

# Starting the Year on the Right Foot

Colossians 1:9-12

January 3, 2016

A little girl asks her mother, “Mommy, why do you cut off the ends of the meat before you cook it?” The girl’s mother goes on to tell her that she thought that it adds flavor by allowing the meat to better absorb the spices, **but perhaps she had better ask her grandma since she had learned it from her.** So the little girl finds the grandmother and asks, **“Grandma, why do you and mommy chop off the ends of the meat before you cook it?”**

Her grandmother thinks a moment and says, “I think it allows the meat to stay tender because it soaks up the juices better, but **why don’t you ask your Nana because after all, I learned from her and she’s always done it that way.**” The little girl is getting a little frustrated, but climbs up in her great-grandmother’s lap and asks, “Nana, why do you, mom & grandma, cut the ends off of the meat before you cook it?” Nana answers, “I don’t know why they do it, but I did it because my pot wasn’t big enough.”

How many times do we walk through life blindly, without knowing the purpose for the way that we live our lives? Or make the best choices that allow us to live life to the fullest?

A New Year is always an opportunity to **consider the trajectory of our lives**, the path that we are on, and evaluate whether it is where we would like to be, or **what God has for us.**

We find important direction from the Lord in this pursuit in **Colossians 1:9-14.**

Colossians 1:9 **“We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives”**

Isn’t this what we desire in our lives? Spiritual Wisdom...Spiritual Understanding **Knowledge of the will of God? There is no better way to begin a new year.**

**Paul describes God’s will for our lives this way...**

**Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (10)**

Some translations use the word “live” in place of walk. The idea is **“how do you walk through life, how do you live your life?”**

Elsewhere we read:

**Walk in the newness of life, Romans 6:4**

**Walk by faith, not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7**

**Walk by the Spirit, Galatians 5:25**

**Walk in a manner worthy of the calling, Ephesians 4:1**

**Walk as children of Light, Ephesians 5:8**

**Therefore be careful how you walk,**

**Not as unwise men but as wise, Ephesians 5:8**

**How are you walking these days?**

**How are you living your life?**

**What will order your steps in the year to come?**

If you wish to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,” or to move in that direction in your life, God gives us 4 qualities to strive for...

### 1) **Bearing fruit in every good work (10)**

God wants something positive, **with a spiritual impact to happen in the life of the believer...**

John 15:2 “Every branch in Me that does not bear **fruit**, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears **fruit**, He prunes it so that it may bear more **fruit**.”

#### **What does it mean for a believer to bear fruit?**

They grow in qualities, fruit of the spirit

Lead someone to the Lord

Make a positive difference in someone’s life

Increase the ministry of the church

Increase in their understanding of God’s truth

**Bearing fruit depends on growth,**

#### **Who brings growth? God,**

**1 Corinthians 3:5-7** (New International Version) “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”

**You need God in your life to bring spiritual growth.**

### 2) **Strengthen with all power, according to His glorious might (11)**

Any effectiveness of our Christian lives is but a result of God’s power at work in our lives. Spiritual growth and maturity can come only as we yield to God’s power and permit Him to **work in us**.

1 Corinthians 1:17 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power** of God.”

Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his **power** that is at work within us,”

God is the source of all power. When we connect with God’s truth, and we live God’s way, then we plug into His power. **Only then can we accomplish God’s will and experience the maximum that our life has to offer.**

### 3) **Be steadfast and patient. (11)**

#### **“Attaining of all steadfastness(endurance) and patience”**

Endurance, “ability to continue toward a goal regardless of the obstacles.”

The word patience means “stand firm against opposition without giving up.”

**Both Often within context of difficult circumstances relationships**

Endurance in the face of obstacles **and Patience while facing opposition is really the definition of perseverance**, and is an important characteristic of the maturing Christian life.

Romans 5:3-4 “we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

### **These are qualities God wants in our lives.**

Patience is not passive, lack of action or complacency. Patience is “enduring inaction.” It is the soldier on the battlefield, continuing forward when the going is tough. It is the runner who hits the wall, but refusing to stop because he wants to win the race.

### **Work towards stability and patience**

Finally, what God has for us in the New Year

#### **4) Joy & Thanksgiving (12)**

Godly joy, is a positive spirit that begins deep in our walk with the Lord, and inside who we are, that radiates from our inner being, to shine through our lives, through our attitudes, our words and our actions, **in spite of the circumstances of our lives.**

Thankfulness is not so much a feeling as it is an action. You decide to be thankful, and you then give thanks for everything and anything. Like joy, it is not dependent upon circumstances.

The joy of the Lord and thankfulness are intertwined. **When you experience God’s joy**, you are thankful for what you see God doing, **in spite of circumstances.** When you are thankful to the Lord for His work in your life, even in challenging times, it prompts joy in your spirit.

**Philippians 4:4-7** “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

#### **How are you walking these days?**

#### **What will order your steps in the year to come?**

- 1) Bear fruit**
- 2) Tap into God’s power**
- 3) Endure and be patient**
- 4) Act with Joy and Thanksgiving**

A man was sleeping one night when suddenly his room filled with light, and God appeared. The Lord told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin.

**The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might.** So, this the man did, day after day.

For many years he toiled from sun up to sun down; his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock, pushing with all of his might. **Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.**

The man thought, “I have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn’t moved. I must be a failure.”

Then he made it a matter of prayer and took his troubled thoughts to the Lord. "Lord," he said, "I have labored long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked, over many years.

Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimeter. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

The Lord responded compassionately, "**My friend, when I asked you to serve Me and you accepted**, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all of your strength, which you have done.

**Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it.** Your task was to push. **And now you come to Me with your strength spent**, thinking that you have failed. But, is that really so?

Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewy and brown, your hands are callused from constant pressure, your legs have become massive and hard.

**Through opposition you have grown much, and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have.** True, you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to **be obedient and to push and to exercise your faith and trust in My wisdom.** This you have done. Now I, My child, will move the rock."

**We don't always see God's purpose, or understand His plans.** But as we begin a new year, let us commit to live **in obedience, to walk worthy, to live pleasing to the Lord, not hindering His work**, and to be open and active in pursuit of all of the qualities His wishes to develop in our lives.

**That is the right step.**