

Being Present in the New Year

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A new year is a little bit like welcoming guests to our homes. We can choose to embrace 2022 with anticipation or live in persistent stress. Three times, Psalm 37 repeats God's pattern for stress reduction: *do not fret*. "Fret" in the Old English means "to devour like an animal." Dr. Richard E. Ecker said stress "is not a force in the external world; it is a response in the body." With our minds and bodies, then, we can choose not to worry, accepting God's rich provision for coping with life's problems. Jesus said, *...everything I've taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!* (John 16:33, TPT).

Dr. Carl Jung described the opposite of God's peace: "It is not famine, not earthquakes, not microbes, not cancer, but man himself who is man's greatest danger to man, for the simple reason that there is no adequate protection against psychic epidemics, which are infinitely more devastating than the worst of natural catastrophes." Today, numerous mental health professionals are describing the constant focus on Covid-19 as creating "mass psychosis." When people have a psychotic break, they lose touch with reality. In contrast, God's Word says, ***God will never give you the spirit of fear, but the Holy Spirit who gives you mighty power, love, and self-control*** (2 Timothy 1:7, TPT). We can face reality with hope, sustained by God, choosing not to allow fear to govern our minds or moods.

God not only delivers us from fear but strengthens us to **live!** Jesus said, *you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing* (John 15:3-5, NKJV). As we daily allow God to transform us, His work in our lives is fantastic, fulfilling, and continuous!

Applying John 15 enables us to notice the presence of our wonderful Lord and to be present with the people He brings into our lives. We can face challenges by learning to fully rely on Him. *God, all at once you turned on a floodlight for me! You are the revelation-light in my darkness, and in your brightness I can see the path ahead. With you as my strength I can crush an enemy horde, advancing through every stronghold that stands in front of me. Yahweh, what a perfect God you are! All Yahweh's promises have proven true. What a secure shelter for all those who turn to hide themselves in you, the wraparound God* (Psalm 18:28-30, TPT).

To help us **be present** we can: 1. **Wisely choose what we think, meditating on God's Word.** 2. **Listen to uplifting music** (such as "Be Thou My Vision," <https://cutt.ly/VUCzjnv> from the Getty's new album, *Confessio*). 3. Spend time with **friends** (perhaps even **exercise** together). 4. **Read good books** to learn how to make a difference in the world. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian World* says, "we live in a culture, one in which our beliefs make increasingly little sense...we should...work on building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance that can outwit, outlast and eventually overcome the occupation [building] an ark in which to shelter until the water recedes and we can put our feet on dry land again." 5. Instead of allowing ourselves to drown in the culture's despair, we can believe in, apply, and **share God's limitless hope!**

If you're experiencing unmanageable anxiety, fear, or depression, you could find a counselor at the South Florida Association of Christian Counselors, <https://sfacc.net/>.

For practical ways to manage fear, anxiety, trauma, or depression, you can work through *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdejH>), and now available as an audiobook on audible. You can subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.