

## HOW TO BEGIN THE NEW YEAR

With each new year comes new opportunities. It is a time when we think to ourselves, "This year will be better." Here are some suggestions on how to begin 2026 right.

**Pause:** Before we think about 2026, the first thing we need to do is take pause and reflect on the previous year. How did 2025 go? What did we accomplish last year? What did we plan and fail to achieve? More importantly, what blessings has God brought into our lives (Deut. 5.15)? What prayers has God answered (1 Pet. 3.12)? Reflecting back on how God has carried us through the previous year will help us to trust in God to carry us through this year.

**Priority:** The new year often comes with promises we make to ourselves. We resolve to lose weight, save money, or learn a new skill. While there is nothing wrong with self-improvement, start the new year by prioritizing improving your relationship with God. Determine that this year, you will be more faithful in your attendance (Heb. 10.25). This year you will treat others better (1 Thess. 5.14,15), find joy in your relationship with God (1 Thess. 5.16), pray more (1 Thess. 5.17), and be more grateful to God (1 Thess. 5.18). This year, decide not to prioritize yourself but to "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" (Matt. 6.33).

**Pace:** It is common to think about long-term goals. We create quarterly goals, long to-do lists, and grand plans. We worry about what the future holds, and we craft solutions to deal with what is coming. Perhaps we should pace ourselves. Instead of thinking long-term, focus on each day as it comes. Jesus tells us, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*" (Matt. 6.34). Remember that Jesus did not teach us to pray about tomorrow, but to "*give us this day our daily bread*" (Matt. 6.11).

How will you start the new year? Begin by looking back in reflection. Then look up and realign your life to the will of God. And live now by relying on the provisions and focus on the problems for today. Then maybe this year will be your best.

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"*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*"  
-Mark 16.15

January 4, 2026

### MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS : 9:00 AM  
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP: 9:50 AM  
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP: 6:00 PM  
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS 7:00 PM

## 2026 Bible Reading Plan

Reading your Bible regularly is a great resolution. The best way to help you keep your New Year's resolution to read your Bible is to have a daily Bible reading plan.

There are a number of plans from which to choose. Many of the Bible programs that are on your electronic devices have their own reading plans. Personally, I use "The Daily Bible" which puts the Bible into chronological order and has dates along the top that tell me what I am to read on any given day. If you are looking for a good way to read your Bible daily, here are some suggestions.

If you were to take the year and divide it up, you would find that there are 261 weekdays in each year (Monday-Friday). There are also 259 chapters in the New Testament. If you read a chapter every day with the exception of the weekend, you will have read the entire New Testament in a year. Also consider that there are thirty or thirty-one days in a month. There are twenty-eight chapters in Acts. There are also twenty-eight chapters in Matthew. If you read one chapter of Acts every day, you will read the book in a month. Perhaps alternate between Acts and Matthew.

There are lots of different ways of dividing the Bible and integrating it into a daily reading schedule. However you decide, make reading your Bible part of your regular routine.

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## QUESTIONS CONCERNING YOUR FAITH

### ROMANS 6:1

#### INTRODUCTION:

1. In the first four verses of Romans 6, there are four questions that are being asked in reference to our life as Christians. [Read]
2. These four questions address three different aspects of our faith.

#### I. GRACE

- A. Question #1: *"What shall we say then?"* (Rom. 6.1).
  1. This question connects us to the previous chapter.
  2. In Romans five, we constantly read about the subject of grace. (Rom. 5.2,15,17,20,21)
- B. There are three thoughts related to grace.
  1. Remission because of grace. (Rom. 5.1,2)
  2. Rejoicing because of grace. (Rom. 5.2)
  3. Righteousness because of grace. (Rom. 5.15-17)

#### II. REPENTANCE

- A. Two questions related to repentance.
  1. Question #2: *"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* (Rom. 6.1). Answer: *"Certainly not!"* (v. 2).
  2. Question #3: *"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* (Rom. 6.2). Implication: You changed.
- B. There are three thoughts related to repentance.
  1. People of repentance. (Rom. 6.1-4)
  2. Permanence of repentance. (Rom. 6.2)
  3. Perception of repentance. (Rom. 6.2)

#### III. BAPTISM

- A. Question #4: *"Or do you not know..."* (Rom. 6.3,4)
  1. Baptism: Literally, "immersion."
  2. We were separated from our sins at the point of baptism.
- B. There are two thoughts related to baptism.
  1. Baptism gives us a relationship with Christ. "Into" - "eis" - "in order to obtain." (Rom. 6.4; Gal. 3.27)
  2. Baptism separates us from sin. (Rom. 6.4; Gal. 2.20)

**CONCLUSION:** When you are immersed in water, you access the grace of God, and the blood of Jesus washes away all your sins.

## A PROMISE IS A PROMISE

The phrase that makes up the above title originates from and was popularized by a children's book written by Michael Kusugak titled, "A Promise is a Promise."

This was a book that was based on ancient mythology of troll-like sea creatures called "Qallupilluit." According to the story, a young girl was captured by the Qallupilluit. She made a promise to the sea creature that she would bring all her brothers to them if it let her go. Qallupilluit agreed. When the little girl got back home, she told her mom what happened. Her mom insisted that she had to keep her end of the bargain because, "A promise is a promise." The moral of the story? No matter what you promise, you are bound to keep your word.

The Bible also emphasizes the necessity of keeping your promises - even those difficult to keep. The children of Israel were told that "*he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth*" (Num. 30.2). In Ecclesiastes 5, the writer warns that it is "*better not to vow than to vow and not pay*" (Ecc. 5.5). He goes on to say that you cannot try to get out of it by saying, "*it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse?*" (Ecc. 5.6).

Consider the example of Jephthah in Judges 11. In the heat of battle, Jephthah made a hasty promise. If the Lord would deliver the people of Ammon into his hands, "*then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me..I will offer it as a burnt offering*" (Judges 11.31). To his surprise, the first one to come out of his door was his own daughter (Judges 11.34). Jephthah was devastated, tore his clothes. This was "*his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter*" (Judges 11.34). The meaning of what he vowed is debated. Did he vow to slay his daughter? Did he vow to give his daughter as a servant to God? Whatever he vowed, he was devastated, "*For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it*" (Judges 11.35).

What kind of promises do we make today that bind us to our obligations? If you have entered into an agreement with the bank to pay your debt, you have made a promise that you must keep (Ps. 37.21). When you get married, you stand before God and make promises in reference to how you will treat your spouse. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why God hates divorce. To divorce is to break your promise. How many times have we promised to be available to others? Promise to listen? Promise to be supportive? Promise to be honest?

To be known as people who keep their word is to be known as people who are reliable. Others need to trust us and know that we mean what we say. After all, a promise is a promise.

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