let Him work in us.

Our hearts need to be bandaged and cared for in a way that only God can work out. We each need personalized attention and care because each person has their own set of needs and each person feels pain differently. Our emotions and bodies need rest from the chaos of living and daily routine. Our families need time to slow down. As women, we need someone to take care of us because we are too busy taking care of everyone else.

Yes, my sisters, 2023 is also a year to let God heal us—be restored and complete in Him. God wants us to be happy, and only He can give us perfect happiness. Let us ask Him to heal our wounds today.

Yvita Antonette Villalona Bacchus

January 6

God Loves Me!

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.
God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*
—1 John 4:16, NIV

I sat at a kidney-shaped table with four third-grade girls, playing multiplication bingo. I would draw a card and call out the multiplication fact, and they would put a plastic marker on the answer on their cards, trying to get five in a row. One of the girls proclaimed exactly how she would win the game and which column contained the winning combination. I called a few more math facts, but things just weren't going as this young lady predicted. Another math fact, and the lower lip came out as she moaned, "God hates me!"

That announcement surprised me. I pondered how I might respond. I called out another math fact, and again this child repeated the mournful words, "God hates me!"

"I doubt that!" I said.

One of the other girls chimed in, "I don't really think that God hates anybody." I was encouraged that she perceived God as loving.

I continued calling math facts, and with the next one, my student placed her marker on a spot that made her happy. Now she called out, "No, He doesn't!" and raising her hand to heaven, she exclaimed, "Thank You, God!"

Even though this girl's fickle pronouncements amused me, I was also aware that I had seen a truth played out before my eyes. When life is difficult, how often are we tempted to blame God or fear He doesn't love us? And our circumstances must sometimes seem as trivial to God as this child's situation seemed to me.

Recently, I sat with a woman who had more grief than it seemed possible to bear. Her pain was real, but she laughed as I told her this story. I reminded her that it is easy to question God's love for us in times of extreme grief and pain. But in those times, it is necessary to immerse ourselves in reminders of His loving character: Scripture passages, prayer, time in nature, and being with supportive Christian friends.

Today, dear sister, take a few minutes to remind yourself how much God loves you. May you be constantly aware of that great love, and may it fill your heart.

Marsha Hammond-Brummel

Loving Forgiveness

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

—Hebrews 4:16, KJV

We were deep in conversation as Steve shined his motorcycle. Our granddaughter, Charlotte, and her mama came into the garage. This little one carries the energy of her four years. She chattered and literally ran circles around the motorcycle and the adults. Then she got thirsty. Knowing that her pop-pop keeps child-sized water bottles in his garage fridge for just such a need, she opened the door and helped herself. I helped her open the cap, and she drank deeply. Then she talked some more, cradling the bottle in the crook of her arm.

Suddenly, the water bottle slipped, landing on its side on the floor. She stared incredulously as the liquid darkened the concrete. I snatched it up and handed it back to her. Her eyes nervously searched our faces. “It’s OK,” I said, “no one is mad at you.” She relaxed. Her mother and I smiled.

Then she realized that Steve had not reacted to her mishap at all. “I have to tell Pop-pop,” she whispered. Walking to where he wiped his bike, she pointed to the puddle. “Look, Pop-pop, I did that.”

He smiled at her and said, “It will dry.”

“Yes,” she replied and smiled back.

How beautiful! What if when we make a mistake, we react like Charlotte? She knew that her mom and I were not upset, but she had to check with the one in charge of the garage. She pointed out her spill without fear or excuse. She could accept responsibility because of confidence in her pop-pop to love and forgive her anyway.

This is the confidence we have in our Savior. It’s inevitable; we mess up. We try to make things right with those around us, to seek forgiveness. Ultimately, we go to the One in charge, God Himself, and confess to what we have done: “I did that.”

Herein is the grace of the Lord. He is not waiting to scold and punish. He has forgiven us. He reassures us that all is well between us. We have not lost our place in His heart, not even for a moment. Confession simply gives us the peace of mind to stay near to Him.

Ann Trout

January 8

When I Remind Myself

But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ. All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, so that somehow I also may be raised to life.

—Philippians 3:7–11, CEV

I wish I could forgive the way that God forgives. Instead, I rehash my faults and flaws over and over again. It's sometimes easier for me to forgive others than to forgive myself. I get to a point when I just say, "Really? Are we here again?" I long to be more like Jesus. He chooses to let go . . . never look back. He makes the choice *not* to go there again (revisit the sin that I have repented for), and I trust that He is all He says that He is. Those sins that I have asked God forgiveness for have been cast into the deepest depths of the sea. Gone. Wiped clean.

We are told that Satan is the "accuser of the brethren," meaning that Satan will try to convince us that God could never love us. We need to recognize those thoughts as lies and instead believe what God says. What God says about us in His Word (the Bible) is truer than anything we could think or feel. Jesus said that those who build their lives on His Word are those whose lives stand strong and secure, able to weather anything in life (see Matthew 7:24–27).

One of my favorite stories is when Jesus is in the boat with the disciples while the storm is raging all around them. When I'm feeling doubt, that's the storm raging. Praise God that He *never* leaves my side. He is there when I doubt. He holds me even closer and desires to reveal Himself to me more and more.

If you've asked God to forgive you and to come into your life—you are forgiven! His Word says so. *He* says so. Thank Him for His forgiveness and begin to rejoice in your secure relationship with Him. He can change areas of your life that don't line up with His desire for you. First Corinthians 1:9 says, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (NASB).

Joey Norwood Tolbert