



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



4 Friends You Need in the New Year

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Many prepare for the new year with celebrations, while others prepare New Year's resolutions which sometimes will last anywhere from one week to an entire month. But what can we do to really prepare for a new year? We all know that we should grow in our walk with God, value our families more and accept the challenge to be a better person. But all other items are so far down on the list that we struggle to move beyond these priorities. However, it is the accomplishment of these priorities that puts the matters of each year in proper perspective.

Ike Reighard wrote an article entitled, "Four Important Friends That Every Pastor Needs." As I read the piece, it occurred to me that these four friends will be beneficial to us all as we move into the new year. For many of you, this last year has included a combination of delight, disappointment and discouragement. Some are happy to set foot into 2024 and others are uncertain about what another year holds in store.

As you start your year with new relationships, look for a **Developer**. This is someone who will help in your spiritual development. This is the individual who brings out the best in you, who simply cares for you. As you get older, it is important to have such a person in your life. If you are fortunate enough to be married to one of them, you are indeed blessed. Developers dare to encourage you when no one else will. They will tell you that you can make it if you try, after everyone else has given you a dozen reasons why you cannot. We all need a friend who believes in us!

For 2024, you will also need a **Designer**. This is the person who is a mentor. They impart words of inspiration. They can always find a word in Scripture or life lessons which are able to remind you that you are never the only one who has experienced a particular ordeal. This person also reminds you of two things: 1. You were not an accident in the eyes of God, and 2. God has a plan for your life! These are two simple-but-powerful truths!

The next friend is the **Disturber**. This person may

utilize one or both of the previous skills. What makes the disturber important is that he or she will challenge you when you fall short in your abilities, realize your shortcomings and even drift into wayward thinking. They remind you to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and keep going instead of laying in the pool of self-pity. They dare to ask questions that shift your perspective to, What is God trying to teach me during this moment in time? Sometimes we've been slow learners and have wasted time — all because there has been no disturber in our life to cause us to ask the question.

The final friend is the **Discerner**. Although it has been appropriate to summarize the thoughts behind the developer, designer and disturber, there is no better way to describe the discerner than in Reighard's own words:

"In a lifetime of relationships, perhaps only a handful of people are willing to play this vital role because it requires mutual vulnerability. More popularly known as accountability partners, discerners bring the gift of spiritual insight into our lives. They know how to speak the truth in love. They know how to exhort and rebuke, seeking to keep their friend on the right track. They are also vulnerable — the true friends who will walk into the room of your life while everyone else is walking out."

I'm not asking you to forsake any other goals that you've set for 2024. I'm merely suggesting that you include the pursuit of these four friends in your list of objectives. These friends will be the glue, cement and motivation for accomplishing any other goals that you set!

The very best to you and yours as you don this new year! As you seek out these friends this year, make yourself available to be one of these friends. You may be fortunate enough to help someone else along their journey!

- Dr. L.W. Edwards

Imagine Your Future . . . With Heavenly Carrots

Farmer Joe has the largest carrot garden in the county, while Farmer Jake has the largest cotton crop. If you interviewed Peter Rabbit and asked at which farmer's property he would make his home, he might say, "Farmer Joe's, of course."

You probe a little deeper and ask, "Why Farmer Joe?"

Do you think Peter Rabbit would say, "Well, I hear he is kind, friendly, good-looking and a much better businessman than Farmer Jake"? Probably not. Instead, he would be more likely to answer, "Because I eat Farmer Joe's carrots."

Ask Peter Rabbit why he eats Joe's carrots instead of snacking on Jake's cotton, and you would discover carrots — not cotton — make up a large part of his diet. He didn't make his selection because of either farmer's character; he cared mainly about their produce. In other words, he needed carrots, but he didn't need a cotton sweater. The carrots drove his expectations for the best place to put down his roots (pun intended).

This may be a very simplistic illustration, but the fact is we all have a "carrot" which shapes our expectations. Our future expectations reveal more about this carrot than the actual outcome and our response to it.

The "Carrot" Categories

One of the terms the Bible uses for our carrots in life is affections. They are anything upon which we set our minds. Colossians 3:2 admonishes, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Whether our carrots for 2024 are political, social, relational, spiritual, physical, health-related, financial or emotional, they fall into two categories: those driven by a love for heavenly things, and those driven by a love for earthly things.

How do we know the difference? Think about why fill-in-the-blank is an expectation for you. Do you want it for your sake, for others or for God and the advancement of His kingdom?

Here's another test: how do you respond when the carrot is taken away or withheld? When your candidate loses; your health fails; you don't find a marriage partner; your bank account runs low; you lose your job; your government makes regulations which contradict your convictions. This will quickly prove whether you are motivated by selfish ambitions or heavenly ones.

As a final means of evaluation, consider how you respond when you get the carrot: Your candidate wins; you get good results from the doctor; you get married; you have more than enough in your bank account; you get the job you've always wanted; your government is making decisions you support. Does this satisfy you, does it fill you with gratitude to God, or does it leave you longing for more?

Our "Carrots" Have Consequences

Our carrots matter more than we realize. In the simplest of terms, earthly carrots are subject to the disappointments of life; heavenly carrots last forever. Matthew 6:19—21 states: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This doesn't mean we should renounce all of our non-spiritual desires. It does mean we should be careful which desires we make into carrots, or treasures, which drive our decisions and actions.

Think about the expectations you carry into the new year, and consider what these desires reveal about your heart. Ask God to search your heart so your motives are pure. Here is a prayer you can make your own as you anticipate the future that awaits: *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*
Psalm 19:14

- Cam Edwards

