

## **Ready for a New Year**

*Houses of Light Church • December 29, 2024 • Ilse Marquez*

**Let's take a moment to reflect on the last year...**

- 1. What goals did you set at the end of 2023? What were you able to accomplish in 2024?**
  
- 2. What obstacles did you face this year? What kept you from meeting all your goals?**
  
- 3. How did you use your time during 2024? How much time did you invest on work, study, family, friends, and community? How much time did you spend online? How much time did you spend with the Lord? (If you want to see a more accurate picture, consider looking at the screen time logged on your phone)**
  
- 4. How do you want to grow in 2025? What goals/dreams do you have for this new year?**
  
- 5. Which of the dreams/goals you have will truly matter in the grand scheme of eternity?**
  
- 6. Do you want to grow in your relationship with the Lord this year? How will you do that?**
  
- 7. What is your prayer life like right now? In what ways could it grow?**
  
- 8. What kind of person do you want to be? What kind of impact do you want to make? What's kept you from being that person?**

This is the point in the year where our social media feeds could get filled up with goal setting hacks and we start to think about signing up for gym memberships or maybe changing our diets, but how do we, as followers of Jesus, start our new year? How do we define success? What motivates us to change?

**The way of Jesus is different**

Where the rest of the world will hustle to the point of burnout, this is Jesus' invitation for us:

*"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* **Matthew 11:27-30**

The way Jesus found success: total dependance on the Father.

How do we find success? What is the secret of this "easy yoke" Jesus is talking about?

- Have you ever tried to live out the phrase WWJD (what would Jesus do)? What is it like to try and be like Jesus in the heat of the moment?
- Why do we fail at looking like Jesus?

Dallas Willard, a prominent biblical scholar who dedicated much of his life to teaching about spiritual disciplines said this about trying to live like Jesus "on the spot:" "We cannot behave "on the spot" as he did and taught if in the rest of our time we live as everybody else does."

He also said:

- "A baseball player who expects to excel in the game without adequate exercise of his body is no more ridiculous than the Christian who hopes to be able to act in the manner of Christ when put to the test without the appropriate exercise in godly living."

He believed there was a secret in what Jesus called the "easy yoke:" "... the secret involves living as he lived in the entirety of his life—adopting his overall life-style. Following "in his steps" cannot be equated with behaving as he did when he was 'on the spot.' To live as Christ lives is to live as he did all his life."

What does this mean?

If we want to look like Jesus, grow in our calling, and be successful by the definitions of God's kingdom, we need to adopt *all* of Jesus' lifestyle, not just hope we can look like him when we're on the spot.

**So, how did Jesus live?** — How did He spend His time? Think about it and write down what you come up with:

We learn how to live like Jesus in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-8). He says this about the practices and lifestyle of those who follow Him:

*"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him...And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you*

*fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

**Matthew 6:1-8, 18-17**

**What do we learn from what Jesus is saying here?**

Remember — it's not meant to be heavy, so what is He inviting us to do?

Write down what stands out to you below:

**The invitation for our community:**

21 days of consecration.

*Consecration:* the act of being made or declared sacred; set apart for a special purpose.

We set aside these days to practice dependance and tune in to the voice of the Lord and let Him be the one to define our year and our success.

The invitation:

- Set aside time daily to be with the Lord
  - This is why we have our 21 day devotional: we all seek after the Lord together, and if you don't know where to start, there are questions and readings selected for you!
- Consider fasting: laying down what you would normally be dependent of in order to take up the practice of prayer and being in the Word more intentionally:
  - Types of fast:
    - Daniel Fast
    - Media Fast
    - Meats and sweets
    - other:

Will you join us?

**Announcements:**

1. **We start every year with 21 days of consecration to dedicate the year to the Lord. It is a season to set ourselves apart to seek Him intentionally! We have a devotional guide for these 21 days, which you can get in the bookstore or online at [housesoflight.church](http://housesoflight.church).**
2. **This Thursday, January 2, we will not have Ministry Night. We'll see you on Monday for the week of sanctification!**