

2021: Don't drop the ball!

By Bob Young

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Happy New Year!

The New Year traditionally begins with the bell dropping in Times Square. I want to reverse the illustration and encourage you toward a stronger spiritual walk in 2021. May I talk with you about the one ball you must not let drop in your spiritual life?

A New Year has dawned, fresh and clean. A new start – new beginnings in our spiritual goals, commitments, and activities.

Churches face decisions – public assemblies, classes, body life, effective outreach.

Church leaders face decisions – restoring the discouraged, developing plans for evangelism and discipleship in the “new normal.”

Christians face decisions – how to live out faith in the midst of this new experience. (Unless you are really old, this is the first pandemic you have had to go through.)

To talk about decisions is to talk about priorities. After the unpredictability of 2020, it may require a little time to get back into the rhythm of healthy spiritual habits. Churches will not punch a reset button and automatically go back to the way things were before. Church leaders will be called to lead God's people through new territory that will require new plans and seizing new opportunities.

Some Christians would like to find a resume button and go forward blindly, hoping everything is OK. Many people hope that 2021 will be “forward to the past” (with apologies to “Back to the Future”).

I am not a prophet, but to churches, church leaders, evangelists, and church members, thinking about our spiritual life in Christ, juggling our spiritual struggle,

I can tell you that you will not automatically succeed in keeping every ball in the air,

I also want to tell you, “That's OK!” It's OK if you cannot immediately get back on track with all of your spiritual goals, commitments, and activities.

Finally, **I want to remind** you about one ball you cannot let drop in in your spiritual life.

As you juggle life, including your spiritual life, that one ball is the unchanging Word of God. Dwelling in the Word provides an unshakeable, immovable foundation. Here are three reasons you must keep the ball labeled “Bible” in the air.

→The Bible is God-breathed; it is the inspired word of God, 2 Tim. 3:15-17. I am honored when others want to know what I think. I like it when people ask me to share my wisdom and experience. I like it when you read my writings and listen to my teachings. One way we honor God is by spending time in his Word so we are regularly exposed to wisdom and knowledge, with spiritual insights. The God-breathed Scriptures are the source of wisdom for salvation and are useful for developing faith in Christ Jesus through teaching and training. The Bible is our life manual, making us competent spiritually and capable in all good works. But teaching and training take time!

→The Bible is the word of Christ. Read John 14-16 again. Jesus makes clear that his message came from the Father and was passed on to the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission speaks of making disciples by baptizing them and teaching them – “teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.” The Bible, specifically the New Testament, contains the commands and instructions of Jesus. I am honored when I am obeyed. Parents expect children to obey; bosses expect employees to obey. Jesus said our obedience is an evidence of our love. If we seldom seek to know Jesus' word, the love described in the Bible is likely lacking from our lives. When we love someone, we want to know and to

do what pleases them. How will we know what Jesus our Lord wants if we do not carefully, regularly listen to him?

→The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6:17. We are instructed to take up the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the word in his work. In John 14-16, the Holy Spirit received the words of Jesus to testify concerning Jesus. The Holy Spirit has been given to us, the Holy Spirit assists in our prayers, the Holy Spirit guides us away from worldly desires and pleasures. Every Christian has been baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). But the primary work of the coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' Ascension was to speak about Jesus. The Holy Spirit guides into all truth. One way we honor the Holy Spirit is by taking up the Word of God, empowering his activity in our lives and in the world. One way the Holy Spirit convicts the world is through the words we speak, the words he has given us. I participate with the Holy Spirit by listening to the Word and by having at hand the armament the Spirit uses in spiritual battles. Simply saying good things about the Holy Spirit doesn't mean much if those words are not backed up with evidence – a specific command related to the work of the Holy Spirit is that we take up the Word and have ready in our lives his sword.

Here is a trinitarian look at Scripture – each entity of the Godhead has an eternal relationship to God's Word – revealing God and his wisdom, giving Christ's instructions, facilitating the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are many ways to keep the ball labeled "Bible" in the air.

- Reading plans are available electronically, on your cell phone and on your computer.
- Keeping a reading chart in your Bible and checking off the chapters as you read them is motivational. (I use the chart available on my website: <http://www.bobyongresources.com/bible/Bible-Reading-Plan.pdf>).
- Adopting and following a plan is helpful – read the NT in a month, or if you are really ambitious, read the OT in a month. Or, read the NT every month. The reading plan does not have to be ambitious. Choose a plan that works with your schedule and then follow through!

It's not too late to order and begin to use my newest book, *Dwelling in the Word*, with a devotional based on each chapter of the New Testament. [Dwelling in the Word: A Devotional Guide for Reading and Understanding the New Testament: Young, Bob: 9781943245611: Amazon.com: Books](#). The 260 chapters of the New Testament can be read and studied, one chapter each day in less than 9 months.

Dwelling in the Word makes a great gift. Here is a plan to help couples spend the first year of their marriage sharing God's Word. Married couples can begin at an anniversary. A birthday is a great time to recommit to spiritual growth through the Word of God. The birth of a baby, Mother's Day, Father's Day. Give those baptized a copy of the book. New Christians can be helped to begin their Christian life developing the habit of faithful, daily Bible study. Graduates can be encouraged to make the Bible a regular part of their life.

In your spiritual life, in 2021, this is the time to plan for success – the one ball that you cannot let drop in your spiritual life is the ball labeled "Bible." Churches, church leaders, Christians – this is the perfect time to renew your excitement and enthusiasm for the Word of God. A good way to do this is by making a commitment to "Dwell in the Word." You will grow in intimacy with God through Scripture. Let us grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).