

# The Living Word

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## 7 SPIRITUAL NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2021 (OR ANY YEAR!)

Excerpted from [www.spiritualawakeningprocess.com](http://www.spiritualawakeningprocess.com) by Jim Tolles

Every year, people make New Year's resolutions as a way to set intentions about what they want going forward. A lot of times, these resolutions are the usual ego desires, and we rarely ever inquire as to from where these resolutions come. It's not surprising that many resolutions don't pan out (like that commitment to go to the gym to get fit) because we don't know ourselves well enough to understand the deeper ego inside of us nor the issues that hold us back. This doesn't make resolutions an unworthy ritual. It simply means that if we want to set intentions for a new year that might stick, then we need to go deeper in understanding ourselves.

To help you along, I'm offering seven spiritual New Year's resolutions for 2021 to go deeper in understanding yourself. They can help you to understand what you truly want in your life. Hopefully, that might make it easier for following through on your other 2021 New Year's resolutions.

Enjoy!

### 1. Be Here Now

Let's start with one that you've already achieved. You are already here now. Congrats!

However, we sure let our minds wander off a lot, so clearly, there is a need for most people to practice bringing that wandering lamb home. It's really not hard to do because you are always here now. The minute you notice that you've wandered off into a mental fantasy land you've already returned your attention to the present moment. That noticing is your awareness, and your awareness lives in the present moment. There's nothing more you need to do, although I suspect you'll become more aware of how often your mind abandons the present moment.

As such, resolve this year to make it a practice from time to time throughout your day to draw your attention to the present moment and to let go of thoughts about the future and the past. *Link to more information:* [Be Here Now](#)

### 2. Start or Re-start Your Spiritual Practice

Many people do not have a regular spiritual practice, or they've let their practice fall by the wayside. I encourage you to resolve to start or re-start your spiritual practice for 2021. The specifics of your spiritual practice are up to you. Whether it is prayer and Sunday (Zoom)

church, daily meditation, your regular yoga class, a combination of these, or something else entirely, find something that works for you. Then work on continuing it. It doesn't have to be hard or extensive. You don't have to meditate for 3 hours a day. But discipline is needed, and through that spiritual discipline, you can benefit greatly in terms of physical relaxation, emotional stability, and mental serenity.

If you are brand new to the spiritual path, check out this blog post to help you get started developing your spiritual practice: [How to Start Your Spiritual Journey](#)

### **3. Deepen Your Spiritual Commitment**

For those of you who have a regular spiritual practice, make it a resolution this year to go deeper, whatever that means for you. I don't mean meditate more necessarily. I mean find places within yourself that you haven't explored or find additional spiritual people to support you.

People tend to explore the parts of themselves that they are comfortable with and avoid other aspects of their inner spiritual work. Many people who are comfortable with intellectual pursuits only engage with the spiritual path via ideas. They can talk up a storm about Eckhart Tolle or Ramana Maharshi, but when it comes to knowing their hearts, they are still in the dark. Similar imbalances can be true for people who know their hearts. While they are strong in their emotions, they are not at peace in their minds or their bodies. Some people know their bodies, but they avoid dabbling in the world of the intellect. There are all kinds of ways to grow and to deepen one's commitment to the spiritual path. It usually means attending to the places where we are weak and under-developed.

Whatever this deepening of commitment might be, you know what it is. I encourage you to trust your own knowing and follow through on it. *Link to more information:* [How to Go Spiritually Deeper](#)

### **4. Seek Out and Confront a Core Issue**

This resolution could easily be the same as the previous one, but not necessarily. Core issues sit at the center of the unconscious ego. They're part of what we unconsciously believe about ourselves in the most fundamental ways. Core issues include self-hatred/lack of self-love, abandonment issues, fear of the unknown, scarcity fears, gender identities, sexual identities, trauma, and others.

At the center of many core issues is the belief that "you are not okay as you are." When people believe that they are not okay, then they need validation, awards, attractive clothing, lots of money, prestige, fame, feel-good spiritual experiences, and other things to hide and medicate this deep issue. Many New Year's resolutions end up being part of this medication process. Someone may resolve to lose weight, but they're not doing it to be healthy. They're doing it to be attractive so that other people will like them. This is just another way to hide the core issue of lack of self-love and the feeling that "you are not okay." It's not surprising that this resolution may not be followed through upon, and even if it is, that core issue will rear its ugly head in yet another way.

So get out your pick axe or journal (okay, the journal will probably work better), and write about your deeper issues. See what they are and how you act them out. Then you can resolve

to change the way you act in a mindful way. *Link to more information:* [When the Spiritual Path REALLY Hits You](#)

## 5. Surrender Something You Need to Let Go of

There are so many things that people hold onto. I encourage you to resolve to let go of one--just one--thing, relationship, job, situation, substance (like alcohol), or something else that you know you need to release. It could even be an idea that you need to let go of.

The more important it is that you let go of something, the more likely your ego will throw a fit when it comes time to do so. That usually means that once you let this thing go, you are likely to feel way better. A lot of your energy is clearly tied up in this issue, and the only way to get your energy back is to let go of this thing.

Once again, it only has to be one thing. That shouldn't be too hard to achieve at least once during the new year. *Links to more information:* [Giving Up Something You Don't Want to Give Up; Surrender, Surrender, and Keep Surrendering](#)

## 6. Tell More People You Love Them

Love seems to be this magical potion that is kept off limits except for special occasions. That's crazy. Instead, practice telling more people you love them. You don't have to shout it to strangers and enemies. Just practice telling those people you already like and appreciate that you love them.

Most people hardly say those three little words, "I love you." And this does strange things to human beings. Many people feel cut off from each other. Reaching out and opening yourself up in this way is a beautiful way to help others feel connected again. It also tends to have the added benefit of helping you feel more connected to the love within you. *Link to more information:* [Expressing Love in a Cynical Society](#)

## 7. Let Silence Consume You

While anyone reading this spiritual awakening blog post can resolve to let silence consume them, I know that some of you are really ready to let everything go. You are ready to drop into the space of silent presence that is already here. So allow it. Let silence consume you. Let the remaining unconscious ego dissolve away. When you find a place that holds on, notice that resistance. Sit with it until you are simply silence itself that lives, breathes, and acts in this world.

*Link to more information:* [Melting Into Silence](#)

## Enjoy the Ride for the New Year

I would encourage you to let go of your expectations for the New Year as well as for your resolutions. Life has its own unfolding, and there are many forces moving through the world. Just do the best you can, and perhaps more joy will emerge out of your resolutions than you would have anticipated.

Happy New Year!



## *Living Stones*

*Remembering that it happened once, / We cannot turn away the thought,  
As we go out, cold, to our barns / Toward the long night's end, that we  
Ourselves are living in the world / It happened in when it first happened,  
That we ourselves, opening a stall / (A latch thrown open countless times  
Before), might find them breathing there, / Foreknown: the Child bedded in straw,  
The mother kneeling over Him, / The husband standing in belief  
He scarcely can believe, in light / That lights them from no source we see,  
An April morning's light, the air / Around them joyful as a choir.  
We stand with one hand on the door, / Looking into another world  
That is this world, the pale daylight / Coming just as before, our chores  
To do, the cattle all awake, / Our own white frozen breath hanging  
In front of us; and we are here / As we have never been before,  
Sighted as not before, our place / Holy, although we knew it not.  
—“Remembering that it happened once” by Wendell Berry*

There is a tender beauty to the Christmas season. An honesty. An opening. It invites us into a realness that transcends all the decorations and lights of Advent. And it moves us toward greater authenticity, even rawness, like what we hear in the gritty, down-to-earth longing of Mary's song (Luke 1:46-56): God will cast down the powerful, and lift up the lowly. God will fill the hungry, and send the rich away empty. This tender beauty is grounded in our messy humanness and deepest needs. It is a gift of Incarnation. And it asks us to imagine what sort of world we hope for— what sort of world we want to be a part of—what sort of world we want to build. The beauty—and the holiness—is already here; we just have to recognize it, allow it to open our hearts, and invite it to move and inspire us.

2020 was such a hard year for so many people for so many reasons. It exposed layers of injustice and layers of grief. And while much of this year was incredibly difficult, it also points a way forward for us as a community that strives to love and care for others. In this new year, I hope we will gather our learnings from 2020, the stories of our hardships, the unexpected blessings that found their way to us, and our deepest longings—and create and live into a vision that responds to the sacred call that God places upon us and responds to the human call of the needs of our neighbors. Beauty and possibility are all around us. How shall we respond?

See you in (zoom) church,  
Christy

**A BIG THANK YOU!**

Thank you so much, Church Family, for your generous Christmas gift! Your generosity means so much to me—and also to Jeanne and Clivie. I am blessed to serve as your pastor, and I am grateful for the faithful ways we minister together. We have certainly come through a challenging year, and your gift definitely helps make our Christmas (and my birthday) especially merry!

With much love and appreciation,  
Christy

**WORSHIP PLANNING RETREAT – JANUARY 23**

On Saturday, January 23, from 10:00-12:00, we will have our next Worship Planning Retreat on Zoom. This will be an opportunity for us to come together to envision and chart a course for our worship services over the next 3 months, including Lent and Easter. We will read scripture together and brainstorm themes, songs, poems, prayers, art, and ways we might structure our worship time. Everyone is welcome! So, bring yourselves and any ideas you have. We will share a refreshing and life-giving time together, while doing the work of the church. I look forward to seeing you there!

Christy

**ZOOM WORSHIP**

As we continue to shelter-in-place, we will continue to worship together online using Zoom. Bible Study begins at 9:30. Worship begins at 10:30. Please join us for any or all of this time together by clicking the link below and joining us through video. Or alternatively, you can dial in by calling the number below according to your time zone. The instructions to connect are fairly easy, but if you need help, please reach out.

In preparation for worship, please have communion elements of some form with you so that we can all partake together. This can be bread and juice—or any other elements that evoke the Last Supper for you. You may also want to light a candle near you as we worship together.

**Bible Study and Worship**

Weekly on Sundays, 9:30 a.m.—Bible Study  
10:30 a.m.—Worship

**KEEPING BUSY IN JANUARY**

As we continue to shelter in place, here are some print & play games to entertain yourself on New Year's Eve and beyond.

**NYE Scavenger Hunt**

- \* Balloons
- \* Snow
- \* Top Hat
- \* Candles
- \* Noisemaker
- \* Clock
- \* Sunglasses
- \* 2018
- \* Cider
- \* Confetti
- \* Fireworks
- \* Countdown Timer
- \* Party Crown
- \* Mum's
- \* Board Game
- \* Pizza
- \* Sparkly Ball
- \* Music
- \* Calender
- \* Star
- \* Glow Stick
- \* Streamers
- \* Toasting
- \* Happy New Year
- \* Napkin
- \* Party Hat
- \* Orange Leaf
- \* Christmas Lights
- \* Snacks
- \* 5 Parked Cars
- \* Rock Star
- \* Christmas Decor
- \* 2019

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**NEW YEAR'S WORD SCRAMBLE:** Unscramble the first four words in each set of scrambles. Use the circled letters to unscramble the final word. Some of the words may unscramble into more than one word, but only one word is related to the puzzle.

<p><b>1. ABOUT NEW YEAR'S (SET 1)</b></p> <p>A O T S T □□□□□</p> <p>F I N D E R S □□□□□□□</p> <p>C E E H R □□□□□</p> <p>A P R Y T □□□□□</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> □□□□□□□□</p>	<p><b>2. RESOLUTIONS</b></p> <p>T I D E S □□□□□</p> <p>A F I L M Y □□□□□□□</p> <p>A E L N R □□□□□</p> <p>A B H I S T □□□□□□□</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> □□□□□□□□</p>
<p><b>3. ABOUT NEW YEAR'S (SET 2)</b></p> <p>O Y J □□□</p> <p>C N O T U □□□□□</p> <p>A A D E P R □□□□□□□</p> <p>S T R F I □□□□□</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> □□□□□□□□</p>	<p><b>4. ABOUT NEW YEAR'S (SET 3)</b></p> <p>S K I S □□□□</p> <p>A P H Y P □□□□□□</p> <p>D I K N R □□□□□□</p> <p>D L U O □□□□</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> □□□□□□□□</p>

**New Year Word Modifier Puzzle**

Change just one letter in each step to make a new word with an entirely different meaning. The clues provided alongside will help you find out each word.

\_\_\_Year\_\_\_ - A period of time containing 365 (or 366) days.

\_\_\_\_\_ - Welcome the new year with \_\_\_\_\_ ones.

\_\_\_\_\_ - A dreadful feeling that you must not experience during New Year's Day.

\_\_\_\_\_ - Another year is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ - This is what you should do with new dresses during the occassion.

**New Year's Resolutions Logic Puzzle**

Each year, we tend to find it necessary to make resolutions for things we'd like to do in the new year. For some people, it's losing weight, for others, it's paying off a debt. This year, 4 couples have decided on something they would like to do, as a couple, in 2021. Your task is to determine who is married to whom and what their resolution was for 2021.

Clues:

1. Todd and his wife were determined to take cooking lessons together this year.
2. Mr. Clark, who wasn't George, announced that they were planning to take a vacation to a tropical island. Mary and Mick were not a couple.
3. Stanley didn't plan to buy a new car. Cindy Douglas didn't need to lose any weight this year.
4. George & Susan were not a couple.
5. Of the four couples, there are Mr. and Mrs. Stills the couple who plan to buy a new car, Pauline and her husband, and Todd Humphrey.
6. Stanley Stills wasn't married to Susan.

		Wife				Surname				Resolution			
		Cindy	Mary	Pauline	Susan	Clark	Douglas	Humphrey	Stills	Buy car	Cooking	Island Escape	Lose Weight
Husband	George												
	Mick												
	Stanley												
	Todd												
Resolution	Buy car												
	Cooking												
	Island Escape												
	Lose Weight												
Surname	Clark												
	Douglas												
	Humphrey												
	Stills												

**Martin Luther King Jr. Word Search**

Search for the words and phrases associated with Martin Luther King Jr. in the letter grid. The words can be in any direction. Circle each letter individually. When the puzzle is completed, read the uncircled letters for a fact about the great civil rights leader.

M N M H U M A N I T A R I A N  
 A O R I T T S E T O R P I F N  
 L N V N U T H E R E K I N R G  
 J V R E C N E I D E B O S I D  
 I I N Q M R E A C E I V E C D  
 H O A U T E E H T S I T P A B  
 A L I A E L N N O P B E L N P  
 V E T L E R A T N A L T A A A  
 E N S I C E O P R S I Z C M E  
 A T I T F P O T R T B A T E T  
 D T R Y E L I N A O G R I R A  
 R C H A S T H G I R L I V I C  
 E I C A L I N L E B O N I C E  
 A E D E T A N I S S A S S A Q  
 M A R C H E S U A L I T T N Y

**WORD/PHRASE LIST**

- |                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| ACTIVIST         | INEQUALITY |
| AFRICAN-AMERICAN | LEADER     |
| ASSASSINATED     | MARCHES    |
| ATLANTA          | MOVEMENT   |
| BAPTIST          | NOBEL      |
| CHRISTIAN        | NONVIOLENT |
| CIVIL RIGHTS     | ORATOR     |
| DISOBEDIENCE     | PASTOR     |
| HUMANITARIAN     | PEACE      |
| I HAVE A DREAM   | PROTEST    |



**QUESTION FOR EPIPHANY**

According to Mark’s Gospel, how many kings came from the Orient following the Star of Bethlehem to pay homage to the Christ child in the manger?

\*\*\*\*\*

Answer: The Christmas Carol “We Three Kings of Orient Are” notwithstanding, the above is a trick question! For starters, Mark’s Gospel does not contain an infancy narrative. You find this visitation story only in Matthew, Chapter 2. In this account, the visitors are not referred to as “kings,” but (depending on the translation) as astrologers, Magi, or learned men. Traditionally, their number is set at three since - when they opened their coffers - they presented 3 different gifts, but the specific number is not actually mentioned. Plus, regardless of our manger or crèche scenes, the visitors did not pay their visit to a barn or manger but, according to Matthew, they entered a house where Mary and the child were. And finally, the Orient is not identified as their origin, but an unnamed country in the East. Christmas pageants aside, be sure to read the full Epiphany story in Matthew 2:1-12.

**MISSION ACTION GIFT**

This month we are again donating to two organizations. The Sparrow Project continues its mission to feed the homeless. Milestones of Development is one of the groups that usually gets funds from the Global Holiday Faire, but was not able to participate in the online Faire.

**DON'T FORGET:**

To help earn money for the church beyond your generous donations:

- ✓ Use [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) (instead of Google or Bing) for your internet searches.
- ✓ Start at [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) when shopping online.
- ✓ Sign up at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) for when you patronize local stores and restaurants.
- ✓ Take your recycling to Valcore ([www.valcorerecycling.org](http://www.valcorerecycling.org)) and ask that the money go to the church.
- ✓ Use [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). The first time you use it, you will be asked to select a charity to support. Pick our church, and don’t forget to bookmark the page!

**Mark Your Calendar**

Sunday, January 10	Epiphany Sunday Elders’ Meeting, following worship
Wednesday, January 13	Zoom Administrative Council, 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, January 20	Zoom Ministry Council, 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 23	Worship Planning Retreat on Zoom, 10 a.m. - noon