

January Spiritual Vitality Practice

Word for the Year

January often gets people thinking about fresh starts, new beginnings, and New Year Resolutions. While we think about improved eating habits, and new exercise routines, it's also a good time to re-invigorate your Spiritual life and your commitment to grow in faith and relationship with God through Jesus Christ. One simple way to do this is to focus on one word, which becomes your prayer focus and theme for the entire year.

Your Word for the Year “should describe how you believe God wants to transform you...It can be something you're asking for your life or a way you'd like to see God guide and direct you throughout the year” (Diana Shiflett, *Spiritual Practices in Community*). Choose a Word for the Year that will help you grow and deepen your relationship with God, a word which will encourage you or stretch you. Choosing a God-inspired word of the year will ultimately direct your attention toward God, stimulate your faith journey, and provide a focus for your prayers throughout the year.

Get Started:

- Take some time to be still, sitting comfortably in the silence. Take a few deep breaths and become aware of the presence of God. A Breath Prayer is a good spiritual practice for this step (see March 2018 Newsletter for guided instructions).
- Ask God what He would like you to focus on in the upcoming year...where have you noticed the need for growth, is there a common theme in the last few days (or weeks) which keeps coming to the surface?
 - Try this prayer (or something similar): Heavenly Father, I open myself before you. Fill me with Your Presence and help me understand how I can grow and mature spiritually. I want to live and act in the manner You desire of me. Show me an area of focus for this year.”
- Listen for the voice of God. Expect that there is a word from God for you. Don't force one or casually make one up, but trust that God is stirring your heart. Where do you sense Him leading you?
- Your Word may not come to you immediately and you may have to spend several weeks in prayerful discernment waiting to sense where God is leading you. If a specific word does not come to you after a few weeks:
 - Discuss the word (s) you are considering with others. Sometimes discussing out loud is a part of discovering your word.
 - Read scripture and let God's Word speak to you. Perhaps your word is a fruit of the Spirit (like patience or joy), or a personality trait (like endurance), or an attribute of God (like forgiveness).
- Once you know your Word for the Year, write it down and reflect on it over the course of the year—through journaling, discussion with trusted friends, or through private contemplation. Journaling, especially, will help you see your progression and remind you to stay focused on your Word as your journey throughout the year.

After you have your Word for the Year, let it inspire you to be the person God created you to be in your family life, your job, your health, your relationships in the church and community, and in your faith life.