

# **New Life In A New Year**

**By**

**Mark McGee**

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## **New Life In A New Year**

God created life. Satan killed it. Jesus gives new life to those who want it. I want it!

Everything was going along beautifully. God created a wonderful world for the enjoyment of His creatures. He created man and woman and introduced them to each other and the amazing world around them. Then Satan got involved. He hated God and everything God had created. That included the world and the people in it. Satan lied about God to the woman and deceived her into disobeying God. The woman asked the man to disobey and he did. The man and woman began to die physically, just as God had warned. They died spiritually at the instant they disobeyed God. They were ashamed and hid from God. Every human being born into life on earth is born spiritually dead and dies physically in a short period of time. That, my friends, is the sad story of humanity. We are born dead — then die.

However, I am very glad to say that is not the end to this sad story. The God who created man and woman gave them one chance to life. He said it would come through a Man He would send to deliver them. We know that Man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the

will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:12-14

The Bible is filled with stories about the birth of boys and girls, but the birth spoken of in John 1 is different than physical birth: “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.” This is a supernatural birth: “but of God.” This birth is directly related to the coming of the Word of God in the flesh. John the Apostle said that he beheld the glory of this Word, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John doesn’t leave us hanging about the identity of the Word:

“John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” John 1:15-17

The word John used for **born** (“who were born”) is the Greek word *gennao*. It was used most often for men “begetting” children. In this context, we see that the begetting is not of blood, will of the flesh, or will of man. It’s of God. It’s the same word Jesus used when he spoke with Nicodemus.

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no

one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:1-8

Jesus anticipated the real question and need of Nicodemus and addressed it. “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus didn’t get what Jesus was saying at first. He thought the Lord was talking about being born physically a second time, a physical impossibility. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus explained to Nicodemus that what He was talking about was spiritual birth, not physical. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The first key is the words “born again.” The Greek is *gennethe anothēn*, “is born from above.” It was used for a place, usually on top of something or above something. Jesus said that unless a person is born from the top/above, they cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus misunderstood, so Jesus added more information to help him get to the truth. This is the second key: “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” He repeats the same phrase, *gennethēnai anothēn* (born from above), and makes it clear that what He’s talking about is being born of the Spirit.

Why do we need to be born of the Spirit? Because the Spirit of God left Adam and Eve when they sinned against God. They received God’s Spirit when God created them. Remember that Adam was created in the “image” of God (Genesis 1:26-27). God breathed into Adam the “breath of life” (Genesis 2:7) that included the Spirit of God. When Adam sinned against God, the Holy Spirit left Adam and Eve. They lost their spiritual connection with God. Being “born again” reconnects people with God and the Holy Spirit once again lives in them.

Jesus introduced Nicodemus to the most amazing fact of life: we can be born of the Spirit! It was a truth that so captured Nicodemus that he eventually became a follower of Christ (John 19:39). I can imagine that the Lord’s promise of spiritual life coming through a new birth from above is something that never left Nicodemus’ mind.

The Apostle Peter also got the message. He knew what it meant to be spiritually “born from above” and taught that truth to others. Here’s what he wrote in his first letter: “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23) The Greek word for “having been born again” is *anagegennemeno*i and translates into English as “having been regenerated.” He used a similar word a few sentences later when he wrote: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” (1 Peter 2:2) The Greek for “newborn babes” is *aptigenneta brephe* and means someone who is a newborn child or infant. Even though Peter was writing primarily to adults, he called them “newborn babes.” That was based on their having recently been “regenerated.”

Regeneration is a phenomenal reality in the spiritual world. God takes someone who was born into physical and spiritual death and begets them anew spiritually! Paul explained it this way:

“And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive

together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:1-7

“And you He made alive, who were dead.” This is stunning information, breaking news to the highest degree! God raises people from the dead every day; people who were dead in trespasses and sins. Even when we were dead in trespasses, God “made us alive together with Christ.” We were “dead” (*nekros* – dead body), but God made us “alive” (*sunzoopoieo* – bring to life, make alive with) together with Christ.

The “new birth” is the pathway to “new life” in Christ and humanity’s only hope to defeat the death everyone of us is born into. It is truly a “regeneration”, a spiritual renewal.

Another Greek word translated “regeneration” is *palingenesia*, from *palin* (again) and *genesis* (birth). Paul used it in his letter to Titus.

“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:4-7

Notice how this happens from God's perspective:

1. kindness and love of God our Savior toward man
2. not by works of righteousness which we have done
3. saved us according to His mercy
4. through the washing of regeneration
5. and renewing of the Holy Spirit
6. whom God poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior
7. having been justified by His grace
8. we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life

Wow! God did all this for us. Paul's teaching and writing are consistent on the fact that we have spiritual life because of the mercy of God, and not because of our righteousness or anything we've done. We are spiritually alive through the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

# An Amazing Adventure

The **new birth** Jesus and His apostles talked about in the Bible has many similarities to human birth. The insight is helpful to understanding the gift of spiritual life, just as it is understanding the gift of physical life.

Life begins at **conception**. That's a fact. The sperm of the man and egg of the woman are alive. When they unite, they begin the God-designed process of making a new life from the two lives of the parents.

**Gestation** is next. That's the period of time when the fertilized egg develops and grows inside his or her mother. The gestation period in humans is usually 40 weeks. That includes the 38 weeks from conception to birth, plus the two weeks from the last menstrual period to conception (known as the gestation period). It's interesting that the gestation period is divided into **three** equal periods of time we call **trimesters**. Each one is vital to the hoped-for-event: the live birth and development of the child.

**Childbirth** is the normal outcome of the gestation period. A child ("children" if multiple gestations) is born. It is viewed as a "new" life and recorded as a live birth or "born alive".

The **newborn baby** is often referred to as a newborn and new baby. Newborns are completely dependent on others to feed them, clean them, clothe them, carry them from place to place, and protect them

from harm. It begins a lengthy process of human growth that takes a person from newborn to infant to toddler to young child, to child, to pre-teen and teen, until they reach adulthood. Then the growth continues from young adult, to middle-aged adult, to older adult, to senior, to aged, to death.

The **supernatural** or **spiritual new birth** is similar to natural birth in several ways. I'll use myself for an example, but this is true for millions of Christians saved as teenagers and adults. We had the physical age maturity to remember the events of our new birth in some detail.

**Conception** – God began His work in me. I can pinpoint the beginning to when my mother told me she was praying for me and knew I would be saved soon. I found that humorous at the time since I was an atheist with no inclination toward the spiritual, but I heard what she said and what God planted in my mind that day would bear spiritual fruit. (Parents – pray for your children and believe God for miracles!)

**Gestation** – God sent three men into my life to nurture the seed that God planted. It was as if He had decided to deal with me in **trimesters**.

9. The first man was Dr. Henry Morris, a professor of science and founder of the Institute for Creation Research. I spent only three hours with Dr. Morris on my radio talk show, but God did a deep work in my unbelieving heart that led to my first doubts about

atheism.

10. The second man was Terry Lytle, a kind man with the heart of a pastor and the spirit of an evangelist. He loved me unconditionally and demonstrated real faith in a loving God.
11. The third man was Dr. Edward Hindson, an amazing Bible teacher who God used to answer every question I had about the reality of God and authenticity of God's Word.

**New Birth** – I was born spiritually May 10, 1971. Terry Lytle asked me if there was any reason I shouldn't receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I thought for a few seconds and told him I couldn't think of any reason. He and Dr. Hindson had answered all of my questions. Terry and I sat in his office and I prayed the sinner's prayer. I was born from above and given the most amazing gift imaginable!

**Newborn** – I opened my eyes after asking God to forgive me and receiving Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I remember feeling different, better — but I couldn't comprehend all of what had happened to me at that moment.

# Journey Of A New Life

Being born again (born spiritually, from above) is just the beginning of a great journey we call Christianity. It begins with God working in our hearts and minds to draw us (*elkuse* – attract) to Christ (John 6:44). We hear the Gospel of God's Grace, believe it, ask God's forgiveness, receive Christ as Lord and Savior, and are spiritually born. The Apostle Paul used the word **born** to describe what happened to him spiritually (1 Corinthians 15:8). The Apostle Peter told the believing Jews that it had happened to them (1 Peter 2:23). The Apostle John also used the word when describing those who believed in Christ (1 John 5:1).

When I received Christ as my Lord and Savior, hundreds of spiritual things happened to me, maybe more. It's just like the newborn baby who is ushered into the world from his or her mother's warm and safe womb. The baby is alive and a miracle of God's design. Parents and grandparents make a big fuss over the little bundle of joy. What does the newborn do? Cry and demand to be fed and changed and clothed and warmed. Babies are very demanding, but that's what's natural for them to do. The baby doesn't know he/she is part of a bigger family. He doesn't understand what just happened to him. She doesn't know whether her parents are rich or poor. She doesn't have any idea of what's going to happen to her. All she knows is what she feels, sees, hears, smells and tastes. Sensations are a baby's life.

It's the same with a person who is born from above. They respond to things that happen around them based on new sensations. I remember the hearty handshake and holy hug I received from Terry Lytle after I prayed in his office to receive Christ. I remember my mother's tears and hugs when I told her I had received Christ as my Lord and Savior. I remember attending church and Bible studies. I can't recall the words, but I remember feeling loved and accepted by fellow Christians. I remember a lot of things from my first days, weeks and months as a Christian, most of them sensations.

How does a newborn grow? They drink milk. It's the same in the spiritual world.

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” 1 Peter 2:1-3

Peter is telling the Jewish believers scattered throughout the world that they need to get back to basics and **desire the pure milk of the Word**. The word **desire** (*epithesis*) means an “earnest longing, desire for something or someone”. The word **pure** (*adolos*) means “without guile, without fraud and deceit, sincere”. The word **milk** (*gala*) is used both literally and metaphorically in the Bible. It carries the idea of “rudimentary spiritual teaching”. Peter said the believers should lay aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, and desire the pure basic spiritual teachings of Christ. Paul used the word in 1 Corinthians 3:2 when he told Christians in the

church at Corinth that he had fed them with milk and not solid food because they were still carnal (*sarkikos* – fleshly, sensual).

Babies start out as babies, but that's not where they finish. Our goal as Christians is just like the goal every parent has for their children: to grow and mature. Newborn babies grow into infants and eventually into young children who can feed themselves, bathe themselves, dress themselves, clothe themselves, and warm themselves. They start on a diet of mother's milk, but are eventually weaned from that milk to eat solid food. That's what Paul expected from the Corinthians. They should have been a lot further along in their spiritual development. Just as parents express concern about a child who is not developing naturally, Christians should be concerned when they see a believer who is not developing spiritually.

Spiritual growth is a major part of our journey here on earth, just like the natural journey we have as physical beings. We need to eat, drink, exercise, rest, think, read, discuss, share, play, dream, and plan spiritually, just as we do physically. Look at some of what God wants us to know about being His spiritual children. You'll find a wealth of insight into your faith in these verses.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Romans 8:16-17

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child,

I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” 1 Corinthians 13:11

“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.” 1 Corinthians 14:20

“Now *for* the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” 2 Corinthians 12:14

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise.” Galatians 4:28

“... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—” Ephesians 4:14-15

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1-2

“For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may

become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Ephesians 2:14-16

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us .... as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children.” 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11

How amazing is our life in Christ!

# Possessions Of A New Life

Just like babies learn about the family they've been born into, new Christians soon learn about their new family. A baby, by law, becomes an inheritor of the possessions of their father and mother. That includes everything from food and clothing to furniture, appliances, vehicles, houses, land, cash, stocks, and bonds. Christians also become inheritors of the possessions of their Heavenly Father.

Here's what Jesus promised those who followed Him:

"Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth."

Matthew 5:5

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

Matthew 19:29

"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Matthew 25:33-34

Here's what Paul said about a Christian's inheritance:

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of

His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Acts 20:32

“I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Acts 26:14-18

“No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things *to your* brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:8-10

“And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. Now this I say,

brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15:49-51

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:11-14

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

Colossians 1:9-12

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of

the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24

It was very important to Paul that Christians learned about their spiritual inheritance and the many rewards that would come from it. Look at the details from his letter to the Christians in Ephesus:

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Ephesians 1:15-23

We are so rich! We will spend eternity with Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord and Savior ... We have an amazing home in

Heaven ... We will walk the streets of gold ... We will enjoy every imaginable joy in Heaven! But what do we have here on earth? We have every spiritual blessing!

12. Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him
13. The eyes of our understanding being enlightened
14. Know what is the hope of His calling
15. Know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
16. Know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe
17. Know the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places

We have access to every spiritual blessing because of our inheritance in Christ Jesus! Our present and future are bound tightly to the inheritance we have in our Lord and Savior. His victory over death and the grave becomes our victory over death and the grave. Jesus has great riches beyond our wildest imagination and He freely shares them with us. Why? Because He loves us and bought us with the stunning price of His Blood.

I cannot express my gratitude, my deep-felt thankfulness, for what God has done for me and every Christian who is alive today, has lived in the past, and will be born in the future.

## Words For A New Life

One of the things I remember from my first year as a Christian is a lot of big words — words like salvation, regeneration, redemption, justification, sanctification, predestination, glorification, dispensation, among many others. I could tell the words were important because older Christians were obviously taken with their importance. I was blessed to be able to look after and live in the house of a Bible teacher for a few weeks while he and his family were traveling. I had access to his large library of theological writings. I spent almost all of my spare time at the house reading from his library and learning about these beautiful and powerful words.

What I learned was that every true believer in Christ inherits all of these spiritual blessings at the nano-second they are saved.

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the

riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:3-14

I didn't know it when I was “born from above,” but I had inherited thousands of spiritual blessings explained through special words passed down to us for thousands of years. Here are some of the “words for a new life” just from this one small portion of the Apostle Paul's writings.

18. blessed
19. spiritual blessing
20. heavenly places
21. chose in Him
22. foundation of the world
23. holy

24. without blame
25. love
26. predestined
27. adoption
28. sons
29. good pleasure
30. His will
31. praise
32. glory
33. grace
34. accepted
35. Beloved
36. redemption
37. His blood
38. forgiveness of sins
39. riches of His grace
40. abound toward us
41. wisdom
42. prudence
43. mystery of His will
44. purposed in Himself
45. dispensation of the fullness of the times
46. all things in Christ
47. inheritance
48. works all things
49. counsel of His will

50. trusted in Christ
51. Word of truth
52. Gospel of your salvation
53. having believed
54. sealed
55. Holy Spirit of promise
56. guarantee of our inheritance
57. redemption of the purchased possession

And that was just the beginning! God placed several mentors into my life during my first year as a “baby” Christian that prepared me for God’s calling in my life. Two of them were Bible teachers who introduced me to the great treasure of studying God’s Word from the Greek and Hebrew. The other two were pastors who had a great burden for shepherding God’s people and reaching the lost sheep in their community. I smile as I write this because God gave me the dominant spiritual gifts of teaching and shepherding and the mentors who were in my life during my first year as a Christian were men who had similar dominant gifts.

It’s just one small reminder that God **chose** us before the foundation of the world. It reminds me of what parents do before their children are born. They prepare for the arrival of the new bundle of joy. They buy clothing, furniture, diapers and other necessities for a newborn. They sometimes remodel a room and get it ready for the new baby. The birth of a child is no surprise to the parents and their family and friends. That’s why we say that a woman is “expecting.” They are

expecting the child to be born, so they prepare. God did the same thing. He chose us in Christ from before the foundation of the world and made all the necessary preparations for our birth. Everything we needed was in place and ready. Nothing in our lives is by chance. God knew it long ago.

My guess is that you could say the same thing as me about your first year as a Christian. God knew you were going to be born and He prepared everything and everyone for you. Who did God put into your life as mentors that first year? Who were the Christians who ministered to you most? Did they have similar spiritual gifts as you? How has God worked in your life to prepare you for worship and ministry? It's often through other Christians. I believe we are drawn by the Spirit of God to the people He will use to train us for ministry. Take a look around. Who is in your life now? What Christians are you drawn to spend time with? Who do you think like and want to be with in your local church and other Christian groups and organizations? What ministries are most important to you? That's often a big clue to your primary spiritual gift and ministry.

The Bible is filled with words – 783,137 to be exact. More than three-quarters-of-a-million words, each one having great and eternal importance because they are the “Words of God.” These are **words of eternal life**. They teach us, guide us, protect us, answer our hardest questions, meet our deepest needs. I pray that all Christians will fall deeply in love with the Word of God and make Bible study a major part of their lives every day, year after year. The Word of God

is our salvation, our hope, just like Peter said to Jesus: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has the Words of eternal life. No one else does. No other religion, no other philosophy, no other teacher or leader. Only Jesus has the Words of eternal life. We are most blessed to have these Words available to us to read, study, memorize, and internalize. The Word of God is not a book of literature to be read and put on a shelf. The Bible is alive with principles and precepts that save souls and guide the greatest living organism in the universe – the Body of Christ.

In Christ’s Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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