

The New Year | Preparing, Celebrating, Discipling

I. Preparing

- The best ways to prepare are doing the things that will keep our minds engaged.
 - We get into so much trouble when we go into autopilot. The vast majority of our sinful choices are made when we mindlessly feel our way through life. In those moments, all we'll ever do is habitually offer our life's experiences on the altar to self. That's idolatry. That's an abomination.
 - So, if that's what happens when we allow ourselves to shut our minds off, we really need to reconsider our amusement. The word "amuse" literally means "no thinking." And don't most people approach the holidays with that mindset?
- Keep you mind engaged by . . .
 - Listen to podcast episodes, sermons, and teaching.
 - Set up visual reminders like a Celebration Wall.
 - The absolute best ways to get your mind engaged is to read the Scriptures and talk to God in prayer. Reading the Bible is incredibly important for many reasons, but the greatest of the reasons is that God commands us to regularly, purposefully, and deeply interact with His Word. And He commands that we pray without ceasing

II. Celebrating

- Plan a time to talk about the blessings of the past year.
- Get into discussions about how you believe the Lord would be blessed in the New Year. Focus specifically on the areas in your life that God has been showing you need to change. This is a really practical way we can live out James 5:16 where we are commanded to confess our sins to one another and pray for each other. And that leads to . . .
- Spend some time in prayer. Don't just talk to each other about these things, talk to God about them. Specifically, as the New Year Breaks, the first words from your mouth could be a prayer to God. You could encourage everyone — instead of yelling "Happy New Year," singing Auld Lang Syne, or congratulating everyone — encourage everyone to have a silent moment of personal prayer. Then after a minute, one of the representatives could pray a short corporate prayer, and then you can continue wishing everyone a Happy New Year.
- Schedule some time to read the Bible out loud. Maybe you'll read verses from a Holiday Bible Reading, or maybe you can share your favorite passage of Scripture. Either way, invite God to speak into your New Year celebration by reading His Word for all to hear.
- Take time to talk of God's mercy, grace, life, and power. Regardless of in which Season your New Year falls, highlight the attribute being cherished.
- Speak about and meditate on salvation. Whether it's our Desperation, Justification, Sanctification, or Glorification, take the time to make sure everyone understands what salvation is and whether or not they've entered into a relationship with God through it.

III. Discipling

- When it comes to our interactions with other people, God expects that it will fall into one of two categories: evangelism or discipleship.
- Evangelism is an interaction whereby we introduce unbelievers to the Lord as well as introduce them to their need for Him.
- Discipleship is an interaction whereby we help believers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and submission to God.