

5-Step Prayer Guide for Beginning the New Year

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As the year comes to a close, it's common for people to start making goals for the new year. I've never been one to make resolutions for the new year because I have a terrible habit of making every day a day for me to achieve perfection. It doesn't sound like a terrible habit, but trust me, it is. Now that I'm aware of my perfectionism, I don't make New Year's resolutions for a different reason; I belong to God. So I do my best to work on His timeline alone.

As Christians, we must understand that God's plans are the only plans with which we must concern ourselves. God created this entire universe and everyone in it. Our current culture reveals that God's plans are the last thing on their minds. But it doesn't have to be the last thing on your mind. You can invite God in and follow His divine plan for your life. You can walk in the steps He ordained for you before you were born!

Hopefully, you're wondering how to sync up with God's plans for you. If so, I have a five-step prayer guide for you to begin the New year on the right foot!

1. Get Quiet

Remove the multiple distractions from your life and be still before the Lord. Being still is not something most people practice, so here are some suggestions on how to do that:

1. Find a quiet place and leave your phone and computer elsewhere. If it's not possible to leave your phone, then put it on do not disturb. (You might consider your car. That's my favorite quiet place.)
2. Take several deep cleansing breaths and let your muscles unwind.
3. Resist the urge to rush. We think we don't have time for such luxuries, but the truth is getting quiet before the Lord is a necessity.

There are many benefits to quieting down and being still. It's good for your body and mind, but it's also good to cultivate a deep personal relationship with God, your Creator. Nothing makes God happier than when we put everything aside and make time solely for Him.

God desires that we put Him first in every moment of every day because He knows His plans are best for us. Getting quiet before the Lord is not meant to be a one-time event at the end of the year. When we commune with Him, He reveals those plans to us in His perfect timing.

2. Get Honest

Share all of your frustrations or worries with God. He already knows them, but verbalizing them to Him helps to clear the head.

Often when we pray, we experience intruding thoughts that distract our focus. So it's best to vent all the negative stuff first to the One who cares about you more than anyone. I like to do this two ways, depending on my mood:

1. Write it out. Journaling is a highly effective practice. Find a lined piece of paper or a notebook, and start writing about everything on your mind.
2. Speak it out. Sometimes I even record my venting prayers to God in case I spit out some great insight from the Holy Spirit. (Honestly, I'm not sure I've ever played it back, but knowing that I have a record of my prayer allows me to free it from my mind.)

Don't hold back. There's no need to self-edit with God. Share your heart with Him, believing that He cares for every part of you. Let Him know your fears about the future. Confess sins that He reveals to you until your head and heart are empty.

3. Surrender All

Take every worry, fear, and frustration you've expressed to God and lay it all at His feet. If you wrote it out, consider crumpling it up and tossing it in the trash. (You could even burn it if you want to get dramatic.) If you spoke a prayer to God, then mission accomplished. As soon as the words left your mouth, they were released.

Surrender isn't genuine unless you trust the One to whom you surrender. Trust doesn't happen overnight; it takes time. But the more you practice trusting God, the more you trust Him because you gain tangible proof that He never fails you.

How to practice surrender:

1. Get to know God. Your trust in God grows the more you know Him. Many people today construct their own image of God as they go along. They use fragments of verses like "God is for me" and run with it. When we create our own version of God, it

leads to a lack of trust because that false god you've created will let you down, but if you start at the source, God's Word, then you learn from Him about who He is.

2. Give God the good stuff too. Surrender your heart's desires. For instance, God has given me the desire to write, but the desire is His, so He gets to use it as He sees fit.

3. Continue to study His Word and pray. It's easier to surrender to a God you know and love. Surrendering every part of your life is a beautiful gift. Surrender is a release. When you take your concerns to Him and leave them at His feet, you receive peace beyond understanding.

I prayed before accepting this article that you are reading now. I know God has given me the desire to write, but that doesn't mean that every assignment is from Him. It's in my best interest to stop and pray before I say yes.

Now that we've successfully cleared the cobwebs in our day, we are ready for the next step.

4. Ask God

Ask Him to open your eyes, ears, and heart to the work He is doing and the work He has set aside for you. Just because something is "good" doesn't automatically mean it's a yes for you.

My husband and I have been at our church for eighteen years. He is the worship/associate pastor, and I am his wife. There are unspoken expectations for a pastor's wife; simply put, I don't think I fit the mold. I have struggled with the rub it has caused (more so in my mind than anywhere else), and the enemy uses it to destroy me.

I don't know the church's opinion about me, but my mind can imagine it all too well. I don't attend every event. I stopped attending Wednesday night [Bible study](#) over a year ago because I felt led to use that time to be alone one night of the week. I've turned down working with the children several times. Don't I sound awful?

God has called me to teach. Unlike writing, I've always had a natural inclination for this. (I probably have had it for writing too, but I was unaware.) So I teach a Bible study on Sunday mornings. I currently sing on the worship team with my husband. I attend a Wednesday morning Bible study and enjoy it very much, and that's all within the church. But God has me ministering outside of the church, too.

Because of those outside commitments, I can't do every church function or ministry. The church ministries and events may be good, but they aren't for me, and that's okay. Don't be fooled, though; it doesn't feel okay. I must renew my mind in the truth daily to avoid the guilt that follows me for not being 100% sold out for our church.

To remain obedient to God's call on my life, I must cast out the supposed opinions of others and the lies of the enemy. I am confident that I am where God wants me to be at this point in my journey.

How can you be sure of what to ask of God?

1. Believe that His ways are higher than yours. If you need a reminder, see [Isaiah 55:8-9](#): "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts, says the LORD. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts" (NLT).

2. Trust God with your desires and know He will use them for your good and His glory. "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. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" ([Romans 8:28-29](#) NLT).

3. Cast out any doubt with which the world may tempt you. The enemy uses everything he can to get you off your God-given path. Recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit and cast out all the rest. [2 Corinthians 10:4](#) tells us to "Use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments" (NLT).

Using these three practices will allow you to align with God's pleasing and perfect will. As the new year approaches, we will bear fruit if we walk in God's ordained steps.

The world struggles to surrender its will to Christ, but as Christians, this is what we are called to do. God asks us to surrender (even though it feels impossibly difficult) because He is good and knows there are no better plans or paths than the ones He created for us. Reminding ourselves of this truth makes it easier to obey, leading us to our fifth step.

5. Listen and Obey

So many resist obedience because we are rebellious by nature and because obedience is an act of surrender. As you've just read, surrender is the hardest part of our **faith**, but if we pray for God's guidance in the new year, we must be willing to listen and obey.

Everything we've done in steps 1-4 prepares our hearts to listen and obey. Sometimes in our walk with Jesus, we reach a certain point, and then we don't obey because of fear. For example, maybe you get still, get honest, and even surrender all, but when it comes time for God to respond, you don't like what He's told you to do. Perhaps your task feels scary or out of your league. Or maybe God has called you to repent or forgive someone, and you aren't ready to do it. To resist His call is disobedience.

God is gracious and patient. So many times, I've disobeyed the Lord because I was afraid, but He stayed with me and brought me to where I am now on this journey. Praise God for giving us His Son Jesus to be our perfect sacrifice. He has taught me a hundred times over that obedience to Him is best.

God requires perfection, but we can never attain it in our flesh. Because of God's great love for you and me, Jesus paid that requirement, and that's why I choose to submit my life to Him and walk in obedience.

How can you listen to God and obey Him?

1. Get quiet and still. Understand that nothing you do is more important than time with God.
2. Clear the cobwebs. Release all that is bogging you down and surrender your talents and desires to God.
3. Surrender your will, remembering that God's ways are higher and more fruitful for you. Then do what He tells you to do.

You may still be afraid of surrender and obedience, so let me ease your worry. God does not always call you to some big scary thing. Sometimes God calls you to rest. Sometimes He wants you to say no. Sometimes God calls you to experience His beauty and abundant blessings! Trust that God's plans for you are good, even if they are scary or difficult.

Let's pray. Dear God, thank you for creating us to be in a relationship with you. Please help us to trust you more with each passing day as we walk in obedience. Please guide us in your truth and love as we enter another new year. In Jesus' name, amen.