

# 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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# 5 Questions to Ask Yourself for the New Year



It seems that we were just welcoming 2016, but here we are hitting the reset button with fresh, new 2017. Whether last year was a banner year for you or one that was full of challenges, it's always good to revisit what happened and decide how to move forward from where you are right now.

Isaiah 43:19 is one of my favorite verses. It reminds me that nothing is too hard for God:

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not*

*perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” NIV*

This verse reminds us that we are never beyond God 's help if we are submitted to Him and seeking His best for us. The following five questions will help you greet this new year with purpose and hope. Work prayerfully through each one, being open to how the Holy Spirit wants to work in your life.

## **5 Questions to Ask Yourself**

- 1. What are your top priorities for 2017? Set at least one goal in each of the following four areas:**
  - Spiritual
  - Physical
  - Soul (your soul is comprised of your mind, your emotions, your will, and your conscience). Pick one of those areas and set a goal.
  - Business
- 2. What pattern or habit do you need to break this year?** Is there something you know that should be out of your life? Perhaps smoking. Maybe too much shopping. Or it could be an attitude that you need to give the boot to.
- 3. Which relationships should you focus on this year?** Who are the people you want to invest in for the next year? Make a list and then brainstorm ways that you will make them a priority. Perhaps you need to meet on a regular basis with a friend or family member. Or date night with your spouse needs to be added to your schedule.
- 4. What one word or theme is God putting on your heart for 2017?** Two years ago my word was *focus*. In 2016 it was *believe*. Ask God to show you what [your word](#) is for this year. Then let it affect your decision making for the year.
- 5. Is there something you have been putting off that you need to take on this year?** Perhaps you're stuck and

stagnant and you need to make some forward progress in one area of your life. Get specific about what you are going to do.

## Journal Your Answers

Sit down with a journal and work through the questions sometime this week. Don't rush the process. Take as much time as you need. Then you use your answers to set an agenda and priorities for 2017. Actually schedule some plans, projects, and appointments based on your answers. Be as specific as possible because if you're vague, you won't move forward.

Feel free to share any of your dreams for 2017 in the comment section below.

Happy New Year!

Jane

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## 2014 Goals Podcast: One Word



Listen in as Mary Kane and Jane VanOsdol of OnlyByPrayer.com discuss a simple way to set goals for 2014. The book *One Word That Will Change Your Life* by Jon Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page is transforming their goal-setting plans for 2014. Whether you are a seasoned goal setter or you repeatedly fail at keeping any goals you set, you'll be inspired to approach this process in a whole new way for 2014.

## Resources from the podcast:

[Compel Training](#) from Proverbs 31 Ministries

[One Word website](#)

[One Word That Will Change Your Life, Expanded Edition](#) (book) available as an e-book and in print

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## Tired of Failing at Goals?



Lately, I've been spending some time setting **goals** and **praying** about the year ahead. I love the fresh start that the New Year affords us but have to admit that I've never been very good at setting – or keeping – goals. Identifying priorities is *not* one of my strengths. I feel almost paralyzed at the prospect of it all. What if I set the wrong goal and I'm boxed in for the whole year and I can *never* change it?! (Silly, I know.) So goes the thought process in

my head.

### If at First You Don't Succeed ...

Well, this year a few things are different. First, I joined the [Compel](#) writers and speakers group from Proverbs 31 Ministries. Using one of their tutorials, I actually set six

**smart goals** that I feel rather hopeful about. Whether I follow through with them remains to be seen, but they are realistic, specific goals. For example, rather than “Write a book this year,” one of my **goals** says “I will write a Kindle book on Prayer Strategies as one of my four special projects for this year, and I will work on it on Friday afternoons.” See what I mean by specific? Through this training, I realized that being specific will actually give me a chance of succeeding and hitting at least some of my goals.

The second thing that happened is that I stumbled across a totally different way of approaching **goal setting**. One morning this week I had the Today show on in the background as I was eating breakfast. My ears perked up when I heard Al Roker and Natalie Morales mention goals, so I tuned in to hear what they had to say. They introduced their guest, motivational speaker Jon Gordon. Jon didn't sound too hopeful about the whole process of goal setting as he cited the following statistics:

- 9 out of 10 people will fail at their resolutions
- 50 percent of us will fail by the end of January

**I could just see my smart goals going up in a puff of smoke.**

Instead, Jon recommended a simple goal-setting process he calls **One Word**: God gives him one word for the year that becomes his focus.

Hmm. That sounds easy enough, yet powerful. He said in the last three years that he, his family, and now many others (including sports teams, businesses, and schools just to name a few) have done this, it has revolutionized their lives. Here's the simple three-step process he says will help you choose your word.

Look in. Look up. Look out.

I decided to check out the [One Word website](#) to download a free action plan to take me through the three steps of choosing my

One Word for the year. Incidentally, I bought the book *One Word That Will Change Your Life* that Jon wrote with Dan Britton and Jimmy Page, which I really like. It's an inspiring read and only takes about 50 minutes to get through.

## And the Word Is ...

So, back to me. God gave me my word for the year: **Listen**. Already it's changing how I go about my day. I'll share more about that after I've lived with it for a while.

Does this mean I'm going to drop my smart goals? Nope. I'm still excited about trying those out, too, and will update you on that progress in about a month.

What about you? Where are you in **setting goals** for 2014? Are you a believer, or do you think it's a waste of time? Will you choose One Word? If so, I'd love to hear it. Please share in the comment section below. If you'd like to watch the Today show segment with Jon, I've embedded it below.

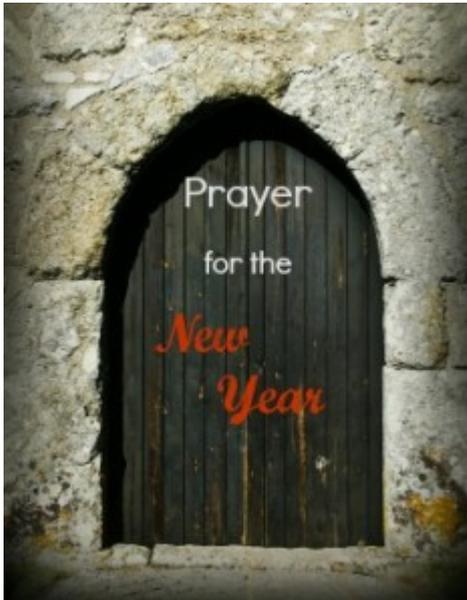
Happy goal setting (or not) and **pray on!**

A stylized, cursive signature of the name "Jane" in a light blue color.

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## New Year Prayer



With the **New Year** comes a fresh start free from mistakes, regrets, and failures of the past year. Hope and possibilities and expectations jostle for space in my soul as I look to the future. Yes, if I'm honest, some anxiety too. But mostly excitement for what lies ahead. Like sojourners of times past, I want to welcome the Lord into these next 12 months. Or should I say, I with *Him*. I want to be sure the door of my heart is open to Him this

New Year.

I recently read about an old Scottish **tradition** that placed much importance upon the New Year. Folks visited from house to house as the New Year rang in, wishing each other a good year while celebrating with food and drink. Once midnight passed, each household watched expectantly to see who would be the very first guest to cross the threshold of their door, thus portending what the next year would hold. I can just envision a knock on the door and families gathered around the hearth to see who would take that first important step into their home.

To acknowledge this tradition, the *Celtic Daily Prayer Book* includes a "first-footing" prayer for the **New Year**, on page 238 called [The Opening Door](#), in which the pray-ers welcome Christ to be the "first foot" into their home to bless them. What a lovely idea!

I was so taken with this thought that I wrote a short **prayer** myself to welcome Christ into my New Year.

## ***Open Door***

*By Jane VanOsdol*

*I open the door of my heart this New Year ...*

*to see Your glory all around me;  
to hear the whisper of Your voice;  
to smell the fragrance of Jesus in my life;  
to taste the fruits of Your blessings;  
to feel the presence of Your Spirit.*

*Welcoming your footsteps across the threshold of my heart,  
Anticipating the gift of another year.*

*Amen.*

I wonder if your heart is open to God this year? Do you feel the anticipation of new adventures waiting to be lived, or have difficulties of time past left you dreading the door before you? [Open the door to Jesus](#) so that He is the first one to set foot in your heart this year.

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Revelation 3:20*

May you experience the peace of Christ and the joy of living life with Him this year.

Pray on!

*Jane*

\*Image courtesy of Freedigitalphotos.net artur84