

THE ONE RESOLUTION THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR WORLD

"DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK."



PRECONCEIVED IDEA:

...to form a conception or opinion of beforehand, as before seeing evidence or as a result of a previously held prejudice.

This New Year's resolution is more about having 'new eyes' than it is about seeking 'new solutions'. For the global Church answers to the many challenges of 2016 will not be found in the battle but in the approach. Renewed **ISIS attacks**, a growth in **radical Islam**, more **refugees** entering Europe, looming **economic collapses**, a breakdown in **international relationships**, **earthquakes** or new **epidemics** will either be seen as challenges or opportunities. The solution will be in the eye of the beholder.

The challenge would therefore be to change our 'glasses' through which we witness these events. It will require nothing less than a complete mental make-over that will seek to relinquish any preconceived ideas. This can only happen when we recalibrate our 'thinking' with new definitions, new attitudes, new standards and new approaches. If we're not willing to do this our thinking process will never be renewed and our lives will never be transformed.

The Scriptural command of this resolution might sound less "quotable" but it is exceedingly profound in meaning and foundational in theology: (Romans 12:2) "*Do not be conformed to this world, but **continually be transformed by the renewing of your minds** so that you may be able to determine what God's will is—what is proper, pleasing, and perfect.*" (ISV)

This scripture sets the scene for addressing the mind of the believer far more than it addresses the heart of the believer. A transformed life, and even more so a transformed year, starts with a renewed mind. **We do not think differently because our lives are renewed, we live differently because our minds are renewed.**

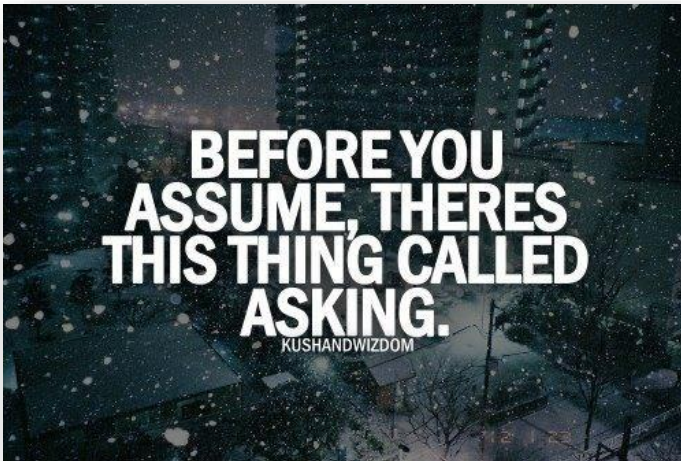
The biggest challenge in responding to global events is not the consistency of an **information flow**, determined by a lack or availability of knowledge, but the consistency of a **behavioural flow**, determined mainly by preconceived notions. Preconceived notions are deeply rooted in our cultural world-views and will always determine our convictions which in turn will determine our actions, our actions will determine our habits, our habits will lead to disciplines, discipline builds character and character determines destiny. Preconceived notions are the barriers that will imprison our minds and prevent us from being fully transformed into the image of Christ. And make no mistake, we all have preconceived notions that define our understanding, determine our actions and limit our obedience.

It is preconceived notions that turn refugees into terrorists and replace anguish with fear. It is preconceived ideas that interpret prophecies with prejudice instead of redemptive purposes. It is preconceived notions that label people as the 'enemy' instead of seeing people as being created in the image of God. It is preconceived

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Anais Nin

notions that turn opportunities into challenges and involvement into apathy. It is preconceived notions that establish attitudes of hostility towards other ethnic, racial, social, or religious groups and turning acceptance into suspicion. It is preconceived notions that move hearts into judgement and slander instead of prayer and hope.



Just like preconceived notions prevented the religious rulers at the time of Jesus to recognise the Messiah, preconceived notions will prevent modern-day believers to identify the greatest opportunities of our generation. With millions seeking refuge, wars abounding, nations in turmoil, leaders fighting for power, the Muslim world at a cross roads and the Christian centre of gravity shifting to the East, there is no doubt that we now live in the “days of opportunities”.

How do we then transform from our religiously preconceived notions and theologies to being Kingdom minded? Here are **FIVE STEPS** to start the New Year with:

1. Think yourself empty and read yourself full.

Be prepared to think differently. Empty yourself of any preconceived notions and fill your mind with truth and well-researched facts, from reliable sources. Many people hold the view that most of the refugees entering Europe are young men of military age and therefore ISIS militants, part of a major scheme to Islamise Europe. These notions are mainly based on preconceived ideas of Islamic agendas, not considering the facts at all. Research shows that more than 50% of all refugees are children younger than 18 years old and more than 50% are women.

We need to recognize faulty thinking and develop the necessary skills to become a more effective decision makers.

2. Surround yourself with people of balanced views.

We cannot afford the luxury of allowing others to make our conclusions for us. Most people like to believe what they want to believe and will surround themselves with like-minded people. Conspiracy theorists love the presence of conspiracy theorists. Negative people love to be surrounded by negative people. Most conspiracy theories of Pope Francis being the Anti-Christ (and, for that matter, all the past Popes as well) are circulated within certain groups of people and feed on preconceived ideas. Most people who support these theories have never met the Pope nor have they taken the time to read his personal confessions of faith in Christ.

BEWARE! Obsessed people will feed your preconceived notions. BE AWARE that not everything on the internet is necessarily true. Find trustworthy sources and avoid conspiracy sites. Listen to other views as well, whether you agree or not

3. Change your glasses and secure your filters.

Be selective how you read the news and use Biblical filters in interpreting the news. We owe it to ourselves to see life as clearly as possible and to always, always, keep a Kingdom perspective. Watching the news can be depressing if seen through carnal eyes but if understood within a Kingdom perspective, challenges will turn into opportunities. The hardship in Syria and Iraq might seem like God has lost control and the world is spinning into an endless cycle of uncontrolled violence. Or we can change our glasses and understand that God is intervening in history and drawing people nearer to Him. This is indeed the ‘days of our Lord.’

4. Don't jump to conclusions – stop and use common sense.

One of the major reasons why hoaxes and false reports are so eagerly passed on is that people jump to conclusions without weighing all the facts. Two of the most visited pages on the INcontext Hoaxology page (<http://incontextministries.org/index.php/investigate/hoaxology>) in 2015 were the hoax of **Pope Francis rewriting the Ten Commandments** (<http://incontextministries.org/index.php/investigate/hoaxology/9-hoaxology/988-pope-francis-to-revise-10-commandments>) and the **attacks on Churches in India**

(<http://incontextministries.org/index.php/investigate/hoaxology/9-hoaxology/796-churches-burned-down-and-christians-being-killed-in-india>). Reading messages with preconceived ideas and then jumping to conclusions will always result in misinformation and ultimately slander and lies. It seems like common sense has become a rare commodity in modern days where information is available at the press of a button. Be careful not to make your own conclusions based on preconceived ideas.

And finally...

5. **THINK**



Before sending out those emails and WhatsApp's about the Anti-Christ, the new world order, the great Islamic invasion and how Christianity is being victimised in the West, first **THINK**. Only when all of the following boxes are ticked should you go ahead and forward the message:

- T** = is it **True** (opposed to unconfirmed reports or hear-say)
- H** = is it **Helpful** (opposed to creating fear, hatred and suspicion)
- I** = is it **Informed** (opposed to opinions and speculation)
- N** = is it **Necessary** (opposed to harmful and destructive)
- K** = is it **Kind** (opposed to slander and defamation)

A PRAYER FOR 2016

As we prepare for 2016 with renewed faith and commitment, here is a prayer worth memorising. Sir Francis Drake, an adventurer, wrote it as he departed to the west coast of South America.

Disturb us, Lord,

When we are too pleased with ourselves,
when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little,
when we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord,

When with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the waters of life;
when, having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity
and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord,

To dare more boldly,
to venture on wilder seas where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes
and to push back the future in strength, courage, hope, and love.
This we ask in the name of our Captain, who is Jesus Christ.



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