

## A Fresh Start for the Weary and Disillusioned

Now that you've survived another holiday season - ate too much, spent too much, stressed too much about too many activities and too few meaningful moments – it's time to stop and take a deep breath. Even if you thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the holidays, you may still be so exhausted you feel like the reindeer ran over you. But perhaps this “most wonderful time of the year” wasn't all you hoped it to be.

The malaise this time of year is so commonplace it now has a term: “holiday depression.” The season of joy may have magnified the ache of loved ones who are no longer present with you. Or it clarified your disillusionment to realize that your family is far from the ideal one crammed down your throat in every Christmas movie and Hallmark card. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), caused by lack of light during the winter months, can affect your mood and energy level.

To make matters worse, now, when you're already feeling down, is the time you're expected to make New Year's Resolutions. These empty promises usually produce more guilt from not keeping them than they do results. I read that 30% of all resolutions are broken within the first week of January, and 80% are ignored by Valentine's Day. Feelings of inadequacy from failed resolutions compound the despondency.

If the peace of the season eluded you, there is a place to go to find the rest that your soul was made to crave. There's only one place you need look. Ironically, the hubbub of Christmas can so easily eclipse the Person the holiday is intended to celebrate.

Jesus calls to each of us. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). He tells us, “My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you.” (John 14:27).

A new year symbolizes the fresh start that we can find every day in a relationship with Christ. We give Him our scarred or broken hearts, release our burdens and unfulfilled dreams to His capable hands. In their place, He offers us forgiveness and grace. A new heart. Another chance.

He not only gives us the peace and rest we need, but He changes us. He gently chips off the rough spots in our lives and refines our motivations so we will want to please Him through the way we live.

Whether you've been a follower of Christ for a long time or a short one, the beginning of a new year can be an ideal chance to reflect on your life. Rather than make grandiose resolutions, think through how you've invested your time, energy, passions, and finances this past year. Dream of what you want your life to look like by this time next year, and write down what you need to accomplish each month to get there. In order to be effective, goals should be bite-size, realistic, attainable, something that helps move you forward to the place you want to be.

Jesus can help you fulfill those goals and become the person He created you to be. You can trust Him to give you a fresh start in 2011.