

ALL THINGS NEW

PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR

In light of the Advent of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and in hope for his second advent, we will spend the remaining days of December meditating on how he is making all things new. Specifically, we will use this as a time to think about how we can be made new.

This part of the devotional will lead you through passages on change, and also lead you through "The Common Rule Habit Planner," which is a resource for rethinking your ordinary habits and rhythms. This way, by New Year's Day, instead of having a few unattainable resolutions that you'll forget by January 5th, you'll have a renewed vision of who God is making you, and you'll also have some new habits and rhythms to put in place on January 1.

PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR | DECEMBER 26 - JANUARY 1

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Because he has come, everything can change.

THURSDAY | Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Jesus has come, and he will come again. In the meantime, he is working to make all things new. This means something incredible - change is possible. It is real. We often lead our lives in a cycle of vague inevitability, like things have to be the way they are. The advent of Jesus Christ the Son of God means that way of thinking is totally wrong. You are not alone, you are not stuck, and you can change. The last five days of this devotional will focus on renewal in order to help you get ready for the new year. The purpose is not to create a list of resolutions, the purpose is to see clearly that Jesus making all things new has implications for you in all areas of your life.

Begin this morning by (1) Reading the "Think Through Your Roles" section in the Habit Planner, and then (2) Listing five areas of your life that you want to see God work in. (For example, think of the roles that you play: parent, worker, spouse, son, friend, disciple, creator, guitarist, etc.) After you write them down, spend some time praying that God would bring newness to each place. Use this template to write them down.

FRIDAY | Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. (KJV)

Seeing a vision of newness is central to change. In part, this is why throughout this devotional we have continually looked at so many visions and prophecies of what the world to come will be like. In order to keep hope alive, we must have a vision of the possible future. Like this Proverb reminds us, some part of us dies when we can not envision a beautiful future. This is why any good leader will motivate people by reminding them (sometimes ad nauseam) of the vision behind what they are doing.

We need this in our personal life as well. We need a clear and compelling vision of what we can become.

Yesterday, you wrote down five roles you have in your life. This morning, read the "Set a Vision" section in the Habit Planner, and then write a vision for two or three of those roles. This vision should be one sentence, and should be an aspirational image of who you want to be in that role. For example, if the role you picked was disciple, you might write: "Become the kind of person who walks faithfully with God every day." Or if your role was husband, you might write: "Fall more in love with my wife each day, and serve her accordingly." If your role was accountant, perhaps you would write: "Bring order and excellence to every project I am given." You get the idea. You will have time tomorrow to finish writing the visions, so do two to three now, and pray over each vision.

SATURDAY | All Things New

Come, Lord, and tarry not; Bring the long looked for day;
O why these years of waiting here, These ages of decay?
Come, for Thy saints still wait; Daily ascends their sigh;
The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come"; Does Thou not hear the cry?

**O come and make all things new! Come and make all things new!
Build up this ruined earth. Come and make all things new**

Come, for creation groans, impatient of Thy stay,
Worn out with these long years of ill, these ages of delay.
Come, for love waxes cold, Its steps are faint and slow;
Faith now is lost in unbelief, Hope's lamp burns dim and low.

**Come and make all things new; Build up this ruined earth;
Restore our faded Paradise, Creation's second birth.**

Come, and begin Thy reign of everlasting peace;
Come, take the kingdom to Thyself, Great King of Righteousness.
Come, for love waxes cold, its steps are faint and slow;
Faith now is lost in unbelief, hope's lamp burns dim and low.

**Come and make all things new; Build up this ruined earth;
Restore our faded Paradise, creation's second birth.**

Come, and begin Thy reign of everlasting peace;
Come, take the kingdom to Thyself, Great King of Righteousness.

These words were written by Horatius Bonar and adapted recently to song by Red Mountain Music - they are worth a read and a listen. There is a deep longing, even an impatience, that the Lord would come in his second advent and make all things new. Read through (or listen online) to this song once or twice, and mediate and pray on one or two of the lines that move you. Now, continuing from yesterday, think about being made new in the roles you listed, and continue to write a vision for the remaining roles. Consider reviewing and revising the visions you wrote yesterday. Your goal is to - like this song - articulate a yearning for how you want to be made new in that role of your life. Tomorrow, we will begin to ask more practically what would need to happen to make this vision a reality. But for this morning, keep dreaming, and write it down.

SUNDAY | Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

This is a beautiful and stunning passage on change. First, because it anchors change in the motive of the gospel. We are not working towards newness so that we can prove something. That would be about us. We are working towards newness because of what God has done. In light of his mercies, in light of his love, in light of what he did for us - so we now go and do. Second, this passage highlights one of the most important realities of formation - conforming to patterns. This is the image of being made in the mold of something. Imagine a cookie cutter. This is important, because much of our life unfolds in habits, patterns, and molds of acting.

We usually have very little idea of how much of our life is one big way of conforming to patterns. For example, we may say, "I want to lose 10 pounds." And we may be very motivated by this goal to exercise. But if we fail to understand that what is really going on is we are in a (potentially unconscious) pattern of unhealthy eating, we'll fail to see that it is the concrete patterns of our diet, not our aspirational hopes of exercise that actually form our body. Our spiritual lives are not so different. We may say in our vision, "I want to be a better husband who serves

my wife," but if we do not see that our small patterns (of not coming home on time, of leaving small chores undone) are the real ways we fail to serve our wife, then we miss the real formation that is happening.

In light of this idea of patterns of formation, read the "List Habits for Each Role" section of the Habit Planner and begin to think about what habits and rhythms you need in your life to move you towards the vision you articulated. On the chart you will use, these might be daily or weekly rhythms, or they might be annual traditions. Do not feel the need to fill up every box, just write a few key habits or patterns for each role. You do not need to finish them all, we will continue and finish this process tomorrow.

MONDAY | Psalm 15:2-8 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

This Psalm is a boast in the power of the living God, however, it also contains a warning to worshippers of false gods - those who worship them become like them. All of life is worship. Even in our small places in life, we are always worshiping something. So when we think about who we are becoming and how we want to change, we must not just consider the big moments, but the ordinary patterns and rituals of our lives - for these are also places of worship.

Often, unfortunately, they are places of false worship. Perhaps you engage in a small pattern of jealousy each morning when, for example, you wake and mindlessly scroll images of other peoples' lives on social media. You would never say it out loud, but in your heart, you are comparing. This is a small ritual of worship, and it is forming you. This morning, think about small patterns like this in your day and ask yourself: If I want to become the kind of person I expressed in my vision, what kinds of small daily and weekly actions need to be happening? Keep in mind what you might have to stop doing in order to make room for what you want to start doing. Finish your chart by writing these daily and weekly patterns down.

TUESDAY | 1 Samuel 7:12 / "Come Thou Fount" Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer for he said, "Till now the LORD has helped us." / "Here I raise my Ebenezer, here by Thy great help I've come."

You may have probably heard the song "Come Thou Fount" before, but you may have never thought about what this line means. The Ebenezer means "stone of help," and it comes from the story where Samuel leaves a stone marker, or a milestone, to remember what the Lord has done. There is a goodness in marking time and creating milestones that remind us that the Lord's grace has been with us all along. This morning, in order to finish your chart, write down a few milestones you hope to hit as you live out these new habits and rhythms in light of your vision. This can be akin to a New Year's Resolution - but think of it as a milestone that these habits should eventually lead you to. Instead of goals that you will simply check off, these are hopeful Ebenezers, things you will eventually name as markers to the Lord's faithfulness.

WEDNESDAY | Revelation 22:20 "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Congratulations! You now have something much better than a few New Year's resolutions - you have a vision for a renewed life and some habits and rhythms that will form you in that newness. First, spend some time praying this morning that God would bless your efforts. Second, make sure you share this chart you've filled out with someone. Ask them to check in with you and ask you how it is going. Maybe even ask them to follow along with you. And remember, the Lord has come, and he is coming again. So may you live this year in light of his coming, and all the newness that will bring. Maranatha!