



January 2014

Friends,

Looking forward into a new year can bring various emotions... hope, excitement, dread, fear, worry. What are you feeling as you look ahead at 2014?

Personally, I want to live life to the full this year. I want to have adventure and take risks as I walk with Christ. I don't want to look back on 2014 as a year full of wasted moments and squandered opportunities. I feel restless as I long to go and serve in new ways, to be stretched and changed to look more like God, in whose image I was made. I want to be different this time next year, better somehow.

I want to feel purpose as I do the most ordinary things. Can a person truly feel joy in doing laundry or cleaning a bathroom? Can you take pride in taking out the trash or scrubbing grease off the stove for the hundredth time? Can you show others what true joy can look like?

The janitor at our elementary school displays true joy as he cleans up after loud, messy kids. He loves those kids. You can see it in his face no matter where he is or what he is doing. He shows them how to have pride in a job that many people would not want.

My grandmother shows true joy as she drives her friends to the doctor, to church, to the store. She takes them meals and keeps them company. She is 88 herself, but she uses up the energy and health she has left to serve her older, more frail friends. She knows that she will soon mourn the deaths of these friends like she has so many before them. But, she also knows she can impact them for eternity by loving them like she does, and drawing them closer to the Father.

Foster parents love a child that is not their own. They teach them how to be a part of a healthy family and how to be a good brother or sister. They show them who God is through their own sacrifices and their heartache over broken families. They show love and grace to the birth families that long to have their child back.

A family adopts a child from the other side of the world. They sacrifice money, time, wants, needs, to go and rescue just one child. Their world is completely different now. He doesn't understand their language and they don't understand his. He is rambunctious and undisciplined and most of the communication has to be non-verbal. They collapse at the end of every day because they have given everything to parent this child in addition to the two others they already had. Yet they say it has made them feel young again to be totally desperate for God. Letting go of all expectations and plans has helped them to hold more tightly to the Father.

I want what all of these people have... life that doesn't hesitate. Life that takes action and is obedient to God's will no matter what it costs. Life that displays unmistakable joy to the world.

Let us be inspired by God's Word to start this new year with purpose...

**John 10:10** – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

***Romans 12:1-2** – Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**2 Corinthians 5:17** – Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

***Hebrews 10:24** – And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

**Ephesians 3:17-21** – And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

**Matthew 28:18** – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Your friend,

And do not forget to do good and to share with others,  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16