

**Monday, December 30. Read Matthew 4:4.** In 1924, Adolf Hitler started writing his book, Mein Kampf, which means “My Struggle.” Some people ignored the book, and some laughed at it. But the words carried a message that would eventually lead to millions of people dying. We should never underestimate the power of words. A judge speaks and a person is condemned or set free. A physician speaks and a person has surgery or goes home from the hospital. A government official speaks, and billions of dollars can be spent or withheld. In your life and my life, we know the power of words. Words can bless us and words can curse us. Words can lift us and words can cut us. Eugene Peterson wrote, “I sometimes marvel that God chose to risk his revelation in the ambiguities of language. If he had wanted to make sure that the truth was absolutely clear, without any possibility of misunderstanding, he should have revealed his truth by means of mathematics. Mathematics is the most precise, unambiguous language we have. But then, of course, you can’t say ‘I love you’ in algebra.” In this New Year, commit to pay closer attention in the year ahead to “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Because His words matter!

**Tuesday, December 31. Read 2 Timothy 3:16.** A young pastor was being counseled by an elder and this older pastor pointed out the importance of being biblically accurate and theologically sound, rightly interpreting the Word of Truth. The younger pastor was encouraged to get training to make sure that what was taught and proclaimed was actually the Word of God. His response was, “I just take what I like, what fits, and I make it shine and sparkle, entertaining and inspiring. And that’s really all I want to do.” That is a tragic thought. If devotion is not based upon proven truth, it’s shallow. And if biblical truth is twisted, it’s heresy. It’s not going to accomplish anything. It is merely shallow sentiment. It is passing the time. We have to work hard to understand God’s Word! Why? It’s only in the Bible that we can truly know what a Christian is, what God has done for us, and what God wants to do for us.

**Wednesday, January 1. Read Matthew 27:50-52.** There are so many things in life we don’t have access to. We see signs that say NO ADMITTANCE. EMPLOYEES ONLY. DON’T GO PAST THIS POINT. DANGER. No access. This is the way it was with God in the days before Jesus. The Jews had the temple; and the Gentiles would go to the temple, but there was a wall. The Gentiles couldn’t enter the temple. Even within the temple, only the priest could go and receive the sacrifices. He would go into the Holy of Holies once a year, and there on the Mercy Seat he could take the sacrifice and receive the grace of God, the mercy of God, and the forgiveness of God. But when Jesus was crucified, the ground shook and the veil of the temple that kept everyone out of the Holy of Holies was torn. From the bottom to the top? No. From the top to the bottom. Only God could have done it. The temple was now wide open so that anybody, anywhere, and from any background could go right in and receive the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ!

**Thursday, January 2. Read Philippians 2:3.** John Maxwell published a book in 2006 called *The 360 Leader*. The subtitle is, *Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization*. On the back there's a tagline: "Don't wait for that promotion! Start leading NOW... right where you are!" Now, that may sound strange, until we come to realize that 99 percent of all leadership doesn't come from the top. It comes from the middle of the organization. There are many examples of this type of leadership in the Bible. One great one is Joseph. In the latter part of Genesis, Joseph rose from the shame of slavery to become Pharaoh's right-hand man, thanks to his leadership among prisoners and the royal court. Ultimately, his faithful leadership meant he could lead his family out of famine. And of course, the ultimate 360-degree leader is Jesus Christ who led heaven and earth in humility from the manger to the cross. Where can you show more leadership in the year ahead? Wherever it might be, look to Christ as the ultimate Leader and follow Him as you lead others.

**Friday, January 3. Read Psalm 46:10.** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently said that for over half the people who die before they're 65, the basic cause of death is stress. One scholar said that between 60 and 70 percent of people who go to see their physician have stress as the underlying cause of their symptoms. This is not how God wants us to live! God says we should rest in the knowledge that He is good and cast our burdens onto Him. Try this: Without moving, take a deep breath. And then, be still for a moment. Ask the Lord to show you what is bringing undue stress into your life. Pray to Him, "Lord, take away my anxiety about this issue and help me trust You to look after it today." As the New Year begins, cast your burdens onto Jesus and let Him take them away.

**Saturday, January 4. Read Philippians 2:15-15.** A few years ago, woman chose to run for political office. She went to a "makeover specialist" and had everything changed – her clothes, hair, makeup... everything! When her friends saw her, they didn't recognize her. Do you sometimes wonder what you would look like or become if you had an external makeover? It's fascinating to think about what the change might produce! But the reality is, the Bible says it's much more important to focus on making over our hearts. As followers of Jesus, we must put to death our sinful thoughts and attitudes every day, and instead shine like lights for God. In this New Year, let's leave behind our hearts that are always complaining and be filled with thankfulness and love for all. In other words, don't whine, shine!

*Adapted from <https://winningwalk.org>*