



December 2020

December Memory Verse

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past;
See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not
perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams
in the wasteland.*

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)

December - Finding God in New Beginnings

What does the Bible say about new beginnings? New beginnings can range from a variety of contexts; starting with what the authors of the books of the Bible have written about all facets of supernatural and earthly life. The Bible contains the specific guidelines for entering a new phase of life with an updated outlook or belief, like becoming a Christian. The Bible offers specific advice and encouragement for beginning a new chapter by providing strength and support in the Word of God. Equally important, the Bible provides the requirements for enriching our physical and spiritual lives!

We trust that you will experience the joy expressed in this New Beginnings Month.

Day 1

John 1:1-2 (NIV)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

As we have learned "Word" refers to Jesus. Being the Son of God, sent to reveal God's mind of the world is proof that Jesus is God; that Jesus has the same essence of God and existed with God the Father from the very Beginning.

How do we respond to this divine revelation?

What makes this so unique to Christianity?

Day 2

Hebrews 10:16-18 (NIV)

"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' Then he adds: 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."

This new covenant was fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection. It promises that we can know God through Christ if we trust in his sacrifice as payment for our sins. Further, it provides the means for us to be God's people. Surely, a New Beginning!

Do you accept Jesus as your "New Beginning"?

What else does this mean to you?

Day 3

1 John 4:17-18 (NIV)

"This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

What kind of love is this? What kind of fear is this? How does love cast out fear? This is love that exists in the life of a person of God, who is a recipient of God's love, that produces obedience to Him and a love toward others. Love does not cause us to disregard or abandon Godly fear. But the love we have as persons of God excludes or rules out painful terror of anticipated punishment; fear of expected torment cannot co-exist where there is perfected love. That love fulfills our heart and life and eliminates any fear that we may have.

What kind of love is this?

What kind of fear is this?

Day 4

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

From these verses we are "taught" that changes in our lives must be intentional steps that we must take to get on with God's work. We certainly aren't being told to sit back and let God do the work while we do something else. We should identify areas in our lives that need to change so that we may start a new beginning in our relationship with God.

Have you put off your old ways?

Are you your new self?

Day 5

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (NIV)

"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God."

We are given a new spirit as children of God. He turns our hearts from stone to flesh. A new beginning for those who believe.

What condition (spiritually) is your heart?

Does it give access to a new beginning?

Day 6

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

We have some awareness of something beyond us; something bigger than we are but most of the time we cannot comprehend the "beginning to end." Not fully understanding this can lead to dissatisfaction with life. We, therefore, must look at a new beginning by turning to Christ.

Do you have trouble seeing the "beginning to end?"

What can you do to see more clearly?

Day 7

Romans 6:4 (NIV)

"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."

When Christ was crucified, He took us with Him into death. By His resurrection He raised us to a new beginning. Baptism symbolizes this dying of the old self and reminds us that we are made new in Christ.

Do you really realize the significance of Baptism?

Since we are normally baptized as an infant, how do we get to know what it entails?

Day 8

Colossians 3:9-10 (NIV)

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

Colossians encourages Christians to focus their attention on Godly, spiritual things. Those who are spiritually free, thanks to their faith in Christ, should not live in the sins which used to be their habit. Lying, among a host of other sins, should be avoided. Paul tells believers to "put to death" such behaviors.

Have you been able to put your sins to death?

What are some of your new practices?

Day 9

Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Life in Christ involves a tension between two equal but contrasting truths. By faith we have already attained God's full acceptance. But in this life, no one yet lives out the full measure of Christ's goodness and love. So, we must live up to what we have attained in this life and press on to what we are called to do.

What keeps you from doing so?

Have you taken hold of it?

Day 10

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (NIV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:"

What is new when we are reconciled to Christ? Everything! A sinner is changed radically; changed inside out and upside down. Life takes a whole new direction and purpose. The believer no longer focuses on himself, but focuses instead on Jesus Christ.

How can you be like Christ?

Would this be a new beginning for you?

Day 11

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

While this passage is referring to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, Jeremiah tells them that God has not forsaken them and He restores them and makes them prosperous. For us, this applies only to believers of Christ Jesus and we can be confident that all things work together for our good if we come to Him.

What must be done to realize these plans?
Could this be considered a part in a new beginning?

Day 12

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

The word hope implies both trust and patience; involves confidence in God's power and that we cannot lose heart. By trusting in God's sovereignty and waiting faithfully for Him.

Do we lose hope to easily?
How difficult is it to wait patiently?

Day 13

1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,"

Peter states that it is the "new birth" that provides our living hope, affirming that salvation is a gift from God. This "new birth" serves as a reason for hope and that our inheritance can never be taken from us.

What does this "new birth" mean to you?
How can we know of this "living hope"?

Day 14

Ezekiel 18:30-32 (NIV)

"Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"

A new heart and a new spirit means a new beginning for those who believe in Christ Jesus. All we have to do is turn toward Christ and let Him make us into a new creation; that newness brings life!

Does Ezekiel make it pretty clear to you as to what you need to do to experience a new beginning?

Where are you in achieving your new beginning?

Day 15

2 Peter 3:11-13 (NIV)

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."

We are not given enough information to know for sure how we can speed the Lord's return. Perhaps this relates to a better job of evangelizing the Gospel to the world. Certainly, as Christians in the 21st Century, we are nearer to our Lord's return than the first Century Christians were; however, our focus is not always where it should be as in looking forward to a new beginning.

Are you the type of person that Peter is writing about?
What must you do to experience this new heaven and earth?

Day 16

Job 8:6-7 (NIV)

"If you are pure and upright, even now He will rouse Himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state. Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be."

The Book of Job reminds us that there are "things" around us that we usually know nothing about. We often ask why God allows something bad to happen; and we sometimes question or doubt God's goodness without "seeing" the big picture. Job teaches us to trust God under all circumstances; and when we do, we will be restored to a new level that we thought not possible.

What recent events might you question God about?
How can you be assured that you are trusting God?

Day 17

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

"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."

How can we know God's will? By honoring and obeying Him, and by refusing to be influenced by societal pressures. As we replace our old way of thinking and adopt God's point of view, we will begin to recognize God's will more and more.

Are you ready to conform to God's ways?

What will it take for you to change?

Day 18

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Using the analogy of a race, Paul describes earlier heroes (converted Jews) of the faith seated in the stadium, as it were, cheering us on to the finish line. The record they (cloud of witnesses) left behind can encourage us to persevere in our faith.

Are you in the race?

Is your faith holding up?

Day 19

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

Ezekiel tells us that God not only promised to bring the people (Israel) back, He promised to completely change her hearts; hearts that were spiritually alive and open to Him.

Are you ready for a change in heart?
Are you ready to be open to God?

Day 20

Lamentations 3:22-24 (NIV)

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'"

One wonders how Jeremiah could retain his faith and trust in God with all the terrible things that were happening. His underlying faith, which, despite his desperation, was rooted in God's unchanging character. This is something that is available for us to follow God to the degree that Jeremiah did.

Do you acknowledge God's unchanging character?
What examples can you provide?

Day 21

Isaiah 65:17 (NIV)

"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

Isaiah was possibly thinking of the end of the present heaven and earth, with God beginning all over again. More than likely, he was using the word "create" to mean "transform". So, when God brings salvation to His people, everything will be transformed. A new beginning.

What does "transformed" mean to a society as a whole?

What does "transformed" mean to you?

Day 22

Isaiah 58:12 (NIV)

"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."

While this verse is describing the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the rebuilding would be done by the returning Israelites. It was a sure sign that God would be with them once more. The rebuilding of Jerusalem would be evidence that God had restored the people of Israel. While we may not be a "structure", the verse does have some meaning when it comes to rebuilding or renewing our lives to live up to God's commandments.

What "rebuilding" do you see that is necessary in your life?

Do you believe it would bring you closer to God?

Day 23

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

We have to accept the fact that we will go through difficult times that we will consider fearful. As we do, we need to remember that God has promised He will never leave us; He is never surprised by our circumstances; and God is bigger than whatever you fear.

What is the difference between faith and fear?

Is it possible to have faith in God and still be fearful?

Day 24

John 3:3 (NIV)

"Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'"

Nicodemus was extremely perplexed by what Jesus had said about gaining access to the Kingdom of Heaven by having to be "born again". This was something that was almost impossible to comprehend by human standards; to be reborn. By this, Jesus was referring to the work of the Holy Spirit breathing life into our sinful and spiritually dead nature. When we are "born again," we become a new person, forgiven of our sins and granted an intimate friendship with God.

What does "born again" mean to you?

Does this verse have any bearing on your spiritual life?

Day 25

Acts 3:19 (NIV)

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

Whether we are repenting for the first time or repenting again, it is refreshing and gives us a sort of "renewed" feeling. But that's not a reason we should be "satisfied" or "feel good". For we are obligated by being a Christian to be free of our sins.

Does "repenting" of your sins offer to you any freedom of guilt?
What is refreshing about it?

Day 26

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus gives His disciples a new commandment, to love one another as He loved them. But this commandment differs from the command to love one's neighbor as oneself. The new commandment's focus is on the love they receive from Christ; the love Jesus gives becomes the source and standard for Christian love; emphasizing the mutual quality of love. The new commandment is a community building commandment. God measured love by obedience.

Have you accepted Christ's love?
How do show your love of Christ?

Day 27

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

The key to this verse is "set eternity in the human heart." There is an awareness that there is "something more" than this transient world; and with that awareness of eternity come a hope that we will someday find a fulfillment not of this world. We have a sense of eternity but as the verse denotes, we don't have an understanding of what God has done for us; from beginning to end.

How do you relate to this concept of eternity?

What is it that you may think we do not fathom about what God has done for us?

Day 28

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

God will finally complete the work of saving us. If we trust in Christ, we are already saved but God's work in our lives continues in us until the day of Christ. Only then shall we be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

How great is your trust in Christ?

How confident are you that this "good work" will be completed in you?

Day 29

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Paul wrote this letter to the Christian community he established in Macedonia to exhort them to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel and to imitate the humility of Jesus in everything they did. This effort to do so was not an easy task. Thoughts of temptation or discouragement can come unannounced; but by disciplining ourselves and making conscious choices to contemplate good things is the right course of action.

Has temptation or discouragement been an issue for you to contemplate "good things"?
What can you do to avoid this?

Day 30

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

What Jesus promises us here is insight and direction through the work of the Holy Spirit within us through prayer. He does not promise that we will receive whatever we ask for or whatever we think we need. There is some "basics" that must be met; namely, no iniquity in a heart and no selfish motivation. As the Holy Spirit directs our heart, we will desire those things that will benefit us spiritually.

What is important to you about these verses?
Do you seek what God has to offer?

Day 31

Matthew 6:25 (NIV)

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"

Jesus does not give a command so much as an invitation to focus on God. As humans, we will cross the line and worry when we should trust God. When we allow ourselves to focus on ourselves instead of God, we violate Jesus' principle. He gave us a liberating principle, not another law to worry about.

Do you fit into this self-focus position?

What you do to be less worrisome?
