

# New Life Family Matters

## January 2008

**Neighbors for life...**

**Hoping for Change, Anticipating Renewal, Reaping a Harvest**

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Rom 15:13 NIV*

*“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” 1 Tim 6:17 NIV*

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” 1 Peter 1:3 NIV*

January. Here in the Northern Hemisphere it is a month marked by cold temperatures, frigid precipitation, leafless trees, but also with hope. Yes, hope. Hope looks toward the future with the anticipation of good. Hope motivates us to begin tough tasks. Hope sustains us through long demanding seasons of life. Hope inspires us to renew our dedication to our goals. As we begin another year, I'd like to focus our thoughts on this precious commodity called hope, its life-giving qualities, and our responsive obedience to this amazing gift of grace.

January literally means, “door.” It is the “doorway” into a new year. New beginnings have an amazing ability to offer hope. How many of us have made New Year's resolutions because of its offer? The desire to change coupled with hope empowers us to make a decision; resulting in action. A common resolution is to lose weight, or to “physically get into shape.” As a follower of Christ, maybe we want to make reading the Bible a daily practice. The 2<sup>nd</sup> of January is commonly the date we plan on enacting our resolution. We start strong, motivated and focused on our goal. Soon though, life on the planet causes challenges, reality sets in and results are not easily attained. Long days of work, our child's dentist appointments, unexpected car problems, and the general “bent of life” toward harshness makes living faithfully unattainable apart from the power of hope infusing our tired mind, emotions and will with its amazing grace. God's Word teaches us how hope empowers us to live faithful to our Master and to our life's goals or mission.

Lasting hope is sourced in God alone. He calls Himself the “God of Hope” (Rom 15:13).

*Hope is a “birthright” of all God's children, a gift of His great mercy, and secured for us through Jesus' resurrection (1Pe 1:3). Just as new beginnings offer us hope, Jesus' resurrection from death was a new beginning from the old pattern of death, decay and disease. Apart from our hope in Christ, we are hopeless to expect anything other than loss, corruption, and evil. But, because He is alive we have a continuous, never-ending source of hope. His resurrection offers us a God-given confidence that expects good instead of evil. By daily, putting our trust in the Lord to empower us to live faithfully*

*in the midst of challenging circumstances; He will infuse us with hope to trust Him to do as He promised. Such hope in Christ can renew our passion, inspire us to keep on keeping on, readjust our focus, reignite our faith and our will to press on –even when life screams at us to give up and give in.*

2007 was a challenging year –one in which many of us faced circumstances that were overwhelming apart from Christ. Though we were hard pressed, time and time again, I saw the hope of the Lord enable us see His helping hand of mercy and grace. His Joy was our strength and even brought laughter in the midst of difficult situations.

As we think about the New Year, I want to encourage you to follow Peter's directive about living with hope.

*“So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. <sup>14</sup>Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. <sup>15</sup>As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness.*

*<sup>16</sup> God said, "I am holy; you be holy."*

*1 Peter 1:13-16 THE MESSAGE*

Pastor Dave