

Program Transcripts

For December 2015



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

December 2015

Topics subject to change without notice

DECEMBER 6 – THE BATTLE FOR YOUR SOUL

You may not realize it, but you—yes you—are in a serious spiritual battle. You are fighting for your soul with a formidable opponent, the devil. How are you doing in the battle for your soul?

DECEMBER 13 – DESIGNED BY GOD

Is this world designed by an intelligent and loving God, or have we come into being by accident or chance? Is there evidence of an intelligent designer creating us or did we evolve from non-living matter?

DECEMBER 20 – WHY JESUS CAME

No one knows exactly when Jesus came into the world, but in this program we're going to learn from Jesus' own words and the Scriptures why He came. The more we know about Jesus, the more thankful we are for His presence.

DECEMBER 27 – I AM RESOLVED

God has graciously given us 2015. What have you done with your life this year and what will you do with the coming new year? Each year is gift from God, but what we do with it is our gift to God.

The Battle for Your Soul

You may not realize it, but you—yes you—are in a serious spiritual battle. Today we're going to talk about the battle for our souls. We pray that the Lord's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. This means we must take the time to learn the will of the Lord by a serious and sincere study of the Word of God, and we must practice what it teaches. Psalm 119:1-3 says, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" We want God to bless us, and we know that we must listen to God if we're to please Him.

We live in a chaotic world with many conflicting voices calling us to believe this or to do that. The voice of God in Scripture will tell us the truth, while the world's many voices will try to lead us away from God. Some voices encourage us to leave our faith and follow the world. Some will tell us "there is no God," or "the Bible isn't true," or "we're the products of evolution," or "Christians are mean." Others will tell us that our sins don't matter. If we believe the lies that the world tells, we can be led astray just as Eve was in Genesis 3. We're facing an ideological battle and a moral battle for our souls. I hope this gets your attention! Whether we believe and follow Christ or believe a lie and follow the world will determine how God will deal with us in eternity. Are you committed to Christ? Are you listening to His Word? Are you winning or losing the battle for your soul?

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 6:10-13. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." Let's pray. Father, we're grateful that You have outfitted us with the equipment that we need to fight in this great battle for our souls. Father, help us to be strong in the Lord and in His might. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

We're at war with the devil; and he's a formidable opponent. He's had many centuries to exploit human weaknesses so that he can lead us into sin and defeat us. This battle is a personal one, like hand-to-hand combat between two soldiers. At the end of such a fight in ancient times, one soldier was standing and the other was dead. This battle is like a wrestling match where two people are personally involved eye to eye. You cannot pass this battle off to somebody else; you must face the devil yourself. He has watched you and he knows your strengths and weaknesses. He'll use every trick he knows to defeat you. He has no qualms about cheating, lying, or using dirty tricks to win. He's serious about defeating you and he intends to win.

This spiritual battle isn't just for your life; it's for your soul and the souls of your loved ones. It's the most important conflict that you'll ever face. If you're not aware that you're in a fight, you will surely lose. If you don't have the will to fight, you will most certainly lose. If you're not prepared to fight, you cannot win. If you fight but you don't give it all that you have, you can still lose your soul. Your enemy, the devil, will do anything, anything, to capture your soul. If that means trickery, he'll lie and he'll twist God's Word to suit his purposes.

The apostle Paul particularly warned Christians to hold to the truth. Paul said, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with

God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled only to those who are perishing. In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2-4).

The devil blinds people to the truth, so they'll believe a lie and be lost. When people leave the Word, they leave the truth. So, the devil twists and tampers with the Bible. To tamper with the Word of God is to distort it or make it appear false by deception. Satan tampers with the Word to make it teach something that it doesn't actually say. The person who uses God's Word cunningly just to advance his agenda is in Paul's eyes disgraceful and underhanded.

Scripture reveals how Satan's schemes follow a common pattern. If we understand the way that he operates, we can prepare for Satan's challenges. Satan, first, loves to ask questions that create doubt in the Word of God. You remember that in the Garden of Eden, the devil asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Genesis 3:2). Satan knew what God had said; he wasn't asking the question to learn the truth or to do the will of God. Rather he asked the question to create doubt in God! He wanted Eve to question God. Doubting the truth is the first step to apostasy. The devil will always give you all the reasons you should not do the will of God. He wants you to forget doing things God's way, and to think for yourself, and to do what you think is best for you. By urging you to do what is self-focused, he gets you to go against God. He wants you to think you know more than God.

Satan, second, contradicts what God says. When Eve told Satan that she would die if she ate of that fruit or even touched it, the devil said, "you shall surely not die" (Genesis 3:4). The devil has no qualms about lying to achieve his purpose. Satan always wants people to place their confidence in him, not God. Satan claims that God has deceived you, but he knows what is really true. This desire to know Satan's secrets and to be one of the elite has led many unfortunate souls down the path to perdition. He appeals to the worst in people: their flesh, their eyes, and their pride. He makes them feel God is holding them down and cheating them out of some pleasure or some knowledge.

The Lord Jesus told some Jews who followed Satan, "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth because there's no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). All you have to do to promote a lie is to tamper with the truth just a little. Take rat poison, rat poison is 98 percent corn meal and only two percent poison. If it weren't mostly corn meal, the rats wouldn't eat it; but two percent of poison is enough to kill the rat. A little lie can still keep you out of heaven. Buy the truth and do not sell it.

Satan appeals to what you want to hear and he makes you feel so good. Eve was deceived by Satan's lie. The devil likes to turn things upside down. He makes what is evil appear good and appealing, and he makes what's good appear evil and ugly. God said, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Have you noticed how our world has labeled anything righteous as being wrong, while things that are evil are all of a sudden made attractive and enticing? That's the devil's scheme.

Satan, third, produces an alternate version of "truth." He enticed Eve with these words, "For God knows that when you eat of it (that is, of this fruit) that your eyes will be opened, and

you'll be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). The devil's alternative mixes truth with error. There is enough truth to sound persuasive, but his message is full of misrepresentations and distortions. Add it all up and the bottom line is that it's just a big lie. Satan wants everyone to believe that he has a better way, that God is trying to fool you, and that God is not your friend but is cheating you out of something really good. His strategy is to get people to rely upon him for real "progress." His alternative ways sound appealing, but, of course, in the end what they do is to destroy those who follow it.

Satan, fourth, despises and persecutes anyone who exposes him. Jesus explained, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and doesn't come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (John 3:19-20). Jesus knew that if the world hated Him, it would also hate his disciples too when they preach the truth about sin. The devil loves to put down the church and the truth of the Bible. Peter said, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, then you're blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (1 Peter 4:14). The devil is a bully, but God sees everything and rewards those who follow Him. If you hold to the truth and righteousness, be sure the devil will despise you and speak evil about you.

Satan, fifth, pretends to be holy. Paul spoke about some deceivers in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. They pretended to be men of God, but they actually served Satan. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." In order to deceive Christians and lead them into his "alternative" churches, the devil pretends to be a Christian leader. There are religions today that pretend to follow the Lord Jesus, but the more you observe them, the more you realize they're not God's people.

With high-sounding phrases, Satan tries to persuade people that Christianity is like a smorgasbord of ideas, from which you can pick and choose whatever doctrines you like, and throw away the others, of course. There are thousands of denominations in America, each teaching different doctrines and wearing different names. It's become popular to follow some man's ministry rather than listen to the Word of God. This is the devil's work. He's the one who provides heresies. Heresies are divisive false teachings that lead people astray and divide the church.

If you listen to the devil, you'll come to believe that there's no such thing as heresy, that every view is equally good. When you believe that, you've fallen into the trap of the devil. He tried to convince Eve to quit listening to God and to trust her own reasoning. When people ignore the Bible, the Word of God, and start listening to the beliefs of men, they fall prey to the devil's schemes. Their eyes become blind to the truth. God's ways and man's ways are not the same. You can't ignore God's Word and build your house upon sand, and expect everything to be all right between you and God. Eve was deceived; she lost sight of God and did what she wanted to do. If we're deceived and lose sight of God and do what we want to do, then we too will have to face the consequences of sin.

Number six, Satan preys on the weak and the ignorant. Peter said, "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9). The devil is looking

for gullible people who will fall prey to his immoral lifestyle and his disobedience to God. He uses false prophets and false churches as alternatives to the truth. He whispers to our consciences that we can sin and not be hurt by it. He is deceptive!

No matter how appealing his message is, the devil's goal is your spiritual death. So... resist him, firm in your faith. Pay close attention to the Word of God. Keep your eyes focused on the cross. God hasn't left us alone to fight the devil. Paul said, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:13-17).

These things will help you in your struggle for righteousness. Whenever you have this righteousness, the gospel of peace; when you have faith; when you have salvation; and when you have the Word of God, this armor will protect you from the devil's weapons; the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, is a formidable weapon. It has the truth that pierces hearts and souls. The best thing that you can do is to fight Satan, and to do it you've got to know the Word of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Oh how we need the Word of God and nothing else, nothing else will do. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we're so thankful that as we fight this great battle we don't have to fight it alone, that we have the strength of Your Son, and that we have that full armor that can protect us. Father, help us to fight Satan, and his lies, with everything that's within us. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

When people follow their own desires rather than listen to and obey God, the devil wins and they lose. My friend, what about you? Is the devil tricking you? If the Lord and His Word doesn't rule in your life, you'll have a master who lies to you to take your soul away. If you follow the devil, he'll take you where you don't want to go. Let Jesus be Lord of your life. To get right with God and to overcome the devil, you need the Lord's help. You can't win by your own strength. When Christ is in you and you are in Him, He'll give you the help and the strength that you need to overcome Satan. Ephesians 6:10-11 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

To become a Christian, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior and the risen Lord. Out of love, repent of every sin and start living as God teaches. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized or immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Galatians 3:26-27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Live the Christian life. Get involved at church. The closer you are to God, the easier it becomes to resist the devil. Do it for yourself, and do it for those that you love. Your strong faith will lead others to place their faith in the Lord as well. Don't let another day go by till you have made your life right with the living God. Why not be obedient to Him today?

Designed by God

Is this world designed by an intelligent and loving God, or have we come into being by accident or chance? Is there evidence of an intelligent designer, or did we evolve from non-living matter? Since the Bible is divine in origin, it teaches us the truth. We want nothing more and nothing less than the truth. We “buy the truth” and aren’t willing to sell it.

A person’s view of the beginning affects his whole outlook on life. We must all deal with questions such as: Who am I? Where did I come from? Does my life have a purpose? Am I of any value? What we believe about our origin will determine how we see ourselves and our place in life. If we consider ourselves merely as a complex animal, which evolved from a one-celled creature, we’ll have a pretty uncertain view of life. But if we consider ourselves unique individuals made in the image of God with an eternal destiny, then there is great reason and meaning to our existence.

Charles Darwin taught that man evolved over time from other species through the process of natural selection or what is better known as “survival of the fittest.” A biologist who followed Darwin’s thinking said, “man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.” The Bible, however, teaches in Genesis 1 that God created the world and all of the creatures within it. Male and female, they were to reproduce after their own kind. About man, God specifically says in verses 26 and 27 that He made man in His own image and gave him dominion over all the earth. These views are very far apart and cannot both be true. So, what we believe about how we came to exist makes a great difference in how we see ourselves.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 139:13-16. “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written, The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.” Let’s pray together. Father, we’re so grateful for Your love, and we’re so thankful that in Your wisdom and power, that You made us and designed us to be the people that we are. Father, help us to love You, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

Genesis 1:1 says: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word “created” means “to call into being something that never previously existed.” God simply spoke and something came into existence. God created the world and everything that’s in it, every plant and every animal. Last, He created man in His own image. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

Believing God intelligently created the world and everything in it is not a blind leap of faith. It’s built on observing all the order and purpose that’s evident in the world. Proverbs 3:19 says: “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens.” God purposefully designed the world and all His creatures with wisdom and understanding. The more we study this world and the human body, the more we realize the order and the purpose that God put into everything that He made.

But those who reject faith in God suggest a different way to explain the existence of life. Some claim that life evolved from non-living matter; but if we rule out God, then the origin of life is a mystery. It’s a great leap of faith to assume that life could come from non-living matter. They think there was a gradual development of complex molecules from the basic elements until they finally became molecules that could reproduce themselves and are assumed to be living.

Evolutionists once spoke of the primordial soup that spawned life, but many now question that since they learned of how complex life really is. The basic building blocks of life are proteins that make up our DNA. The DNA provides the information or intelligence needed to reproduce the proteins which give us life. Each protein is quite complex. It doesn't just happen. Protein molecules are made up of a complicated series of amino acids that are ordered by the various genes in our DNA. Sir Fred Hoyle, one of England's prominent scientists, argued that the chance of higher life-forms emerging accidentally from non-living matter is comparable to a tornado making a Boeing 747 jet out of a junkyard.

Living cells use over 75 special kinds of proteins and RNA molecules to make one protein following DNA's instruction. What we know about airplanes convinces us that their flight is the result of creative design. What scientists know about the way living cells make protein suggests just as clearly that life also is the result of creative design.

In 2004 prominent British philosopher and proponent of atheism, Professor Antony Flew, renounced his atheism. Why? He said because "the argument to intelligent design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it. It now seems to me that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design." Flew had to admit he "had to go where the evidence leads," and that's to believe in a Creator.

Evolutionists once believed that man had vestigial organs, body parts that lost all or most of their original function. There were supposed to be 180 such vestigial organs in humans. This list included such things as the tailbone and the appendix, even parts of the ear and eye. Now, that list is almost obsolete. Medical science discovered that these organs played very essential roles and were not "useless."

What these organs teach us is that God had a special purpose behind everything that He has made. Psalm 139:13-15 says, "For You (that is God) formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth."

Evolution, according to Darwin, is in a continual state of motion, with gradual change happening over long periods of time. He believed the fossil record should be filled with examples of transitional forms from one species, or one kind of animal into another; these forms go from the less complex to the more complex. But paleontologists didn't find these transitional forms. They found gaps in the fossil record. There was no evidence of transformational intermediates between documented fossil species.

Many people forget the number of hoaxes that evolutionists have posed to support their theory. They put forth "missing links" between apes and men. They believed the fossil records would show how one kind of animal evolved into another, but none of the fossils ever showed a transitional link between one creature and another.

Instead of gradual change as evolutionists expected, what they found were sudden appearances of new species and the overlapping in time of species. One evolution scientist, S. M. Stanley, admits, "Species that were once thought to have turned into others have been found to overlap in time with these alleged descendants. In fact, the fossil record does not convincingly document a single transition from one species to another."

The first fossil hoax was Java Man found in 1891. Evolutionists said they found a missing link, and what was the evidence? They found a skullcap, three teeth, and a femur or thigh-bone. They found the thigh-bone 50 feet from the skull a year later, and it didn't come from the same individual. The skull came from an ape, while the leg bone came from a human.

Second, Neanderthal man was found in France in 1908. Neanderthal man was thought to be ignorant, ape-like, stooped and knuckle-dragging. But the evidence proved that Neanderthal man was just as human as we are, and his stooped appearance was because of arthritis and rickets. Neanderthals are now recognized as skilled hunters, who believed in after-life, and even were skilled surgeons. They found one Neanderthal skeleton whose withered right arm had been amputated above the elbow.

Third, there's Piltdown Man who was found in 1912 in a village named Piltdown in England. It was no missing link; it was merely an early human. The evidence came from a human skull and a jawbone of an orangutan. This deception lasted more than forty years before it was proven to be a hoax.

Fourth, there is Nebraska Man who was found in 1992 in western Nebraska near Snake Brook. Some scientists said this was the missing link until they discovered the fossil was only the single tooth of an extinct wild pig.

Fifth, there is 'Lucy,' this is the popular name given to a famous fossil skeleton found in 1974 in Ethiopia by American anthropologist Donald Johanson. To many, Lucy is regarded as a certain link between ape-like creatures and man and supposedly proves evolution. But "Lucy" was not human at all; she was a chimp-like animal, very different from humans.

Rather than look to fossils for imaginary missing links, perhaps we should look to the amazing design that's right in front of us. This purposeful design all around us argues for an intelligent designer. That designer is God. He's the only one with the unlimited power and wisdom to create us. Revelation 4:11 says, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

Microbiologists tell us of the utter complexity of a single, living cell. Benjamin Miller and Ruth Goode said, "The cell has been likened to a power plant, a furnace, a chemical laboratory. In its reproductive functions, it's been described as a factory complete with manager's office, files of blueprints and plans, intercommunication system, assembly line with foremen and workers."

They said, "None of these fanciful analogies does justice to the living cell. All of these man-made systems put together, however ingenious and efficient, could not reproduce the functioning of this single unit of life that's too small to be seen with the unaided eye." My friend, Wayne Jackson, in his book, *The Human Body—Accident or Design?*, asks, "If the living cell is more 'ingenious' than any 'man-made system,' who made it? Are we to conclude it just happened? That's wholly illogical."

The human body is an engineering miracle. It's indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. We have trillions of cells in our bodies, and they're marvelously designed and show their function. For instance, the human red-blood cells are saucer-shaped and fairly flat, permitting the transfer of oxygen and carbon dioxide throughout the body. Nerve cells, on the other hand, "have long, thin extensions to transmit messages." Hebrews 3:4 says, "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God." These exceptionally complex cells didn't just happen! God designed and built them for their functions. And only a wise God could make them!

Charles Darwin in the *Origin of Species* said, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory (that is, the theory of evolution) would absolutely break down." Then he added, "But I can find no such case." However, on page 167 of the *Origin of Species*, Darwin spoke of the eye and said, "To suppose that the eye...could have formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree possible." Even then, Darwin doubted himself. He did not know in 1859 what we know today about the eye.

You are watching me because God gave you eyes and you are listening because God gave you ears. Bioengineer John Lenihan said, "The eye is an exceptionally sensitive optical instrument displaying many striking features of design and performance; even the windscreen washers and wipers (that is, in your eye) have not been forgotten."

Just think! Your eye can see moving images by the thousands as they change. Your eye makes adjustments to the amount of light, to distance, and to angle automatically. Every camera we own was patterned after the eye. Wayne Jackson argues, "If the function of the camera demands that it was 'made,' doesn't it stand to reason that the more complex human camera, the eye, must also have had a Maker?"

Likewise, the ear is a marvel. Using membranes like the eardrum, small bones, muscles that amplify the sound inside your ear, and 25,000 auditory receptors, the brain is able to receive these vibrations and interpret whether they come from thunder, or a voice, or from thousands of other tones that we hear.

One authority says, "Amazingly, the inner ear, although no bigger than a hazelnut, contains as many circuits as the telephone system of a good-sized city." Can you believe that a city's telephone system could design itself or just happen by accident? Your ear is far more sophisticated than this microphone that I'm wearing. Did this microphone just happen or did someone make it?

You're watching me because God gave you a mind that can understand sights and sounds. How did material things by themselves ever produce consciousness? How did we ever become aware of ourselves and of other things around us? How did material things by themselves ever produce language? Language demands the organization of words and symbols that are understood by more than one mind. How did language pass from one person to another? You're listening and reasoning about what I am saying. How did you gain the ability to reason? One more thought: where did your sense of right and wrong come from? Surely you didn't get that from material things.

The Bible says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Oh, let's be grateful for all that God has done in giving us this marvelously designed world and life. Every bone, muscle, organ, and tissue shouts that God made us in His image. Let's pray together. O, Heavenly Father, we're grateful for the love, the wisdom, and the power that You have shown in making us. And may we love You enough to do Your will on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

The fossil record doesn't give us any "missing links" or intermediate forms showing the transition from one species to another. The body itself shows us an incredible amount of design. These facts make it reasonable to believe that we've been created, not products of natural selection. It takes far more faith to believe that non-living matter produced life than it does to believe in God. It takes far more faith to believe a reptile could gradually become a bird than it does to believe in creation. It takes far more faith to believe an eye or an ear were accidents of nature than to believe God designed them.

This world contains everywhere the marks of all-powerful and all-wise Designer, and that Designer is the one and only God. He is your God. He made you, gave you life, loves you, hears your prayers, and wants you to live with Him in heaven for eternity. You can learn all about Him in the Bible. He gave us this precious book to answer our most important questions of life. It's the only book that will tell you where we came from, why we're here, and what will happen to us after we die.

To enter into a spiritual relationship with the Lord, believe in Him with all your heart, turn away from sin and follow His Word, confess the name of Jesus as the Son of God, and out of love be baptized into Christ. When you're immersed into Christ, you're baptized into His death. At that time the Lord will wash away your sins by His blood (Acts 22:16) and He will add you to His church. Nothing you can do is more important than getting into a right relationship with the One who created you. We hope you'll do that today, and let us know about it.

Why Jesus Came

No one knows exactly when Jesus came into the world, but today we're going to learn from Jesus' own Words and from other Scriptures the reason why. For centuries people have celebrated the birth of Jesus, some during December and others in January, even though no one really knows what month Jesus was born. The Bible doesn't instruct us to celebrate the birth of Christ; this is merely a tradition of men. Though we don't know the time of His birth, we're so grateful that He loved us enough to make Himself known to us as the Son of God. He gave us hope, forgiveness, love, peace, and eternal life. I'm so thankful that the Scriptures teach us about Him.

Keith Johnston Thomas wrote in 1912, "If Christ had done His bare work in the carpenter's shop, the most shining example of manly perfection and splendid prospect of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, culminating in the hope of life beyond, would not have been handed down to us." Our God got involved! He didn't ignore us and stay in heaven. Our God didn't leave us alone to wonder where we came from, why we're here, or what will happen to us when we die. We have Jesus who came to seek and to save the lost!

If Jesus had remained in the carpenter's shop, we'd have never known Him. However, Jesus, became the Savior of the world. His sacrifice on the cross for our sins touches each of us and offers us hope and eternal life. His sterling example challenges us to live holy lives of service to make the world a better place. His teaching leads us to be more giving, more loving, and more kind. Because He forgave us, we also learned how to forgive others. He brought Jew and Gentile together; He is indeed the Prince of Peace. We thank God that Jesus came into the world!

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 1:14-18. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*." Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful that Jesus came to dwell among us, and that we beheld Him. Father, we pray that our hearts will come to love Him, to believe in Him, and to serve Him. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men" (John 1:1-4). The Word was God, and He is eternal. He's always been and will always be. There's never been a time when the Word, that is Jesus, didn't exist. He came into the world to bless us with life and light, and we can be thankful for that.

To find out what God is like, study Jesus. Jesus is indeed Immanuel, that is, "God with us" according to Matthew 1:23. Jesus was born that we might know God personally and have a relationship with Him. What do we see when we look at the life of Christ? We see God's power and glory. He had power over nature, sickness, sin, and death. We see amazing love, meekness, gentleness, holiness, justice, compassion, grace, mercy, loving-kindness, anger at sinful behavior, patience, and authority. We see in Christ, God calling us to repent and to do His will.

The Bible says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus has always been Divine, but He became flesh and dwelt among us. The word for “dwell” has the idea of pitching a tent, that is, a temporary dwelling place. Since our flesh is temporary, Jesus became one of us and took on temporary flesh. Jesus felt pain, got hungry and thirsty, grew tired, and experienced physical death. We see His glory in that in spite of the fact that He was God, He was willing to humble Himself to bless us.

Jesus, as God’s Son, was still full of two divine characteristics: first, grace; and second, truth. The Bible says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Lord Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to His Father’s will. He did this to save us from sin and to give us life. This is amazing grace!

First Timothy 1:15-16 says, “It’s a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.” Jesus came to save every person who comes to Him in faith and obeys His will. He is patient with us and gives us an opportunity to make changes in our lives.

Out of grace and love for us, Jesus came to do the will of God. Hebrews 10:4-7 says, “For it’s impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ comes into the world, He said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.’ And then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

When Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, “Not my will but Yours be done,” He was saying to His Father that He was willing to drink the cup; that is, to die on the cruel cross. Such grace and such love is astounding! The Bible says that Jesus himself “bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

You remember that Scripture that we learned whenever we were children. John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten (or His only one of a kind) Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus are in the saving business. Jesus didn’t come into the world to condemn, but to save the world from the evil that sin brings. The Lord knew that we needed saving from sin and a path away from a sinful life. He forgave us and showed us the way out of evil. He lived a sinless life and showed us how to live and how to love.

The book of Galatians says that those who practice the works of the flesh or sin “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). But Christ came to lead us out of that evil, fleshly life to a better life. Verses 22 to 24, the next verses, say, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; and against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Jesus came to show us a better way of living than that old sinful way that hurts everybody.

The Lord Jesus didn't merely come to give life, but to give it in abundance. The Lord said, "The thief comes only to steal and to kill and destroy; but I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly" (John 10:10). The life that Christ gives lifts people up, and gives them hope, gives them joy, gives them peace, and teaches them to love. First John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." We're transformed into new people by the blood of Christ. He gives us new life and a chance to start fresh as changed people.

The grace of God not only saves; it also teaches and trains us. Titus 2:11-14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

God's grace turns cold hearts into warm ones. It turns people who were once foolish and ungodly, and had those desires that were ungodly, into people who live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. Their hearts don't wallow in the old and ugly life that they used to live. They're now ashamed of that life. They think about the coming of Jesus and live to bless other people. They look for opportunities to do good deeds. Wherever it goes, the grace of God enlarges people's hearts and transforms their lives to become compassionate and righteous.

The Lord doesn't leave people in the lost condition where He found them, oh no! God shows them what they can become in Christ Jesus! Jesus Christ first gave us grace to save us from sin and second, he gave us the truth to teach us how to live this victorious and abundant life! Jesus graciously tells us the spiritual truths that we need to hear, not simply stories that we like to hear. God had only one Son, and He was a preacher. He gave us the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). Jesus showed a great sense of urgency to preach repentance and truth to people.

The Bible reveals this urgency. The Scripture says: "When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and they came to Him and they tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose'" (Luke 4:42-44). So, He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. The Lord Jesus wanted everyone to hear His message. He spoke to anyone who was willing to listen. To God every person is important. Jesus wants to save every soul.

Mark 2:16-17 says: "When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, 'Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?' And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, '*it is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Jesus came to make a difference in people's spiritual lives, to help the spiritually sick become well. Jesus knew that both grace and truth were needed to make a difference!

Jesus came to bring the truth. John 1:17 says, "For the Law was given through Moses; but grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." In fact, Jesus could say to His disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). We can know the truth by listening to Jesus Christ. In John 18:37, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'" Whose voice are you listening to? Where are you turning for spiritual truth? I hope you're listening to Jesus by reading the Scriptures.

If you want to know what is spiritually true, study what Jesus said. If you want to be “of the truth,” listen to His voice. Read the Words of Jesus in the New Testament. Learn what He teaches. He is full of truth. We’re hearing many strange ideas in the religious world today. John said, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The very best test of right and wrong; the very best test of truth and error, is still found in the teaching of Jesus. If the Lord Jesus doesn’t teach it, don’t believe it. He is the measure of truth.

Some people think the words highlighted in red in their Bible are the only words that Jesus spoke. He certainly said these words, but the rest of the New Testament also contains the words of Jesus. Jesus made a promise to the apostles. He said, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:12-13). In fact, all of the New Testament comes from the Lord. Every word of it is God-breathed and utterly true.

I would hate for anyone to miss the grace of Jesus Christ by missing the truth of Jesus Christ. These two things, grace and truth, are intertwined; they’re bound together and they are inseparable. You can’t find the grace of Christ by ignoring His truth, and you can’t find the truth of Christ by ignoring His grace. If we are to trust the grace and promises of Christ, we must find them in Scripture. Some people want grace from Christ, but they don’t want His teaching. Oh, my friend, you can’t have one without the other. You need both. Let’s pray together. Oh, Heavenly Father, we’re thankful that Your Son Jesus brought grace to save us, and truth to teach us. Help us to put our ears to Him, to hear everything He says and to enjoy the grace that He offers. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

Since Jesus came to seek and save the lost, we can have hope. Your salvation in Christ came at a very great price. You weren’t redeemed by silver or gold, but by the blood of Jesus. That baby born in Nazareth so many years ago came to earth for the purpose of offering His body on the cross so that we might have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. His birth was marvelous and miraculous, but His death captures our hearts and our souls. By His wounds we are healed.

Since God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him on the throne in heaven, far above all rule and authority, wouldn’t it make sense to follow Him? He came to find you and to save you. Will you let Him? He’s inviting you to have an abundant life here on earth and an eternal life in heaven. No one has ever loved you to the extent that Jesus loves you. He was willing to endure the utter pain, humiliation, and punishment of the cross so that your sins might be forgiven.

If you want Jesus as your Savior, you must also take Him as your Lord. You must trust Him and believe what He says is true. If you cannot trust Jesus, but think He’s mistaken in what He teaches on morals or doctrine, how can you trust His promises? You can’t re-write Jesus’ teaching on one point and then trust Him on another point. When you do that, you really don’t believe in Jesus at all. You believe in yourself and in your own wisdom. God wants us to trust in Jesus Christ in every step and decision we make. When we do, His grace and truth surround us.

Have you come to Christ in faith, repentance, and baptism? Why not come to Him today? Believe in Him with all your heart, turn away from the evils and danger of sin, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Acts 22:16 says, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Won’t you do that today?

I Am Resolved

God has wonderfully given us this year. What have you done with it and what will you do with the coming new year? Today we're going to find ways to draw closer to God. When you consider how much God loves us, it's only fitting that we give Him the full measure of our love and devotion.

As we think about this past year, let me say thank you to each of you, our viewers. Your encouragement, prayers, and kind words have truly lifted our hearts. You've made this year wonderful and we expect nothing but good in the coming year! Each day we live is God's gift to us, and how we use our days is our gift to God. God didn't create us to waste our lives in things that don't matter. He wanted to bless us and to be close to us. He wanted us to know His love and enjoy His grace. He opens His heart to us so that we might have forgiveness of sins and the peace that passes understanding.

This time of year, people make resolutions or commitments to improve their lives. Some vow they will lose weight; some change their diet; and some stop bad habits or start good habits. The best thing we can do to make life better is to go back to the basics of drawing close to God. I want to challenge you today to examine yourself and rebuild your spiritual life if you need to. Build your faith, build your hope, and build your love! Make this a year of growing close to God!

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians 3:1-4. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for the promise that we have of being able to live with You when Your Son, Jesus, returns. Father, we're thankful that You have given us such hope and such life. Help us, heavenly Father, to love You and to do Your will always on this earth as it is done in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

As we think of this year coming to an end, it's fitting for us to examine our souls. Do we please the Lord? Do our words and lives honor Him? Can we say that we're closer to the Lord today than we were this time last year? Second Corinthians 13:5-6 says, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"

We first need to honestly look at ourselves. Let's put aside pretense and look deep into our hearts. We'll probably find things there that we don't like, sinful thoughts and behaviors for which we're ashamed. It's time to put away our pet sins and to repent from our hearts. Those who are outside of Christ need to become Christians by obeying the gospel; and those who are members of the Lord's church but have strayed away need to come home, asking for forgiveness from the Lord.

Once you've made your soul right with God, and we'll talk about how a little bit later in this program, you need to begin some spiritually healthy habits. The second thing is to begin reading your Bible every single day. Sadly, many Christians have never read the Bible all the way through. The Bible says, "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you've tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Peter 2:2-3). Reading the Bible is how we listen to God, how we come to know Him, and how we learn the

way to please Him. If you follow the yearly Bible reading guide that we have online at searchtv.org, you can read the whole Bible within one year.

Reading the Bible will build your faith in Jesus Christ. John 20:30-31 says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." The more you study God's Word, the stronger your faith will become. Faith still comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, or the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

Psalms 1:1-3 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." I hope you understand that God's Word is not merely a guide to right and wrong; it's also the path to blessing. God teaches us what is right in order to bless us and to prosper us. God knows what's best, and He gives us the Word to guide us in the way that brings blessing.

Third, begin praying again. Pray humbly, fervently, and regularly. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "pray without ceasing." This is not suggesting that we pray 24 hours a day; nobody could do that. The Bible here says that we should not quit praying. Some people quit for days on end. They pray on Sunday or when they're with others, but they've ceased praying on their own. Your Father in heaven wants to hear from you. Don't stop talking to Him.

Jesus, the Son of God, needed time with the Father. The Bible says, "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16). God wants to hear from you, too. You don't have to beg Him to listen to you. Prayer was God's idea. Some religions think God is too busy to listen, but God is like a father who cares about every aspect of His children's lives.

The Lord Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11).

Prayer is how we give thanks to the Father. It's how we, as Christians, ask for forgiveness. Prayer is how we seek help from the Father for ourselves and for our loved ones. Prayer is how we pour out our hearts to the Father when we're hurting or afraid. Prayer is how we grow intimate with God. If you want to transform your prayer life, take a few minutes before you pray and think about the One to whom you are speaking. You're talking to God, the Creator of the Universe, who made you, loves you, and cares deeply about every aspect of your life.

When you pray, ask in faith. I don't believe in my praying; I believe in God's answering. I believe in the power of God who hears my prayers. The Bible says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8.)

Fourth, start attending church regularly. The Bible says, "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our

bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:22-25).

We need the strength of brethren to keep our faith and our love strong. Worshiping God at church regularly keeps our hearts focused on God. We take the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day to remember what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, sacrificing His body and blood for us. Singing, and praying, and hearing the Word preached helps us to keep God in our hearts and to learn of all His love. Giving of our means allows us to demonstrate our love to God. Worshiping with the church is vital to keep our faith and our love strong! Oh, how we need to do that!

Fifth, let's live with moral excellence or virtue. We don't hear much today about virtue or moral excellence, but God honors moral purity and righteousness. Living sexually pure lives, paying our bills, keeping our word, and treating others as we wish to be treated, these are all signs of faith and devotion to God. Christians live godly lives because they love Christ and they want to do what is right.

The Bible urges us, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge" (2 Peter 1:5). Romans 12:9 teaches us to "Abhor what is evil; and to cling to what is good." The Bible teaches us to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

First John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world or the things that are in the world. And if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that's in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." How we live matters to our souls because sin is offensive to God; it's always been offensive to God, so let's live as people who love God and show it by our holy lives.

Number six, let's imitate Jesus Christ by serving others. The Bible urges us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). We should be loving and compassionate to those who are in need. Galatians 6:9-10 says to the churches of Galatia, and not just one church but to many churches who all could go together and help, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we don't grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The world identifies us as followers of Christ by the love that we show one another. The Lord Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, that you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Acts of love and kindness open the door of faith to unbelievers, and that's why we need to do this. When we are able to give love, and they see our love, they become thankful. They're more willing to learn about Jesus Christ.

The Bible points us to our victory over death and sin in the resurrection and urges us, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). When we're busy serving God, God smiles on us. Our labor isn't wasted. God rewards those who put their trust in Him and serve Him by serving others. Christians serve because they know the goodness of God and they want to be like Him.

Seventh, let's encourage others to serve the Lord Jesus. Nothing you'll ever do tomorrow will be more important than sharing the gospel with someone who is outside of Christ. One way that you can do that, of course, is by encouraging them to watch the SEARCH program. There are many other ways, but this is one of those ways and we hope that you'll invite your friends to watch the SEARCH program.

Christians are responsible for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. Matthew 28:18-20 says: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

That's why we share the good news about Jesus Christ. That good news about Jesus Christ is too good to keep to ourselves. We've got to tell everybody, everywhere about His love and His grace. Jesus died on the cross for our sins to reveal His love and grace to everyone. God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead to give us a living hope and to demonstrate once and for all that He is the Son of God. Christians tell the great story of His death, burial, and resurrection because they know the gospel is what people need most in life.

Money won't last and youth vanishes, but God's promises last forever. You can count on them. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse you from sin; only the Word of God can lead you to righteousness; and the Lord's way is the only way that leads to heaven. So let's follow Jesus. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful for Your love, and we're thankful for the truth that leads us to eternal life. Father, we pray that Your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Build your faith; build your hope; and build your love. Do this to make the coming year the best it can be! Paul wrote the church in Thessalonica these words, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).

Can these words be said about you? Can those who know you well say that you have faith, hope, and love? Do they thank God for your work of faith, your labor of love, and the steadfastness of your hope in our Lord? Do your friends see Christ living in you? Do they see the love of Christ, the joy of your salvation, the peace that passes understanding, and the hope of heaven in you? Have you spiritually matured any in the last year?

How you nurture your soul this year will make a difference in your relationship with God and in how you live your life. Will 2016 be a year of spiritual improvement or decline?

If you are not a Christian, you can become a committed one today. Believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Turn your heart and life from sinful ways to living for Christ; that's what repentance really is! Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the presence of others. And be baptized, immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is when the old man of sin is crucified with Christ, so that you may be free from sin (Romans 6:3-7). So live every day faithful and devoted to the Lord. And don't let anything come between you and the Lord.