

# 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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## 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)

## 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!**

*Jane*

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## Eight Obstacles to Finishing What You Start

Piles of books. Stacks of magazines. Untried recipes. Unfinished projects. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

Truth be told, I have way more plans I want to accomplish and things I want to do than time to finish them all in. I often feel frustrated when I see around me the evidence of my yet-to-be completed projects.



Lately, well actually over the last year, I've felt the pull from God to get this under control, to learn how to hone my ability to truly focus on a task from start to finish. It's not that I never complete anything. I've even hit a milestone this past year with one of my finished projects. It's more that I'm not the best at planning and prioritizing. So, before I look at ways to improve this area of my life, I need to understand what throws me off track. Maybe this honest look will help you too.

### **Ways to Derail Your Projects**

1. **Not having a long-term plan.** It seems to me that the people who get the most done are the ones who plan ahead of time. They sit down with a calendar and plot out what each of their major projects will be for the entire year and roughly when they will work on each one. They then further break them down into monthly, weekly, and daily goals.
2. **Not allowing enough time.** I'm learning that most projects—whether they be writing books or reorganizing closets—take longer than I think they will.
3. **Not planning for the urgent.** Emergencies and last-minute changes to my schedule happen more often than I realize. So that means I need to add even more time to point #2.
4. **Procrastination.** Perhaps a beautiful day is beckoning me outside, or someone calls with an invitation that's hard to resist, and I put off my priority for the new thing that's come along.

5. **Being overwhelmed by the size of the project.** Sometimes I just don't know where to start, so I don't.
6. **Not having God's perspective on a project.** On the other hand, I also have a tendency to jump right in with an exciting idea before I've really hashed it out with God to see if this is something I should be pursuing.
7. **Being overcommitted.** Impulsively saying yes to too many things. This follows closely on the heels of #6.
8. **Not taking my goals seriously.** So often, I will stop what I'm doing to help someone else. This can actually be a good thing, but not when it becomes a regular occurrence. As my husband says, "Sometimes you have to learn how to say 'no.'"

### **Does God Want Me to Be Productive?**

**You don't have to read too far in the Bible to see the importance God placed on doing things in order.** God created our world in an orderly fashion, and the universe functions in an orderly manner. Consider the following facts: \*We know that every year we cyclically move through four seasons. \*We can see an order to how animals live. \*God gave Moses detailed directions on how to build the ark and finish the mammoth project of rounding up all the animals.\*Look at all the precise detail that went into building the tabernacle. \*In the book of 1 Corinthians, God makes it very clear that He wants our worship services to have a sense of order to them when He says in verse 40 "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." \*The human body is a masterpiece of design.

**It just makes sense that God wants us to have a semblance of order, balance, and thought in our daily lives too.**

In the next blog post, I'm going to address ways to overcome some of the obstacles of finishing what we start. In the meantime, I'd like to hear your thoughts on what keeps you from being productive in your days. Please leave your thoughts in the comments below.

Thanks and pray on!

*Jane*

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## **Pray Your Way Through 2011 Podcast**

Perhaps one of your New Year's goals is to pray more. Well, January is a good time to take stock and ask God what major issues or topics He wants you zero in on for the year. Join Mary and I as we discuss what topics God has laid on our hearts this year. You'll be encouraged to pray your way through 2011 with us!

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