

# UNIVERSAL NEWS



SCAN ME

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## Night Vigil for a Brand New Life

WAS YOUR  
**2023**  
A PAINFUL YEAR?

START  
**2024**  
THE RIGHT WAY  
RIGHT HERE

**NEW YEAR = BRAND NEW LIFE**

NEW YEAR'S EVE NIGHT VIGIL | DECEMBER 31<sup>ST</sup> AT 10PM



*"I came across a man who had 'everything', but I was an unhappy person..."*

- Carla

*"I slept with a knife under my pillow."*

- Simone



### ▪ SPECIAL



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**Bishop Edir Macedo**

Do you know what is God's plan for you?



*Do you want to know how to have the best Christmas of your life?*

Read full article on page 7



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**NOT TO BE SOLD**

## | IN THIS EDITION |

### New Year, Brand New Life

How will you start the new year?

The month of December is the month when most people begin to reflect on their year. While some look back and rejoice in their successes and accomplishments, others, unfortunately, look back and see only failures and losses; they would rather forget this year altogether. The latter may be true for you. When you look back, all you feel is sadness and regret. You were able to accomplish nothing, and with another new year approaching, the idea of starting something new has become daunting. But what if I told you there is a way to guarantee your success in 2024? A way for this year to mean the start of a new life?

Let's look at the following verses, "Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19). God states here that He will do a NEW thing in our lives and make what seems impossible become possible. What does this look like to you? Is it a new job, new habits, a new approach to your relationship, or a new home? No matter what this newness may be for you, you can achieve it! With God by your side, the future will always be better than your past.

This is why on Sunday, December 31st, at 10 pm, at every Universal Church worldwide, we will have a New Year's Night Vigil for a Brand New Life. You, your family, and your friends are welcome to this special occasion to start the New Year in the presence of God. Come to place your plans for the New Year into God's hands and allow Him to guide you to achieve your goals. He is the One who will protect and equip you with everything you need to succeed. Take advantage of this opportunity to start anew. Start off the new year on the right foot with God!

## | BEATING DEPRESSION |

Depression is a sadness felt in the deepest part of one's soul. It causes a sense of hopelessness and exhaustion so great that a person loses the motivation to do anything and some to live at all. It is a sickness of the soul. But who can heal the soul other than the Savior of Souls, the Lord Jesus?

On Fridays, at every Universal Church, we have a service for Deliverance from Depression. Visit a branch near you today. Make a Chain of Prayer by attending a prayer meeting near you for seven consecutive weeks. You will receive practical steps, counseling, and spiritual help through prayers to overcome. You won't regret it.

There are thousands of testimonials worldwide that prove a Chain of Prayer works. You, too, CAN defeat depression!



Call 1.888.332.4141  
Text 1.888.312.4141  
For more information  
SEE PAGE 12 FOR LOCATIONS



### Bishop Edir Macedo

## Do you know what is God's plan for you?



The Creator cares about every human being, but unlike us, who focus on the individual, His project is intended for all of Humanity.

Many like to believe God has a plan for each specific human being. A detailed project that includes everything a good story requires but, preferably, focuses only on what we think is good for us, such as romance, family, professional success, and many other achievements. All that would be left for us to do is to be a star in history and proudly declare: "my life" and "my achievements."

However, despite not having the 'spoilers' about the future, we insist on taking the script from the Author's Hands (God). We insist on using our free will to remove and include details in a desire to be the protagonists of a perfect journey. But we are left only with problems and frustrations. Why do the path and the exceptional destination seem increasingly distant? Why does the plot twist rarely occur, and when it does, it is not a good thing? Why isn't the plan of God being fulfilled in people's lives today?

Truth be told, God does not have a particular plan for each human being. No destiny is mapped out for each of the 8 billion people living on the planet today. Neither did it exist for the other billions of people who have passed through this world. There is no perfect script intended exclusively for a man. The last time this happened was in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve, with the idea that there would be an intimate relationship with God in which human beings would be completely happy and fulfilled forever. But Humanity decided to follow the path of disobedience and lost the chance to live the joyful life the Creator had planned.

Maybe you, dear reader, ask, "What do you mean? In Jeremiah 1:5, the Lord said, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; Before you were born, I sanctified you: I ordained you a prophet to the nations." In the notes of the Study Bible, Bishop Edir Macedo explains that "In God's mind, there is a sublime purpose for Humanity." It is not for a specific human being but for everyone, and people chosen by Him fulfill God's purposes. The Holy Scriptures show examples of men who specifically express this: Samson, John the

Baptist, Paul, and Jeremiah. In the case of Jeremiah, the Divine plans for him to preach to the nations were already there. Jeremiah fulfilled it, but it could also have been carried out by anyone who made themselves available for God to use.

That being said, there is another important detail: we are not the main character or author of the story. The most significant proof is that in this aspiration to be the star in the plot and dictate each action in the 'script,' we become the great antagonist (villain), attracting a succession of problems. There is also the constant feeling that "we are missing something." Even after fulfilling our dreams and desires, we are constantly implementing plans.

We plan freely, fight, and achieve our dreams, but still, our happiness fades with each new imperfect plan. Human beings will never be able to find satisfaction if their desire is not in the most important things: the Holy Spirit and the soul's Salvation.

Only the Creator, with His Spirit, can satisfy the creature He has formed. Only the Holy Spirit can grant the plenitude human beings seek. And only the Word can dictate the script of Humanity and include mere mortals in this story with mastery.

God's plan is to save the soul of everyone who believes in and obeys Him. And it doesn't matter how far you are from the plan of the Most High. In His infinite mercy and grace, God always finds ways to call human beings to Himself and to the heart of His initial project revealed in Eden.

By His perfect will, the Most High has good thoughts about us. He wishes that each person uses their life to honor Him - for this is the greatest purpose of human existence. However, the Most High respects the foolishness of those who believe their wills are better than His.

Friendships, professional life, studies, experiences, relationships, money, addictions, or anything else only bring momentary satisfaction. The void continues in this search for a complete life while living on drafts sketched by human limitations. The Lord Jesus revealed: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10.10). This extremely abundant life originates from the inextinguishable Source, which is the Most High.



## Carried by the Holy Spirit



Hairdresser Gislene, 29, used to have a New Year's tradition in which she would dress in white every New Year, a tradition supposedly coming from her religion. She would dress in white as a symbol of peace and jump the sea waves seven times yearly. But her life was far from peaceful.

"I remember my sister and I had a tradition of jumping the seven waves every New Year. But there came a

year when I had lost a child eight months into my pregnancy. I later ended my relationship with my partner after discovering my partner was cheating."

Being unable to deal with the pain, she began to search for relief in momentary pleasures.

"I started hanging out, drinking, and getting involved with a lot of people. Until one day, a friend suggested I seek help after seeing me get sick as a result of the drinking."

She saw that her tradition was not helping achieve the peace she desired. She decided to do something different and sought the help of God instead.

"I decided to participate in the New

Year's Eve Vigil at the Universal Church. I know the Holy Spirit led me to the night vigil because I went alone. I know I needed to be there."

After participating in the night vigil, her life began to change. Gislene stated that she started asking for forgiveness from those who had hurt her and those she had hurt. After doing this, she finally achieved the peace she had been searching for.

"I have remained in the Presence of God till this day. I'm not who I was before. There has been a before and after in me. Inside me, there is a fire that burns with happiness. I have peace. Just knowing that this year, I am still in God's Presence and that, throughout the days of next year, I will continue with Him is such a great feeling," she highlights.



# DIVINE WATER

In March 2019, Luana felt severe abdominal pain. She sought medical help, and after doing some exams, the doctors found out she had appendicitis. "Right after that, I was taken to have surgery to remove the appendix. I also learned I had a bacteria that the doctors

needed to clean. I was released, and even at home, I continued feeling severe pain and had to be admitted to the hospital. Then, I needed a second surgery due to the bacteria. Antibiotics were not helping, and the pain was constant. After one week, the doctor said there were two more bacteria, and a third surgery was performed. This time was more complicated because my intestines were weak." Tired of the situation, Luana decided to use her faith. Luana's parents also supported her in the Church, praying for her and going to the altar to trust and depend on God. "A fourth surgery was needed, but this time, I had made a vow to God. When the doctors opened my abdomen, my intestine was normal, with no perforation or infection. Today, I am healthy and blessed!



**"I had four surgeries, yet I was still in pain..."**



***THE PAIN IN MY SHOULDER IS GONE!***

I had been feeling pain in my shoulder for a month; the pain was severe. It also affected my elbows. I couldn't lift my hand; it was discomfort; the doctors took X-rays and gave me some therapy. I started attending the Universal Church to do the Chain of Prayer. I drank the Divine water and also poured it on me. I believed, and by faith, I could lift my arms, and I did not feel any more pain in my shoulder. - Jewel, NY



***"MY SON WAS HEALED FROM BONE MARROW FAILURE"***

Rafael, my son, was diagnosed with a severe disease that caused him to have bone marrow failure. He needed a transplant and was being treated, but at the same time, I was using my faith for his healing. Today, my son is healed. He's a very active child. -Zeneide



***I WAS ADDICTED TO MARIJUANA FOR 15 YEARS***



I was addicted to marijuana for 15 years; because of this addiction, I lost my house, I lost my daughter in a car accident, and over time, I also developed back pain. I learned about this ministry on TV, and by coming here and doing the chain of prayer and drinking the Divine water, I have overcome the addiction, and the pain I had has gone. Today, I have peace; I was delivered from that suffering! -Verlex, SC

Learn to apply your faith in order to face your challenges!

**GET YOUR DIVINE WATER EVERY SUNDAY**  
at your nearest Universal Church



|Message|

**BISHOP JOSHUA**

## NEW YEAR, SAME OLD LIFE?

In times of trouble, our first thought is to turn to those we think can help, whether that be a trusted friend, a family member, a spouse, or a boss. We look to those who have the answer to our problem. However, where do we turn when those we depend on don't have the solutions we need?

*“Present your case,” says the Lord. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob.” Isaiah 41:21*



What is your case? Perhaps a sickness, depression, an addiction, an overwhelming loneliness, or a broken family? Whatever your problem, there's no need to

take them into this new year. Yes, a new year is approaching, and perhaps you have been counting down the hours, but truthfully, you are not looking forward to anything. You see it as one minute moving to the next, a new day but the same old life.

It doesn't have to be this way. At a Universal Church near you, you can break into the new year in God's presence, presenting your case to Him.

Present your old life and ask Him for the new one you've longed for. No matter your case, He will always have the answer. Unlike presenting your problems to other people, there's no doubt that God will always give us the correct answers.

May the God of the Bible bless you!

CHAMPION OF REVOLUTION  
MOUNT SINAI  
DEC 2023 BIBLE READING  
LBN GENESIS

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 Exodus 31 ✓	2 Exodus 32 ✓
3 Exodus 33 ✓	4 Exodus 34 ✓	5 Exodus 35 ✓	6 Exodus 36 ✓	7 Exodus 37 ✓	8 Exodus 38 ✓	9 Exodus 39 ✓
10 Exodus 40 ✓	11 Esther 1 ✓	12 Esther 2 ✓	13 Esther 3 ✓	14 Esther 4 ✓	15 Esther 5 ✓	16 Esther 6 ✓
17 Esther 7 ✓	18 Esther 8 ✓	19 Esther 9 ✓	20 Esther 10 ✓	21 Ecclesiastes 1 ✓	22 Ecclesiastes 2 ✓	23 Ecclesiastes 3 ✓
24 Ecclesiastes 4 ✓	25 Ecclesiastes 5 ✓	26 Ecclesiastes 6 ✓	27 Ecclesiastes 7 ✓	28 Ecclesiastes 8 ✓	29 Ecclesiastes 9 ✓	30 Ecclesiastes 10 ✓
31 Ecclesiastes 11 & 12 ✓						

## EVERY NEW YEAR WAS THE SAME STORY UNTIL...

**H**appy New Year! These words are on the lips of many as the year ends, but what truly brings a happy new year? A lot of money in their pockets? I was one of them who wished to have a better life different from the one I had. However, as the years went by, it was difficult to expect the new year to improve because problems continued in all areas of my life. After attending the Universal Church for almost 30 years, I only recently understood that no matter what a person achieves, nothing can compare to the difference that only the Holy Spirit can make within the person. My first memories are of misery, of significant deprivation. I lived in a house where we shared the same stove, shower, and sink with 50 people. With time, after coming to the Universal Church, I saw some improvements in my life, to the point I opened a company. Still, I could not manage it due to the lack of God's direction.



Over the years, the wife and I accumulated an enormous debt that looked unpayable. My goal for the new year was always to pay the bills. I had no mind or pleasure in anything, and, at that time, the problems were so big that I had no hope that the new year could be better. As the year ended, everyone was happy, with faith in a better future, but I looked at the turn of the year as if I were a zombie; it was just another date on paper.

My wife came to the Universal Church as a teenager, and she was also facing problems. Her mother had a health issue which would make her faint all the time. She was going through many financial difficulties. They would live on noodles because they could not afford a proper meal. When we got married, the problems got worse. We used to fight physically.

I thought things would improve with time, but that didn't happen. One year ended, and another began, and the more I chased money, the more money ran away from me, and thus, the debts increased. The worst year of our lives was 2011. We worked from Sunday to Sunday, and my wife worked throughout her pregnancy until 30 minutes before delivery. I wanted to solve my problems, but they drained my strength and energy.

There was no shortage of hard work, but it was still insufficient. We set up a factory and made heavy investments in equipment, company structure, and employees, and we had many customers. However, as much money came in, much more went out. My biggest problem was that I was in the Church, but I was alone, without God. Even though we were trained, we only took wrong actions because what was inside us was reflected on the outside. I supported myself during my time in the Church. Still, internally, I was empty because I didn't have the Holy Spirit, and I didn't have Him because I was anxious about having money. Furthermore, my character was not good; I only pretended to serve God.

I then got tired of living the same life and made a decision. When immersed in debt and problems, I thought I would be happy if I were rich, or I attributed the sadness, emptiness, and anger to the problems. Today, I don't see it that way because the source of my unhappiness was not a consequence of the problems: the reason for all the anguish was the lack of the Holy Spirit. So, I began to dedicate all my strength to getting to know Him, and the most significant event of my life was the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

I recognized the importance of this surrender: He is the Source of Life, and when we drink from It, our lives are transformed. In a year and a half, we paid off our debts, and in the middle of the pandemic, we acquired five companies.

My wife did the same, and after receiving the Holy Spirit, the year of the pandemic became the best of our lives, and everything became new. She now is a better mother, a better wife, and a different person. Today, our marriage is a blessing; I am now a partner to my wife and friend. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of understanding, courage, and wisdom; when we have Him, He grants us peace. God changed our lives and has changed our story. Even if I hadn't paid my debts, the Holy Spirit would make me the happiest person in the world, and nothing can pay for waking up in the morning and having a desire to live. In the past, on New Year's Eve, I wanted the whole world for myself. Today, my goal is to bring salvation to those suffering and do God's work.

Carlos Rodriguez

# What's happening at the Universal Church...

## "I was diagnosed with several level 4 malignant tumors"



What was thought to be a simple everyday pain led Maria Eugenia to discover more than 40 tumors in her body.

"I have always been a healthy person, but on a normal day while at home, I began to feel extreme pain in my legs and spine that made it impossible for me to walk. It was then that I had to go urgently to the hospital. The doctor who attended me gave me an injection for the pain and also prescribed some medications. But the pain returned three more times. The fourth time I felt the same pain, I talked to a friend. She invited me to participate in a healing meeting of the Universal Church, and I immediately accepted. The pastor said a prayer for me and determined that I would be fine and that I would return to church walking and without pain on Sunday," said Maria Eugenia.

"By Wednesday of that week, I was fine and walking without pain. So I called my friend and told her I was going to church on Friday and Sunday. However, during the night, when I went to the bathroom, as I turned on my side, I hit my knee on a cabinet and immediately broke my kneecap. I was in a lot of pain, but I went to sleep anyway. At 6 pm the same day, I couldn't stand the pain anymore and was unable to move; I called the ambulance and went to the hospital. I was evaluated by a doctor, and at that moment, he indicated that I'd have to have an MRI of the whole body. When he saw the results, he realized

that I couldn't go home because I would have to start treatment immediately. I was diagnosed with several level 4 malignant tumors in my brain, spine, breasts, and bones. In total, there were more than 40 tumors," she said.

In difficult moments, the war in the mind becomes even more severe. Although Eugenia accepted the treatment, she still believed in the power of faith.

"I started with radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment. That led to me being in the hospital for a month without being able to move. After that time, I was transferred to a nursing home and stayed there for a year and two months.

I couldn't receive any visitors because we were at the height of the pandemic, and I felt alone, very sad, had bad thoughts and insomnia, and was paralyzed on my bed. I couldn't be in person at church, but I had the opportunity to attend meetings online. Day after day, I attended the meetings, and the pastor always said to have a bottle of water ready. At the time of the meeting, we would consecrate the water, and I always drank it with faith and bathed with the consecrated water every day. Two weeks later, I started taking small steps. The tumors were shrinking, so I continued to drink the water and use my faith.

Months later, I was already walking alone, taking a bath alone. Everything I stopped doing due to these illnesses, I started doing again. I became independent again. The doctors couldn't believe what they were seeing. I had to do several tests before leaving the nursing home because they couldn't believe the miracle that was in front of their eyes. Three months later, I left the nursing home. T

Today, thanks to my God, I only go to the doctor for routine check-ups because I am free and cured of all diseases," she concluded happily - Maria Eugenia

## The power of a Mother's cry



The doctors told Monica that little Mayra would only have a few days to live, but Monica's Faith changed the situation.

Monica Varela has always had the desire to be a mother. After a year of trying, she finally became pregnant. The pregnancy went smoothly, and the first-time mother didn't notice any problems when little Mayra Sophia was born. However, the baby was gray and did not behave like a healthy baby. The doctors noticed something was wrong and performed several tests on little Myra. Later, they found that the baby had a problem called Truncus arteriosus.

Truncus arteriosus is a disease that affects only infants, causing malformations in the heart and lungs before birth. About 50% of babies who have this problem die within the first month. Approximately 80% do not reach the first year of life due to the low levels of oxygen in the blood circulating throughout the body, thus leading the child to heart failure.

The baby was taken to the intensive care unit (NICU) and was immediately placed on life support. The doctors told Monica that little Myra's case was very serious and believed that Mayra would only live another week. The mother did not accept the news. At the time, Monica was already attending the Universal Church and knew the power of God and the strength of faith. "I didn't want to lose my daughter to that

situation. As soon as I was discharged from the hospital, I started doing the chain of prayer for healing for her. I did not question God or cry. I used faith and believed," says Monica.

While the mother remained certain that God would heal her daughter, the doctors tried to save the little girl's life in every way. Just so the child could last until the day of her surgery, the specialists gave her many strong medications.

The surgery lasted about eight hours, but the doctors were not very successful, and the baby had to have her chest cut open three additional times. During this time, a bacterium settled in her body. Mayra began to have complications, and her heart, lungs, and kidneys stopped functioning. There was nothing else the doctors could do. "I didn't listen to what the doctors said, but I believed that God would work a miracle in my daughter's life. I didn't let doubt in," she says. After three days of being almost lifeless, Mayra began to react.

Gradually, her health improved, and the doctors reduced her medication. Mayra began gaining more and more strength. It didn't take long for her to start breathing without the help of the machines. "The doctors were surprised every day when they saw my daughter's progress. They didn't know how to explain what was happening," Monica recalls.

Mayra was the only baby who survived out of all those who were in the same hospital ward with her. After 19 days, she was finally discharged.

The mother remembers that when she left the hospital with her, some specialists who cared for the little girl were moved. They acknowledged that they had seen a miracle happen. "I said it was the power of faith, a mother's heartfelt cry to God, that has power. Today, Mayra is a very healthy child; she has no sequelae and lives a normal life," celebrates Monica. - Monica Varela

## It seemed impossible to change



I come from a humble family. My father was absent, which led me to experiment with drugs at the age of 13 to get attention. To gain popularity, I did a lot of wrong things seeking approval. I began smoking cigarettes and drinking. I later tried marijuana and, from there, moved on to riskier things, such as selling drugs and robbing people.

I began to party and go to bars every day.

There, I'd find plenty of crack and cocaine to experiment with. I lost count of how many times someone tried to kill me. I also tried to kill other people; I did a lot of wrong things.

My life was sad and empty; no one who looked at me would imagine that all I wanted was to find happiness. My family was destroyed, and I was living in misery. I spent all the dirty money I made on luxuries and vanities. I lived a promiscuous life and was always under the influence of drugs. My life seemed impossible to change.

I finally hit rock bottom when my friends tried to kill me for money and power. We were all having fun one night when a fight broke out, and everyone who was with me started to hit me with bottles, rocks, and

sticks, and I got stabbed several times with knives. I was really drunk, but I remember hearing them say, "We're going to have to kill him!"

I was left to die. A girl found me two days later when she came across one of my shoes. Thinking it was nice, she decided to look for the other one. Thanks to God, while searching, she found it and also found me in the bushes, covered in blood, with flies and dogs on top of my body. The coroner was called, but it was determined I was still alive.

I was taken to the ICU, where I remained in a coma for three days and had to be placed in an induced coma for an additional eleven days. I underwent three facial reconstruction surgeries, received 48 stitches, and spent three months undergoing physical therapy to recover movement. Only then

was I discharged from the hospital.

Around this time, I received an invitation to the Universal Church. I also began participating in the youth programs. Everything started to change in my life. I turned away from all the bad things and got delivered. I also quit all my bad habits, found a job, and started working.

I gave my entire life to Jesus and was baptized in water. I began earnestly seeking God's Spirit to dwell in me and was baptized with the Holy Spirit. Today, my life is transformed. I overcame the traumas of my past. I am conquering my dreams through Faith. My life is entirely different from what it was before. My family has also changed after seeing my transformation. Someone believed in me, and now I believe in you!

Luiz Henrique



## "I CAME ACROSS A MAN WHO HAD 'EVERYTHING', BUT I WAS AN UNHAPPY, MISERABLE, AND POOR PERSON."

Carla says she learned about faith and served God for 30 years until she left due to disappointments, frustrations, and hurts. She directed her focus to work, study, and parties to fill the void that remained, but achieved the opposite: "I had depression and attempted suicide."

At this time, she met Doctor Marcus, who searched for happiness incessantly and without success. "It was a search for everything that material life can offer. The hope was to find happiness in a car or something else. Still, disillusionment and

it all started after I met him. It was a four-year relationship with a lot of struggle because he didn't believe in God, or rather, he believed in his own way. Despite being far away, I knew what the truth was. So, it was the most difficult period. I started to fight with God and use faith, even without going to church."

Carla realized that with the strength of her own arms, she wouldn't achieve anything and decided to return to the church. While dealing with her wounds, she also made vows and resolutions for Marcus without him knowing

discontent were the fruits of the harvest," says Marcus.

Carla describes it then: "I thought everything was over, and

she was back in the Father's House. Until she shared with him her desire to spend New Year's Eve at the special vigil in the Universal Church, and Marcus accepted.

He remembers that he felt a mixture of unhappiness, distrust, and curiosity, contaminated by what he read and heard about the church. Still, he continued to attend it: "Little by little, I became involved in learning the Gospel, with the seriousness of the work, and I began to feel that the place was surrounded by blessings and exuded a faith based solely and exclusively on the Word of God." With the decision to be baptized in water, they resumed their relationship as lovers correctly. They got married with the blessing of the Altar.

Upon leaving the Presence of God, Carla highlights that she was faced with a sad reality. Still, she is grateful for

her experience and maturity during this period, especially in her faith: "It was not God who abandoned me, but I who abandoned His plan, and

### "I had depression and attempted suicide."

it was the worst experience I had in my life." But that's how she recognized that living God's plans is infinitely better than living her own. "I saw that having 'everything' does not mean being happy. I came across a man who had 'everything', but I was an unhappy, miserable, and poor person; a person who had studied and had never read the Word of God. Today, looking at our

transformation, there is no money and nothing to pay for it. Nothing replaces the Presence of God, the Holy Spirit, and this peace", she concludes.

Marcus says that he found the happiness he sought and became a man of God: "In the beginning, there was desolation and darkness. The searches were for the works of the flesh: lust, strife, heresy, anger, and idolatry.

**Today, I deal with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, such as love, longsuffering, gentleness, and faith. I have within me that God is reason and that my main asset is my soul."**

## "MY STEPFATHER BEAT ME AND THREATENED TO KILL US."

Simone remembers her New Year's Eve traditions: "I wore new clothes, but they were always donated. I used the color corresponding to the area I thought I needed to favor, as they said the colors had meaning, but nothing brought results. I also liked the excitement of the fireworks and the food. Still, reality returned in the same week, with misery and fights in the family. Nothing changed, just the date on the calendar. Everything got worse," she says.

She recalls that her life was marked by situations that only brought her pain: "My stepfather beat me and, drunk, threatened to kill us. So, I slept with a knife under my pillow. We ended

up living in a tenement, in a basement beneath a bar, with one bathroom for 20 families. Many times, our main diet

### I slept with a knife under my pillow.

consisted only of cornmeal." At a young age, Simone lived with depression. "From 20 to 24, I was locked inside the house. Then, I got into a relationship and got better, but after the pregnancy, I had postpartum depression. There was always a justification for me living like this: first, it was because of my father's death, then that was it. I have lived with depression at every stage of my life," she says.

Already using black-label medications, her situation only got worse. "I wasn't sleeping, so I started taking sleeping pills. Afterward, I started taking medicine to stay awake and then medicine to make me happy, but nothing had any effect. I stopped going to work, I didn't shower, I didn't dress up, I didn't even go out in the backyard. I was seen by psychologists and psychiatrists, who increased the dosage of the medicine." She lists the consequences of her problems: "I ended up trying to commit suicide, cutting my wrists, or taking cleaning products. I had my stomach pumped because I took medication to kill myself. To my surprise, the doctor asked me why I hadn't taken rat poison since I was just there to be a bother."

So, for her, each new year became new, but her depression was old. "I spent New Year's Eve locked up at home, depressed and crying. I heard the fireworks and got angry because I wasn't happy. I spent New Year's Eve taking medication and under a blanket."

For Simone, the year of difference happened five years ago. "I knew the Universal Church, but I had moved away. I returned in 2016, right at the end of the year; I gave my life with all my expectations and desires because I had nothing left to lose, and I was sure everything would be different. When I received the Holy Spirit, the depressed and complex Simone



ceased to exist."

Today, she celebrates: "I no longer have depression, and I am complete. I endured life, and now the Holy Spirit is the reason for my living. Today, my daughters and I serve God, and our priority is to enter the new year in His Presence", she concludes.



WAS YOUR  
**2023**  
A PAINFUL YEAR?

START  
**2024**  
THE RIGHT WAY  
RIGHT HERE

**NEW YEAR = BRAND NEW LIFE**

**NEW YEAR'S EVE NIGHT VIGIL | DECEMBER 31<sup>ST</sup> AT 10PM**

**W**hat do you want: a new year or a different life? The year 2024 is about to begin. Faced with so much uncertainty, what do you need to do to have an exceptional year compared to all the others? Try putting all your strength (and your entire life) into the Holy Spirit.

If you could retrace the years left behind, review the mistakes of 2023, and plan the successes for 2024, you would probably do it right this second and not even wait for January 1st to start. This date is approaching, and, as is to be expected, everyone wishes for a new year that is infinitely better in their lives or even one completely different from all the others. The question is: How do you achieve a life that, for many, seems more like a fairy tale? As this question lingers in our minds – as the pain and

loss of a pandemic remains, as uncertainty has never been more visible, and despair has never been felt more by the many who have lost their jobs, their loved ones, and their resources –, there is something that is ideally available to everyone: a firm and faithful Word, which brings into existence the life that many doubt exists. (John 14.6).

In Revelation 21.5, we can understand more about the Author of Life, who says: "Behold, I make all things new." Therefore, if there is a God who makes everything new, why not cling to Him? After all, his Spirit encourages us to reinvent ourselves and guides us to a new life that begins from the inside out. By receiving the Holy Spirit, we also receive an infinitely better interior, which reflects His character and promotes His fruits. (Galatians 5.22). Even

in the face of difficulties, with Him, we find hope and not confusion (Romans 5.5), we draw strength from weakness (Romans 8.26), and we are not faced with a downcast spirit (2 Timothy 1.7). Still, with Him, we alleviate the pain and become free. (2 Corinthians 3.17).

Those who enjoy these virtues are transformed by the renewal of the mind (Romans 12.2) and today are "able to experience and prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God." And this occurs 365 days a year. The difference starts within you. This time of year is a period of great emotion due to the holidays, and many people even cling to catchphrases like "new year, new life." They have been doing this for a long time and see it being the same thing every year or even worse. To have a truly different year, you need to take different actions.

However, for this to happen, much more is required. They need to change their mind to know how to do the right thing. People want change in their love life, bank account numbers, and family, but they continue to have the same thoughts – and there is no way to have a new life or a different year if they don't have a change of mindset.

Why should you go to the New Year's Eve Vigil? Who doesn't want a year full of peace, achievements, and happiness or lots of money in their pocket and good health? To obtain all this, many turn to different traditions. Here are some standard practices in the US: Times Square Ball Drop, Making Resolutions, New Year's Kiss, Hoppin' John, Auld Lang Syne, and Midnight Countdown, among others.

However, putting God first

is the only action capable of blessing someone's year. We believe that Jesus must have priority in our lives and that if we give Him due honor and first place in everything, then He will also honor us in everything.

I believe everyone wants the New Year to be prosperous, and there is no better way to bless your next 365 days than by putting God before everything in your life. We often say that everything will work out when you put God first.

**Therefore, regardless of whether you are a churchgoer or not, we invite everyone to participate in the Vigil "For a Brand New Life," which will take place in all Universal Churches on Sunday, December 31st, at 10 pm. See the back page for locations.**

## Do you want to know how to have the best Christmas of your life?

like these is to prioritize God in your life. He is the only one who can fill a space inside you that no gift, party, or person can. Jesus wants to celebrate his birth within you. When this happens, all his anguish disappears, and you become different. Maybe you have celebrated Christmas for many years, but nothing has changed about you. The true Christmas happens when He is born in us. Before getting together with your family, consider valuing what is spiritual and eternal. You will receive

the presence of God and take it wherever you go. Loneliness, sadness, anguish, doubts, and regrets - these are feelings that affect millions of people in the last weeks of the year. For everyone who suffers from these issues, the Lord Jesus has an invitation.

**"He said: Come to me, those who are weary, oppressed, burdened, suffocated, distressed, and I will give you rest."** He placed this Word; He placed this invitation. Jesus was

the one who said this. He is inviting you to come to Him. You don't want death. You want a different life but don't know how to get it. That's why you think of death as a solution. But the Spirit of God will take this pain away from you without you having to take your life. The Spirit of God will do this in your life! So, this end of the year, don't let depression dominate your spirit. Go to the Lord Jesus, and He will ease your anguish.

**F**or most people, Christmas time is synonymous with celebration. During this period, many tried to bring the idea of unity, peace, and donation. They turned to consumerism, buying what they can and can't and investing in

temporary joy. And, after the fun moments pass, there are often disastrous consequences: debts, accidents, and fights due to excessive drinking, among others.

The best way to avoid situations





## UNIVERSAL BEYOND BARS

**You are not Alone!**

# D.W.I LANDED ME BEHIND BARS

I was in the news and was the drunkest driver in the history of the country. I was drinking alcohol from the age of eleven years old. From alcohol, I went to using drugs, says Jose. I then started using drugs; I was introduced to marijuana and cocaine, which I used for a long time before going on to crack. I was so addicted that my mind was used to having some hallucinations.

So much so that when I did not have anything to drink or smoke or another drug, I would soak a piece of cloth in diesel, put it in a plastic bag, and sniff that in my day-to-day activities. I always wanted to have a sense of high; it came to the point that when I was at work (I would drive a truck), other truck drivers would mix a bunch of substances like cocaine, tablets, and Viagra in a bottle of some caffeinated drink so we could be out of our minds and handle the pressure of the job.

Through this addiction, I lost many jobs; I have overturned trucks while driving and crashed them. I



moved to another state, but that did not work out, and I was dismissed from that job, too. Instead of taking myself out of this situation, I went deeper and deeper. I wallowed in the mud; you could say I drank so much that my body

and my face became swollen. I had taken so many drugs that I developed a heart problem, which made my heart swollen; it looked like I had an apple inside of my shirt.

The doctor had given me only four months to live; even with medical treatment, it would've been tough; they wanted to take the blood, but how could it have been possible if I had more alcohol than blood in my veins?

I was utterly drunk with no self-awareness, one day, on my trucking job, I was drinking and driving, and I was swerving in and out of the lanes, and the police had been called on me. Still, I vaguely remember that because I was so drunk, they had done the breathalyzer test on me, and from then, I got the name "the drunkest driver in the country."



I was 4x over the drinking limit in the breathalyzer testing, and this was on the news. I could barely walk, and I was arrested. Eventually, my mom flew from another state to bail me out; and go back with her, she figured this would help me. But this was my rock bottom living in my mother's house. I drank more and used more drugs, and when she was out working, I would even steal her things: her clothes, her money to pay bills, her motorcycle. I took it all and gave it to the

drug dealers in exchange for drugs. One day, because of this problem, I suffered a heart attack. When I closed and opened my eyes again, I was in hell. I was not in a dream; there is a difference between dreams and reality, and I know what I saw and experienced very well. It was real, so REAL. I then remembered a brother who attended the Universal Church, which sponsors the UBB, and he had been free from the same addiction I had; at that moment, I went down on my knees and spoke to God.

I said, "God, if You exist, do not let me end like this; I don't want to die like this. Give me one more chance." Then I woke up, and when I recalled all that had happened to me, I knelt at my mother's feet and said forgive me for all the trouble I have done to you, and I told her I was going to the church right away.

On my way out the door, my mom said, "Stop" Don't go now, wait. I told her, "I must go now; I want to go now," Jose recalls. My mom told me to get cleaned up first before I went because I was in a terrible state; I had used the bathroom on myself and hadn't realized I was in my own feces, so I needed to take a bath and go clean and fresh to the church.

The day I entered the church, I went straight to the altar and said, "Lord, I surrender my life to You now. I have nothing, and You see, I don't have anything, but I give You, my life. I came to the church on Dec 29th, 2019, and my walk with Christ began; I hadn't known that my mom and brother had participated in a campaign of faith on my behalf just the week before; It was the campaign of Mt. Sinai.

I was ready for the next campaign and went in with such strength I did not know where it came from, and I put together my sacrifice and all my material and spiritual things. I fasted and went to God and told Him if You don't change things for me and give me Your Spirit, I will not be able to do things on my own, and I would return to the old Jose.

I cried out on the altar. God has mercy on me, bless me, give me and seal me with Your Spirit. After that day, my life completely changed. I met my wife in the Universal Church. I no longer drive trucks, but now the Holy Spirit gave my wife and me an idea, and we own a coffee shop. I had another vision from God, and we opened a restaurant, bought a house, and soon will build a house. God assured me that He saved me so I can save others through my testimony. I am a soul winner I help others and pass the word to them; this is all because of the Holy Spirit. Look how glorious this is; a country boy like me learned the goodness of God!



## What is the True meaning of Christmas?

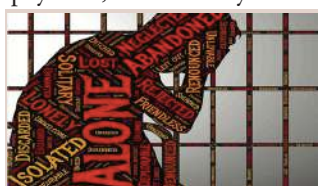
It's that time of year again, the holiday season. I am sure it is a season that you are not looking forward to. You know your family will already gather to exchange gifts, they will have a nice meal together, and the list goes on. But what is the true meaning of this holiday? It's to have the joy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Scripture says,"



"And the Angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Luke 1: 35

Christmas only happens when Jesus is born within a person. This Bible verse I shared with you is what the Angel said to Mary, and her Christmas was precisely this. To know that the Holy One would be born within her. If a person does not receive Jesus, there is no True Christmas. Christmas should not be about presents, food, the tree, decorations, etc., but real Christmas should be when a person encounters God.

This holiday only comes around once every year, and for many, it is a sad moment. Think with me: how could the supposed day Jesus was born to be something saddening? It should never be but take this time to seek the Birth of Jesus inside you. That way, every day may be "Christmas," and you will always have the Joy of the Savior living inside of you.



**"I never knew, things would get this far. If I did, I would've stopped doing this mess when I had the chance."**

**Has this been in your thoughts? You have regrets, night and day. You know you messed up, but sometimes it's hard to face it.**

**Send your letter or an E-Message to Bishop Joshua. He will personally read, and reply to you. You don't need to walk alone. Mail your letter to: 7075 Southwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77074; and you can ask to be added to our E-Message list. Include: First/Last Name, Inmate Number, Facility, City/State, & the Zip Code.**



## NEW YEAR, NEW YOU?



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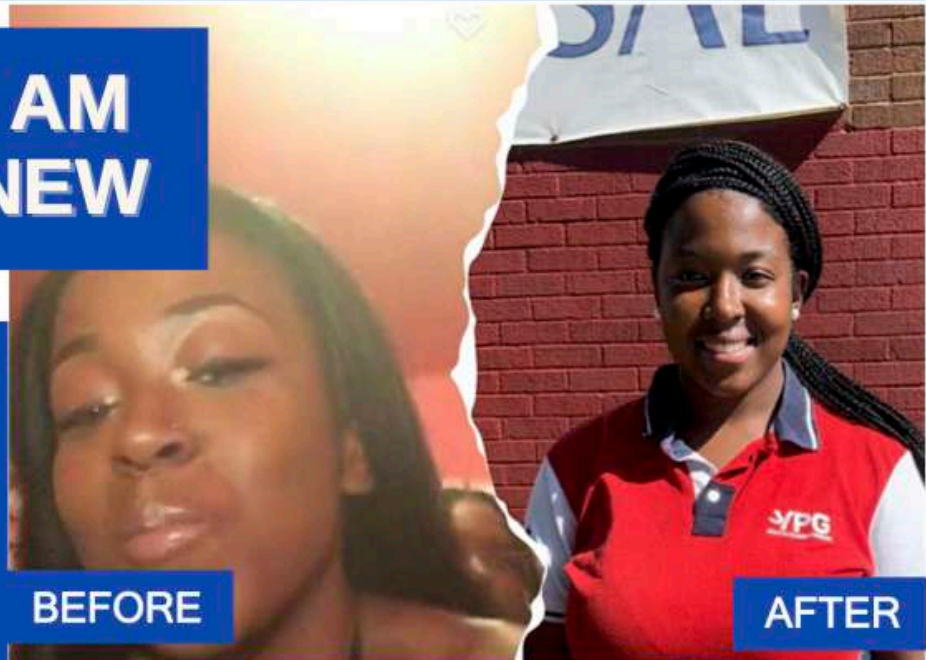
# YPG NEWS

YOUTH POWER GROUP



I AM NEW

ARE YOU DONE READING? STAY A BIT LONGER! CHALLENGE - THERE IS A YPG LOGO HIDING ON THE PAGE. WHEN YOU FIND IT, CIRCLE IT AND TAKE A SELFIE WITH THE PAGE. THEN, GO TO INSTAGRAM AND TAG US @YPG.USA



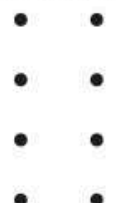
BEFORE

AFTER

### WORD PUZZLE CHALLENGE COMPLETE THE PUZZLE!

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

Hi, my name is NAIJERIA. BEFORE COMING TO THE YPG, I HAD LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND COULD NOT LOVE MYSELF. I WAS PARTYING, DRINKING, AND SMOKING TO FILL THE VOID INSIDE OF ME. BUT WHEN I FOUND THE YPG TWO YEARS AGO, MY LIFE CHANGED FOR THE BETTER. I AM NOW PLEASED WITH MYSELF; I HAVE SELF-VALUE AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PERSON I BECAME. THANK YOU, YPG!



## STAY ENCOURAGED WITH DAILY PROGRAMS

Genesis follows the lives of Adam and Eve, Noah and his family, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob (who God renamed as Israel), to Joseph, who was taken from slavery to become ruler of Egypt. (9pm ET)



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### ULFN PROGRAMS SCHEDULE (ET)

**SHOWDOWN OF FAITH | 7am**  
 with Bishop Joshua

**THE AM SHOW | 9am**

**STOP SUFFERING | 12pm**  
 with Pastor Diego

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION**  
 2pm with Pastor Edwin

**BREAKING THE SILENCE | 3pm**

**FIGHTING THE UNSEEN ENEMY**  
 4pm with Bishop David

**MOSES & THE TEN**  
**COMMANDMENTS | 7pm**

**GENESIS | 9pm**

**THE RICH AND LAZARUS | 11pm**

**LET THERE BE LIGHT**  
 12am with Pastor Samuel



SCAN ME



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Have your problems kept you up at night?

*please read*

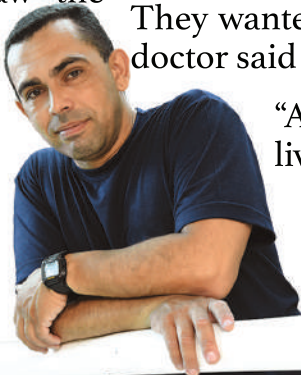
For almost two years, David Diaz's nightly routine was tossing in bed from one side to the other. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't fall asleep. Instead of sleeping, all David could think about was the bills he had to pay.

The insomnia began when he decided to leave an excellent job in the hospital to open his own company. David was confident, but reality turned out to be very different from his expectations. "When I bought the company, it was already behind on payments. When I took over, one problem after another appeared, and I didn't know how to deal with it."

take on several roles: management, customer service, finance, etc. The overload of work made his insomnia worse. "I was a one-person army. I did some contracts where my company needed to be available 24 hours daily. I worked day and night and lost count of how many hours I worked. When I took a day off, I

I couldn't sleep." During another sleepless night, David made a decision: "I saw the Universal Church program on TV and decided to go back to the church."

He remembers that he returned to The Universal Church. "At the time, the pastor talked about a campaign of faith; it was an opportunity to turn my life around. I felt like a failure. The company was in debt, but



*I decided to give my all to God."*

Many people would criticize him, but soon they saw the results. The first change was overcoming sleepless nights. "I began to have peace and slept normally; I was sure I would solve my problems because God was in control."

Shortly afterward, he began to sign more contracts. "I closed 23 contracts with 23 insurance companies. It gave momentum to the company, and I was able to pay off the debts." According to him, other areas of his life transformed. "At the Universal Church, I met my wife, Fernanda. God kept giving us ideas. Today, we have three stores, and we are considering continuing to expand. We also have a goat farm."

Fernanda and David went through another challenge a few years ago. They wanted to have children, but a doctor said it wouldn't be possible.

"As we already gave our lives to God, we acted on faith and did not accept the diagnosis. Shortly after, our first daughter, who is five years old, arrived. Then, Fernanda

became pregnant with our twin daughters. The doctor said it was luck, but I knew it was God."

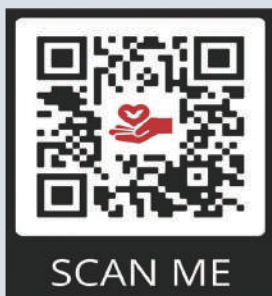
According to David, the transformations in his life are the result of his faith. "My life changed when I surrendered to God and obeyed His teachings. He saved me from insomnia and transformed my entire life."

### SNOWBALL METHOD VS. AVALANCHE METHOD

**How Do You Pay Off Debt?**  
When paying off debt, you can either get rid of tiny snowballs first, or tackle the avalanche head-on. Which strategy works best for you?

SNOWBALL METHOD	AVALANCHE METHOD
<b>PHILOSOPHY:</b> Pay your smallest monetary debts first to increase motivation and create good financial habits.	<b>PHILOSOPHY:</b> Pay high-interest debts first because they cost you the most money over time.
<b>PRO:</b> An immediate sense of accomplishment for a job well done for managing the small bills that come in more frequently.	<b>PRO:</b> The fastest way to eliminate debt and save on interest payments.
<b>CON:</b> It may take longer if your largest debt is your credit card.	<b>CON:</b> It may take years to eliminate your largest debt while smaller bills keep coming in.
<b>BEST FOR:</b> Anyone who feels overwhelmed by the number of individual debts they have.	<b>BEST FOR:</b> Those with a lot of credit card or other high-interest debt.
<b>SNOWBALL METHOD EXAMPLE:</b> 1. \$700 credit card with 18% interest 2. \$3,000 credit card with 25% interest 3. \$5,000 student loan with 5% interest 4. \$10,000 car loan with 8% interest <b>MONTHLY PAYMENTS:</b> Minimum, plus \$100 As monthly payments shrink, the extra money is put into the smallest debt. <b>PAYOFF:</b> Debt free in 52 months	<b>AVALANCHE METHOD EXAMPLE:</b> 1. \$9,000 credit card with 25% interest 2. \$700 credit card with 18% interest 3. \$10,000 student loan with 8% interest 4. \$5,000 car loan with 5% interest <b>MONTHLY PAYMENTS:</b> Minimum, plus \$100 As monthly payments shrink, the extra money is put into the most expensive debt. <b>PAYOFF:</b> Debt free in 51 months
<b>COMPARISON:</b> The Avalanche Method would take about the same time, saving you just \$250.	<b>COMPARISON:</b> The Snowball Method would cost you three months and \$2,000 more in interest.

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