

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Our happiness should be determined by the God in our lives, the One who is in control of all circumstances.

KEY POINTS

- ▶ When someone says "Happy New Year", it indicates, for most, the celebration of the birth of a New Year—the joy of being alive to see the beginning of another year.
- ▶ A new year can bring great joy: a wedding or birth, a new/better job, graduation, freedom from real or metaphorical prisons, opportunities to help others, etc.
- ▶ A new year may also bring new trials and challenges.
- ▶ The best way to have a happy new year is to stay within the boundaries of God's will, plan and purpose.
- ▶ I can have a happy new year if I keep my eyes on Jesus, if I keep my focus on Him.
- ▶ I can have a happy new year if I allow God to work His will through me without hesitation on my part. I have to make Him my stronghold and my fortress.
- ▶ Every year has four seasons and in Canada each season has very distinctive qualities.
- ▶ Winter, the coldest time of the year with the shortest days, is a dark time when most vegetation "dies".
- ▶ It may be winter in your life. Things may seem unfruitful. But the Lord promises He will never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). He will be your abiding companion.
- ▶ In Spring there are new leaves and blossoms on the trees. It is a time for planting. There are signs of hope.
- ▶ In "Spring" we have hope for abundant blessings. We must be prepared to receive them.
- ▶ We dig deep into the Word of God and make sure we are rooted and grounded in Him.
- ▶ Summer is the warmest time of the year with the longest days. It is hot and dry. It is the time to water what has been planted in the spring. At times we try to find cool, shaded places.
- ▶ Spiritually speaking, we may find ourselves wishing for the day to be over; wishing we could find a shelter. Our situation may feel like an inferno.
- ▶ But remember, "Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).
- ▶ Autumn (Fall) is the transition from summer into winter, when we are moving from a season of abundance to a season of limitations. It is a time for harvesting. The trees with their multicoloured leaves are beautiful to see.
- ▶ However, the harvest may be less than we expected. Disaster may strike, causing us to lose everything. Then we remember Habakkuk 3:17-18:
 - ¹⁷ Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
 - ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Lamentations 3:22-24; Psalm 18:2

- ▶ Whether it is Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall, God's covering is over us.
- ▶ The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 11 that, "For everything there is a season" and "...God has made everything beautiful for its own time."
- ▶ God is in control of all of the seasons, whether natural or spiritual. We need to trust the experienced God whose reputation precedes Him. Everything we know about Him is good. His resume is perfect. A background check on Him would result in a flawless record.
- ▶ His on-the-job experience is countless. He is "... Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Revelation 22:13).
- ▶ Do you want to have a happy new year? Then remember, "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).
- ▶ No matter the challenges we may face, nor the sorrows that may come our way; they will endure "but for a night" and joy will come in the morning.
- ▶ No matter what season of life you find yourself in, if God is the central focus of your life, you *will* have a Happy New Year.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Think about some of the changes you would like to see in your life/society in the New Year. Which ones are a priority for you?
2. Reflect on the reasons you want to see these changes. Are they simply for personal benefit, or do they consider the well-being of others?
3. We discern the changes in weather seasons and make preparations for them in terms of clothing, activities, and other things. Can we discern and prepare for changes in spiritual/personal seasons? Reflect/Explain.
4. Begin or add to your repertoire of scriptures that you can turn to for encouragement and support in each season of life.
5. Repeat and memorize the scriptures that give you the most hope and peace.

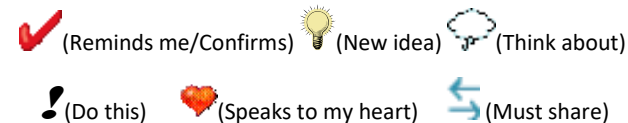
Prayer Time

Lord, I am so thankful that if I keep my focus on You, every year can be a happy year, regardless of my circumstances.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.



PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

L.G. Ice-Breaker: What is something new that you are hoping to do/purchase/accomplish in 2018?