

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

By: Jan Davis

Today is New Year's Day. As a new year begins we explore what the Bible says about new beginnings.

OPENING PRAYER

As I enter a time of prayer, I pause and become still. I calm my thoughts and silence my mind. I breathe deeply and slowly, and center myself upon the presence of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Holy Lord, in the peace of these morning moments, I long to experience Your presence. Come Holy Spirit, reveal the new things you want for me in this new year. Enable me to hear the message You have for me in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:20-24

REFLECTION

The book of Ephesians outlines the process of Christian maturity and teaches me how to make progress toward the goal of Christian living. I am taught how to live my daily life in a way that is pleasing to God. Taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes is a Biblical metaphor for a new beginning in the life of faith. In the ancient baptismal rite, the newly baptized were given new garments to wear. The ritual symbolized putting away the old lifestyle like filthy, worn out clothes and embracing the new nature in God. It is a fresh start and a new beginning. As a new year commences, God invites me to begin again. I am to put away the old and have God clothe me with new spiritual clothing - righteousness and holiness.

As I begin the new year of 2025, I open a calendar of 365 empty days waiting to be filled. I reflect on today's scripture passage from Ephesians, and consider how it informs the upcoming year. I am taught a way of life in Christ. I learn about Jesus, read the Bible and understand the way of holiness. Yet my old self, corrupt and deceitful with worldly desires emerges on occasion. The Bible says I am to put off my old self as I would take off old clothes. I recall times I have worn dirty clothes - perhaps I spent time exercising, gardening or cleaning the garage. I took off those filthy, soiled, old clothes and put on something clean and new. In the same way, I take off the negative parts of myself and put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness. I put on holiness like a garment and rely on the Holy Spirit to help me keep it clean.

At the dawn of a new year and new beginnings, I ask God to reveal how I am to live my life. I embrace the truth found in Jesus and the way of life I learn from scripture. I ask God to examine

me thoroughly and reveal every part of my life that is not pleasing to Him. I name these before God and imagine them as part of a garment I once found attractive but now realize is soiled with grime or horribly outgrown. What would it look like for me to put off these old things? I examine how my thoughts and attitudes reflect the mind of Christ. What would it look like to put on new things?

Ask: What attitudes, habits, behaviors or vices do I need to take off this year? What attitudes, habits, behaviors or virtues should I put on this year?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving and gracious God, thank You for teaching me how to live a life that is pleasing to You. Forgive me when I continue to fall short and succumb to corrupt thoughts, negative attitudes and deceitful desires. Renew my mind and cleanse my heart. Show me how to put off my old self and leave it in the past. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, enable me to put on my new self created to be like You. Show me what I need to do to grow in holiness. Teach me Your ways and lead me in paths of righteousness. Show me what to take off and leave behind as I enter a new year and show me what to put on and carry with me. Amen.