



# Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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## Christmas Cream

It's fascinating to listen to people talk about Christmas and watch how they live it out. Having just gone through another holiday season, we all have had ample opportunity to observe and be amazed.

There are those who absolutely love Christmas and everything connected to it. They love the Christmas story, the lights and decoration, the parties, even the shopping. They get their tree early, decorate it to the hilt, and leave it in place long after Christmas has passed. Holiday baking and cooking occupy a good portion of their time as they delightedly produce seasonal treats to enjoy and share. Presents are purchased with thoughtful care and then wrapped with colorful flair, all in anticipation of the excited joy found in giving and receiving. Smiles abound, and somehow, there is peace on earth.

Then, there are those who really dislike Christmas. It is, at best, tolerated for the sake of others. If a tree is purchased, it is taken down as soon as the designated day has passed. There is resentment and disgust about the commercialization of the holiday, the obligatory presents and the related financial strain, forced family gatherings,

artificial pleasantries, and the endless caroling that usurps the airwaves. The new year is seen as an opportunity to cleanse their mind and their surroundings and to return once again to some form of normalcy.

But what if we didn't just return to business as usual? What if we learned from Christmas, taking from it the "cream" it offers, while leaving behind the "gravel" we bring into it? And what if we take this "cream", the best of Christmas, and spread it throughout the new year? What would this look like?

Let's pause for a few moments and imagine how a "cream-enhanced" new year might appear. Consider a new year infused with:

1) kindness and good will. - This would be a year when we actually wish the best for others, whether it be financially, relationally, experientially, or whatever. We not only wish it, but promote it through our own words, actions, and attitudes of kindness and consideration.

2) a perspective beyond oneself. - In being kind to others, we not only *see* beyond oneself, but also *care* beyond oneself. In the best of Christmas tradition, we think of *others* throughout the year, considering their importance while being sensitive to their needs.

3) generosity. - Reflecting the gift giving of Christmas, we make gifting a prominent part of our normal life. We give to those in need, sharing what we have, whether it be little or much. We give to those we love and cherish, sharing our message of love outside the typical gifting occasions. We intentionally share our time, our attention, our encouragement, and our listening ear as well as our material resources.

4) thankfulness and appreciation. - Throughout the year, we live an attitude that focuses on what we have, instead of what we don't have. We recognize significant people in our lives as the gifts they are, and we share that with them. We look for reasons to say, "Thank you!", as we learn in humility to appreciate rather than resent.

5) joy. - Happiness, yes ... but also *joy* - joy based on the truth of the Christmas story. It's a joy that doesn't ebb and flow with the changing circumstances of the year, but remains permanently present with us, deeply imbedded in our soul, based on the sure knowledge of who and whose we are.

Such a year is possible! It's up to us. So let's grab a spoon, capture some Christmas cream, and make this a year to remember!



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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## Resolutions? - Aim Low!

Do you wonder why our New Year's resolutions often fall flat? Do you wonder why we start the year with such good intentions and passionate purpose, only to abandon our goals within the space of a few months (or weeks)?

Perhaps the answer to this dilemma lies in the basic nature of our resolutions. We are, within our culture, a very action oriented people. We recognize, emphasize, encourage, punish, reward, and identify ... behavior. As Nike has said, we "Just do it!"

Naturally, when we think of making positive changes at the start of a new year, we think of changing behaviors. Sadly, however, we neglect all the forces within us that shape and determine our behavior - our needs, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. We pursue the symptoms, but ignore the causes.

This year, rather than chasing after behavior, let's ask:

- what *needs* do I have to properly fill to eliminate that unwanted behavior?
- what *beliefs* do I need to challenge, what *thoughts* do I need to transform, what *feelings* do I need to resolve, what *attitudes* do I need to adjust ... so my behavior can improve?

Aim low, beneath those behaviors, at the "internal stuff" supporting them, and be amazed at how powerful your resolutions can really be!



"I complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. It's all how you look at it."  
- J. Kenfield Morley