



A Walk Into The New Year

by Sarah L. Phillips

I attacked the house with a vengeance! The vacuum sucked up the last of the pine needles, and my husband marched the boxes of holiday decorations up to the attic to hibernate for the next eleven months. The calendar said December 31, and I felt driven to begin the new year clean, organized, and de-cluttered – well, as much as possible with an imaginative little girl in the house!

The mild air and evasive snow made it seem more like November. “Let’s go for a walk at South Abington Park!” Our outdoor-lover’s spontaneity and enthusiasm caught, and in fifteen minutes the four of us headed out the door.

Dusk began to settle. We walked along the wooded path, and the nearby stream whispered softly to itself. The two sisters ran ahead. The twelve years between them

didn’t matter as they romped and skipping with abandon. Such joy in the simple things... My thoughts rambled as we meandered behind them. A new year and a new beginning...but I was still the same old person. What difference did a clean slate make when my own humanness repeatedly blotted the page?

In between bits of conversation with my husband and chasing after the girls, it dawned on me: God is the same too – but in a different way! He is the same loving, forgiving, gracious God. He covers my sin with His blood and sees me through Christ’s righteousness. “...His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23). He is all powerful, all knowing, and with me every minute. I don’t

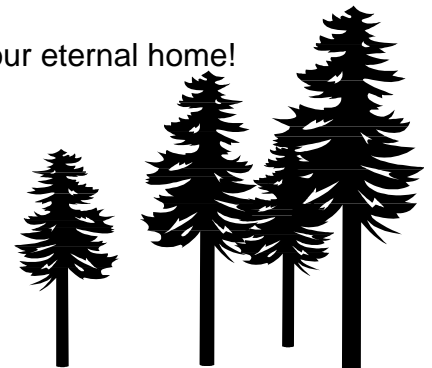
have to enter the untold secrets of the new year alone or with fear in my heart. He is the same and always will be!

Breathless, with muddy sneakers and rosy cheeks, we came home to a cozy supper by the fireplace. The leaping flames chased the chill from our hands and feet. But my heart felt warmed and secure as we sang together:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And

Isaac Watts

our eternal home!



Are you a Serial Resolver?

Find the secret to change that lasts!



Did you realize that studies suggest over half of the people who make New Year's resolutions make the same resolutions every year? Lose weight, get in shape, spend more time with the family, etc. We start off with the best of intentions to change, but statistics tell us that in one week, a third of us will have already quit, and by the end of six months, only one in five are still hanging on (CNN.com; unbiased.co.uk).

So, 2008 comes around, and we start over again, often with the same goals from last year that are usually based on some personal shortcoming. Each year of failure either grows our guilt or increases our numbness to it, and a more sinister meaning of the word "resolve" sets in. We become "resolved" that change is either highly elusive or downright impossible, or we are just incredibly weak. Sigh.

If you've reached the point where you realize that the Avis approach of "just try harder" doesn't work (and hopefully before you resolve that change is impossible), we have just the book for you! Based on James MacDonald's expanded exposition of Romans 7, *I Really Want to CHANGE...So, HELP Me GOD* helps you find the lasting freedom that is found in changing God's way.

A couple of points to whet your appetite:

Change starts with a crisis called conversion and continues with a process called sanctification. The change you desire is not possible without a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you have never received Jesus by faith, all efforts at lasting change will eventually fail. If you have, then all the tools you need for change are at your disposal. There's no need for disappointment. Change is 100% possible. You can be a success story!

The Christian life is all about change. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification [change]" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). "He Who began a good work will be faithful to complete it" (Philippians 1:6). It's true! God wants to do more than just save you. He wants to change you.

The "How-To's" of Change:

This is where the rubber meets the road. There are a lot of faulty change methods out there. Circle those you have tried before:

Man's Efforts at Change:

- 1. Environmental** - If I could just get out of this job, this house, this marriage.
- 2. Internal** - If I understood myself more. The power is within me.
- 3. Legal** - The power to change is in the power of the rules. Here's the list. Just do it.
- 4. Monastic** - a complete suppression of the will.
- 5. Intellectual** - More education equals change. Read a book. Attend a seminar. Search a website. (What we have found is we usually know what to do. The problem is the huge gap that exists between knowing what to do and the actual change that begins in our hearts and works itself out in our hands.)

How many have you tried? Reality check! None of these change methods work. The problem with these change methods is that they start with me, not only as the object to be changed, but also the instrument of change. It's me, changing me.

God's Pattern for Change:

I am the problem. Admit it. Romans 7:24 states, "O wretched man that I am, Who will deliver me?"

Turn to God. Only He can change the heart. John 15:5 declares, "I am the vine; you are the branches...*apart from me you can do nothing.*" "In *repentance* and *rest* is your salvation; in *quietness* and *trust* is your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

So, what is my role in the change God wants to accomplish in me?

1. Ask God for wisdom to know exactly what He wants to change. James 1:5
2. Review biblical lists for attitudes and behaviors to change. (Try Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians.)
3. Let God isolate your own area of specific need. (What is He bringing to your attention?)





New Year's Eve



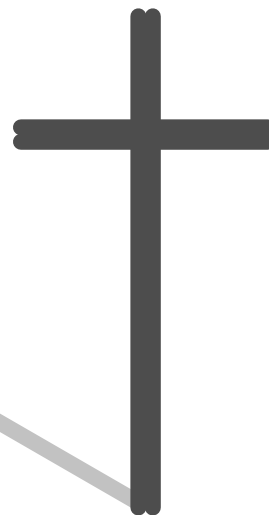
Just imagine it: a perfect world, a delightful paradise. Plush green trees, one more beautiful than the next, filled with colorful and edible delicacies, cover the terrain under a new blue sky. What a perfect place for a wedding - especially for a bride who would breathe her first breath on her wedding day, awakening to new life as her heavenly Father brings her to her husband. She is pleased to hear him who receives her proclaim her to be "bone of [his] bones" and "flesh of [his] flesh." This indeed is perfect harmony as she knows no other purpose for her life. It is a secure and uncompromised bliss.

Adam eventually gives her the full orientation to Eden, including an introduction to the animals he had named and the divine instructions for living life in the garden. Life and communication are sweet, unmarred by extended family relationships. Adam is never annoyed that his bride's indecision about what to wear will cause him to miss the sunset over the river, nor is she ever irritated over something his mother says. It is a secure and uncompromised

Then comes that conniving serpent who approaches the woman with his malicious agenda on the tip of his tongue. He plants a seed of doubt by asking the woman if God has really prohibited their eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Perhaps a little befuddled, the woman exaggerates the prohibition by adding that they may not even touch the fruit of the tree. Then the serpent swings the door of compromise wide open by suggesting that she could be on an even plane with her Creator if she were to do one simple thing - eat. With visions of grandeur, the woman does just that; she eats. She does not ask her husband or her Maker if any part of this sounds odd. After all, how could something so good, so pleasant, and so hopeful be all bad? In fact she is so proud of herself that she gives the forbidden fruit to her husband, and he eats it also. In an instant their eyes are opened. They are ashamed of being naked, and they hide themselves from God who, like any father, could recognize His children anywhere. It is complete and utter chaos. But that is last year's Eve.

She doesn't realize that even as she is in hiding, she is clearly seen, and that even in all her shame God will provide a covering. She feels hopeless. Like her husband, she resorts to the blame game when God gives her the opportunity to own up to what she has done. She somehow is unaware that the same God Who spoke her world into existence could somehow also fix this big mess.

New Year's Eve has accepted God's punishment. She has also accepted the new name ("Mother of All Living"), which, by faith, Adam has given her. She proudly wears the coat of skins which God sacrificed for her. She credits her Maker when she gives birth to her son, Cain. Even amid the sorrows of life she experiences, she is able to have a measure of joy. She remembers the promise mingled with the punishments that day in the garden. Her seed would one day bruise the head of that old serpent. It is a secure and uncompromised promise!



"In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son..."
Galatians 4:4

Sherry Boykin is a stay-at-home mom to two-year-old Katherine and



Allowing Priority To Triumph Over Pressure And Neglect

Inner Solitude Means...

Knowing I need "something" and taking the time for that something to manifest itself in my life.

Realizing that joy comes from how I see the world around me and commandeering the minutes needed to see what I should be seeing.

Resting in the reality of God's grace for all things, at all times, in every way.

Knowing who I need to be and creating the personal space needed to become a true friend to myself, my God, and those around me.

Allowing the silence of the soul to work its wonders on the story lines of my heart.

Forfeiting the call of the rush hour for the often disregarded appeals of my spirit for a "time out" -- a time out to comfort, guide, and protect the very essence of who I am, need to be, and hope to become.

Unlocking the reality of inner success and the peace it brings for the purpose of resisting the chronic barrage of performance-driven living.

Resting in the ever-present arms of God's grace and seeing Him for all He's worth.

Allowing the joy of life to captivate me one more time!

Accepting the reality of life's unanswered questions by trusting in Who I know to chaperon my heart -- guiding its longings toward the inner balance so needed for the moment.

Slowing down enough to listen, remaining quiet enough to hear, and being courageous enough to follow what I've heard.

Reflecting on what matters most by refusing to allow what matters least to incarcerate my heart more than desired or needed.

Allowing the sunshine of my soul to become a reality instead of the mist of a dream which visits my heart way, way too often with little or no results.

Believing in the power and beauty of silence enough to enter its door more often than not -- rather than less often than needed.

© Lee Wise All rights reserved. You may freely distribute this writing. The copy-



Thoughts to Ponder



TIME

I need to learn to budget time -
And not to waste it so,
It's really quite important,
For time so swift does go.

An hour that is wasted -
Can never come again,
May I then use it as I should,
And make of time a friend.

Each day is given me by God,

"Love never fails..." 1 Corinthians 13

GOD'S GLORY

We glimpse God's Glory through a mist -
As mountain morning newly kissed
By falling dew—all wrapped in fog -
It lies beyond. What fallen log
Can show true beauty of the tree
That towered before in majesty -

"**Hope** is the comforting belief that while looking through winter's frosted window panes, our minds can see pink apple blossoms and beautiful lilacs blooming in the soft, spring rain."
- Mary A. Michaels

Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.

"We are not at the mercy of chance. A loving hand, a great wisdom, and an omnipotent power rule our destiny." - Elisabeth Elliot

BEAUTY

Showering beauty in the rain,
Hidden beauty in life's pain,
Brilliant beauty in a flower,
Hints of beauty every hour.
Romping beauty in a kitten,
Warmth of beauty in a mitten.

The poetry written by **Mildred Jacoby Vail** is taken from her book entitled *Scattered Sunbeams*. She is a new member of Summit.