



Some thoughts from others as well as myself for this New Year.....

Many people, on this New Year's Day will have goals relating to relationships, health, education and perhaps even finances. Although these things are of some value, spiritual disciplines are valuable in every way. So, for 2021 here are some spiritual disciplines you can try:

Prayer

Colossians 4:2-4 tells us to devote ourselves to prayer.

Set aside some quiet time each day to go off somewhere and to pray. If you find yourself not knowing what to pray for, make a list of things that you are thankful for; prayer requests from family and friends; as well as things happening in our country as well as the world.

Read Scripture

Read the word of God diligently and frequently, not just reading the words but actually processing and putting the word into action.

A really good way to dig deep is to get a notebook and pen and write down the verse or chapter and look at each word, questioning why they were used or the context and what it means for us today.

Bible reading plans also help to explore the Bible thoroughly. Maybe 2021 is the year you read the whole Bible!

Also, the Bible is at the tip of our fingers with many Bible apps available. You can even listen to the Bible while in the car or during chores. The possibilities are endless.

Try Fasting

What are the things that get in the way of God? Try taking some time away from them that your heart and your attention might be focused more on your Lord.

For example, try to have 'internet-free days' where you do not use the internet for social media or for anything else. Could you stay off that long?

Wonder more

Take time to wonder at God's glory through his creation.

Look at a tree, marvel at your fingerprints, count the stars or just take a few more seconds savoring your foods. Whatever you do, be still and know that the Lord is God.

Share the Love of God

This year will undoubtedly hold unexpected joys and sorrows, moments of faith and fear, wishes fulfilled, as well as dreams abandoned. There is much we do not know. But there is much we do know with absolute assurance. We know that God's heart is good and merciful toward us. We know that we are not alone. We know that we are loved and that every day is an opportunity for us to share and to explore that gift in our lives.

Take the time to really experience the Love of God by putting that love into action. Do what you can for people, don't hesitate to open your heart and to simply share His love through acts of kindness, sincere words, thoughts, and simple every day acceptance and welcome. Let others know the greatest gift that your God has given you to share.

Hope

Hope requires more than red shoes or crossing our fingers. It's a sweet and magnificent benefit of walking with Christ. Hope looks at all that is true about the present, lifts the circumstances of life into the tender, loving hands of God – and exhales in trust. Hope is what makes it possible to live with our feet firmly planted on earth while our hearts and minds are committed to a vision of life that is far bigger than we are.

So, allow yourself to go to that place - to trust that He is there through whatever comes, throughout the day, throughout the night, and even as we begin a fresh tomorrow. Realize that one of the greatest powers you hold is your ability to hope.

And....

No doubt, I could continue on with a few more items, but perhaps you should take it from here. What else needs to be on your list? What is important to your spiritual health and to your relationship with God? What could you benefit from doing a little more of this year?

God's blessings to each and every one of you as, together, we enter this new year filled with new possibilities and blessings!! Happy New Year!!

A Prayer for the New Year:

This prayer from Billy Graham, written for *"The Saturday Evening Post"* in 2008, is just as relevant more than a decade later.

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So, help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life’s uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love.

In the midst of life’s inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need.

In the midst of life’s temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: *“Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end” (Psalm 119:33).*

We pray for our nation and its leaders during these difficult times, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world.

We pray especially for Your protection on all those who serve in our armed forces, and we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also and assure them of Your love and concern for them.

Bring our divided nation together and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12).*

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come. *Amen.*