

Living For A New Day

People love stuff that's new. Have you ever noticed how many times you've gone into the grocery store and you have to look all over for your favorite product. Actually, the product is there they just changed the package and made it "New and Improved." You have no idea what makes it new but we're so enamored with the "New and Improved" label that we buy it anyway.

We like new stuff. Advertisers know this and that's why there's this deluge of new products being introduced all the time.

But an interesting phenomenon takes place every December and early January on TV and in the magazines. All of a sudden we go back to the highlights of the past year.

New and improved isn't the buzzword any more. Now it's the most memorable events of the past that take center stage.

Actually that's my least favorite time on TV. I've already seen those pictures and videos a thousand times. After all, this is the information age! They show them over and over again on our 24hour news channels and then they revive them at the end of the year for filler.

Personally, I'd like to know what's going on now and how it might affect my future.

I want to understand the past because it kind of influences my view of the future. But here's the exciting thing. It doesn't have to determine my future.

The Bible actually gives us some great principles for facing the New Year in light of the past.

Maybe your past has been great. Everything seemed to fall into place for you. You have no complaints.

Let me say "You're in the slim minority." Consider yourself fortunate because most people would say just the opposite.

In can recall years ago, when Jim Johnson and I went to a conference put on by a seminary up in Philadelphia at a historic church called "The Blue Church." This had

to be over 20 years ago, and at the conference the speaker said, “We’re only beginning to see the confusion that’s coming into our families as things become more disruptive in our society.”

“The can of worms is multiplying. As each generation has a little bit less to count on in the family, the uncertainty is only going to multiply.”

Unfortunately his words were accurately prophetic. Here’s the question I have, “Is there hope?

Can the trend be reversed? Is there a way to make a seismic shift in our culture and our families?”

Well I believe there is. I believe there’s a way to reverse the trend. And it doesn’t take something new and on the cutting edge to make it happen. That may be great for technology, but it doesn’t work that way for human nature.

The place we go to figure out human nature is the Bible. The Bible is inspired by God so it has timeless direction for our lives. So here we are beginning a new year. This is day 1 of 2012. But the answers to life aren’t the New and improved versions of the past. They’re actually rooted in the past.

As we’ve often pointed out from this platform, technology changes but human nature stays the same. We can find the direction for life in the eternal Word of God.

So what is it that’s going to make it possible for us to live happy, productive lives in 2012?

Let me suggest 3 things.

I. Realize That As Hard As It Is For Us To Believe, We’re Not Going to Live Forever On The Planet

If you go online to deathclock.com you can determine that date of your own death. Maybe you’re not into morbid stuff like that but I thought it was fascinating.

According to the death clock I’m going to die May 28, 2022. The good news is I have 10 more years to live. The bad news is I have only 10 more years to live.

Here’s the real question; whether I live 10 more years or not, are those 10 more years going to count for anything?

Open you Bibles to Ephesians 5 page 1149

While you're turning there let me give you a powerful prayer from the Psalms. This should be one of those "daily reminder" prayers.

(Psalm 39:4) LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.

Or how about Psalm 90:10, The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Now at his point you may be thinking, "Why did I come to church this morning? There's enough bad news in the world today. Even the Mayan calendar stops this year. I came to church to be motivated and revitalized not discouraged. I don't want to walk out feeling worse than I did when I got here!"

Well hang on to this for a minute. Let this one sink in a bit.

I believe that when we have a clear understanding of why we're here and how we fit in the big picture of life that it gives us a meaning, purpose and direction that we wouldn't have any other way.

If you really think you have all the time in the world and what you do doesn't really matter that much anyway, life can be pretty empty.

It's funny how our view of time changes as we get older.

When you're young and you read a verse about being 70 or 80 years old, that sounds like a long time. When I was a little kid I thought anyone with hair on their legs was ancient. Obviously I still don't think that way. (Unless it's a woman!) It is all relative, isn't it?

Pastor Melvin Newland wrote this: "For 2 teenagers in love talking together in the car, an hour or two seems like a blink of an eye. But for mom & dad worrying about what's going on out in the car, an hour or two seems like an eternity."

Read Ephesians 5:15

All the way back in Ephesians chapter 2 we were told about the amazing regeneration that takes place when we put our faith in Christ as savior. We're lost. We're separated

from God and God does what we could never do. He reaches down to us and gives us His life.

Listen to this. This is so powerful and it's so opposite of our mindset that we can work our way to God.

Even when we were dead in trespasses, (He) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

We're talking about time this morning but in God's economy time isn't even a factor. God just created time so that we could function. In eternity time will be no more. It'll be totally irrelevant. So in God's sight believers in Jesus are seated in heaven already. Talk about eternal security! We're already there.

But now here's why God has come in Jesus Christ and paid for our sins on the cross... *that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

For all eternity God gets the praise and worship He deserves. Here's why...

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:5-10)

So God has done the saving work. Now He calls us to live according to the new divine life He's given us.

The context of verses 15-17 is that they follow on the heels of a challenge for Christians to live as children of light.

Actually the preceding verses were more a challenge to stop living as if we were in darkness. Verse 14 said "Wake up sleepers! Don't participate in the darkness of the world system in which you live. Let the light of Jesus Christ shine through your life so that the darkness of this world will be illuminated and others can see the truth."

Now verse 15 builds upon that concept, to say “see then” or “see to it then, that you walk circumspectly.” The word “walk” is a Hebrew-type idea of moving through life. And so the command is to live circumspectly.

The term that Paul used for his Greek readers, that’s translated as “circumspectly” is the Greek word *akribos*. That’s obviously the basis for our English word “acrobat” and it means “carefully” or “deliberately.”

Picture an acrobat on the high wire, or performing some dangerous feat. You know they got all the people with the poles and the chairs and some really strong guy is carrying them across the high wire. They are not going to just jump up there and say “Hey guys, lets just bounce on down this wire that’s strung 30 feet above the circus ring.”

Every step, every move, is planned and thought out and rehearsed over and over. They know how crucial every move is. And now God’s challenge to us as we head into a new year and a time of new beginnings is going to be “think and plan” out your life.

Take every step of your life as if you had three people upon your shoulders and your walking across a high wire.

A person who knows what’s at stake. A person who knows that life may end at any moment lives with God’s wisdom as his or her guiding principle.

We finally were able to replace our Dodge Caravan that was totaled several months ago. My wife who is unbelievably wise with money searched on line until she finally found a great deal. It was a Craig’s List purchase so naturally we got a chance to find out a little something about the owner.

The man was retired so he was selling the car for his sister. A few months ago her husband went for minor surgery, came home the same day, seemed to be recovering, and died in his sleep.

I. Realize That As Hard As It Is For Us To Believe, We’re Not Going to Live Forever On The Planet

II. Since We Never Have Any Guarantees Of Tomorrow, Make The Most Of Every Opportunity

Read Ephesians 5:16

There are 3 nouns that the author of this letter, Paul, had to choose from in Koine greek to describe the concept of time.

Kronos means a succession of moments one after another.

Hora means a time or period fixed by nature. (a season)

But these, don't convey God's thought. So instead he used the word *kaipos* which means "a moment of time." A single moment of time.

If the Mayans are wrong and we live past December 21, 2012 (Sidenote: The Mayan calendar has nothing to do with the end of the world. They just ran out of ink or something. Biblical prophecy is a specific determiner of events that's been shown to be accurate over and over again. Just keep your eyes on the Middle East and especially Babylon and Persia. We know them today as Iraq and Iran.

As long as we live, we want to invest those moments of time.

Imagine that you had a bank that credited your account with \$1440.00 a day. The thing is, you couldn't carry over a balance. You couldn't keep cash in your account, and finally every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during that day.

What would you do if you had a situation like that? You'd draw out every cent wouldn't you? I'd keep expanding my missions giving, but I'd also save up for that Koenigsegg Agera R which is a Swedish sports car that goes from 0 to 200 miles and hour and back to a complete stop in 25 seconds. Sorry EdO but when I saw that I had to give up on the Viper!

Well, we all have that bank. And what's in that bank is worth a hundred sports cars. You can buy a car but you can't buy what's in this bank. It's time. We don't get \$1440.00 a day but we do get 1440 minutes. 1440 *kaipos* - moments of time.

Every night whatever we've failed to invest for a good purpose is gone. There's no balance. There's no overdrafts. Each day the bank opens a new account with you and each night it burns the records of the day.

A wise person redeems those moments of time. Yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have. Redeem it wisely.

Now how do you redeem time? What does it mean to redeem time? It obviously has to do with a wise use of time but why the word "redeem"?

The Bible has as its foundational truth the great doctrine of redemption. Jesus Christ, through his death, redeemed us from the penalty of sin. And the word translated “redemption,” or “to redeem,” meant to purchase in the slave market.

We were all sold under sin but Jesus Christ entered into the world, into the very slave market of sin itself and paid the price to set us free.

To redeem means to buy back. To take something back from someone else by paying a price.

Now, if we’re to redeem the time, what we are to do is to take the time out of the hands of another and use it for ourselves.

Actually, the word carries the connotation of “buying up completely.” Purchase all that it offers. Pay the necessary price in effort and exertion to make the most of your every moment.

In Galatians chapter 6, this word for “time” is translated “opportunity.”

Paul says, “buy out the time” we would say “use every opportunity to its fullest.” Don’t let your life go to waste.

And the opportunities that the Bible is speaking of here are opportunities to honor God with our life. It’s the opportunities we have to walk worthy of the calling where with we are called. To put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. To walk in love, and to walk as children of light.

Now, just let me say this; The one thing we want to watch out for is an imbalance which leads to false guilt. We could go through life thinking if we’re not busy actively doing something for God or others we’ve squandered our time.

Remember how many times Jesus got away from the crowds just to spend time with His Heavenly Father. Worship is part of redeeming the time. In fact worship prepares and equips us to be better servants of God and others.

So we redeem the time, but we don’t do it in such a way that we miss that personal walk with God. If your task oriented like me, that’s always a challenge.

I. Realize That As Hard As It Is For Us To Believe, We’re Not Going to Live Forever On The Planet

II. Since We Never Have Any Guarantees Of Tomorrow, Make The Most Of Every Opportunity

III. God's Will Isn't Hidden So Make Sure You Know What It Is

It seems like a lot of Christians have the idea that God's will for our lives is some mysterious secret that God dangles in front of our faces but seems to always keep just out of our grasp.

Think about this. According to this verse if you don't understand God's will you're foolish. Of course God expects us to understand His will.

It seems that the common view of God's will is that God has every step of our life planned out and if we get out of step with God's plan we're doomed to failure. The catch is no one seems to agree on how we'd know God's will.

Here's what God is saying "The days are evil We face daily temptation. Therefore we need to understand God's will."

If we don't understand God's will, we won't redeem the time. If we don't understand God's will, we will act like fools. If we don't have that correct understanding.

But what is God's will?

It's interesting but God never promises to reveal every little detail of our lives to us. Some people wouldn't make a move without praying, examining their feelings, checking out circumstances and looking for some immediate guidance.

The Bible doesn't tell us to do all that. It doesn't contain any formulas for finding out God's will on every one of life's decisions. Instead God's will is found on the pages of the Bible.

Now occasionally there are some very exceptional circumstances in which we need specific direction from God, but those are few and far between. Understanding what the will of the Lord is doesn't mean that. I believe what the Bible is talking about here is God's wisdom for the daily stuff of life.

There are 5 things that are specifically said to be God's will for us. God's will is that we be:

1. Saved II Peter 3:9
2. Spirit-filled Eph. 5:18
3. Sanctified I Thessalonians 4:3

4. Submissive I Peter 2:13 To government, home, church - authority
5. Thankful - I Thessalonians 5:18

If we are a believer in Jesus, living a Holy Spirit controlled life in holiness and submission, being thankful to God in everything we'll be in God's will.

And when it comes to every day decisions we have the liberty to make the decisions that are in line with Scripture.

Psalm 37:4 says *Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

Some people think that means that if you delight yourself in the Lord He will give you whatever you want. Others interpret it to mean that God will put the desires within you. Actually when you come down to it, both are correct.

If your a believer in Christ, Holy Spirit controlled, have a commitment to holiness, submissive and thankful you are delighting yourself in the Lord.

And that means that you will only want for your life what God wants. God will give you the right desires and then by his grace fulfill the desires in your life.

A wise believer understands the will of the Lord because he understands the word of God and puts it into practice.

One of our biggest challenges is to learn how to live today. The two greatest enemies of time are regrets for things we did in the past, & anxiousness about what's going to happen to us in the future. Many of us are living either in the past or in the future.

In fact, many of us are engaged in the game of, "I wish it were." "I wish it were next week," or "I wish it were next month." Kids go to school & say, "Boy, I wish this day were over."

Gary Freeman tells about a girl who went to college & just hated it. But she told herself, "If I can ever get out of college & get married & have children, I know I'll finally be able to enjoy life."

So she stuck with it. She went to classes every day & finally graduated from college. Then she got married & had children, & discovered that children are a lot of work. So

she told herself, "If I can just get these kids raised, then I'll be able to relax & really enjoy life."

But about the time the kids were entering high school her husband said, "Guess what? We don't have enough money to send our kids to college. I guess you'll have to get a job."

Well, she didn't want to, but she knew he was right & they needed the money, so she went to work. And she hated it. But she told herself, "If I can just get these kids out of college, & get all of the bills paid, then I can quit work & really enjoy life."

Finally, the last child graduated from college, & all the bills were paid. So she walked into her employer's office & said, "I quit." He said, "Oh, you don't want to quit now. If you stay with us just another 8 years you'll have a pension for the rest of your life."

She thought, "Well, I don't want to work another 8 years, but there's all that money there, & I really can't turn down the opportunity." So she worked for another 8 years. Finally, she & her husband retired at the same time. They sold their home & bought a little retirement cottage.

Then they sat down on the swing on their front porch & looked at the family picture album & dreamed about the good old days.

Someone said, "Life is what happens to you while you're making plans to do something else."

That's true, isn't it? Another year has come & gone.
A new year stretches before us. We're already a little over 11 hours into that year.

The Bible says, You know what sort of times we live in, and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear. Then you won't try to satisfy your selfish desires. (Romans 13:11-14 CEV)