

Happy New Year!

The start of the New Year can be a profoundly spiritual experience if you choose to make it so. It is a time of renewal, an opportunity to pause in the rush of daily living and reflect on where your life has been and how you want your future to look. On January 1, or a few days before or after, take the time to review 2004. What did you accomplish? What are you most proud of? What areas of your life need improvement? What steps can you take to make your life better?

Next, think about the coming year. Every new year, I take the time to plan my yearly goals. But I don't think just think about this year; I like to set five and ten year goals. I also like to think about what I want to accomplish over the course of my lifetime--not just what I want to achieve, but how my life can affect others.

The following six suggestions can help you grow and accomplish more this year.

1. Challenge yourself. In what way have you kept yourself within your comfort zone? While this zone or "box" feels safe and secure, its solid walls are only an illusion. What keeps you from venturing outside your box? Fear. Most often this fear is fear of shame--the negative voice in your head that is full of self-doubt, wonders what others will think, and what will happen if you fail. When you challenge yourself to push through your fear, you'll find your "box" is as flimsy as cardboard.

2. Turn fear into faith. Become aware of your fears. Take a few deep breaths, then write them down. They'll look a lot smaller and sillier on paper. Then pray about them. Give them to God. They'll come back, but just keep "turning them over" or "casting the burden" to God. Then take the first small step toward your goal. Acknowledge yourself for taking that step. Then take the next one, and the next....

3. Set personal goals. When was the last time you set a seemingly impossible goal for yourself? Studies show that those who set goals and *write them down* are more likely to accomplish them. Set mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, family, and community goals. Look at your goals every day. Pray about them. Visualize yourself succeeding. How would you feel about yourself if you accomplished one of your goals? Florence Shinn writes, "Are your desires bringing you wings? We should all be bringing a seemingly impossible thing to pass."

4. Reach out. Make your world a better place to live in by doing big and small acts of kindness. Smile at strangers, be a less aggressive driver, don't litter. Be a role model--volunteer. Cheerfully do more than your share. Being of service to others makes you feel better about yourself. Remember, what you put out is what comes back to you.

5. Nurture your relationship with God. Whatever your personal beliefs, take time to pray or meditate for a few minutes every day. Make sure you give thanks for all the blessings, big and little, in your life. Read something spiritual or inspiring every morning. You'll start the day feeling more positive. If you can keep in mind that God is our source of love and abundance, everything else in your life will become less stressful.

6. Find ways to grow. Classes, 12 step meetings, support groups, seminars, therapy, videos, books, and working with a mentor, are all ways to grow mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. If you're not growing, you're stagnating!

The following is a suggested reading list. I've used and recommended these books for years. Buy, rent or borrow books on tape. Whereas a book might sit around for months unread, it can be heard in a few hours while you're doing your normal driving around.

Ethics For The New Millennium, by the Dalai Lama

How To Think Like Leonardo da Vinci, by Michael J. Gelb

The Writings of Florence Scovel Shinn, by Florence Shinn

Codes Of Love: How to Rethink Your Family And Remake Your Life,

by Mark Bryan

Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, by John Gray

Children Are From Heaven, by John Gray

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, by Steven Covey

Conversations With God, by Neale Donald Walsch

Nine Steps To Financial Freedom, by Suze Orman

I hope the year 2005 brings you health, abundance, and joy. Feel free to write me with your questions. drdebraholland.com

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