

STAYING CONNECTED

Sun 3rd Jan 2021
Week 42



The One sitting on the throne said,
"LOOK, I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW"
Revelation 21:5



Praying New Year blessings for you all, Haz

(2) Perhaps if someone is fearful looking into 2021, Philippians 4:5b-6 "*The LORD is near. Do not be anxious about anything*", or Joshua 1:5b, 7a "*I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong & very courageous*".

(3) For people trying to make plans, Prov. 3:5-6 "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; Seek his will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take* (NLT)", Prov. 16:3 "*Commit your work to the LORD, & your plans will be established*", whilst remembering Jeremiah 29:11 "*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*".

(4) For parents trying to teach their children about God, Prov. 22:6 "*Train a child in the way they should go, & when they are older they will not depart from it*".

(5) For parents whose children have grown up & are not walking with the LORD, & yet you did your best to train them, the same verse as above, Prov. 22:6. Pray it back to God. Tell Him you've done your bit, now it's over to Him to be true to His Word. He can handle the challenge!

Rick Warren took the idea of the "Defining Verse" further this week when he summarized many Christians feelings, "*2020 has been lots of things, and for each of us something different. It's been stressful, painful, lonely, scary, frightening*". The verse that we use or resonates most with us may reflect our experiences of 2020, and of (continued at the bottom of page 2)

Each year at this time I encourage people to look back over the previous 12 months & to count their blessings & name them one by one. Whilst we can all find things to give God thanks for, there is widespread agreement across the world today that for many millions of people 2020 has been the most difficult & stressful year of their lives. Sir Anthony Hopkins on Christian Premier News said, "*It's been a tough year, full of grief and sadness for many, many people*". I was struck by the many articles from all nations celebrating the end of 2020. An American magazine said, "*The year 2020 is finally almost gone & good riddance to it. It was a stinking dumpster fire of a year, a cheesy monster movie in which the monster didn't take its cue to die*". An Australian publication observed, "*2020 has been full of surprises that no one, not a single one, has ever asked for*". Oprah Winfrey wisely commented, "*Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning, but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instil in us*". Someone else said, "*New Year is the first blank page of 365-page book. Write a good one!*"

Warren Wiersbe in "*The Defining Verse*" poses a great New Year question for us as individuals. Above is the TCF verse-of-the-year from Revelation 21:5, but what is your own personal verse-of-the-year for 2021? In Wiersbe's terminology, 'what is your defining verse for 2021'?

On New Year's Eve Ruth sent out an email with the line in it, "As 2020 draws to a close & we wonder what 2021 will look like, what are you praying for?" Have you a verse, uniquely applicable to you & your situations, that you are meditating on & praying through? The Bible has 66 books, 1189 chapters and 31,103 verses. There is something in it relevant for everyone in every situation! A few examples:

(1) For someone seriously engaging with the outworking of their faith in new ways in their life might take Psalm 138:8, "*The LORD will perfect that which concerns me*" (ESV "*The LORD will fulfil His purpose for me*"), or Philippians 1:6 "*Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion*".

King George VI Christmas Day speech and the often quoted poem from Minnie Louis Haskins, "The Gate of the Year" has perhaps more widespread relevance today than since it was originally broadcast in 1939. The entire poem is recorded here below.



And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hides His intention.

God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.

Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.

Continued from column 3 page 1

what we are now carrying into 2021. Wiersbe acknowledged that people may be carrying wrong attitudes, hurts, unforgiveness, etc. With Bible characters often the focus is on their failing or sin. Noah was a drunk, Jacob a cheat, Samson a wild man who liked drinking, fighting & prostitutes, David a murderer & an adulterer.

Jesus commanded us to forgive our brothers & sisters even if they sinned against us seven times a day (Luke 17), but instead with other people just like Bible characters, we may carry unforgiveness & we make that sin the key to their character. This blinds us to the real person. After Peter denied Christ he wept. Sin put Jesus on the cross. Peter wept over his sins; do we weep over ours? In Matthew 6:12 "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us" implies our receiving forgiveness is dependent on us forgiving others!

Warren's article at goes on to say, "(2020) has also been a wake-up call for God's people and hopefully we can partner with Him to say 'yes' to all that He is calling us to accomplish in the year ahead".

I pray that in 2021 there will be genuine new beginnings and that whatever God is calling us to do we will not miss any fresh opportunities.