

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Today marks the beginning of a new year. Traditionally, New Year's Day is when we review the past year through a judgment filter of good and bad; success and failure. Based on our findings, we then make resolutions for the year ahead. Before we stroll down memory lane or set goals for the upcoming year, let's pause for a moment and ask; "Who will be in charge of this review?" A Course in Miracles teaches there are two voices in our mind that guide our thoughts, pass judgment and decide our goals; the ego voice and the Voice of the Holy Spirit. Before I became a student of the Course, my year-in-review, guided by the ego, went something like this:

I would begin with a series of questions. Was I successful at my job? Were my kids healthy? Was my relationship stable? What had I accomplished? What gains had I made in terms of money, my career or my relationships? I then would begin the judgment of myself. Did I do enough? Say the right things? Make poor choices? Fail to achieve the goals I set the year before? Moving from the judgment of the past, I then would begin making resolutions for the New Year. The goals were set based on the answer to one simple question: "How can I achieve more peace and happiness and have less pain and suffering?" If truth be told, I always felt deep down that there were no clear-cut answers to this question. The goals achieved in the past did not bring me lasting happiness, relationships were constantly changing, and the forces of nature and economics eroded any sense of power the little me had to make things happen. In addition to all of that, the effort I put toward changing others so they could make me happy never worked!

It became apparent to me after becoming a student of A Course in Miracles, that if I wanted to have more peace and joy, and less pain and suffering, I needed to give the ego voice a rest! This year, we can give the ego a day off and let the Holy Spirit be in charge of reviewing our past and guiding our future.

To begin, it's important to remember the Holy Spirit has only one purpose for time: to realize and accept our True Identity as the holy Son of God. His function is to instruct, reinterpret and guide us toward the realization of this one goal. Therefore, with Holy Spirit, a year-in-review is focused on how our time was spent- not pursuing worldly goals- but rather taking steps closer to our spiritual goal; waking up to the truth of Who we really are.

He sees all things working together for good. This is not to say that all things you've experienced, including pain and suffering are good, but rather each experience teaches you *where* the good can be found. The good- or happiness and peace- can only be found in the acceptance of the goodness of Who we are. We do not realize this fully yet. We are confused about what will set us free from pain and suffering. We still have a lingering desire to find happiness and peace in the world and in our identity as a separate and independent individual. That is why we must be taught where our treasure can be found. We must learn that the world does not hold the key to our happiness. We must learn to not look for answers in the world nor value our independent self, but to value and want only the truth as the acceptable answer to all of our perceived problems.

We might be tempted to judge events or situations of this past year as bad or as failures because we were not successful in collecting what the world values as treasures, getting from others the love and appreciation we believe we are lacking or because we experienced pain- whether it be physical or emotional. But consider this: is it accurate to judge a past situation as bad if it is what leads you to go within, and in doing so, you experience peace, joy and healing from all pain? Is it really a failure if losing something in form is the catalyst to your realization that only the unwavering Love of God can content you? Is it a success if you collect trinkets of this world and in doing so, forget to look for your Real Treasure? It is clear we do not fully understand what is a success or a failure, therefore we have no way to judge our past year or determine our future goals. *"Put yourself not in charge of this, for you cannot distinguish between advance and retreat. Some of your greatest advances you have judged as failures, and some of your deepest retreats you have evaluated as success."* (T.18.V.1:5-6)

The Holy Spirit understands what we are looking for, where it is and how to find it. He also can clearly see what is helping us advance and what is keeping us apart from peace and joy. That is why He is the best Guide for us when reviewing our use of time in the past, present and in the future.

How would Holy Spirit evaluate your past year? Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help facilitate a new way to look at 2010.

- During this past year did you offer a troubling situation to the Holy Spirit to be used as an opportunity to heal your mind of false beliefs?
- When you experienced fear did you turn to Him for help instead of trying to rearrange your external world?
- Did you encounter a 'stranger' and smile, sending a message of love and acceptance?
- Was there a time when you were willing to hear a call for help instead of someone's sharp words to you, and respond with love instead of attack?
- Were there moments spent in quiet and stillness when you reached the light within your own mind and brought this with you into your day?
- Was there a time when you experienced the 'hurtful actions' of someone and found the willingness to see it differently?
- Was there a morning when you devoted five minutes to think of God and allow your heart to open? At any time throughout the year did you feel gratitude toward another for saying just the right words to help you or for offering their silent presence which comforted you?

If you answered "yes" to any one of the questions you are on your way to being in a constant state of peace and joy. Wouldn't you agree that this type of year-in-review leaves you with a sense of hope, an idea of your true purpose and an awareness that time spent doing *more* of this will fill your days with peace?

What about the year ahead? The following quote is often used by Course students at the beginning of a new year to restate and reinforce the purpose of time.

"SO WILL THE YEAR BEGIN IN JOY AND FREEDOM. THERE IS MUCH TO DO, AND WE HAVE BEEN LONG DELAYED. ACCEPT THE HOLY INSTANT AS THIS YEAR IS BORN, AND TAKE YOUR PLACE, SO LONG LEFT UNFULFILLED, IN THE GREAT AWAKENING." (T.15.XI.10:8-10)

As this year begins anew, will you take your place in the Great Awakening? Is there one step you can take, one resolution you can make toward this? Spend a moment with the Holy Spirit and write out a New Year's resolution.

Begin by making this pledge; *"Be You in charge, for I would follow You, Certain that Your direction gives me peace."* (W.#361) Let Him set the course for you this year. He is your trusted Friend and faithful Companion. His gentle guidance will lead you to unwavering peace, limitless joy, unconditional love and a successful new year!