

# GOD IS A GOD OF NEW THINGS

## Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

*What the new year brings to you will depend, in part, upon what you bring to the new year. —Vern McLellan*

The year 2020 is now in our rearview mirror, and many Americans are not sad to see it go.

It has been a long time since there's been so much stress in one 365-day calendar year. Not only did the Covid-19 virus disrupt everything, but it was also a presidential election year.

So now that we're in 2021, we are filled with hope. Out with the old; in with the new. This year, we hope and pray that a fail-proof remedy will emerge to combat this virus.

We've had to *defend* ourselves against the virus. We are asked to keep a space of 6 feet between ourselves and others. When in public, we need to wear a face covering. Churches were closed as were movie theaters and sports arenas. Oh, yes, 2020 was an unusual year! A year ago, we had no idea!

So we have been defending ourselves by staying home and alone as much as possible. But behind the scenes, scientists have been on the *offensive*, too, working feverishly to develop a vaccine or antidote to beat the virus.

We're ready for something new. We're tired of the old way of living.

Sounds familiar.

The apostle Paul speaks of the old and the new frequently. He notes that God is a God of new things. He also says, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Here is encouraging news to remember for the year 2021: God is a God of new things. God will be with you, as God has in the past. Therefore, we do not fear.

May I suggest a Bible verse for you to remember for the year 2021? "Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread ... because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Write this verse down or underline it in your Bible. Memorize it if you can. It will be a big help to you in 2021!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for preserving me throughout the past year! For the new year, I continue to trust in you. Amen.*

# ACTIVITY PAGE - GOD IS A GOD OF NEW THINGS

## Verse to Remember

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! —2 Corinthians 5:17

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Sunday:** Genesis 1-5
- Monday:** Genesis 6-12
- Tuesday:** Genesis 13-18
- Wednesday:** Genesis 19-23
- Thursday:** Genesis 24-28
- Friday:** Genesis 29-32
- Saturday:** Genesis 33-36



## LEFT OUT

**Directions:** Insert one letter set from column A in the space provided in column B to form a six-, seven- or eight-letter word. Each set in column A can be used only once.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
ARB	1. FORE _____ N
AVO	2. SP _____ XES
ELL	3. HO _____ ENY
ETH	4. GRI _____ ED
GIB	5. LI _____ BLE
HIN	6. TAN _____ LE
ILL	7. GRA _____ TY
KEA	8. FL _____ R
MAC	9. UR _____ RA
MOG	10. GE _____ OX
NOO	11. DW _____ ER
TUI	12. SE _____ MS
XIS	13. SP _____ WAY

## GENESIS PAIRS

**Directions:** The Bible readings this week are from Genesis 1-36. Sort the names listed here into pairs. Each name can be used only once. (Use the white space to do your work.)

- Rebekah
- Ark
- Cain
- Abraham
- Adam
- Noah
- Abel
- Ishmael
- Sarah
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Eve
- Rachel
- Leah
- Hagar
- Esau

### ANSWERS:

1. forenoon
2. sphinxes
3. homogeny
4. grimaced
5. likeable
6. tangible
7. gratuity
8. flavor
9. urethra
10. gearbox
11. dweller
12. sexism
13. spillway

### Genesis Pairs:

- Adam/Eve
- Cain/Abel
- Noah/Ark
- Abraham/Sarah
- Isaac/Rebekah
- Jacob/Esau
- Rachel/Leah
- Ishmael/Hagar

# HOPE

## Scripture Reading: Mark 1:4-11

*Hope is being able to see that there is light, despite all the darkness.*  
—Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

What kept us going in 2020? For many, it was ... *hope*. Next year will be better, we thought. It has to be.

We watched a lot of movies and TV in 2020, including reruns. Perhaps you watched some episodes of the crime drama, “Monk,” a show infused with a lot of humor. Tony Shalhoub plays the lead character, a detective, Adrian Monk. A germaphobe, Monk’s work is complicated by obsessive habits and a variety of phobias.

This is why he sees a psychiatrist several times a week. In Season 5, Episode 7, while investigating the murder of a cleaning lady in the office of his psychiatrist, Dr. Kroger, Monk happens to see his own file that Kroger has compiled. He’s only able to get a quick glance at it. But he is shocked by what he sees in the margin near the bottom of a page: *No Hope*. Monk is understandably distressed, believing that his shrink has come to a professional diagnosis that there is no hope for him. A confrontation ensues:

KROGER: And you read your file?

MONK: I couldn’t help it. I happened to glance down. And I saw something. Two words. “No hope.”

KROGER: “No hope?”

MONK: Is that what you think?

KROGER: Oh, Adrian, I would never say that about anyone, especially about you.

Kroger went on to explain that Monk in his haste had read “No hope,” when what it really said was, “N. Hope,” a reference to New Hope, Pennsylvania, where Monk’s father lived.

It’s a terrible thing to live without hope. So, as we peer into the year before, it’s hard not to have some feeling of hope for the coming year. Hope is so important that it is enshrined in culture as the middle of the three virtues: Faith, Hope and Love. And although the apostle Paul declared Love to be the greatest of the three, without Hope, Love cannot live and breathe.

Nurture the hope within you, the hope God has given you — a hope that rests solidly on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For if hope could shine even in the darkness of Calvary, then it can shine anywhere.

*Prayer: Thank you, God, for not only giving me hope, but for rewarding my patience, as I watch all things work together according to your infinite wisdom. Amen.*

# ACTIVITY PAGE - HOPE

## Verse to Remember

Happy are those ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. —Psalm 1:1-3

### Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** Genesis 37-39

**Monday:** Genesis 40-42

**Tuesday:** Genesis 43-46

**Wednesday:** Genesis 47-50

**Thursday:** Matthew 1-4

**Friday:** Matthew 5-7

**Saturday:** Psalms 1-3



# MIXED MESSAGE

**DIRECTIONS:** Write a word to fit each definition. Then, transfer the letters to the numbered boxes.

A large, dangerous sea creature with a fin on its back

15 20 5 23 3

A place to shop

8 7 1 16

A red vegetable

9 4 14 21

To work hard, sweating

10 11 2 6

A shack

13 18 12

To grow old

17 19 22

### THE BEATITUDES

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

**Directions:** Look for these words from the Matthew 5 reading listed above: blessed, children, comforted, earth, filled, God, heart, heaven, hunger, inherit, kingdom, meek, mourn, poor, pure, thirst.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

**Answers:**  
 shark,  
 mall,  
 beet,  
 toil,  
 hut,  
 age.  
 Like a  
 lamb to  
 the  
 slaughter.

# CLEANING HOUSE

**Scripture: Philippians 3:4b-14**

*Cleaning house fascinates everyone in my family.  
They can sit around and watch me for hours!!! —Anon.*

This current pandemic is not yet over yet, but it is a safe bet that more trash, junk and garbage has been hauled to the dump lately than ever before in the history of humankind! I have not verified this, but I'll bet that charities like The Salvation Army and Goodwill have seen donations jump sky-high in 2020.

Why? Because Americans, having so much time on their hands, cleaned out closets, attics and garages. They got rid of a lot of stuff.

They cleaned house. And then some!

You may not do too much housecleaning anymore. Perhaps you have someone or a staff of people who help you with meals and daily needs. Your place is tidy and kept up well.

But you remember when you were cleaning house. And although you may have had a job, often, if you were the woman in the relationship, cleaning duties fell to you. And it seemed never-ending.

Why am I talking about housecleaning?

Because taking care of one's soul demands a similar type of discipline. Good housekeepers know that one has to be ruthless with dirt!

In the reading above, the apostle Paul says that he makes sure to take out the garbage: "More than that, I regard *everything as loss* because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake *I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish*, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (vv. 8-9a, emphasis added).

Do you have any garbage to take out? Any grudges, resentments and bitterness to throw out the window? Is your life filled with and burdened by guilt and feelings of regret?

It's time to do spiritual housecleaning.

Fortunately, if you're willing, all you need to do is call the Cleaning Service. The Bible says that we are clean through the word that Jesus spoke to us. It also says that we have been cleaned up by the blood of the Cross.

David's earnest prayer was that he might be clean (Psalm 51). May it be ours as well!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for tossing out the trash. I am clean again, and I feel clean. Praise your name! Amen.*

# ACTIVITY PAGE - CLEANING HOUSE

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS

**Sunday:** 1 Corinthians 5-8  
**Monday:** Ezekiel 37-39  
**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 40-42  
**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 43-45  
**Thursday:** Ezekiel 46-48  
**Friday:** Daniel 1-6  
**Saturday:** Psalms 112-118

## World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday, first observed in 1936, is celebrated the first Sunday in October. It's a special Sunday when churches around the world give thanks to God for our oneness in Christ, the Prince of Peace, who calls us to serve in the midst of the world of people alienated from him and often estranged from each other. Let's thank God today for God's church, pray that it may be an effective agent for positive change in the world about us, and that many people might hear the Good News of Jesus!

## QUOTE FALL

**Directions:** In the box below is a quotation attributed to Henry Ward Beecher. The quote will "fall" into place as you choose the correct letter from each column. For example, in the first column below, the first letter of the first word will be either an I, W, M or T. The second letter of the first word will be an A, E, T or A. We've dropped the first word for you.

<del>I</del>	A		G	I		P	S	U		W	C	H	H		T	E
W	E	K	E		U	N		B	P	T		H	T	A	W	
M	<del>T</del>		E	S	V	U		T	U		H	A	A	T		
T	A	K	I	S		E	O		R	I	T	W				
I	T															

**ODD WORD OUT:** Circle the word in each group that does NOT belong with the others.

Group 1: lions, tigers, bears, dogs, giraffes  
 Group 2: peas, corn, carrots, apples, beans  
 Group 3: Monday, May, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday

### Quote Fall:

It is not what we  
 take up but what  
 we give up that  
 makes us rich.

### Odd Word Out:

Group 1 — dogs;  
 Group 2 — apples;  
 Group 3 — May.

# DO NOT WORRY

## Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:1-9

*Worry doesn't take care of tomorrow's problems;  
it takes away today's peace! —Anon.*

In today's reading, we're told: "Do not worry about anything," (verse 6).  
That is easier said than done!

Doesn't it irritate you when someone says to you: "Don't worry about it!"? It is especially aggravating when this well-meaning person says, "The Bible says we shouldn't worry."

We don't have a worry switch we can turn on and off, do we? It's not like we forgot to turn off the lights, close the windows or drink enough water.

Worry comes naturally. It is part of our instincts that keeps us alive. We check and double-check in order to ensure our safety.

So I think it's smart to worry or fret about *some* things — just long enough to determine if our worrying is justified. If it is, then we can fix the issue. If it isn't, then we can move on.

Bad worrying is worrying about matters that are completely out of our hands!

When we worry about such things, we're wasting time and energy.

But even worse, we are really causing sorrow in the heart of God, because our worry over things that cannot be controlled shows *that we really don't trust God to take care of us*.

According to experts, the top 10 things people worry about are work, money, being late, a friend or relative's health, our own health, relationships, missing a plane or bus and not waking up to our alarm.

Do you worry about any of those things? If so, which ones are beyond your control? If you worry about those things, that's *bad* worry.

Fortunately, the Bible gives us some help. The verse goes on: "Do not worry about anything, *but in everything by prayer and supplication* with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (verses 6-7, emphasis added).

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, I confess that I worry sometimes. Help me to place my fears in your hands, and let you take responsibility for all things. In your name. Amen.*

# ACTIVITY PAGE - DO NOT WORRY

## Daily Bible Readings

Sunday: 1 Corinthians 9-12

Monday: Daniel 7-9

Tuesday: Daniel 10-12

Wednesday: Esther 1-3

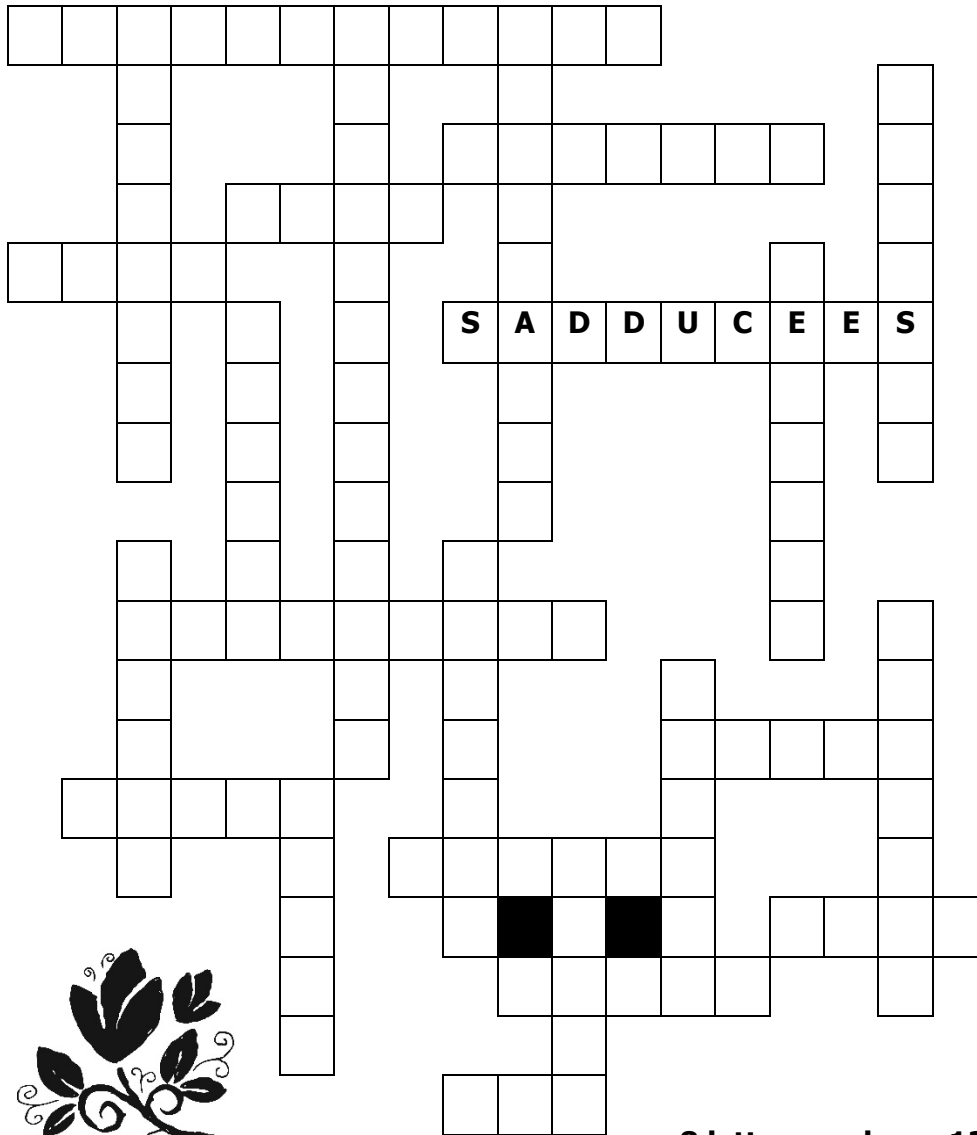
Thursday: Esther 4-7

Friday: Esther 8-10

Saturday: Psalm 119

# CLUELESS CROSSWORD

**This crossword has no clues! Fill in the squares according to the length of the word. We've filled in one word to get you started.**



### 3 letter words

God

### 4 letter words

holy

John

plot

### 5 letter words

faith

guard

Jesus

Peter

Satan

### 6 letter words

beggar

Israel

nation

Spirit

### 7 letter words

Ananias

miracle

priests

prophet

servant

### 8 letter words

Sapphira

### 12 letter words

resurrection

### 9 letter words

ignorance

Sanhedrin

### 13 letter words

encouragement



**"Autumn is a second spring  
when every leaf is a flower."  
—Albert Camus**