

January 2024: What do you want this year?

For many of us, January is a time for making New Year resolutions. A time for looking at ourselves or how we live, and making resolutions expressing our determination to change something, in some way. And, if you are like me, you may often find yourself thinking, 'I've made this resolution before, or one very like it'!

Apparently the most common New Year's resolutions in the UK for 2023 were 'saving more money', 'pursuing a career ambition' and 'taking up a new hobby', while for Americans the most common New Year's resolutions were 'improving fitness', 'improving finances', 'improving mental health', closely followed by 'losing weight' and 'improving diet'. For most of us, I suspect that our New Year resolutions are usually connected to either our short term or longer term goals to do with the person we want to be.

Many years ago, I remember reading the results of a survey that had asked people in their nineties to look back over their lives and say what they wished they had done differently. Many spoke of wishing they had spent more time with those they loved, wishing they had taken more risks, wishing they had been better listeners, wishing they had done something good that would outlive them. Careers and money were hardly mentioned. One person, when asked if they wished they had achieved more, replied simply, 'No. I wish I had loved more.'

Maybe this year, we will all dare to dream those big dreams, the dreams we scarcely believe are possible; a world without conflict or poverty, a world where all are enabled to thrive and fulfil their potential, while living in harmony with the planet that sustains us all. Christianity speaks of 'discipleship,' from the Latin word for 'learner'. Discipleship is the process of trying to learn to live as God wants us to. To be a Christian, should be a lifetime of 'New Year resolutions', a lifetime of focusing on the vision of the world of flourishing and harmony that God intends, a lifetime of reflecting on how we can make changes in our lives that enable us to better play our part in helping to shape that world of flourishing and harmony, the world that Christianity calls the 'kingdom of Heaven,' a world that Christians believe we can partly share in in this life, and fully share in after death.

So this year, whatever your beliefs, my prayer is that we can all take time to imagine the world as we would like it to be, for ourselves, our children or grandchildren, for our neighbours near and far. And then allow that vision to shape whatever changes, whatever resolutions, we decide to try make for ourselves at the start of 2024, and beyond,

Yours in Christ,
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