



New Year, New Hearts - January 2023

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. Ezekiel 36:25-27

Happy New Year! Each year the time around the New Year is filled with great hope that the next year will be better than the previous one. The thing that gives us this hope is the anticipation that we will experience positive changes. Maybe we will lose a few pounds or travel more. However, change is hard. Before we know it, we will be at the same place 365 days from now.

True transformation is something that people struggle with on their own, and when it comes to the transformation of a person's heart, change is impossible to achieve without God. True transformation is a gift from God that we cooperate with.

Today's scripture highlights two sins that the people of Israel struggled with— idolatry and hard heartedness. We struggle with the same sins today. The promise is that God can and will transform our hard hearts into soft hearts and help us worship him. This change comes from being "sprinkled with clean water" – a prefiguring of Christian baptism. Through baptism we are given new life and our

stoney hearts are replaced with hearts that are receptive to God.

- What inward, spiritual changes do you think God wants to bring to your life this year?

- Why do people struggle to change?

- Do you find it difficult to believe when people claim to have changed?

