

STEADY PACE. BOLD MOVES.

EMBARK

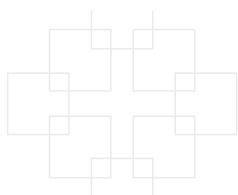




*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Isaiah 55:8-9





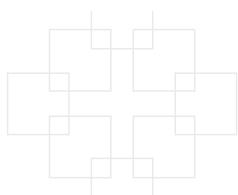
WELCOME

You might find this launch kit a bit unorthodox. As you know, our modern culture has lots to say about how to get any year started “right.” Magazine articles and podcast episodes abound, all offering ways to improve fitness, finances, and everything else. And those approaches can be good.

But truly, God is inviting us into something bigger, better, and longer-lasting than any diet, gym membership, or list of resolutions.

When we think about getting intentional about the next twelve months, therefore, it begins with God — and *that’s* what this launch kit is all about. The exercises contained herein — which are best completed in three separate sittings — will help you align your heart with his heart and discern *his* thoughts and purposes for the year upcoming.

We pray you find it supremely helpful in cutting through the chaos and confusion and finding God’s goodness and grace.





PHRASE FOR THE YEAR

Entering any new season with unique, personal words or phrases from God can prove both motivating and clarifying. Such words act somehow as beacons *and* anchors, helping us make wise and courageous decisions, keeping us rooted in our God-given identities. With them in mind, we can walk into any situation, any interaction, confident in who we are, whose we are, and what matters most, thereby bolstering our abilities to make meaningful and eternal differences in our own lives and the lives of the people we love.

To obtain such words or phrases, though, we need help. Only our tender and fierce Father in Heaven knows enough, loves well enough, to bestow the right words upon his children.





So, this exercise is not about *choosing* but *receiving*.

We get these words *through prayer*.

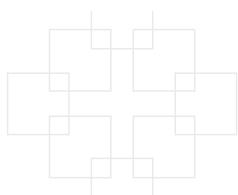
Every person connects with God differently, so consider what lifts your spirit and orients you toward him. Do you connect with God most easily out in nature? When worship music is playing? When there's silence? Whatever facilitates closeness with God, go ahead and do that in a place where you're unlikely to be interrupted. And ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts. Pray against distraction, against fatigue, against confusion. Then, remain quiet for a length of time. Whatever feels right.

Just breathe and relax.

Enjoy a few moments of solitude.

Before we get to the listening part, it can also be helpful to spend some time in retrospect, examining the choices we've made—whom we've been spending time with, what practices we've been engaging in, what experiences we've been enjoying.

So, take some quiet moments now to reflect upon those choices and their results. What was good? Who was good for you? What worked? What wasn't so good? What didn't work? What did God teach you? How did you grow? What was there to celebrate?





Now, let's listen for God's voice.

When you're ready, go ahead and simply pray this prayer:



God, I need your help. I want to sense your presence. I want to know your will. Help me quiet my spirit and listen to you. Help me overcome any thoughts or beliefs that might prevent me from hearing and responding to your voice.

Now, as the good father you are, please come and teach me your wisdom and truth: if you could pray one word or phrase over me for the coming twelve months, what would that be?

Remain quiet for ten to twenty minutes. Don't feel any pressure, and don't rush it. Don't try to listen with your physical ears but with your heart. Notice what thoughts come and go. Listen for an inner voice. Maybe you'll sense a single word or a few, or maybe a verse or character from the Bible, or maybe a line from a song.

Be open and attentive.

If you love worship music playing the background as you pray, here is a [Spotify playlist](#) we put together for you.





Remember, God wants to speak to his children.

If you struggle to hear, don't dwell on it because when we engage God in this way, he's sure to answer at some point in some way — probably in one we won't expect. Maybe your word or words will come in the silence. Or maybe they will come in a later conversation. Or maybe you'll sense them during worship or during a sermon or while you are driving.

So again, be open and attentive. Your good Father wants to speak to you, his beloved child. It might also help to prayerfully consider these questions: What kind of person do you want to become next year? What prayers do you want to see answered? Finally, if you could sum up your personal hopes for the new year in a word or two, what would they be?

Once you have settled on a word or phrase, respond in prayer to God's gift:



Father God, as I look toward the open expanse of this new year, help me to know your thoughts and desires for my life. Help me to enter the new year with great faith, expectancy, and peace as I follow your lead.

What can I do to pursue my word for the year? How can I live into this word?

Amen.



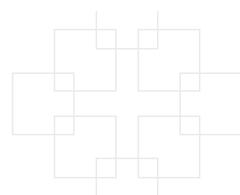


Enjoy the silence for another five to ten minutes, listening with your heart. Then, when you are done, remain in a quiet, prayerful state and consider these questions:

- Will you surrender this next year to God? Will you consecrate the upcoming twelve months to him? If so, do those things now.
- Will you lean into your word or phrase, starting now?
- What bold moves do you feel encouraged or compelled to make in response to receiving these words, these words just for you?

What bold moves came to mind as you prayed?







PEOPLE FOR THE YEAR

The Bible is clear: we're meant to be together, to do life together, to care for one another, to be united with God and our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Don't think community is not for you, friend; you are not alone. None of us is ever alone. Not really. Rich, long-term community is available to each of us. We just need to bring our intentionality and creativity, our bravery and perseverance to the issue.





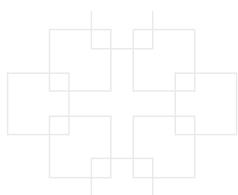
Find a place you're unlikely to be interrupted.

Turn off your notifications. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts. Again, pray against distraction, fatigue, and confusion. Then, do nothing for a few minutes. Just breathe and relax. Enjoy a few moments of simplicity and calm. And then, when you're ready, close your eyes and pray:



God, I need your help. I want to sense your voice. I want to know your will for me around community. Help me to build the community that you want for me. Please show me a face or two or three. Tell me a name. Who do you have in mind for me? Is there someone I already know? Is there someone I've been turning away? Or somebody new?

Now, remain still for ten to twenty minutes. Again, don't feel pressure to see specific things or hear particular names or think certain thoughts. Be open, and don't be in a hurry. There is no urgency. Listen with your heart. Listen for that inner voice. If you struggle to hear, don't be anxious. Don't dwell on it. Just try again later.





Also, remember, from our perspective, God is unpredictable.

So, having asked these questions, you might sense his answers in other contexts, even when you least expect them. For example, you might gain an answer in a future moment of unguarded thought or a subsequent conversation with a trusted friend.

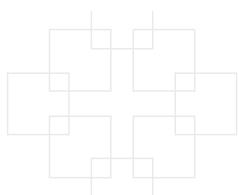
Once you think you might have seen a face or two or heard a name, respond to God:



Father God, as I consider my community, help me to know your thoughts and desires for my life. Help me to approach community with great courage, expectancy, and love as I follow your lead.

Please tell me, what can I do to pursue the friendships you want for me? What steps can I take to partner with you in building my community?

Amen.



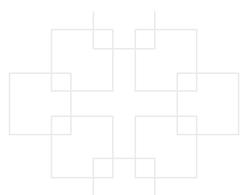


Embrace the silence for five to ten minutes, listening with your heart. Then, when you are done, remain in a quiet, prayerful state and consider these questions:

- Will you, right now, surrender your relationships to God? Will you consecrate your friendships to him? If so, do those things now.
- Will you lean into the relationships God's just put on your heart, starting now?
- What commitments will you make around initiating connection among the relationships God has called you to?

What bold moves, commitments, or specific actions came to mind as you prayed?







PRACTICE FOR THE YEAR

God made you to be well — well in body, mind, and spirit. He made you for peace and rest and restoration. He wants you to enjoy your life, to feel his love, to overflow with it. And he also made you to connect with him *uniquely*.





One last time, find a place you're unlikely to be interrupted and turn off notifications. Once again, pray against distraction, fatigue, and confusion — and then ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts. Then, remain still and quiet for as long as it feels right. Relax. Soak in a few moments of peace.

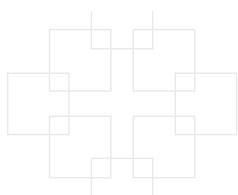
When you're ready, pull out a pen or open the notes app on your phone and list between ten and twenty-five activities — things you love doing, things that bring you joy, things that make you feel alive. Don't list any pursuits because others might think you're cool or saintly for doing them. Instead, list things that truly move your heart — get it beating fast or slow it down. List things that give you rest, restore you, give you recreation, and connect you to God.

Now, switching gears.

Scripture and tradition beckon us into the rich and varied actions that open our hearts to the presence of God — things like reading Scripture, engaging in prayer, fasting, study, solitude, meditation, service, confession, worship, and celebration. These practices have stood the test of time because they work. By engaging in them, we get to have encounters with the very God of the Universe.

But, because you are uniquely made, you might not want to engage in, say, solitude, the same way as your spouse or neighbor. You might enjoy solitude while hiking alone or running or sitting quietly in a garden or an empty church sanctuary. Therefore, taking into account your singularity is vital.

And that's why we created our lists of things we love.





So now, return to your list of ten and twenty-five activities and narrow it down by overlaying upon it this list of traditional spiritual activities:



Your List of Activities

Traditional Spiritual Activities

Reading Scripture

Praying

Fasting

Studying

Sitting in Solitude

Meditating

Serving Others

Confessing Your Sins

Worshipping

Celebrating

Look at both lists and pray about each item, but do it with your eyes open. Listen for God's *still small voice*. Let the Holy Spirit guide your thoughts as you consider this question:

- Where is the overlap? Where can you engage in a traditional spiritual activity *while* doing something that you love?



Once you have settled on an activity or two where there is overlap, remain in a quiet, prayerful state and consider these questions:

- What are you prepared to do? Will you commit to regularly engaging in the activities you've settled upon, starting now and continuing for the rest of this new year?
 - What bold moves do you feel encouraged or compelled to make in response to God's invitation to spend time with him? Commitments around routines and frequency? Commitments about asking others to keep you accountable?

What bold moves came to mind as you prayed?





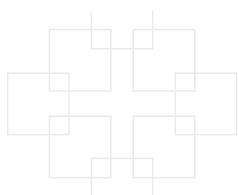
As we draw these exercises to a close, pray with us one last time.



Father God, thank you for helping me align my heart with yours as I enter this new year. Thank you for helping me to bring intentionality to my relationship with myself, my relationships with others, and my relationship with you. Give me perseverance and strength when things get hard. Give me energy and inspiration when things get busy. Give me wisdom and clarity when things get confusing.

I want to follow your lead this coming year— and I want to stay the course.

Amen.





Great work, my friend! Very well done.

Please know that we are in this with you. We're praying for strength and grit in the New Year for all of us. We pray we can all make the bold moves we've identified here and hold fast to the commitments we've made through these exercises. And we pray that our collective intentionality — and our resulting actions — bring us closer in love, closer to one another, and closer to God.

Finally, we pray a blessing of joy, peace, abundance, and health over your year.

Amen, and Happy New Year!



P.S. We'd love to join you as you go deeper. Therefore, if you haven't yet, take a moment exploring our various ministries. They're handcrafted just for you! ***Loop*** for Women, ***WiRE*** for Men, the ***Rush*** Podcast, ***FLAG*** Messages, and ***Rapt*** Interviews!

