

Happy New Year, everyone! I know we are all wondering what this new year may bring, in regard to the Covid issue, weather anomalies, and what sort of life events will occur within each of our families. The new year always brings with it a new hope, at least it does for me. I don't make resolutions. I really just try to evaluate the year that is gone, and try to make better plans for the year to come.

I've been listening to podcasts by Pastor Rick Warren, famed author of "The Purpose Driven Life". If you have never read this book, you need to. His podcasts recently have included the types of investments we need to make for our lives. Yes, he touched on financial investments, but those with eternal returns, which are far more valuable than those we seek here on earth. But he also talked about goals. God wants us to set goals for ourselves. He wants us to dream big, and God can do amazing things with our big dreams, but he wants us to set goals toward those dreams. Dreams without actions are just dreams. Dreams with goals are destined to become reality.

Pastor Warren refers to seven key areas in which we need to make changes; spiritual health, physical health, mental health, and emotional health. We also need to transform the way we think about financial health (how you feel about and handle money), relational health (relationships), vocational health (your job – where you are going for the rest of your life). I plan to keep all of these in my metaphorical pocket, as they all are so important. One of my favorite verses was used as a reference by Rick Warren:

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 2:12 NKJV*

He shared that setting goals is our 'spiritual responsibility' and are also 'statements of faith'. God has goals for the universe, for earth, for history, for eternity and for our lives; each and every one of us. We must forget the past and keep striving forward, that one day we may receive the ultimate prize. If you don't have goals for your life, you're not living, you're just existing, literally coasting downhill – letting others control your life because you haven't clarified what you need in your life. As a statement of faith, we need to lay out our goals, believing that God wants us to accomplish them by a certain time. This stretches our faith, and without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

One of my dearest friends and I have been sharing our thoughts for the new year, mutually praying for each other that God would reveal to us both what his plans are for us in this new year. We both have an idea of what he may have in store for her, but that is her story to tell, not mine. I have been asking him in my daily prayers to reveal his plans for me, completely at his mercy for what he wanted to show me.

I have just returned from an amazing few days visiting my old high school friend who lives near San Francisco. This was a trip that had been planned and canceled twice for various reasons. I was thankful simply for finally being able to go. We had the best time visiting the beautiful Pacific Ocean, of which she is blessed to live so close. We enjoyed amazing food and drink as we ate lunch at a restaurant with a view of that lovely city by the bay. We rang in the new year together, after a gourmet meal including mouth-watering prime rib prepared by her sweet husband. We did reminisce, but I love that it had been ten years since I had seen her, and we were able to pick up right where we left off.

It was our last night together as we just sat and talked for a bit that I felt confirmation of what God wanted my goal to be for this new year. I believe he wants my main goal for this year to be toward improving my physical health. Of course, I am to continue to serve where I can, give as I am led and when it is needed, etc., but without my health, I won't be worth a flip.

Before I left for this trip, I had surgery on my right shoulder due to a torn rotator cuff and tendon. I am still on the mend from that surgery when I was walking in to my workplace and felt a 'pop' in my left knee, that nearly took me down to the ground. I was finally able to see my doctor, and the X-Ray reveals severe arthritis, and showed the two major bones in my knee almost touching one another. He had to drain my knee and gave me a cortisone shot, hoping it would relieve the pain before my trip. It didn't. I managed to do all that I wanted to do on my trip, but spent each night in considerable pain. One good thing about the knee pain is that it made

me forget about my shoulder pain. This was definitely a call to start taking better care of myself. I hope you don't mind if I ask for your prayers during this journey.

I can't tell you what your goals for the new year should be. You need to figure this out for yourself. I can tell you that it helps tremendously to know my loving Father is by my side continually, directing my ways and providing detour signs when I need them. My thoughts today are about my goals, but I write them with you, the reader, in mind. If you don't know God, the Creator, personally, then I invite you to get to know him. Find a good church where you are welcomed and can feel his presence. This is a new year. If you have no other goal set, choose to ask God to be the king of your heart. I can't think of a better way to start fresh. May God richly bless you in 2022.

