

Looking Back, Looking Forward 2025

I. INTRO

- A. Looking back at my google calendar and my journal from January 2024, I found that I had been musing a great deal about “what am I doing?”
 - 1. I had lots of questions, felt very itchy, and couldn’t seem to “figure it out”
- B. So, 2024 launched with questions
 - 1. Should I do my doctorate?
 - 2. Should I join the USCG Auxiliary as a Chaplain? The PD?
 - 3. Should Revolve start a school?
 - 4. Should I do more training with missionaries? Local churches?
 - 5. Should I just keep doing what I am doing?
- C. Early in January, David and I went up to NYC to train Christian’s co-workers and we had a great time, but it just made me want MORE.
 - 1. And MORE is what I wasn’t seeing.
- D. So I did what anyone else would do; I did everything
 - 1. I started my doctorate
 - 2. I signed up for the USCG
 - 3. I emailed and texted all of my old contacts to see if they had anything going on that I could help with
 - 4. I cold-called a guy and asked if I could buy his house, knowing it would need a ton of work
 - 5. Simply stated, I got super busy.
- E. I don’t know about you, but when I feel confused about my life, I tend to grab the bull by the horns or brainstorm instead of being still and waiting on the Lord
 - 1. No wonder God reminds us some two dozen times in the Psalms to wait on him instead of striving and chasing the wind → but we are slow
 - 2. I found that I was itchy to do more of what we did in NYC, discipleship of leaders, training, but everywhere we looked God shut the doors
 - a) Ex: We had to cancel every single mission trip in 2024 b/c of lack of interest or ability to go
 - b) Ex: I had MULTIPLE canceled trainings, where a church or leader would invite me and then cancel
 - c) Ex: One NJ church asked me to train them, and then they uninvited me after the first session #awkward
 - 3. Little did I know that God had his own plan. (surprise, surprise)
 - a) Also in January I met a few key people who I would spend much of 2024 discipling, meeting with, and encouraging
 - b) If I had just patiently WAITED ON THE LORD instead of BRAINSTORMING in my flesh, I would have avoided a lot of anxiety and stress
 - 4. God raised up 4 or 5 men in whom I could invest over these last 12 months // all through unexpected scenarios from random dinners with mutual friends to visits to the doctor’s office

5. God brought us to No Limits, where we've been blessed to volunteer alongside some awesome leaders who want to work with at-risk youth
 - a) We've seen at least 8 kids make professions of faith
 - b) We've had the privilege of seeing leaders grow in their faith & be baptized
 6. God brought us a great contact – Josh – who has a clearly established partnership and work in South Asia; a work we can onboard to quickly
 7. Consider this:
 - a) None of those things were from my brainstorming
 - b) None of them came from my strategizing
 - c) None of them came from my anxiety
 8. Every single man I am currently discipling right now, every overseas contact that might turn into something of substance, every partnership, every scenario worth writing home about came from GOD and not from BILL's grand ideas
- II. One of my favorite verses to meditate on is Psalm 46:10 → many of you know it
- A. Psalm 46:10, [10] "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"*
1. Being still is the opposite of striving
 - a) Lit: stop striving, sink, relax
 - (1) Think like trying to rescue someone who is thrashing as they drown instead of allowing themselves to be helped
 2. Being still is a posture of surrender and humility
 - a) It says, "You are God and I am not." → Letting myself sink
 - b) It says, "My work and anxiety accomplishes little of eternal value."
 3. The world tells us to strive
 - a) Make 40 New Year's resolutions
 - b) Come up with a strategic action plan
 - c) Get published
 - d) Get rich
 - e) Get famous
 4. God, the creator of the universe, the one who breathes out galaxies, has some other advice: Be Still.
- B. I think one of the reasons we strive is because we want to be exalted instead of God...
- C. Once we step back and realize that it's not about exalting ourselves or building our own personal empire, we can press pause, sink, relax
1. A lot of our personal ambitions, pursuits, and anxieties drift away when we remember whose kingdom it is and who rules the world
- D. Even good desires (like ministry) can crowd our hearts and minds and, essentially, become idols
1. God's Word: Be still, and know that I am God. I WILL be exalted
- E. And that's good news, friends. God WILL be exalted
1. Whether or not I get my doctorate or join the USCG Auxiliary

2. Whether I publish a book or never even start a blog
3. God will be exalted... Why?
4. God is always at work, even if you cannot clearly see it in the moment
5. When you look at the day, you might feel like, "God's not doing anything," but he is
6. Jesus promised, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it!"

III. God IS working.

A. Some 2024 highlights

1. Revolve grew about 25% in attendance
 - a) Were averaging about 225 the last few months, including 45 revolveKids check-ins week to week
2. Baptized 13 or 14 people
3. 12 Discipleship Groups, including 2 new groups that launched
4. Women's prayer and fellowship has thrived and found its niche
5. Able to spend time with some of our missionary families
 - a) Michael and Sarah from Germany
 - b) Isaac and Gloria from South Asia
 - c) Milan and Misa visited midweek
 - d) The Stewarts hung with us a few weeks ago
6. We had a great International Potluck and Prayer back in March that we hosted at NLA
7. We celebrated some powerful prayer and worship nights at the office
8. Victor has done a fantastic job with Sunday morning prayer and empowering others to participate in it
9. Student Min morphed into more like a Middle School DG
10. We started a new Roadie Serve Staff which has MASSIVELY empowered me, the Worship Team, and the elders to focus on praying and being available before and after service. [THANK YOU!!!]
11. We had our healthiest fiscal year since 2020 (about \$500k), including raising about \$100k in December for missions
12. We are still crunching all the numbers, but we will have used about half of our money from 2024 for benevolence, mission, service, and evangelism

B. If you only look at one day of 2024, you don't see any of the things I mentioned

1. This is the way life and ministry works
2. This is the way the kingdom of heaven works
3. So God reminds us: Be still, stop striving. I am God. The world turns even if you get the flu because I oversee it. The grass will grow, and the flowers will blossom and fade. The birds will be fed. God will be exalted among the nations. God's name will be made great.

C. So just breathe.... Be still... sink into his presence...

D. Numbers are good metrics, but they don't tell the whole story

IV. So, I am not supposed to STRIVE. What are we supposed to do, God?

A. This was the question on my mind as I pondered 2024 and looked to 2025.

B. Over 3 or 4 hours of journaling and prayer, God brought me to various passages of Scripture and spoke to my heart

1. BE STILL

- a) Psalm 46:10 → Be still and KNOW that I am God
 - (1) Over you... Over your family... Over Revolve... Over the world
 - b) He brought me to Isa 27 and reminded me: “Revolve is my vineyard. I am its keeper, the vinedresser. Every moment I water her and watch over her. I keep her day and night. I have no wrath towards her, only love and affection.”
 - c) John 15, “God prunes those that he loves, and he wants to prune in my self-reliance. He wants to prune STRIVING.”
 - d) And from John 15 he brought me to Isa 55 and reminded me:
 - (1) Seek the Lord while he may be found... Call on him... Forsake your way... Return to the LORD... God does not work as you work
 - (2) You strive without result, but God’s Word ALWAYS accomplishes its purpose
 - e) To be still is to sit with the Lord and pursue his presence by sinking into the Word and prayer. Embrace stillness, a posture of surrender, and a process of pursuit.
 - f) This is why we are going to begin 2025 with a concerted push into what is called the Spiritual Disciplines, God’s means for intimacy and growth, with a 2-month sermon series.
 - g) These are areas of simple obedience, basic building blocks of faith
 - (1) What it means to discipline yourself for godliness
 - (2) Biblical Meditation on the Word
 - (3) Practicing Silence and Solitude
 - (4) Praying the Word
 - (5) Worship
 - (6) Fasting
 - (7) Stewardship
 - (8) Learning
 - h) Victor is simultaneously going to offer a class on Sunday mornings from 830 to 930 am where he is going to go through a Spiritual Formation workbook (You can sign up in the app or at the desk)
2. **Be Faithful** today with what’s right in front of you
- a) We have some 225 people
 - b) 1 Peter 5 commands the elders to shepherd the flock entrusted to us → what does that look like?
 - c) You heard us in the Fall talk about what Revolve’s all about → glorifying God by making disciples who multiply, reaching the nations, equipping you to hear, obey and share God’s Word

- d) But what's YOUR next step? How can we be FAITHFUL to shepherd you towards that end?
- (1) We will keep PREACHING...
 - (2) We will keep PRAYING...
 - (a) Sunday morning
 - (b) Midweek
 - (c) Special prayer times
 - (3) We will keep EQUIPPING...
 - (a) Spiritual Disciplines (Vic)
 - (b) Basics of Hermeneutics (how to read)
 - (i) /resources and pick a reading plan
 - (c) Bible Introduction (what is each book about)
 - (d) Missional Training (Hub starts in February)
 - (e) Doctrine throughout the year
 - (4) We will keep GATHERING...
 - (a) Meeting with DG leaders this coming Friday
 - (b) Reminding them of the habits of healthy groups
 - (c) Sharpen one another to that end
 - (d) Interested in joining a group?
 - (e) Interested in leading a group?
 - (f) Women's prayer meeting
 - (5) We will keep GOING...
 - (a) Friends, we have so many opportunities
 - (b) So many amazing contacts
 - (c) So many trips we could go on
 - (d) So many things we could do
 - (e) But this is my call to you → Be still. Be faithful.
 - (i) Be still in his presence
 - (ii) Be still with his presence
 - (iii) Be still and enjoy his presence
 - (f) I believe that if we are still before him, embracing the simple obedience of the spiritual disciplines, God will use our daily faithfulness to accomplish great things
 - (g) I believe if we sit at his feet like the story of Mary and Martha in the Gospels and enjoy him, he will use us
 - (h) I believe that if we are faithful with small things TODAY he will bring us places we never imagined
 - (i) I believe that if you commit this year to stop striving after that which fades and pursue that which lasts forever, you will be flabbergasted at what the Lord does IN you, WITH you, and THROUGH you

C. So the Lord has reminded me to BE STILL and to BE FAITHFUL. What does that mean for you?