MINISTÈRE DU PASTEUR CLÉMENT SALOMON · DEVOTIONAL #6

A New Year with God

Mercies new every morning — and a freedom no calendar can give.

It is five o'clock in the morning on January 1, in a small kitchen in Brooklyn. Grandma Lucienne is already awake.

The big pot is on the stove. The whole apartment smells of pumpkin, beef, cabbage and thyme. Soup joumou. She has made it every New Year's morning of her life, in Haiti and now here.

Her grandson Jonathan comes in and sits down without a word. He is twenty-two. Last year was hard for him. He dropped out of school. He lost his job in the fall. And at Christmas he said things to his father that he cannot take back.

"Grann," he says quietly, "I don't feel like celebrating. I feel like I'm bringing the whole of last year with me."

Grandma Lucienne fills a bowl and puts it in front of him. "Do you know why we eat this soup today?"

He shrugs. He has heard it before, but she tells it anyway, the way many Haitian families tell it. Under slavery, the people who cooked this soup were not allowed to eat it. Then came January 1, 1804. Independence. And on that day, everyone ate the soup — as free people.

"Nobody earned that freedom by eating the soup," she says. "The soup came after the freedom. Somebody paid for it. Now eat."

Jonathan picks up the spoon. But he is still thinking about the heavy thing inside him. Is there a freedom for *that*? Keep reading. Because the Bible says there is — and it does not wait for January 1.

Mercies with a morning date

One of the most hopeful verses in the whole Bible is hidden in one of its saddest books. Jeremiah wrote Lamentations while Jerusalem lay in ruins. Everything was broken. And right in the middle of the tears, he wrote this:

> *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."*
>
> **Lamentations 3:22-23 (KJV)**

Notice what it does not say. It does not say God's mercies are new every *year*. It says every *morning*. You do not have to wait for midnight on December 31 to start over with God. He opens a new page every single sunrise. That is 365 fresh starts this year — and every one of them is a gift.

Stop driving with your eyes on the mirror

Try driving a car while staring only into the rear-view mirror. You will not get far. Many of us live like that. Our eyes are fixed on last year — the mistake, the loss, the shame. God speaks to that habit:

> *"Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."*
>
> **Isaiah 43:18-19 (KJV)**

Here is something surprising. Just before these words, God reminds Israel of the greatest miracle in their history: the road He made through the sea (Isaiah 43:16-17). Then He says: do not stay stuck in the past — not even the good past. I am about to do something new. A road where there is no road. Water where everything is dry.

Is your life a wilderness right now? That is exactly the place where God likes to build roads.

Not a new resolution — a new creation

Every January, millions of people make resolutions. Exercise more. Spend less. Be kinder. By February, most of those promises are gone. Not because people are bad — but because willpower alone cannot change a heart.

God offers something much bigger than a resolution:

> *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*
>
> **2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)**

A new year changes the calendar. Jesus changes the person. He does not just help you try harder. He gives you a new heart and walks with you every day so that you can grow — little by little — into His likeness. That is what the Bible calls growing in Christ.

Paul's "one thing"

If anyone had a past to be ashamed of, it was the apostle Paul. Before he met Jesus, he hunted Christians and threw them in prison (Acts 8:3). Later he called himself the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). How did he live with that? He tells us:

> *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*
>
> **Philippians 3:13-14 (KJV)**

"Forgetting" here does not mean pretending nothing happened. Paul talked openly about his past. It means he no longer let his past hold the steering wheel. Jesus had forgiven him. So he looked forward and kept running toward Christ.

You can do the same. Bring last year to Jesus — honestly, by name. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Where you hurt someone, ask Him for the courage to make it right. Then leave the rest behind and run.

Who holds the map?

A new year is full of plans: a new job, a move, school, a wedding, papers to file. Planning is good. But the Bible tells us who should hold the map:

> *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*
>
> **Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV)**

All thy heart. *All* thy ways. Not only on Sabbath. Not only when there is trouble. When God is first in the morning, in the money, in the decisions, He promises to direct the road. You may not see the whole year. You do not need to. You only need to know the One who does.

Wherever you go

Joshua knew what it felt like to stand at the edge of the unknown. Moses was dead. A whole nation was looking at him. In front of them lay a river and a land they had never lived in. And God said:

> *"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."*
>
> **Joshua 1:9 (KJV)**

Whithersoever thou goest. To a new city. A new country. A new job where you do not speak the language well yet. A hospital room. A courthouse hallway. God does not stay behind at the old address. He goes with you.

The freedom 1804 could not give

Our ancestors broke real chains, and we honor them for it. January 1 is a day of dignity for every Haitian family. But there is another kind of chain that no army can break. It is inside us: guilt, fear, bitterness, habits we cannot stop, shame we cannot shake. The Bible calls it slavery to sin (John 8:34).

Jesus came to break that chain. He said: *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36). He paid for that freedom Himself, on the cross. And then Scripture tells us how to live in it:

> *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*
>
> **Galatians 5:1 (KJV)**

Remember Grandma Lucienne's words: the soup came after the freedom. It is the same with Jesus. You do not earn His freedom by being good this year. He gives it first. Then, because you are free, you live like a free person.

Try this: begin the year with God

- **Give Him the first minutes:** each morning this week, before your phone, read Lamentations 3:22-23 and pray one sentence: *"Lord, thank You for new mercies today."*
- **Put last year down:** write on a paper the thing you are still carrying. Bring it to God in prayer and confess it (1 John 1:9). If it involves someone you hurt, plan one step to make it right. Then tear up the paper as a sign that Jesus has carried it.
- **Choose a path in the Word:** start a simple Bible reading plan — for example the free *7-Day Reading Plan: Meet Jesus in the Gospels* in our library — and invite your family to read with you.

The heart of it: the freedom comes first

Back in the Brooklyn kitchen, Jonathan finished his soup. Then Grandma Lucienne took his hand and prayed. She did not pray for a perfect year. She prayed that he would know the One whose mercies are new every morning.

That morning, Jonathan called his father. It was a short call. But it was a start — a new thing springing up in a dry place.

This new year, you do not have to carry last year on your back. Jesus has already paid for your freedom. Tell Him today: *"Lord, I give You my past, my plans and my future. Walk with me wherever I go."* He will. He promised.

Before you close this — one question

What are you still carrying from last year? And would you like to walk into this new year with Jesus instead of alone?

You do not have to figure it out by yourself. We would be honored to pray with you, open the Bible with you, and help you meet the Jesus whose mercies are new every morning.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, study the Bible, or go deeper on this topic? Reach us today:

📞 **903-748-9353** · ✉️ **jils19802012@gmail.com**
Or leave a comment, send us a direct message, and **subscribe + follow** on YouTube and Facebook.

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SHARE THIS WITH SOMEONE WHO NEEDS A NEW START

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Viewer Handout

A New Year with God — pocket version

5 truths to remember

1. God's mercies never run out — they are new every morning, not just once a year (Lamentations 3:22-23).
2. God tells us not to stay stuck in the past; He is doing a new thing and makes roads in the wilderness (Isaiah 43:18-19).
3. In Christ we are not just improved — we are a new creation, and we keep growing in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).
4. We confess our sins, receive forgiveness, forget what is behind and press toward Christ (Philippians 3:13-14; 1 John 1:9).
5. When we trust the Lord with all our heart, He directs our paths and goes with us wherever we go; Christ has made us truly free (Proverbs 3:5-6; Joshua 1:9; Galatians 5:1).

Memory verse

> *"His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."*
> **Lamentations 3:22-23 (KJV)**

Think & pray about it

- What from last year am I still carrying that I need to give to Jesus?
- Where in my plans for this year have I not yet "acknowledged Him"?
- What would it look like for me to live as someone Christ has truly set free?

FOR TEACHERS & SMALL GROUPS

Presenter Bullet Sheet

- **Open with the story** (an illustrative story: Grandma Lucienne's soup joumou on January 1 in Brooklyn, and her grandson Jonathan who feels he is carrying all of last year) — ask: "What would you most like to leave behind as this year begins?"
- **Point 1 — Mercies with a morning date:** Lamentations 3:22-23. Written among ruins; mercies are new every morning, not once a year.
- **Point 2 — Stop driving with your eyes on the mirror:** Isaiah 43:16-19. Even the Red Sea miracle is "former things" next to what God will do; roads in the wilderness.
- **Point 3 — Not a resolution, a new creation:** 2 Corinthians 5:17. Willpower vs. a new heart; growing in Christ day by day.
- **Point 4 — Paul's "one thing":** Philippians 3:13-14; Acts 8:3; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 1:9. Forgetting = not letting the past steer; confess, make right, press on.
- **Point 5 — Who holds the map?:** Proverbs 3:5-6. Plans are good; God first in all our ways.
- **Point 6 — Wherever you go:** Joshua 1:9. Connect with migrants and anyone facing the unknown.
- **Point 7 — The freedom 1804 could not give:** John 8:34-36; Galatians 5:1. Honor the history; point to freedom from sin, given first by Christ, not earned.
- **Practice:** first minutes with God each morning; write, confess and tear up last year's burden; start a reading plan as a family.
- **Appeal:** invite each person to give Jesus their past, their plans and their future today. Offer prayer and Bible study.
- **Close:** memory verse (Lamentations 3:22-23) + announce the next study, "One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

EVIDENCE-BASED · FACT-CHECKED

10 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact (with Bible)
1. My past year decides what my new year will be.	God's compassions "fail not. They are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23); "Behold, I will do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19).
2. God forgives small sins, but what I did is too big.	"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9); "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).
3. "Forgetting what is behind" means pretending nothing happened.	Paul spoke openly of being "a blasphemer, and a persecutor" who "obtained mercy" (1 Timothy 1:13). Forgetting means no longer letting the past hold us back (Philippians 3:13).
4. A strong New Year's resolution is enough to change my heart.	God Himself gives the change: "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26); "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
5. Trusting God means I should not make plans.	"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). We plan — and acknowledge Him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:6).
6. A real Christian never feels afraid.	God told Joshua, "be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed" because fear was real — and gave the reason: "the LORD thy God is with thee" (Joshua 1:9).
7. God stays behind in my home country or my old church.	He is with us "whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9); "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).
8. Freedom in Christ means I can do whatever I want.	"Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Christ frees us from sin, not to go back to it (Galatians 5:1).
9. Luck, charms or special rituals on January 1 decide how my year will go.	"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Trust the Lord, and "he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

10. Once I become a new creation, I am finished growing.	Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended... I press toward the mark" (Philippians 3:13-14); "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Where this comes from (Sources)

This devotional is built on the Bible and reflects the published beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Verify everything for yourself:

- The Bible — passages on new beginnings and growing in Christ: Joshua 1:9; Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 16:9; Isaiah 43:16-19; Lamentations 3:22-23; Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 28:20; John 8:34-36; Acts 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:13-15; James 1:17; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:9 (King James Version, public domain).
- Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #10, "The Experience of Salvation," and #11, "Growing in Christ" (we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer and feeding on His Word) — official beliefs: https://adventist.org/beliefs
- 28 Fundamental Beliefs (2020 edition, PDF): https://adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: https://gc.adventist.org/
- Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, chapter 8, "Growing Up Into Christ," public domain: https://whiteestate.org/ / https://m.egwwritings.org/
- About January 1: soup joumou is eaten on Haitian Independence Day (January 1, 1804) as a sign of freedom; UNESCO inscribed it on its list of intangible cultural heritage in 2021. The story of who was not allowed to eat it is told here as families tell it.
- Related in this library: *"Saved by Grace"*, *"Forgiveness: Free at Last"* and the *7-Day Reading Plan: Meet Jesus in the Gospels* — https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/resources.html · Your faith journey: https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/journey.html · Questions? https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/faq.html

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