

Ryan Milne

New Year / New Years Day / Psalm 90

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Text: Various Texts

Call: “*The grass withers and the flower fades,*”

Response: “*But the word of the Lord endures forever.*”

2026: A Year To Live For God

- 1. Reflection under Scripture**
- 2. Sanctification and Perseverance**
- 3. A Christ-centered call to press on**
- 4. Application and Call to Christ**
- 5. Questions For Study**

Introduction

It's amazing to me to think about the fact that I get to preach again to Awakening Church at the turning of another year. This has been, for years, one of the few times we preach "topically" without moving through a specific book of scripture. In the past, we have done sermons about "what we believe" or even specifically "what we believe about the Gospel". As we head into 2026, I thought it would be helpful, especially with all the new year content that we will be inundated with, to be reoriented vertically before we do anything else.

The calendar changes, but God does not. Our days move forward one at a time, but the Lord stands over time, eternal, sovereign, and unchanging. He is not carried along by the passing of days, nor bound by our schedules. Every moment of 2026 will unfold under His wise and holy hand.

Psalms 90 reminds us where we stand before Him:

Psalms 90:9–12 "For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Our days are fleeting. Our years pass quickly. What we accomplish will fade. But God's promises, His Word, His presence—they endure. They are firm. They are unshakable.

Lamentations gives us hope for each new day:

Lamentations 3:22–23 "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

As we step into this year, we do not rely on our own resolutions or strength. We rely on the God whose mercies are new every morning. The God whose faithfulness sustains us, not only through extraordinary days but through ordinary, faithful days.

Philippians reminds us of God's ongoing work in us:

Philippians 1:6 "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

The same God who preserved us through 2025, through trials and ordinary moments of obedience, will complete His work in us in the year ahead. We are not called to manufacture perseverance. We are called to press on in the paths He has appointed, trusting Him to do what He has promised.

Hebrews anchors us in the unchanging Savior:

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

The future may be uncertain. Our days are numbered. But Christ is constant. He walks with us. He sustains us. He enables us to press on in the ordinary means of grace, day by day.

The new year is not primarily a time for grand resolutions. It is a time for renewed humility, trust, and dependence on Christ. It is a time to reflect, to repent, to give thanks, and to press on in the ordinary, faithful ways God has appointed for the growth of His people.

As we begin 2026, let us fix our eyes not on the fleetingness of our days, but on the faithfulness of our God, who keeps His promises, preserves His people, and calls us to live every ordinary day in union with Christ.

1. Reflection under Scripture

The beginning of a new year naturally invites reflection, but Scripture calls us to a particular kind of reflection. It's not meant to be sentimental or merely emotional, but theological. We are not simply asking how the past year made us feel. We need to be asking how the Lord was faithful within it. We are asking how His Word confronted us, corrected us, comforted us, and shaped us.

As a new year begins, the world also reflects. But it reflects in a very different way, and for very different reasons.

The world tends to reflect horizontally. It looks at what was gained or lost, what was achieved or missed, and what increased or declined. It measures the year in terms of success, comfort, productivity, experiences, and personal satisfaction. It asks questions like, Did I advance, Did I improve, Did I get what I wanted, Am I happy with the outcome.

Worldly reflection is often driven by comparison. It measures life against others, against trends, or against personal expectations. And because it is untethered from God, it often leads either to pride when things went well or despair when they did not.

Christian reflection is different. It is vertical before it is horizontal. It begins not with ourselves but with God.

The Christian reflects before the face of the Lord, asking not first what was accomplished, but what was revealed. Not just about what changed, but how God proved faithful. Not just where life went smoothly, but where the Lord was present, sufficient, and at work.

The Christian asks theological questions rather than material ones.

- How did God sustain my faith?
- How did His Word shape my thinking?
- Where did sin remain, and where did grace abound?
- Where was repentance necessary, and where was mercy shown?

Worldly reflection asks, What did I do with my year?

Christian reflection asks, What did God do in me and through me during this year?

The world reflects in order to reset itself. The Christian reflects in order to repent, give thanks, and trust the Lord more fully. Christian reflection isn't about feeling proud or about beating ourselves up. It's about turning our hearts to worship.

This kind of reflection is framed by grace, not condemnation. The purpose is not self-punishment but honest evaluation under the light of God's Word.

2. Sanctification and Perseverance

A right understanding of the Christian life provides a strong ability to resist the New Year's hype. Scripture does not promise that this year will be easier than the last. It does not guarantee fewer trials. It does not hold out expectations of instant spiritual breakthroughs.

Instead, Scripture emphasizes sanctification and perseverance.

Paul reminds the Philippians,

Philippians 1:6 “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

God sanctifies His people, but He does so through ordinary means over time. He grows us slowly and faithfully through the Word, through prayer, through the ordinances, through life in the local church, through repentance, and through obedience. Sanctification is real, but it is not flashy. It is often quiet. It is often unseen. And it is always dependent on the grace of God.

The turning of the year can also tempt us toward presumption. We make plans, set goals, and imagine futures as though tomorrow were guaranteed. James warns us clearly,

James 4:14–15 “yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

Scripture does not condemn planning. Wisdom plans, as Proverbs affirms. What Scripture condemns is pride. We do not plan over God's hand. We plan under it, trusting that every intention, every hope, and every step is held securely by Him alone.

This posture means walking forward in humility and perseverance. We take each step knowing growth in Christ is gradual and that the future is safely in God’s hands. Our role is faithful obedience, confident in His grace and sovereign care.

3. A Christ-centered call to press on

Awakening Church as we enter 2026, the world will flood us with resolutions, vague promises of self-reinvention, new habits, and personal upgrades. But we are called to something far deeper, pressing on toward Christ Himself, not toward a better version of ourselves.

The apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12–14 tells us, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Do you understand what the forgetting is here? We don’t minimize serious past sin or ignore God's past providences; we remember God's past faithfulness to fuel hope, but we do not rest on past experiences or dwell on past failures as if they define our standing before Christ.

The foundation is not our effort; it is Christ's prior, sovereign work. He has made us His own. In his electing grace, he laid hold of us first. Because he has grasped us, we strain forward. We forget what lies behind, not erasing God's mercies or our sins, but refusing to let past failures, achievements, or complacencies paralyze or define us. The past is not our master; Christ is.

And here is the most crucial truth for anyone considering this call to live 2026 for Christ! None of this pressing on is possible apart from being united to Christ by faith. We cannot make ourselves His own, and our striving is powerless without His saving grace. God calls sinners to Himself. He promises forgiveness of sins, new life, and adoption as His children to all who trust in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

John 1:12 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,”

Salvation is not about moral effort or religious activity; it is about trusting in Jesus, the Savior who lived perfectly, died for our sins, and rose again to secure eternal life for all who believe.

If you have never placed your trust in Him, the invitation is plain: repent of your sin, acknowledge your need for a Savior, and believe in Jesus Christ. Receive Him by faith. Trust

that His blood cleanses, His Spirit transforms, and His righteousness is credited to you. Only in Jesus can you truly press on toward the goal. Only in Christ can the ordinary means of grace bear fruit.

As we move forward into 2026, I hope we see clearly that the goal is not self-improvement. It is Christlikeness, knowing him more intimately, being conformed to His death and resurrection, growing in holiness through the Spirit's work. The prize is the upward call, the consummation of our salvation, full communion with God in Christ on the last day, presented blameless before His glory. That prize makes every ordinary act of faithfulness worth the strain.

So what does pressing on look like in the plain and ordinary and often difficult days ahead? It does not look like grand vows or confident promises about what we will do differently this year. It looks like humble and steady commitments that depend upon the Spirit and rest in the ordinary paths God has appointed for the perseverance of His people. I want to exhort you plainly, as one sinner saved by grace speaking to others who stand in the same grace, that our first call as we enter the New Year is a deeper and more deliberate devotion to the ordinary means of grace God has given for our good.

These ordinary means of grace are simple and familiar.

The Word of God read and preached.

Prayer.

The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

These are the means Christ Himself has expressly instituted as the instruments through which He ordinarily communicates saving and sanctifying grace to His church. In this context, ordinary does not mean weak, optional, or unimportant. It means appointed, regular, and expected.

When we speak of the ordinary means of grace, we are speaking of the ways God has chosen to work most often and most reliably among His people. They do not appear extraordinary. They do not impress the world. They are simple, repeatable, and accessible to the whole church. Yet they are powerful because God has attached His promises to them.

Consider the promises God has given over His ordinary means of grace.

First, the Word of God.

God promises that His Word will accomplish His purpose. Isaiah teaches us that it does not return empty but succeeds in what God sends it to do. Paul tells us that faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Jesus Himself prayed, Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. God promises not merely information, but saving and sanctifying power through the preached and received Word.

Second, prayer.

God attaches clear promises to prayer offered in faith. Jesus assures us that the Father gives good gifts to those who ask Him. James tells us that the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Paul promises that prayer brings a peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Prayer does not bend God's will, but God has promised to work through it.

Third, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

While we deny any automatic or mechanical grace, Scripture still attaches real promises to faithful participation. Baptism is tied to our union with Christ and walking in newness of life. The Lord's Supper is a true participation in Christ, proclaiming His death until He comes. Christ uses these ordinances to strengthen faith and nourish His people when they are received in faith.

With that foundation, I want to encourage us by considering three things.

The context in which the means of grace are given.

The responses God calls for under the means of grace.

And the fruit God is pleased to produce through their faithful use.

Commit to gathered worship. Do not neglect meeting together. Be present Lord's Day by Lord's Day, where Christ feeds His people through the preached Word, congregational prayer, and the Lord's Supper, and where the body builds itself up in love. Commit to singing with the church, letting the Word shape your praise as you teach and admonish one another with thankful hearts. In an age of isolation and digital substitutes, choose faithfulness to the local church.

Hebrews 10:24–25 “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Commit to the Word. Engage it daily. Read it, meditate on it, hear it proclaimed, and hide it

in your heart. This is a primary means by which the Spirit sanctifies us and conforms us to Christ.

Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Commit to prayer. Pray without ceasing, in secret, with your family, and with brothers and sisters. Pour out your heart to God, confessing sin, seeking strength, and interceding for others, always depending on the Spirit who intercedes for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing,”

Commit to your local church. Love it, serve it, submit to its elders, bear with its weaknesses, and use your gifts to edify the body. The church is Christ’s household, the pillar and support of the truth, where we grow together toward maturity.

1 Timothy 3:15 “if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

Commit to repentance. When you sin, and you will, do not hide or harden your heart. Confess your sin, turn from it, and trust the blood of Christ to cleanse you and the Spirit to put sin to death. Perseverance is not sinless perfection. It is daily warfare waged in grace.

James 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Commit to loving your family well. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives, respect your husbands. Parents, raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Children, honor your parents. Singles, pursue holiness and serve others. The home is the first place where gospel grace must be made visible.

These things will not look impressive to the world. They are not easily measured or quickly celebrated. They require patience, persistence, and faith. Fruit may come slowly. But these are the faithful and ordinary ways the Holy Spirit preserves God's people and conforms them to Christ.

So press on, not in your own strength, but because Christ has made you His own. Strain forward toward the goal. Finish the race with faith intact, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"

Ephesians 5:33 "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Ephesians 6:1–2 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),"

1 Corinthians 7:32–34 "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband."

In case someone might be wondering, after speaking about all of that. What if I have been thinking about more physical goals? Do I need to scrap my weight loss or savings plan, or my commitment to organizing my home?

I would like to give us a simple way to think about things like that.

First, all things are under God's lordship. Physical goals, like saving money, losing weight, or organizing a home, are not inherently worldly or sinful. They are part of wisely stewarding what God has given you (Matthew 25:14–30; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Second, goals should be God-centered, not self-centered. The difference is motive. Are you pursuing a goal to glorify God, serve others, or be a better steward of your body and resources, or are you chasing self-image, comparison, or control?

Third, God equips us through ordinary faithfulness. While salvation and spiritual growth are by grace, God uses our disciplined efforts in daily life to cultivate character, perseverance, and service (1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Colossians 3:23).

Finally, we must keep an ultimate perspective. Physical goals are temporary and finite. They should never become your identity or ultimate aim. They are good when they support, not replace, your pursuit of Christlikeness.

So here are some examples in good order and practice:

1. You want to save money: Do it for the stewardship of your family, for generosity, and to avoid debt.
2. You want to lose weight or exercise: Do it because caring for the body God gave you allows you to serve Him and others.
3. You want to organize your home: Do it by creating space and order to glorify God in your family life and hospitality.
4. You want to eat healthier: Do it to honor God with your body, fuel your mind and energy for service, and show discipline in everyday life.
5. You want to reduce screen time or digital distractions: Do it to focus on God, your family, and meaningful work, stewarding your time wisely.
6. You want to develop a new skill or hobby: Do it to glorify God through creativity, usefulness, or teaching others, not for pride or personal acclaim.
7. You want to improve your work habits: Do it to serve your employer, family, and community well, working “as to the Lord”.

The short answer is yes: pursue these goals. But let them flow out of grace, not guilt; from

stewardship, not striving for worthiness. It's not the goal itself that honors God—it's the **faith-born motivation** behind it. Every act of diligence, discipline, or care becomes worship when it is offered to Him, done in dependence on His Spirit, and rooted in the joy of being His child.

Romans 12:1 "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Application and Call to Christ

Awakening Church, as we close, I want us all to hear this assurance from the closing words of Jude. The same God who has carried you through every trial, every faltering step, and every ordinary day of faithfulness in the past year is the God who will carry you through the year ahead. Not because you are strong, not because your resolutions will hold, not because you have mustered enough perseverance on your own, but because **He is faithful**.

Philippians 1:6 "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Jude 24–25 "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

This is our hope for 2026 and every year until the Lord returns. Christ is able. He keeps His people from ultimate stumbling, not by removing all difficulty or sin from the path, but by His sovereign, preserving grace. He will present you, a sinner saved by grace, blameless, faultless, with great joy before the Father's glory. Not because of your record, but because of His finished work. Glory, majesty, dominion, and authority belong to Him alone, through

Jesus Christ our Lord, from eternity past to eternity future.

So we do not face the unknown of 2026 with despair or with a false bravado.

We do not know what tomorrow may bring, sickness, loss, joy, temptation, or trial, but we certainly know the God who brings tomorrow into being.

We do not know what is coming, but we know who is coming with us: the unchanging Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Tomorrow is uncertain. Christ is not.

Here is the final word as we land the plane headed into 2026.

God does not promise to bless every sincere idea we have, but He has promised to bless through his appointed means.

God promises blessings through these means, not because of them. He has attached his word and his promises to them.

SO if you want a personal blessing this year, order your life around these means.

If you want a family blessing, bring these means into the life of your family.

If you want Awakening Church to be blessed, participate in and encourage what God has told us in His word that He will use.

And if you want the world to be blessed, give them Christ and his word. Point them not to our creativity or sincerity, but point them to what God himself says he will use to bless and grow through.

Awakening Church.

Rest in His hands.

Trust His faithfulness.

Face each day, every challenge, every temptation, with rejoicing, rejoice in the One who will receive us in 2026 and present us blameless before His glory for eternity.

5. Questions for Reflection and Discipleship

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. How did God prove faithful to me in 2025?

Reflect on all the ways God has sustained your faith, guided you through trials, and revealed His mercy, even when life was difficult or confusing.

Read: Lamentations 3:22–23, Psalm 90:12.

2. In what areas have I grown in holiness, and in what areas have I resisted repentance?

Consider where God's Word has convicted you, where you have turned from sin, and where patterns of disobedience persist. Think through how to pray through these things with God, and if appropriate, share and pray with your discipleship group.

Read: Philippians 1:6, James 5:16

3. How am I trusting God with tomorrow?

Evaluate whether your plans, goals, and expectations are submitted to His sovereign will, or if you are relying on your own understanding and strength. Read: James 4:14–15, Proverbs 16:9

4. What ordinary, Spirit-dependent practices will I commit to this year?

Reflect on your faithfulness to the Word, prayer, gathered worship, the local church, repentance, and family life. How will you intentionally grow in Christ through these means? Set real, actionable goals and share them with your spouses or discipleship group partners.

Read: Hebrews 10:25, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Colossians 3:16

5. In what ways am I pressing forward toward Christlikeness?

Think about how you can “forget what lies behind and strain toward what lies ahead” in your pursuit of holiness, knowing that the goal is not self-improvement, but Christ Himself.

Read: Philippians 3:12–14, 2 Corinthians 3:18

Extra Credit:

Read through one of my favorite “New Year's” selections. These are the resolutions written by Jonathan Edwards.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards>