

CLARITY FOR A NEW YEAR

JAMES 4:14-16 | ERIC SIMPSON | JANUARY 3, 2021

What's clearer to me at the beginning of 2021?

- **The fragility of life**

James 4:13-14

¹³Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

- Make plans & set goals...but do so with an open hand.
- Numbering our days on the timeline of eternity.

- **The presence of people**

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us..."

imago Dei = image of God

We're made in the image of community – plurality of being in the godhead.

We are not made to be alone.

We are made to inter-relate and inter-connect with other people.

"Whether we love people or not, we still need them...to feel lost and then to feel the touch of another human being reaching toward us across the gulf, not out of strength but often out of mutual frailty—this is an unforgettable experience. A bond is forged that cannot be forged in any other way." – Mike Mason

"The fabric of your spirituality will be worked out in loving your wife, your children and the people in your congregation." – Father Matthew Kelly

- **The ballast of the Bible**

ballast = weight placed in the hull of a boat to give it stability

"...the evidence shows that Americans who actively engage with the Bible and in corporate worship score higher on every measure of human flourishing, including better mental and physical health and a deeper sense of character and virtue. They even have a greater sense of financial and material stability compared to those who don't attend church or engage with the Bible." – Dr. Tyler VanderWeele

Harvard University study in 2020 = people who read the Bible regularly, 33 points more hopeful

Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Examples from this past year this past year...opening the Bible, whispering "Jesus help."

- *Psalms 75:3*
When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.
- *Psalms 77:19*
Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.
- *Matthew 11:28*
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

- **The otherness of Jesus**

I have a lot of wonderful people in my life, but none like Jesus.

He's so personal and precise in all He does.

He's faithful when I understand His ways and when I don't.

He's patient with my impatience.

He's loving with my stubborn selfishness.

He's light in the darkness.

His claims are outrageous.

His promises trustworthy.

His hope is alive.

Revelation 19:11-16

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. ...¹²His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns...¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God... ¹⁴On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

We have no idea what 2021 will hold, but we do know WHO holds it.

"Some of you have shouldered burdens that few of us could ever carry. You have bid farewell to lifelong partners. You have been robbed of lifelong dreams. You have been given bodies that can't sustain your spirit. You have spouses who can't tolerate your faith. You have bills that outnumber the paychecks and challenges that outweigh the strength. And you are tired.

It's hard for you to see the city in the midst of the storms. The desire to pull over to the side of the road and get out entices you. You want to go on, but some days the road seems so long.

Remember this: God never said that the journey would be easy, but he did say that the arrival would be worthwhile. He may not do what you want, but he will do what is right...and best. He's the Father of forward motion. Trust him. He will get you home. And the trials of the trip will be lost in the joys of the feast." - Max Lucado