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**DAILY  
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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Are You Ready for Something New? - This Year

December 28, 2020

I can honestly say 2020 has been the worst, best year. This year, I realized God gave me what I wanted, but not how I wanted it to be. I say this because it made me realize the truths about God—that what he says about me is true. I have been tempted to quit many times and blame God for all the injustice; instead, I kept going and stayed focused on Jesus.

My worst, best year looked like this:

- Traveling right before quarantine, returning home, and being forced to go nowhere. It was especially depressing being stuck in my house for months after a fun adventure.
- Stepping into a double major at college but at the mercy of online lectures and missing out on the typical college experience.
- Thinking I could earn some extra money working as a nail technician during the school year.

But God had different plans. As 2020 comes to a close, think about the worst, best things that you experienced.

For many of you, it is a year that you can't wait to put behind you. Maybe you're stuck in a bad situation—financially, relationally, or situationally, and you're not sure what your next step should be.

For others, perhaps 2020 was GOOD. But with all the uncertainty, you're not comfortable celebrating your achievements.

Regardless of where you are, you have a chance to start new. Lead Pastor Ben Snyder encouraged us to focus on the truths about God and what he says is true about us.

I think I would have missed those truths if I hadn't been steadfast and kept my eyes focused on Jesus through all the unexpected situations that unfolded. There can be truth and revelation in the unexpected. When you remain focused

on Jesus, he will do something new in you, especially in the midst of the unexpected.

Are you ready for something new? Do you believe that God can do something new in you? As it says in [Luke 1:37](#), **“For nothing will be impossible with God.”**

God can do something new in you when you keep your eyes focused on Jesus. This weekend, Ben pointed out that **we follow where we focus**. I know this sounds cliché, but when we take our eyes off Jesus, we lose sight of our destination and get lost on the journey.

Over the next few days, we will focus on what is true about God and what he says is true about us.

### **Questions:**

What has 2020 looked like for you? Where was your focus in unexpected moments?

What did you learn about God’s truth this year? What does God say is true about you? Do you believe and accept it?

### **Next Steps:**

Take time to journal and reflect about what 2020 looked like for you.

Pray about what something new might look like in your life.

Step into joining a group or take GrowthTrack to engage in ways you can focus on Jesus.

### **Prayer:**

*Jesus, 2020 will be a year to remember. A year of ups and downs. There have been times that I have struggled to keep my focus on you. I have been reminded that we follow where we focus. If there are any distractions that are keeping me from focusing on you I pray they would fall away. Thanks for being the God of the impossible in a time of uncertainty. I know that despite the challenges, I can realize the truth about you and what you say is true about me. Your promises are certain when everything else feels like it is not. I pray I will receive your promises today. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

*This post was written by Becca Roberts, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*

# God's Power - This Year

December 29, 2020

My mom's side of my family, the Cephas side, is from the Eastern Shore of Maryland. I grew up enjoying crab cakes, oysters, Ocean City, and occasionally, Maryland basketball. Maryland served as a nice escape from the Ohio summers during my childhood. So at age 21, I naturally welcomed the idea to recreate those summer memories when a couple of friends invited me on a trip to Ocean City.

It was a large family vacation, and I was prepared to spend some time with strangers, which didn't really bother me. However, one red flag unsettled my nerves during the drive from Ohio to Maryland. My friend told me that her grandfather had quite a few prejudices against black people, and we would be staying a night at his house in Baltimore. This information wasn't something I had been given before packing my bags and hitting the road.

The story is too long to share all the details, but I left that trip with some new friends, one notable friend being the grandfather. He had gone most of his adult life without speaking to a person of color, and in one week, we had five mornings of coffee and conversation. Any feelings of a façade were dispelled when he wrote his granddaughter a letter thanking her for bringing me along. I was myself during that vacation, but the grandfather could have chosen not to see the authentic me as he had done with so many others over the years. The power of God's love and truth were on that trip. When was the last time you experienced God's power?

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder taught from John 21 over the weekend. We were reminded of Peter's denial of Jesus and his ascension into heaven a few days later.

## **John 21:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> *Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."*

*"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.*

<sup>4</sup> *At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. <sup>5</sup> He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"*

*"No," they replied.*

*<sup>6</sup> Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.*

Peter was already feeling down. If you recall, Peter had denied Jesus, his teacher and friend, three times before he was crucified. No doubt, Peter was suffering from shame and looking for an escape, so he went fishing. And he couldn't even find success at one of the few things that brought normalcy to his life. But God showed up and showed his power in a moment of uncertainty and doubt.

When I think back to my earlier story, I am reminded that God continues to show up in difficult and uncertain circumstances. Up to that point in my life, I had never encountered such a prejudiced adult who allowed God's love to reverse their hatred. That day, I experienced God's power to reveal what is true, and the experience allowed me to hope for more.

**Questions:**

What makes God's power personal for you? Do you drift in moments of uncertainty? Do you know your faith in God grows stronger when you recognize his work in your life?

**Next Steps:**

Be open to allowing God's work to move within you by joining a group. Attend GrowthTrack to unlock the spiritual gifts God gave you. Dive into your Bible and read the daily LIO to dispel feelings of uncertainty or shame in your life.

**Prayer:**

*God, as we say goodbye to 2020, let us be reminded that it was you who brought us through a challenging year. Let our faith intensify, knowing that you will continue to navigate us through 2021. When we feel so down that our shame questions our walk as Christians, let us remember that we cannot be perfect, but through Jesus, you called us to be holy. Amen.*

*This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*

# No Turning Back - This Year

December 30, 2020

## John 21:7

*Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore.*

I can't help it. When I read this verse I picture a scene from Forrest Gump. Forrest is on his shrimp boat when he sees his hero, friend, mentor, and leader on the dock—Lieutenant Dan. Remember that? And without hesitation, Forrest just jumps off his moving boat and swims to Lieutenant Dan. To me, that is an amazing, touching scene. A man was so overwhelmed by the presence of his leader, that without thinking, he jumped into the water with reckless abandon.

Was Peter much different? John barely gets the words out, "It is the Lord," and Peter is off the boat and swimming to shore. It's beautiful! He was alone, dejected, and feeling regret, but then there was a turning point for Peter: Jesus! He can't get to Jesus fast enough. When I read this verse, I feel so much excitement and empathy for Peter.

## John 21:8

*The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore.*

What a simple verse this is, but I find it almost comical. Who among us hasn't sped by someone in our vehicle only to be stopped at the next light and have that person pull up right next to us? It is kind of humbling and humiliating, right? Where's our patience? I can totally imagine the other disciples in the boat watching Peter swim for 100 yards, wondering why he isn't in the boat helping them. What they didn't fully understand was how life-changing that swim was for Peter—more on that in a bit.

## John 21:9-12

*<sup>9</sup> When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread. <sup>10</sup> "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn. <sup>12</sup> "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.*

That's right, Jesus was on the shore preparing breakfast. Think about that. The savior of the world, the resurrected King, the son of God was making breakfast! Throughout the Bible, we consistently read about Jesus serving others and making people feel welcomed. I imagine it is exactly the situation that Peter (who had just denied Jesus three times) needed.

My friends, this is the turning point for Peter. This is that moment when Peter changed from fisherman to "rock." Peter dedicated his life to Jesus and transformed into a full-time evangelist. Peter jumped into that water and swam toward Jesus—and he never looked back! I pray for that kind of peace and purpose for all of us.

**Questions:**

What are some of the ways you could move toward God this year?

How might you be able to serve others before you serve yourself?

**Next Steps:**

2021 is upon us. It is a start to a new year. Develop a plan and establish goals on how you might be more purposeful in moving toward God in 2021.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the examples you have given us. Help us to put these words and messages into action. Use us to make change. Show us how capable we are, and give us the courage, faith, and strength to follow through. It's not easy to deny ourselves, so we pray that your example may inspire us to impact your kingdom in a supernatural way. Amen.*

*This post was written by Mike Bilik, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*

# You New Creation, You! - This Year

December 31, 2020

The Apostle Peter had been Jesus' "Right Hand Man" from the beginning of Christ's ministry. The one renamed "the Rock." At the Passover supper, the night before Jesus died, Peter said to him, "Even If everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you" ([Matthew 26:33](#)). Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth, Peter—this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me" ([Matthew 26:34](#)). But Peter insisted, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" ([Matthew 26:35](#)).

Yet a few hours later, when confronted by Jesus' enemies, Peter lied about even knowing Jesus—THREE times—then ran away and wept.

Have you ever felt you failed Jesus so badly that there was no way back to him? Peter did. He was in such despair, he couldn't believe he would ever work for the Lord again. So in [John 21](#), he left Jerusalem and went back to fishing. It appears, he considered himself unworthy to serve the one true God, our Savior.

What happened next is so beautiful and so like Jesus ... and so like Peter, too. Jesus goes after his wayward child and asks, "Peter do you love me?" Jesus asks not once but three times. Why three times? As I researched this story, I learned that Peter answered the Lord with a different variation of the word *love* each time.

The first *love* was more like, "Of course I do. You're my pal." The second was like a brother, "Of course I do. You're my bro." It wasn't until the third time that Peter was able to get past his shame of failure and blurt out the word for unconditional love, "YES! Completely!"

Jesus' responses in turn? "Feed my lambs." "Take care of my sheep." Then the third time, "Feed my sheep." It was then Peter realized he was no longer a fisherman but rather, as Jesus had promised, *a fisher of men*. Peter also realized he was never going to be "good enough," and it didn't matter because it was not about him.

Are you good enough to be the hands and feet of Christ to the world? You are if you have put down your pride and self-will and accepted God's invitation to a meaningful and eternal life. This can happen if we accept Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the only way to have a relationship with the Father and a life of great

worth. You can't earn it, and you can't lose it—even when you spiritually fall on your face. Just like Peter did.

### **Ephesians 2:9-10**

*<sup>9</sup>Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. <sup>10</sup>For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

### **Questions:**

Why do you think you are here? Will your life really matter in the eternal scheme of things? How has your focus been affecting your life? For better or for worse?

### **Next Steps:**

Take your focus off the world, and turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Listen to [Turn Your Eyes to Jesus](#) by Shane and Shane and Reflect on what Jesus told Peter to do if he loved him ([John 21:15-19](#)).

### **Prayer:**

*Thank you, Lord, for allowing trials as the way for us to grow in our understanding of you and your relationship with us. I wish we could learn about and embrace your grace without the pain that comes from enduring trials, but our selfish sin nature makes those corrections inevitable as we stumble toward a closer walk with you. Thank you for caring so much that you allow them in order to grow us in our love for and service to you. Please give us the patience, insight, and determination to be your faithful servants all the days of our life, and throughout eternity. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

*This post was written by Martha Smith, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.*

# Still in Control - This Year

January 1, 2021

The beginning of 2020 doesn't seem like it was all that long ago. If you concentrate and listen closely, you might still hear the faint whisper of Barbara Walters saying, "*Welcome to 2020.*" Does it seem that way for you? Where were you on January 1st, 2020?

I remember the start of last year well. I was living with my in-laws last January 1st because our house was being repaired from a pretty significant electrical issue. I remember checking the 10-day forecast each day, praying the temperatures wouldn't dip below the freezing line of 32°. I had no control over the weather and little control over much of the overall situation. It was not a great feeling. Little did I know that issue with our house would pale in comparison to what was ahead.

As 2021 begins, I am aware that this year, like last, will go by quickly. I am also mindful that this year will bring all kinds of unexpected challenges that I can't imagine or see today. If I am not careful, these two thoughts can be a little overwhelming. With time seemingly moving faster than ever, it is easy to start believing the lie that I don't have time to accomplish anything of significance this year. My day-to-day tasks consume too much of my time and energy. Secondly, it can be frightening not knowing what is around the corner. Often when we don't know, we worry that the worst is coming and believe there is nothing we can do about it. We want to have more control than this.

Thankfully, we have a God that is in control of all things. When time is seemingly slipping away, God is there. He is at work ready to connect with us and help us grow in every moment of our daily lives, even in the mundane, seemingly insignificant ones. When we can't see what's ahead, we can find confidence knowing nothing surprises God. He knows what 2021 has in store and invites you to trust him through it all.

At the end of this past weekend service, we heard a song that started with the question, "*How can I say it is well? When my voice can barely speak?*"

*How can I sing You a song In the midst of suffering?* The answer to the question is the title of the song—“[Still in Control](#).” The lyrics can be a prayer and reminder for us to carry with us into 2021.

*Teach my soul to sing  
My God is still in control  
And still He reigns on His throne  
Though mountains may tremble and sea billows roll  
I'll sing it is well with my soul  
My God is still in control  
You have not left me alone  
Though the world has let me down  
All of my sorrow and pain  
I will trade it for a crown  
Thank You for staying with me  
When the night was closing in  
Whatever my lot, You are still God  
I will sing again  
My God is still in control*

Songwriters: Mack Brock / Jesse Reeves / Ricky Jackson / Ran Jackson

**Questions:**

What do you remember about last year's New Year's Day?

In what ways did last year challenge your faith in God's control?

How did you take steps of trust this past year?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how prepared are you for 2021? Explain your answer.

**Next Steps:**

Write down the lyrics to [this song](#), and place them somewhere you will regularly

see them, maybe on your bathroom mirror or in your kitchen. Thank God that he cares about you and is in control of everything that will happen in 2021.

Next to it, write down Philippians 4:6-7 and give your worries to God.

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God. Thank you for this new year. Not just because it means 2020 is over, but because it has the potential to mark a new beginning. As this year starts, I want to declare my trust in you. I know that no matter what 2021 has in store, you are in control. Guide me and help me see every blessing and challenge to come as an opportunity to know you more. God, this year, I will sing that you are still in control, reigning on your throne. Amen.*

*This post was written by Ben Bockert, a regular contributor to the LivingitOut.*