

Nuggets for New Year: Realities of change

Here it is: the big flip of the page to 2026. It's that golden opportunity to reflect on 2025 and to aspire for a better 2026. The trick is combining those noble aspirations with the crush of reality for a hopeful way forward.

But let's be honest, somewhere about mid-January most of our aspirations for the new year usually get waylaid by the realities of daily life and the difficulty of personal change.

Here are some random thoughts to help us combine those noble aspirations with the crush of reality for a hopeful way forward.

Change is possible. I am not one of those who believes that people never change because I have witnessed life-altering change in my life and in other people.

Change is hard. It is more than a little unlikely that anyone will change something that has been a part of the pattern of their life for several years in a few days or weeks.



GLENN HAGER

Change requires a strategy. It won't just happen because we wish it to. We have to dig deep, asking ourselves, "What is it really going to take?" There will be a whole subcategory of steps and little changes to get to the desired goal. Work on those little steps.

Change is a process. It is not an event. We have to learn to embrace the process, realizing that we have not arrived, but are in process for all of life. That process will involve some successes and some failures. We are doing great if we can keep the arrow generally pointed in the right direction.

Change requires grace. The great example is God's grace who accepts us as we are. The great challenge is to accept others as they are, but the greatest challenge may be to accept ourselves as we are. Yet, that is where we are. That is reality.

Change needs acceptance. "What if we never change?" "What if we keep failing?" What if self-loathing sets in and we keep replaying negative mental messages about ourselves? It all comes down to our understanding of God. If our view of God is someone who is surprised by our failure

or sin and somehow changes how he feels about us, we will likely become an obsessive self-improvement freak or someone who feels a bit more righteous than most. That is not the God I know who was fleshed out by Jesus. That's a god of our own making, more like us than the real God.

Change is not just about us. One of the big parts of changing is becoming more loving. We all have this tendency to get lost in our own little world when the best thing we can do for ourselves and others is to become more loving and focused on others.

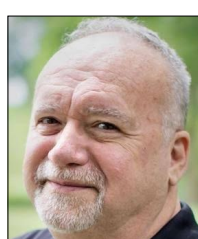
A New Year filled with faith and determination

A brand-new year is here, and I'm excited to see what the Lord has for us! Keeping Christ at the center of our thoughts takes a great deal of discipline and determination, but so does everything else we really care about. We often hear people discussing their resolutions, which are serious intentions, desires, and promises they believe they can achieve. What are your goals and visions for the coming year? Would you like to draw closer to God and experience His peace and joy? I can tell you, according to His word, He loves you and waits for you to be more involved with Him. James 4:8, and Jeremiah 29:12-14 talk about this, but it will take more than just a whim. It will take a drastic lifestyle change.

To become more holy and governed by God, instead of our emotions, let us understand that lifestyle transformation involves personal sacrifice. It is said that the only limit to our

goals for tomorrow will be our doubts of today. So, here's the big question: Just how willing are we to give Him total control of our lives? Isn't this why we are here? If we abide under the shadow of His wings, we will walk in the peace and joy of His Spirit, but if we allow ourselves to be tempted and drawn away by sin, we will remain distant and miserable. Matthew chapter 22 gives us the true meaning of life, "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

Most of the time, we are so busy making our own decisions that we hardly consider the distractions that cause us to



BILLY HOLLAND

ignore Him. In the book of Revelation, chapter two, God is disappointed with how the Ephesians had left their "first love," but what does this mean? It's time to examine our hearts and choose once and for all who we are going to serve. Actually, the Bible contains many passages where God says He loves us and how much He wants to fellowship with us. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are all about Jesus inviting everyone to have a personal relationship with Him, but it's our decision since He will never force us to love Him.

This has been a challenging year for my health, along with other various disappointments, as I'm sure many of you also have your own issues. I actually spent Christmas Day in the hospital. We need our strength as there is much to do for God's kingdom. My family lost some dear members this year, and this holiday has not been very jolly, but we are comforted in

knowing they loved God and are with Him now.

I ask that you pray for the inmates that we serve at our local detention center. We bring the good news of the gospel, along with baptizing those who give their lives to Christ, and serving communion. I also have some exciting news, as I became a certified substitute teacher this year for Jessamine County. I've really enjoyed the challenge, love the kids, and look forward to this coming school year. With a doctorate in Christian education, I have a passion to teach and coach, especially knowing how the enemy is attacking the young ones in today's world. I want to pray and help children in any way I can.

Philippians 3:14 declares, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus," which reveals a vital condition to personal transformation: no one else can do it for us. We must see our

need to change and be willing to do whatever it takes to be victorious. It's commendable to have long-term goals, and we should release our faith into accomplishing our destiny, but it's critical to realize just how desperate we must become. It's not automatic, but a day-by-day process. It would be much better to go slow with permanent results than to go through the motions and become overwhelmed with frustration and eventually give up. Let us pray. "Father, in the name of Jesus, I ask that you truly become our Lord. No more games, no more lukewarmness, depression, or excuses. Please give us the courage to discipline our flesh and the faith and strength to say no to all that is wrong, and yes to your perfect will for us. We give you all praise and glory, amen."

Dr. Holland is an ordained minister, chaplain, and author. Read more about the Christian life at billyhollandministries.com

Who are you and why are you? God planned each of us

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

From the time we enter school, we have been taught individuality. No two of us are alike. We do not look alike; we do not think alike and our personalities, interests and abilities are as varied as the stars in the universe.

From kindergarten through our senior year in high school, the concept of the individual has been emphasized. Our emotional, mental, spiritual and physical variances define us as individuals.

At our conception, the chance of us becoming who we are is one chance in hundreds of millions. Had our father's sperm that made us not "won the race," we would be a completely different person.

The human female ovary usually releases only one egg per cycle (ovulation). The human male, on the other extreme, produces literally millions of sperm every day of his life. One source states that production rate in the average male is 1500 sperm per second.

I asked AI, "If my mother's egg had been fertilized by a different one of my father's

sperm, would I be a different person?" The answer received is profoundly convincing and specific.

"Yes, absolutely! If a different sperm from your father had fertilized your mother's egg, you would be a genetically unique individual, essentially a different person, much like a fraternal twin or sibling, but still sharing the same mother and father; every sperm carries a slightly different mix of your father's DNA, so a different combination with the egg results in a new, unique genetic blueprint."

To consider my existence is one chance in millions is a little scary but it is also a direct implication. Should I be happy or sad at my existence? This opinion changes daily for many of us but we must consider the why of our existence.

Psalms 139:13-14 "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well."

Many of us have preached



VAN YANDELL

and taught God's creation is specific, planned, and deliberate. Did God actually direct the union of our parents' sperm and egg? Once again, why do we exist as we are?

In the leading scripture, Jeremiah 1:5, conclusively stated is that God created Jeremiah for a reason and a specific purpose. Can we apply that reasoning to ourselves? The answers to that question of course will be debated for generations to come.

Some argue this verse applies only to Jeremiah. "I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This could imply a specific reference only to Jeremiah? Had this been the case, why are so many other millions of people obviously used by God to accomplish some seemingly predetermined task?

Did God create Mohammed, Buddha and Abraham accidentally or did He have a plan? If God had a plan for you and me, no doubt He had a plan for them.

Did God create the notable evangelists, missionaries, doctors, scientists, welders and truck drivers with specificity? In this writer's opinion: Absolutely!

To think of ourselves as biological accidents is depressing and lessens our reasons for living. Believing that

a spiritual supernatural God exists and planned our being is questionable to many. Those that believe in and follow the teachings of an omniscient and omnipotent God, maintained is a certainty.

For those that prefer to believe we all are mutations and our existence is purely accidental, consider the uniqueness of your mind and body.

Could the perfection of our cardiovascular systems, our digestive systems and our brain functions have evolved by accident? Could have the regeneration of our blood/ bone marrow, skin, and the growth of our fingernails be coincidental? Those questions are yours to answer.

Whereas many of us have more questions than answers, what makes sense? Does God know in advance what we will do; what we will become and specifically, how we will promote His Kingdom? Some of us believe "Of course He does!"

As I have grown older, I have come to understand, I know nothing. All one can do is analyze and evaluate available information, and those things we see/witness and form our thinking on is that existing information.

It appears our best (and possibly only) source of reliable information is the Holy Bible.

I have come to believe everything else is speculation, opinion, fiction or fantasy. God's word proves itself from within itself.

Can we determine beyond our own thoughts the will of God? Many believe His Holy Spirit teaches us and even in some cases, manipulates us.

Thus, the verse Proverbs 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established," takes on a completely distinctive meaning and a separate meaning for each of us.

Submission to God's will and plan for us has a new and different meaning as we realize our differences. As Jesus told Ananias (Acts 9: 15) that Paul "is my chosen vessel," each of us has a matchless and irreplaceable purpose.

You are not an accident! The teaching of Savior Jesus as being the one that provides for us eternal salvation by our faith based belief in Him is a teaching to be told to the world. Evidence points to this as a substantiated fact; we are not accidental beings and we have a purpose.

Van Yandell is a retired industrial arts teacher, an ordained gospel evangelist and commissioned missionary. His email is vmy3451@gmail.com