

After the Party

January 7-8, 2017

Community:

1. How do you usually deal with (or handle) the end of the holidays and the new year? Scott Nickell said there are 3 basic ways. You either (a) ATTACK - You attack the new year headlong with a list of resolutions. (b) DENIAL - You deny and act as if the holidays are still in full swing. (c) SURRENDER - You know nothing will change the wrongs of the past and that things will basically be more of the same. Which one are you, and what are some specific things you do that show it?

Core:

1. Many New Year resolutions revolve around reading the Bible, but (as Scott reminded) the Bible is not a self-help book or a 3 Easy Steps to Happiness manual. The Bible is about Jesus. Aside from the Gospels, where do you see this to be true?
2. **Read Psalm 42: 1-3.** This is a very familiar passage from the Bible, but what does it say to you about who you are (in your relationship with God), and God's love for you?
3. **Read Psalm 42: 4-5.** Scott shared that this Psalm was not written by King David, but by an anonymous worship leader—someone obviously struggling with life and faith. The worship leader (talking to himself) reminds himself what God has done in the past. Does it help you to remember what God has done (or has let happen) in the past? Why or why not?
4. Scott quoted Martin Lloyd Jones who said, "*We must talk to ourselves instead of letting 'ourselves' talk to us.*" Do you find this to be true in your life? What good things have you experienced by having a (healthy) talk with yourself? How can things turn destructive when we start letting 'ourselves' do the talking?
5. **Read Hebrews 11:1.** This tells us we need to hope in God, not in our circumstances. Where (in the past year) have you seen God to be faithful? Does that give you a stronger faith and hope in the New Year?
6. One of the best things we can do (to take the focus off our worries and ourselves) is praise God. What does it look like to you when you praise God? What are some good steps you can take to put yourself in a better place to praise God?
7. C.S. Lewis wrote that when we seek and praise God (especially when we don't feel like it) we are "*digging channels in a waterless land*"--preparing our hearts and lives for when the floods (hard times) and/or rains (blessings) come. Have you experienced this, where your heart was prepared long before the hard/good times came? Explain.

Challenge:

As we begin the new year, try to be intentional about your *Hope in God* and *Praising Him*. A good start is reading Psalms and Proverbs together. A simple plan is read five chapters from Psalms each day along with one chapter from Proverbs. You'll finish both books about the same time. Think, pray and meditate on your *hope* in God, and why He's worthy of your *praise*!