

“My desire and hope is that Spiritual Gold will reach our world with the positive message that God is alive and has the answers for the problems facing us today. In his messages at SpiritualGold.org, my husband, Richard, takes the Scriptures and breaks them down so that we can understand and receive practical advice as we live one day at a time.” —Mary Strauss



Finding Joy in the New Year

Adapted from the *Nehemiah’s New Year* by Dr. Richard L. Strauss, delivered on January 1, 1978

So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them.

- Nehemiah 8:12, NLT

Enjoying a festive meal. Sharing gifts of food. Celebrating with great joy. Doesn’t that sound like just the kind of thing to kick off the new year?

Did you know there are two passages in the Bible that talk about New Year’s celebrations? The first is in Exodus 12. God had the Israelites change their civil calendar so that the seventh month became the first month in order to commemorate God saving them from Egyptian bondage.

To learn about this, download the message “God’s New Year” (<http://spiritualgold.org/soundfiles/MS-015B.mp3>).

The second celebration is in Nehemiah 8. After the Babylonian captivity, the temple was rebuilt by Ezra in 520BC. Ezra 7:10, by the way, says that Ezra was a man of the Word—he lived it, obeyed it, studied it, shared it.

To learn about Ezra, download the message “A Prepared Man” (<http://spiritualgold.org/soundfiles/MS-061.mp3>).

The next step was to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. Nehemiah was the man to lead that. “So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days” (Nehemiah 6:15). Afterwards, everyone gathered together

Dear Spiritual Gold,

[I have] listened to a number of sermons from Pastor Strauss and have been really blessed. I forgot not only how good a preacher he was but what a true shepherd he was also. Thank you for keeping up the website with many of his sermons. A couple of his sermons have really been an encouragement in tough times.

- F. S.

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Finding Joy in the New Year *(continued)*

for two reasons: to celebrate the completion of the wall, and because God had commanded them to gather this day for the Feast of Trumpets (see Lev 23:23ff), which is Rosh Hashanah. This is the day that is in Nehemiah 8. What did they do?

They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.

² So...Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³ He read it aloud from daybreak till noon... And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

⁴ Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion...⁵ Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. ⁶ Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. ⁷ The Levites...instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. ⁸ They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. ¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

- Nehemiah 8:1-10

They listened. From daybreak until noon they listened to the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy). For six hours! Their hearts were hungry for the Word. There was a love for the Word of God. What would God have us think about for our New Year's? We should resolve to study the Word of God. Read through the Bible this year

They responded. The other thing they did was let the Word saturate their minds and they responded by being convicted of their sins. All the people wept. They also learned they should dwell in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles to remind them of their pilgrim status on this earth. Don't rush through the Word, meditate on it. What does it mean that you are a pilgrim?

They rejoiced. They also rejoiced in the Lord. "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." You want joy? You aren't going to find it apart from a relationship with God through His Word.

Binge Listen

There are over 1500 messages at spiritualgold.org. You can search for messages on specific books or topics in the Bible, or browse by going to the home page and clicking either of these buttons:

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Email Reminders

Need a friendly nudge to listen to the Sermon of the Month? Go to SpiritualGold.org to sign up for email reminders and a link to the message. Or type this link into your web browser:
<http://bit.ly/2eKQ8WX>

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May We Suggest...?

Thru the Bible. Following a program like Thru the Bible is a great way to get into God's Word. In the "Nehemiah's New Year" sermon, Dr. Strauss mentioned that 100 Thru the Bible booklets went quickly so EFCC had ordered 400 more.

Life of Christ. We would also like to suggest going through a Bible study with Dr. Strauss. Unlike his expository sermons that were created to fit into a given time period, Dr. Strauss simply goes through as much as he can until the next Wednesday night in a series called "The Life of Christ." Using the four gospels as organized in Dr. A.T. Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels*, Dr. Strauss teaches the life of Jesus in chronological order. When he first started the series, he said he had no idea how long it would take him to complete. Well, it took him 10 years and over 250 lessons. You can go through it in a year if you set your mind to it, but even at a more leisurely pace, it won't take you 10 years. Then again, so what if it did? It's a really rewarding study and one that is unlike any other. It's a great way to get to know your Savior through the Word of God.

You can find the series of MP3s here: <http://spiritualgold.org/catalog.php?series=lc>

Or type "life of Christ" in the search bar on spiritualgold.org.

You can find a transcript of the first message here: <http://spiritualgold.org/transcripts/LC-001.html>

In this first message, Dr. Strauss exhorts us to commit to getting to know Jesus. "Luke wrote this book that we may know the Lord Jesus Christ more intimately, that we might enter into a more precious and blessed relationship with Him. And as we come to know Him better by studying these records about Jesus—four different men who wrote a good message to us, the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ—as we study what they wrote, we're going to get to know the Lord Jesus better. To get to know Him better is going to be to love Him more. That's really what we're after, isn't it? A deeper love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you'll stick with us. We may be here years but what better place can we be than just learning about the Lord Jesus?"

Christlikeness. If 250+ messages seems a little overwhelming, try warming up with the Christlikeness series.

You can find the series of MP3s here:

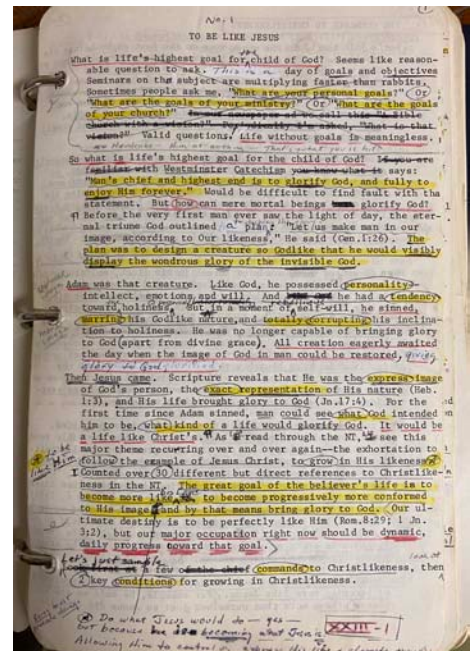
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Or type "Christlikeness" in the search bar on spiritualgold.org.

You can find a transcript of the first message here:

<http://spiritualgold.org/transcripts/CL-01.html>

In this first message, Dr. Strauss notes: "This is a day of goals and objectives. ...So what is life's highest goal for the child of God?...As I read through the New Testament I see this theme recurring over and over: the exhortation to be like Christ, to follow His example, to grow in His likeness. In fact, I counted over 30 different but direct references to Christ's likeness in the New Testament. I probably missed some... The great goal of the believer's life is to become more like Jesus Christ, to progressively become more conformed to His image, to do what Jesus would do, yes, but because we are becoming what Jesus is, that's the power to do what He would do. It's to be like Christ and by that means, to bring glory to God."



The first page of sermon notes for *Christlikeness*

However you choose to pursue a relationship with God through His Word, you'll surely experience more peace and joy in the new year.