

JANUARY 2019: A GATHERING OF WOMEN

By Tanya Lopez, Disciples Women Coordinating Minister

New Year, New You, Renewed Us

Happy and Blessed New Year to you and your family! With each new year, we are gifted with new opportunities, new challenges that help us to grow, new affirmations that help us to stay positive, and of course new goals that help us shape and create the year as we see fit! Well, at least that's what we hope and long for. New year's resolutions, new visions and new dreams are always initially exactly what we want and need. They are the things that will propel us into the life we've always wanted. The life we've envisioned for our families, for our churches, for our world! And yet, inevitably... life happens. And sometimes in the busyness of packed schedules, business meetings, afterschool responsibilities and so on and so on, we sort of let go of those new year hopes, goals and dreams. They seem to fade into the background and sometimes, unintentionally, we forget all about how motivated we felt and how determined we were to make this new year ours.

How can we hold on to something that, though we can make it tangible by setting goals and making plans to meet those goals, is really more of a feeling. It's a powerful sense of culmination and determination that comes over us and gives a sense of purpose. We will lose the weight we've been meaning to, we will eat healthier, we will go back to school, we will apply for that job, we will read more, we will judge less, love more, stress less... But why is it that we lose this feeling? I think that the answer won't and can't possibly be the same for everyone but I know that for me, looking inwards and making daily choices is what helps keep the fires of inspiration, of hope, and most importantly of determination, kindled and alive!

We need to daily remind ourselves that we need to strive for progress and not perfection. Because the truth of it is that we are not and will never be perfect. Perfection is an illusion and we harm ourselves and others when we strive to create and curate a sense of pristine and perfect happiness, absolute control of everything that comes our way, and a picture-

perfect life. We curate our life so that we measure up to whatever it is we think is the standard of a realized career, a life with meaning and a family and circle of friends that make everything just the epitome of success. But the truth is that we need to make choices every day that will help us become the best we can be little by little.

We need to practice forgiveness. We need to really forgive ourselves for past mistakes, for the ones we continuously make and for the many ways in which we may mess up in the future. When we learn to forgive ourselves, it becomes easier to forgive others. In my experience, the best and most pivotal life moments and milestones only come and only carry a lasting impact in our lives when they come after many failed attempts or many setbacks. Maybe your great new idea didn't really turn out the way you had planned, maybe you finally tried that new workout regime and it didn't magically transform your body like it did for the countless others who've tried it. Maybe that new medication your doctor prescribed didn't make anything better, maybe you still haven't felt relief from the pain you've been carrying for so long. But every day we are gifted with the opportunity to decide to stay in the fight a little while longer. To reach out to a trusted friend, to try another ministry idea that might connect people, to reevaluate where you are and where you've been and choose to trust in the process.

Trusting the process is not easy, but you are in the process of becoming. And so am I. God is always with us. God is always in our corner rooting for us. For us to not give up. For us to not get disappointed by the past but for us to learn from it and move forward taking with us the lessons we were able to glean from what might've felt like the end. This new year, my hope and prayer is that we learn to trust the process and the journey that we are each on. That we look within and trust that God is with us. That we allow ourselves to make daily choices that will allow us to capture that feeling that the new year brings, not just in the beginning of the year, but at the beginning of each day.

This new year, let's become new every day. Let's seize each opportunity to make another small choice and decision that will help us little by little achieve our dreams and goals. That will help us reach the visions we set out for ourselves, for our families, our churches and

that we dream and hope for our world. It all starts with you, with me, with us. We need to be renewed everyday so that we can help restore the lives we have been called to serve. Not because we are better, or because we have it all figured out, but because God is love and love and wholeness is a divine gift for all life. We are a people of God, let us use this new year to spread more love, more forgiveness and to help inspire those around us to keep striving for the best always, every day.

With the new year, reach out every day for the new you. With God's help, I trust this will help lead to a renewed us.

In Love,

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