

A Christian Perspective For A New Year

Sermon by Todd Lester

January 3, 2016

THREE THINGS THAT CAUSE STRESS

1. Everything is _____
2. Every decision is becoming _____
3. Every value is being _____

THREE THINGS THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE

1. God's _____ will never change

Malachi 3:6 I am the Lord, and I do not change...

Jeremiah 31:3, Romans 8:38

2. God's _____ will never change

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever. Psalms 119:152, Matthew 7:24

3. God's _____ will never change

1 Samuel 15:29 And He who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will He change His mind, for He is not human that He should change His mind!

Psalms 33:11, Proverbs 19:21, Romans 8:28, Psalms 56:11, Psalms 46:1-2

REFLECTION & RECOMMITMENT



2015

HIGHLIGHTS

What would be a favourite good memory from the past year?

Did you face any particularly tough things this year?

Can you highlight a “God moment” – a time when you sensed His nearness or voice.

2016

CHALLENGES

List some goals you have (or could, or should) set for yourself which will challenge you to grow in these areas:

Physically

Mentally

Spiritually

Other

Consider thinking about one thing for each of the following categories:

START

STOP

CONTINUE

Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:5)

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Icebreaker/Introduction

Use the first part of the 'Reflection & Recommitment' activity to get group participants thinking about the past year. Give some time for reflection and then ask group members to share some of their highlights. If time allows, or if it seems appropriate, consider discussing the second section on 'resolutions' for the new year. Perhaps this discussion could start with some sharing about whether or not group members make resolutions.

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made that really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Todd began his message talking about how change can cause fear. How well do you handle change? How about when the change is (as Todd mentioned) 'unexplained' or 'unwelcome'? What about if you initiate the change? Can you think of an example of a time you resented, resisted, or ran from change?

THREE THINGS THAT CAUSE STRESS

1. Everything is moving faster

Do you agree with Todd's statement that 'speed causes stress'?

Todd said that progress has led to greater speed and efficiency. Is there a down-side to efficiency?

What are some ways to cope with or resist this reality of a fast-paced society?

2. Every decision is becoming complicated

What do you think of all of the choices we have when it comes to different products we can purchase? (Todd used the example of the many kinds of cough syrup)

How do you handle the huge amount of information that is available to you?

Share an example of a decision you have faced where it seemed to be difficult because of how complicated it became?

3. Every value is being challenged

Do you think many people live as if there are no absolutes?

What are some examples of values that are being challenged? (things we assumed everyone agreed on but now are not)

Do you sense that people are now afraid of offending others so are less likely to stand up for what they believe?

THREE THINGS THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE

1. God's love will never change

Focuses on Malachi 3:6, Jeremiah 31:3, Romans 8:38

What person has given you the most consistent love in your life (besides God)?

How does it help you (in practical ways) to know that God's love is continual and consistent? Is it helpful to compare it to human love (that is, how does the love of a spouse or parent help you in practical ways)?

Todd pointed out that we get into problems when we doubt God's love. Can you think of an example of this from the Bible (Peter walking on the water) or from your own life?

2. God's Word will never change

Focuses on Isaiah 40:8, Psalm 119:152, Matthew 7:24

Todd pointed out that it has become harder to actually determine the truth when it comes to the social sciences. Can you think of other areas today where it is hard to decide what is true?

Todd mentioned how the serpent used the basic temptation on Adam & Eve of having them question the Word of God. Can you recall his modern-day examples (or other examples) of this principle? ("that's just your interpretation", "that was for then and no longer applies")

What are some ways that you could become more Biblically literate this year?

3. God's purpose will never change

Focuses on 1 Samuel 15:29, Psalm 33:11, Proverbs 19:21, Romans 8:28, Psalm 56:11, Psalm 46:1-2

How do you reconcile verses like 1 Samuel 15:29 ("nor will [God] change his mind") with places in the Bible where He seems to (for example with the Israelites in the desert in Exodus 32:14 ("the Lord changed his mind"))?

What does the phrase 'God doesn't have a plan B for your life' mean to you?

Read Psalms 56:11 and 46:1-2. Are these helpful for not fearing the future? Do you have times when you do fear the future? Why?

Do you have a sense of God's purpose for your life?

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THREE THINGS THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE

1. God's love will never change

Malachi 3:6 I am the Lord, and I do not change...

Jeremiah 31:3 The Lord said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."

Romans 8:38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

2. God's Word will never change

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.

Psalms 119:152 I have known from my earliest days that your laws will last forever.

Matthew 7:24 Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.

3. God's purpose will never change

1 Samuel 15:29 And He who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will He change His mind, for He is not human that He should change His mind!

Psalms 33:11 But the Lord's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.

Proverbs 19:21 You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Psalms 56:11 I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalms 46:1-2 God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.