

## 4 Life-Changing Spiritual Habits for the New Year

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**Have you ever made a New Year's resolution for your soul?** This year, nearly half of us will make a resolution of some sort. ([maristpoll.marist.edu](http://maristpoll.marist.edu), 12/18/14)

The two most popular are to make more money and lose weight/get in shape. Other top resolutions are to travel more, read more books, learn a new skill, or quit smoking.

What doesn't tend to appear on those lists are spiritual resolutions. But Scripture tells us that, whether we realize it or not, our deepest longings are for God and the life that comes only through Christ.

But the problem is, a flourishing relationship with Christ doesn't just happen. As a matter of fact, our natural bent is to drift *away* from him! That means developing spiritual habits is one of the most healthy and life-giving choices you can make!

With that in mind, here are four spiritual habits that will lead you closer to Christ in the coming year. Each includes ideas to make it specific, realistic, and accountable, a 'cue' to help establish the habit (thanks to writer Josh Daffern for that idea), and a stretch goal.

Here they are...

**HABIT ONE: Learn to pray.** Prayer isn't about using certain words or saying it just the right way. Prayer is an ongoing conversation with Christ, an acknowledgment that he is present and that you are present to him. You can make requests, give thanks, pray for others, or simply be with him.

**BE SPECIFIC:**

- When? Morning? Bedtime? Lunch break? *A thought: praying in the car on your way to work is good, but be sure you also set aside time to pray without the distractions of the road!*
- How? Will you write a prayer? Read a Psalm as a prayer (that works really well)? Pray out loud? More spontaneously?
- For what and for whom? Make a list of people and requests; pick one or two to pray for on a given day.

**BE REALISTIC:**

- How often? Every day? A few days each week?
- For how long? Make it do-able—5 minutes of actual prayer is better than 25 minutes of intention! Set a timer to help focus on God instead of your watch.

**USE A CUE:** Breathe a prayer whenever you 'take a sip'—drinking coffee, during lunch, at the water cooler. Take a moment to remember Christ is with you, and be present to him.

**STRETCH GOAL:** Explore the discipline of silence and solitude—take an hour, an afternoon, or even an entire day to be alone with God. No phone, iPad, laptop. Just you, your Bible and God. Read slowly, reflect deeply, and listen for God's prompting. And mostly, just be with him!

**My commitment this year** (when, where, how long, how often):

*I will pray* \_\_\_\_\_

**BE ACCOUNTABLE:** Who will ask you how it's going? This person should be safe, encouraging, and trustworthy!

*I will ask* \_\_\_\_\_

**HABIT TWO: Read Scripture regularly.** Since the Bible tells us who God is, what he’s like, and leads us to know Christ better, soaking in God’s Word and letting it permeate your thoughts is of incredibly important!

**BE SPECIFIC: *I will read*** \_\_\_\_\_

- What time of day will you read? In the morning? Before bedtime? During lunch?
- How and where will you read? Choose a quiet spot that can become a ‘sacred space’. Try reading out loud. Listen to Scripture on the *YouVersion* app, then read the same passage.
- What part of Scripture? If you’re new to this, start with the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), which tell the story of Jesus. After that, try the rest of the New Testament, the Psalms, and Proverbs. There are many great Bible reading plans on the *YouVersion* app.

**BE REALSTIC: *I will read*** \_\_\_\_\_

- How often? Every day? A few days each week?
- How long? Make it do-able. Start with five or ten minutes and set a timer so you can focus. Read slowly and deliberately. The goal is not to get through the Bible but to get the Bible through *you*!

**USE A CUE:** Following Deuteronomy 6:7 (*...talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise*), read when you’re ‘up and down’—when you wake up, sit down at your desk, get up for lunch, lie down in bed.

**STRETCH GOAL:** Memorize a few verses that are especially meaningful as you read during the year.

**My commitment this year** (when, where, how long, how often):  
***I will read Scripture*** \_\_\_\_\_

**BE ACCOUNTABLE:** Who will ask you how it’s going?  
***I will ask*** \_\_\_\_\_

**HABIT THREE: Fellowship consistently.** Biblical fellowship is simply spending time with others who follow Jesus, encouraging and spurring each other on, having conversations about following Jesus in everyday life!

**BE SPECIFIC: *I will connect*** \_\_\_\_\_

When will you connect with others who follow Jesus?

- A starting point: make a commitment to attend church regularly. There's something about gathering regularly with others to worship that helps us love Christ and each other better!
- Look for at least one other connection point during the week, whether it is joining a Crossing Life Group, praying with a co-worker once a week to start your day, or becoming part of a Bible study group.

**BE REALISTIC: *I will connect*** \_\_\_\_\_

- How often? As stated above, commit to attend church regularly. Then add something else.

**USE A CUE:** Put 'Worship' on your calendar and set an alarm or reminder! At the Crossing, that would be Sundays at 10am at East Ridge High.

**Stretch goal:** One effective way to make sure you develop this habit is to start volunteering in church on Sunday morning—then you know you have to be there. Works for me every week!

**My commitment this year** (when, where, how often, how long):  
***I will connect*** \_\_\_\_\_

**BE ACCOUNTABLE:** Who will ask you how it's going?  
***I will ask*** \_\_\_\_\_

**HABIT FOUR: Love others purposefully.** *We hear a lot about love, but we don't often see it. Jesus commands us to love those in our spiritual family and those who don't know him. The greatest act of love is to share Jesus with others!*

**BE SPECIFIC:** *I will* \_\_\_\_\_

- Find and meet one person's need every day, week, or (at least) month.
- Try meeting needs for two people—one in your church, and one without a church home.

**BE REALISTIC:** *I will* \_\_\_\_\_

- Keep it simple. Don't start a whole ministry—write an encouraging note, pray for someone on the spot, or thank someone for serving you and tell them why you appreciate them.

**USE A CUE:** Every time you touch your phone, ask yourself how you've reached out to someone this week.

**STRETCH GOAL:** Share Jesus in one way or another with someone every week. Pray toward it. Practice telling the story of how Christ has worked in your life. Look for opportunities. Have spiritual conversations. Invite someone to church!

**BE ACCOUNTABLE:** Who will ask you how it's going?

*I will ask* \_\_\_\_\_

**There are many spiritual habits that God can use** to shape your soul, but these four are a great place to start! Remember, it's a lifelong journey of discovery! If there is any way we can help you take your next step, please contact us at [Grow@theCrossingChurch.org](mailto:Grow@theCrossingChurch.org) or text GROW to 352.874.5059

***May you experience the life-giving presence of Jesus this year!***

*~ Your friends at the Crossing Church*