



## the great work of everyday obedience

If the first part of January was an imperfect start to the new year, you can still start fresh.

January doesn't define your destiny. Don't be discouraged. Keep moving forward. The calendar will keep flipping whether we're ready for it or not, so let's surrender these days to God and press into what He's calling us.

Our routines, desires, and abilities might be different this year. You might be focused on different areas than you normally are. You might enjoy (or not enjoy) things differently from last year. These changes might surprise you, but they don't mean you're not doing life correctly. Other people might express their surprise or even disappointment at these changes, but you should not cave to pressure just to try making things look like they were before.

You are different than you were a year ago, and that's okay. Do not resist what the Lord is trying to lead you in by trying to force normalcy or tradition. Go where He's calling you. He might bring you back around to the same familiar things again after a while, but He also might be helping you achieve something you couldn't have planned for. He might be protecting you from something you can't foresee. Trust Him and move with His leading, not on your own autopilot.

You don't have to be predictable. You are free to move and change and transform into who God has designed you to be. And who that is will probably surprise you and those around you. You do not have to meet the expectations of those who would stifle the Holy Spirit's growth in your life. You do not have to "tone it down" or put things in soft pastels if you were made to paint in deep reds and blues and oranges. And you don't have to paint in those colors all the time; there may be days when you walk in soft blues and shades of white. Your job is to be consistently obedient to Jesus – not the expectations of others or yourself.

Let the Holy Spirit surprise you. Let go of insecurities that hold you back, and surrender to what He's been speaking to you about. Great joy and confirmation is on the other side of it.

*Let your reasonableness (gentleness) be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

— *Philippians 4:5-7*





You don't have to go it alone. You know that, of course, and you know the Lord is with you. But also, He's speaking to people on your behalf and they are interceding for you, worshiping with you, trusting God for breakthrough in the difficult things you're too close to and having a hard time seeing past. Jesus loves you enough to keep others awake at night praying for you.

You may have been through devastating, hard things, but you are not alone. You are not defined by these situations. You're not defined by your circumstances today. Rejection and misunderstanding are not your destiny, and your mistakes are not your identity. Other peoples' opinions of you are not your identity. Their judgments of you are not your identity. And also...your perceived or assumed judgments that they have of you are not your identity. Injustices against you do not diminish your worth or standing.

Hurtful words and acts are hard to ignore, and feeling them isn't wrong; sin is painful and shouldn't be whitewashed. But if you can feel or remember that pain and still want God's very best for the person who caused it, you are the living sacrifice who has died to self, surrendered to the Lord's will, and risen brighter and stronger than before: humble, holy, and high above the fray.

And that's who you are.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

— 1 Peter 2:9

You are going through this new year wiser, stronger, and better than before. There are joys and victories ahead you would never imagine. God has beautiful plans for you, plans that will take everything the enemy threw at you before and make them pale in comparison for the joy He has ahead of you. But you have to go there to get there.

Don't give up. Calmly take things day by day; there's no rush and no pressure; move slow and trust Him. Obey in the small things, and they will become the big things. This is shaping up to be your best year yet.

*Jesus, protect our perspective today. Thank You for a new year and a new day, for new growth and new opportunities. Thank You for a clean start every morning. We will abide today, pausing and hearing You when You interrupt us, and we will walk in great peace, strength, and joy as You lead us.*





Walk with your head held high, in great expectation of the future. Your prayer is changing your days and the lives around you. Don't give up now. Don't believe only what you see. Lean in and press on; your breakthrough is closer than you think. You'll have more fun and peace in the meantime if you remember that.

*I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!  
Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!*  
— Psalm 27:13-14

Stay faithful in the small tasks in front of you: Pray, read, abide, forgive. Give eye contact and listen. Eat real food. Think about your values. Talk about them. Look for what you're hoping toward. Refuse to cave to fear. **Victory is gaining momentum, and you are doing a great work in your everyday obedience and integrity.**

*For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.*

*For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*  
— 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

The Lord knows how to sort you out. He knows where all your scraps and pieces go, and He knows which things work together to make a result that sings. He knows which things don't go together, and He is protecting you in His divine "no" and "not yet." He knows where you are fraying and damaged. He is the precise surgeon with delicate stitches, healing you so that you are better than before.

He knows that you can't figure it all out and that it is complicated and overwhelming. He's with you as you look at each part, trying to steward your pieces well. He's whispering answers as you abide, and He rejoices with you in every epiphany you discover.

*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.  
This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.*  
— 1 Timothy 1:5, 18-19a

