

# Fresh Start: Get a Fresh Spirit for 2017



I love January because it represents fresh starts. All possibilities are open. Usually at this early point in the year, I haven't made too many glaring mistakes or committed a hoard of selfish sins yet. Of course, as a Christ-follower, I can confess sin and receive fresh power of the Holy Spirit any time of the year. But there's just something special about January. I've got a wide-open fresh canvas of a year ahead of me.

# So for this month, I want to focus on the theme of a fresh start.

Today we will look at one aspect of this, seeking a fresh spirit. Exactly how can we welcome a fresh breath of the Holy Spirit in our lives? I'd like to suggest a few ideas:

1. **First of all, pray each morning for the Holy Spirit to fill you with His presence.** Then listen and watch for His leading and guidance in your life throughout the day. How might He do this?

- Conviction. He may prod your conscience that something you're about to say or do may not be the wisest choice.
- God appointments. As you're out and about, you may find yourself with unexpected opportunities to offer an encouraging word or prayer for a friend or even complete stranger. You may make a business connection that you didn't see coming.

[When we pray up in the morning, we give God free reign to operate in our lives in exciting ways.](#)



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- Equipping. When you pray and commit your needs to the Lord, the Holy Spirit equips you for the difficult tasks at work, home, school, or church that you need to accomplish.

2. **Another way to get a fresh spirit is to pick a characteristic or habit that you want to cultivate and choose a scripture that matches that need.** For example, perhaps you are feeling jealous of a friend's recent success in an area that you have been striving for yourself. You don't like this feeling that has overtaken you, so you choose to memorize

Proverbs 14:30 “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.” (That’s direct, isn’t it?!) As you commit this verse to memory, repeat it often, especially when those envious pangs hit your heart.

To take it a step further, you could also write this verse in your journal and meditate on it, asking the Spirit to show you how you can personally apply it in your life. Write down any special instructions you receive. Maybe God directs you to write a note to your friend, congratulating her on her success. As you follow through and actually do these things, you’ll begin to experience victory in this area. Stick with the verse until you feel you have worked your way through this challenge and are experiencing the freedom you desire.

**3. A third way to get a fresh spirit is to choose a book to read that addresses an area where you would like to see spiritual growth.** It could have something to do with the topic you have picked for your memory verse, or it could be entirely different. For example, over the last two years I have been in the “dream-birthing” process in my life. I am slowly working through a book by Beth Booram called [Starting Something New: Spiritual Direction for Your God-Given Dream](#) (this is an affiliate link). I purchased a journal just for this book, being sure to capture all the insights God is giving me.

So, choose a book for the first part of this new year and commit yourself to growth. Don’t feel you have to rush. Take as much time as you need to thoroughly digest the book and extract from it all the goodness and ideas you can. Make sure you find concrete ways to apply what you’re learning by giving yourself actions steps and setting goals that have dates attached to them.

Instead of setting a goal that is vague like “I want to open an online store,” make it specific and actionable: “By March 1, I will open an Etsy store featuring my knitwear designs.” Then take the goal and break it into all the smaller steps

you'll need to do to get there, like choosing the designs you'll feature, knitting the designs, researching how to photograph your items for the store, reading through the online tutorials, and so on.

**4. Cultivate a spiritual discipline.** Spiritual disciplines have been around just about as long as the church has, but I'm not sure that we pay enough attention to them. Let's make 2017 the year we change that. Choose a discipline and learn about it and how to include it in your life. Maybe you feel like you could use some [silence and solitude](#). Perhaps you feel convicted to add [fasting](#) to your spiritual repertoire. Maybe you want to learn how to deeply [examine](#) your life. It could be that you want to understand more about [prayer](#) or explore how to do [sacred reading](#). The spiritual disciplines add a depth of richness and intimacy to your walk with the Lord and are well worth the time you invest in them.

## What about you?

What other ideas do you have for acquiring a fresh spirit for 2017? I'd love to hear what you think. Just leave a comment below and ...

Pray on through 2017!

*Jane*

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# Five Ways to Pray in January



**J**anuary is the start of a fresh year. It's the time when we have a completely blank book open before us waiting to be written. Much of the content is of our own making, and it depends upon our choices, behavior, thoughts, and actions. Other parts of the book are filled with things that happen to us, but again, we get to choose how we react to those things. As we begin this New Year, here are a few suggestions to *fuel your prayers*.

**1. New Year's Day** – January 1 is about possibilities. We can leave behind the mistakes and regrets of the past and start over with the promise of a fresh start. It's worthwhile to reflect on what was and set goals for what is yet to be. Pray that God will give you His vision for your New Year and anything that He wants you to confess, learn, or do in the upcoming 365 days. The following resources may help you with goal setting.

## Resources:

- [Only By Prayer One Word podcast](#)
- [Get One Word](#)
- [The Lens of Love](#)

*Verse: "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."  
Matthew 19:26 NKJ*

**Prayer:** Lord, we pray that you would drive deep into our hearts the truth that with You we always have a fresh start. We don't have to wait for the New Year to hit the reset button. But we do ask that You will help us to make the most of 2015. May we listen to Your plans for us and obey what You are calling us to do. We ask for the faith to believe that whatever You want to do in each of our lives is possible. In Jesus' name. Amen!

**2. The Epiphany** – January 6 commemorates the Magi's visit to Baby Jesus (this date is also used to remember Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist). If we can cultivate the same characteristics that the kings had as they were searching for Jesus, we can grow in our faith just as they did. Read more about this below.

## Resources:

- [Journey Like the Magi](#)
- [Re-gifting to the King](#) by Mary Kane
- The Season of Epiphany by Dennis Bratcher

*Verse: "We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:2 NIV*

**Prayer:** Lord, we pray that we have our eyes to the sky looking for You this year, just as the Magi did on their journey to Bethlehem. Help us to make You our top priority. May we

remember to give You the best of our resources and gifts – not the leftovers. Amen.

**3. Human Trafficking Awareness Day** – January 11 is the day set aside to draw attention to the plight of those caught in the web of human trafficking. This problem is much more invasive than you may realize. When researching this topic, I came across a long article by Vanity Fair that sickened and convinced me of the horror of this problem right here in the U.S. I did not put it in the resources (choosing instead to focus on what we can do to combat the problem), but you could easily find it by googling it.

**Resources:**

- [5 Ways You Can Combat Human Trafficking](#)
- [Shared Hope](#)

*Verse: “For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.” Psalm 72:12-14 NIV*

**Prayer:** Lord, often times the victims of trafficking have no one to defend them, no one to help them. We pray for their plight to be made known. We ask for their rescue, deliverance, and healing. We pray that all those participating in enslaving others would be brought to justice. And show us what each one of us can do to combat trafficking in our communities, states, and countries. Amen.

**4. National Religious Freedom Day** – January 16 is set aside to support the religious freedoms we enjoy as Americans and to particularly celebrate the rights our students enjoy in school. Download the short guidebook from the website below. Pay close attention to the section entitled “The Religious Liberties of Public School Students.” This section highlights

seven areas underscoring students' rights regarding religious freedom. In this day and age when it seems that there are so many challenges to religious freedom in our schools, these freedoms enacted by our own presidents (from Clinton to Obama) are eye-opening – and ones we should all be familiar with.

**Resource:**

[Religious Freedom Day](#)

*Verse: Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 1 Peter 2:16 ESV*

**Prayer:** Lord, we ask for protection of the freedom to worship You. Perhaps we are guilty of not taking advantage enough of this freedom to worship and serve You. May we remember the old saying that says “If you don't use it, you'll lose it.” Give us the courage and gumption to speak up. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**5. Martin Luther King Day** – On Monday, January 19, we will celebrate this federal holiday. Martin Luther King was a civil rights leader who worked for racial equality. Let's pray for racial unity in our country where we are too often divided by politics, social standing, misunderstandings, and outright hatred. May we remember that we are all made in the image of God.

**Resource:**

[How We Open Our Hearts to God](#) excerpt from Coretta Scott King's book

*Verse: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28*

**Prayer:** Lord, we pray for your balm of peace and unity to

spread across our country. May we treat each other with dignity and respect. Help us to remember that each person is made in Your image and is far more valuable than any material possession. Amen.

Feel free to add your own prayers in the comment section below.

*Pray on!*

*Jane*

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