Pastor Jay’s Jottings

January 2025

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our risen savior and Lord. Amen. “A new year, a new resolution.” That seems to be the general way we look at beginning a new diet, or reading plan, but then what happens? We tend to fall back into our old habits, and the data will tell us that most new year’s resolutions have been thrown away by the second week of February. The biggest reason we don’t succeed is because we are trying to add something into our already busy lives, and our patterns are already in place. Enter in Jesus. Jesus says, “A new year, A new life!” As I was reading an article from the Gospel Coalition website, I felt it hit me that we don’t need a new resolution, we need a new life approach. So with that in mind, here are four ways to ensure that Jesus remains at the front of your sightline for the coming year… (2025) 1. Remember The wise man of Ecclesiastes said, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Eccl. 12:1). In January, the year is young, and the opportunities seem fresh. So many productivity gurus preach a gospel of self-empowerment, but as gospel people, we know the fragility of human life. We know every breath is a miracle, a gift given to us by our Creator. Every new season is a testimony, a signpost, to grace. So the proper response to the past year, whether good or bad, is not “I made it through” or “Look what I achieved.” It is “Thank you, Lord.” 2. Repent Our worship of God for his faithfulness and majesty, evidenced by the changing of seasons, should then lead us to repentance. His goodness breaks us in fresh ways as our sin is exposed by the light of his glory. But this isn’t a morbidly introspective, navel-gazing exercise. To repent is to rejoice. We claim the promise of 1 John 1:9 because we know our forgiveness has already been purchased at the cross. Beginning the new year with repentance is to draw closer to Jesus, to appropriate the fresh grace that is ours in him. This is why confession always brings relief and joy. It is the gateway to greater intimacy with God. 3. Renew New Year’s should also be a time of renewing old commitments, like marriage, family, and church. Before we begin grand plans to lose weight or develop a new skill—good creational goals—let’s begin by renewing the core commitments we already have. Our most vital work is what we do within the walls of our homes—loving our spouses and raising our children in an atmosphere of godliness and grace. We live out the gospel best when we live it out in the daily rhythms of repentance and forgiveness with loved ones. We must reject the lie that says success requires abandoning family commitments. We should also renew ourselves to the faithful body life of our local Bible-treasuring, gospel-preaching church. The local church is the locus of God’s mission in the world, where we gather in community to declare Christ’s kingship each week, and where we work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12) with brothers and sisters in Christ. 4. Rest New Year’s should be a time to rest. First, we rest in the reality of our identity in Christ. We may have failed to meet our heady goals in 2025. Jesus still loves us, despite our failures, unchecked boxes, and disappointment at the scale. The gospel tells us that he loves us in the midst of these. It’s not the voice of your Savior, but the whisper of the enemy that says you have less worth because you blew your resolutions. A “more successful 2025” will not make Jesus love you any more. He’s the One, after all, who calls broken sinners and empowers them for his mission. Failed apostles, former persecutors, recovering Pharisees—his body is full of them. Rest isn’t a sign of laziness or weakness; it’s a sign of spiritual strength and confidence that when we close our eyes, our lives are in the grip of a sovereign God. To sleep is to say that we’re not God and that the world can go on without us. Conclusion: Setting goals for a new year are an important sign that we’re intentional about glorifying God in our callings—work and business, home and church, private and public witness. But before we write out our goals, we should begin in the heart. The temptation for Christians is to make our plans and add a dollop of Jesus on top, rather than allowing him to form in us the desires and motivations to do his work.

“Happy New Year. Happy New Life.”

God Loves You and So Do I,

Pastor Jay