

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

7 Days of Freedom, Day 5: Stand Firm



*For freedom Christ has set us free;
stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of
slavery.*

Galatians 5:1

firm [furm]

adjective:

1. not soft or yielding when pressed; comparatively solid, hard, stiff, or rigid
2. securely fixed in place
3. indicating firmness or determination

What is the first directive God give in Galatians 5:1? He asks us to **stand firm**. Notice God does not ask us to fight, run, or sprint, but to **stand firm**. In the Greek, **stand firm** transliterates as *steko*, which means, *to be firm, to persist, to persevere, to be stationary*. Thayer's Lexicon gives us the prescription of how to **stand firm**: *to persevere in godliness and fellowship with the Lord*. When we face temptation, despite our feelings, we need to continuously obey God's Word

and consistently meet with Him. In short, follow and fellowship. **Stand firm.**

When we trace *steko* back to its root, it also means “to have a steadfast mind.”

[Standing firm isn't so much a position of body, but of mind.](#)



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After we have been freed from sin by Christ, under what conditions can we be subjected again to slavery? If we *move* ... if we do not **stand firm**.

Why has Christ set us free? So we can be free ... free to love Him, free to serve Him, free to take His message to the lost of the world.

Over the holiday weekend please take time to pray for our nation's citizens and leaders, that we will **stand firm** in the Biblical truths that shaped and formed our great nation.

Action Points

1. In order to pray and act efficiently, we must be informed. Please click on the following link to read about current hot-topic issues in the United States.
[Citizen Link](#)
2. Is there an area of your life you need to *firm-up*? What steps do you need to take to **stand firm**?
3. How can you help your family **stand firm**?

Please enjoy the music below.

God Bless America.

Mary Kane

“firm.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 28 Jun. 2015. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/truth>>.

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

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