

## A Good Year

### 1 Peter 1:3-7

**WE:** Happy New Year. And I mean it. I hope 2021 is a happy year for you.

Question... **We all hope 2021 will be better than 2020... but what if it's not**

We have this hope that turning the page on a calendar will make everything better.. Especially after 2020.

But reality is... **An arbitrary number on a calendar isn't going to change our current reality...**

We often think that life is a series of hills... highs and lows... try to stay on the highs and have as many as possible... good days / bad days. Good years / bad years

Every new year a chance to reset and have a good year. Which works. Until the 1st bad thing happens. And the next. Then the year is ruined. And it's only January 2nd.

Reality is life is like train tracks... one side bad one side good both coming at you at the same time.

**No matter what year it is... life is hard.**

And yes, we all have a choice of which side of tracks to focus on... but for the JF there's more... the train is headed somewhere... and we know where...

**2021 won't be a complete reset, but it can be a new beginning.**

Peter talks about this idea...

**GOD: 1 Peter 1:3a All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.**

That's the core of Xianity. **A single event.**

Not a set of teachings, way of thinking, pathway to knowledge/enlightenment, or even a set of behaviors/actions.

B/c of God's loving mercy... He came, died, and rose again. And has offered us a perfect relationship with him now and forever and a new life of transformation... Simply by trusting in his forgiveness.

**Jesus came back to life to give us a new life.**

And a solid hope for our ultimate future... the final destination of the life train...

Completely changes how we view our current situation...

**1:3b-5 Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is**

protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Faith/Trust... Trust that Jesus died and rose again for you.

Trust that a new eternal life and future (As Paul says in Eph.) is Sealed by HS/ Secure/ Promised... you didn't do anything to earn it can't do anything to lose it...

No events, feelings, difficulties can destroy what God himself has promised and is protecting.

If you trust it... will change your perspective and life

RESULT? Peace. Confidence. Happiness. Starting right now.

**A Jesus Follower's hope for the future allows them to enjoy today.**

Next is the key for us...

**1:6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.**

Realistic Hope- Things WILL BE difficult right now... BUT we can experience joy now b/c there is wonderful joy ahead

See, the secret is not ignoring difficulties or wishing them away with positive thinking, even trying to complain them away...

It is looking the real world square in the face... acknowledging that things stink right now and probably won't be better for a while...

BUT this is not forever... what awaits a Jesus Follower is infinitely better and longer lasting than what we are enduring now.

**Real hope allows us to persevere in the real world.**

**Jim Collins**, "Good To Great"... Jim Stockdale. Medal of Honor. POW in Vietnam for over 7 years.

Asked who didn't make it out...

*Oh, that's easy, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart. This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.*

-Jim Stockdale

Wishful thinking, denial, complaining, blaming, doing nothing... none of it makes things better. In fact, makes things worse...

We need to face the facts that life is hard, it always has been, it always will be...

BUT someday it won't be this way... a reality more real than the pain we experience now is waiting for us and being held for us by the one who paid for it for us.

No matter what you go through... I know some of you have been through the closest thing to hell in the last year... there is something better coming... all things sad will be undone.

**Rev. 21:3b-4**

**He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."**

Sounds like wishful thinking right?

I'd agree... sometimes I start to... then (sometimes longer than I'd like) I remember...but- **It's only wishful thinking if there's no proof**... And I remember that Jesus, himself, said...

**John 16:33b** Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart I have overcome the world.

And then he not only overcame the world... he overcame death just like he said he would.

**Jesus' resurrection is proof that our current life is not our final life.**

And as we wait for that final life... we don't just sit back and hunker down... we have a role to play... make this world as close to heaven as possible... to give others a taste of what they can experience someday too.

**1:7** These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

Remember a few episodes ago--- Difficulties are an opportunity to practice trust.

Faith not just belief.. But a trust that inspires action... **Faith= a trust that inspires action.**

A faith that (as Paul says in Galatians) expresses itself in love.

**We can use life's difficulties to make life better for others NOW.**

Allow the trials to refine a faith that expresses itself in love NOW.

Allow the trials to make you more sympathetic and empathetic... seeing this brutal world for what it is and realizing that the person your faith is founded on is the one thing those around us need right NOW.

Allow the trials to show you where God is working and where he is carrying you right NOW

Allow the trials to teach you empathy, to love like Jesus loves NOW.

## YOU:

We all hope 2021 will be better than 2020... but what if it's not. An arbitrary number on a calendar isn't going to change our current reality. No matter what year it is... life is hard. 2021 won't be a complete reset, but it can be a new beginning. Jesus came back to life to give us a new life. A Jesus Follower's hope for the future allows them to enjoy today. Real hope allows us to persevere in the real world. It's only wishful thinking if there's no proof. Jesus' resurrection is proof that our current life is not our final life. Faith= a trust that inspires action. We can use life's difficulties to make life better for others NOW. 3 choices to make 2021 a new beginning...

### See reality for what it is

- This feels impossibly difficult. This hurts more than I ever thought something could.
- This isn't fair. It's not what I wanted. I don't like this.

### Trust Jesus for who he is

- Accept Offer
- You promised you would ALWAYS be with me and NEVER leave me
- You promised that I am yours forever
- You promised an eternal life now and with you forever

### Make this world better than it is.

- Through Jesus' empowering... play your part...
- One person at a time
- Who do you want me to love for you today?

## WE

2019 wasn't that great

2020 was even worse

2021 probably won't be much better. Even if it is, it won't live up to ALL of our expectations.

But what if this is all true...

What if there is more to our world than we can see...

What if we didn't have to fear an unknown future

What if we didn't have to fear death...

When you don't fear death you don't fear much...

What could your life begin to be if you chose to face reality, trust Jesus, and work with him to change the world around us for the better right NOW; TODAY?

**When we turn every difficulty into an opportunity to trust Jesus, every difficulty is an opportunity for a new beginning.**

## Questions

1. How do you feel about the "New Year" as a holiday? Why is that?


2. Read 2 Cor 5:15-21. In your own words, what do you think this says about Jesus followers? How do you feel about that?
3. Jon encouraged us to “see reality for what it is, trust Jesus for who he is, and work with Jesus to make this world better than it is”. What does that look like for you moving forward and how can your group pray for you in this?


## Summary

Every New Year’s Eve we hope the next year will be a reset and that this will finally be a “good year.” Unfortunately life doesn’t work that way. The good and the bad always come at us at the same time. Even though we can’t guarantee a “good year,” Jesus offers us something better... a new beginning in the middle of our real life.

## Episode Breakdown:

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## SHOW NOTES:

✳ Notes & Questions: [https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/media/2020-12-13\\_cg.pdf](https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/media/2020-12-13_cg.pdf)

✳ Transcript: <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/media/2020-12-13.pdf>

✳ Ask for Prayer or Questions: <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>

✳ #forSalem JANUARY Opportunity: Pay it Backward! Treat someone in the drive-thru behind you! Hand the attendant a #forSalem card so let them know it’s because you believe God is for them, and that they matter! Get your cards here:

<https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>

✳ #forSalem Opportunity: Help out Church @ The Park! <https://www.church-at-the-park.org/>

✳ #SalemOregon #local Giveaways (Happening on Social Media later this week)

- Enter to win this week on Social Media: Epilogue Kitchen- <https://epilogue-kitchen.square.site/>

- This week’s winner: Isaac’s Downtown- <https://www.isaacsdowntown.com/>

✳ Suggested Bible Readings:

Ephesians 1:13-14, Revelation 21:3-4, John 16:33 -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1%3A13-14%2C++Revelation+21%3A3-4%2C+John+16%3A33&version=NLT>

✳ Music we listened to making this episode:

Enya: May it Be- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt3Ggo1CE3g>

Less is Moi: Yo Yo Ma- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhofmsgVnP8>

For King & Country: Fight on, Fighter- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jHL9\\_zijiQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jHL9_zijiQ)

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