

NEW YEAR STOCKTAKE

The beginning of a New Year is a natural time to stop and think about how our lives are going. We can do that individually on a physical level—our health, our finances, our family, etc: how are they going? What are we going to do differently this year? What are our goals for this New Year?

But in the sermon today I want to focus in on our spiritual lives—how are we going spiritually? Our spiritual lives have many different aspects and characteristics. We have strengths and weaknesses, assets and liabilities, spiritual talents and gifts, and spiritual pitfalls.



One way of reviewing some of these, and conducting a spiritual inventory, is to consider each of the colours in the bag of jelly beans I've handed out today.

1. The **yellow** jelly beans picture the **JOY** we have in knowing God's truth, in knowing God and Jesus Christ, and having Him work in our lives.

John 15:11 "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Jesus gave us the gospel message so that we can have **complete joy**—because we can have the joy of Jesus Christ in us!

John 10:10 is a great verse: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Yellow pictures our friends, the people who perk us up and bring light and laughter to our lives. Isn't it wonderful to have friends and family and spend time together with them?! They give us encouraging words when we need them, they do kind things for us, they make us smile, laugh, have fun and joy.

Proverbs 27:9 "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice."

There are beautiful things like perfume and aftershave that bring joy, and so do our friends bring pleasantness, because of what they say and the advice they share with us. Joy is of course one of the fruits of the spirit, so I hope we'll have lots of yellow things in our lives this year!

2. The **green** jelly beans picture growth. We want the New Year to be a year of growth. It is vital that we grow spiritually. If we don't move ahead, but just stay where we are, we will stagnate and get left behind. We need to continue to fight Satan, and to understand God's Way more and more.

2 Peter 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

1 Peter 2:2 "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."

Grow up in your salvation. How? By taking in spiritual food, just as we grow physically by taking in physical food.

Luke 2:52 "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Jesus grew in these four areas!

Did you grow last year? Did you learn more and make progress in the way you live your life? Do you have plans to grow this year? Any goals for the year? It's something worth thinking about.

Ephesians 4:15-16 "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." *From Him the whole body grows and builds itself up in love.*

So I hope we have lots of green stuff in our spiritual lives this year—lots of new growth!

3. The **blue** and **purple** jelly beans picture the times of trial when we have the blues, or we've been bumped and bruised to where our bodies go purple. Sometimes we're so disappointed or flattened by problems, frustrated and upset, that we find it hard to keep on going. A friend we have might leave the church, or get really sick, or have financial strife; or that might happen to us. Someone might hurt us by what they say or do, or we might disappoint ourselves by what we say or do. This is when we need to fall back on verses like—

Psalms 62:5-8 ⁵"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from Him. ⁶Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ⁷My salvation and my honour depend on God: He is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge."

We can remember the people of faith in Hebrews 11, who suffered all kinds of trials yet were faithful to the end.

And 1 Corinthians 10:13 is a passage of comfort to us—

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

As well as Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

So we'll no doubt have some blue or purple stuff thrown at us in the lolly scramble of life this year. But remember that purple might signify suffering, but it is also the colour of royalty and that's what the Bible says follows suffering. Many scriptures say we go from suffering to glory, from the cross to the crown. The blue of trials, when mixed with the red of Christ's blood, leads to the purple of Kingship in the world tomorrow.

4. The **white** jelly beans represent the **purity**, innocence and holiness that should be at the core of our lives.

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Hopefully our hearts, our thoughts, our lives, through and through, are pure, ethical, clean and honest deep down inside.

Colossians 1:22 "But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

We are to be holy and without blemish—of course this is only possible through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:12 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

There are lots of verses saying we need to be holy. If we clothe ourselves with these things, we will in fact be clothed with the “white” linen which represents the righteousness of the saints—we will be righteous and holy. But of course we can’t do that of ourselves.

So I hope we’ll have lots of white stuff in our spiritual lives this year.

5. The **red** jelly beans picture love ♥ — another vital characteristic that should fill our lives. One scripture says “live a life of love.”

Hundreds of scriptures talk about love, especially 1 Corinthians 13, which says it is the greatest thing in the world. **Red** also reminds us of the **blood** of Jesus Christ, which also pictures love, because there is no greater love than to shed your blood, lay down your life for others (John 15:13). We can fulfil this by doing things and giving our time for our friends. Because of the red blood of Jesus our sins are washed away and become as white as snow. That’s how we can have the white jelly beans!

Ephesians 1:4 “For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”

We are to be white, holy, clean and spotless. It happens because of Christ’s blood.

Verse 7 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace”

6. The **orange** jelly beans remind us of a wonderful time of day—sunset. After the busyness of the day there is a time of peace and quiet (hopefully!)—time to rest and relax a little and enjoy dinner. We need times of peace, stillness and relaxation in the midst of our busy modern lives, and the way to have this is through Jesus Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Let’s not forget this as we go through the year ahead. Let’s make use of the orange jelly beans.

Psalms 23 talks of this too. Verse 2 “He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters.”

7. The **pink** jelly beans picture being in the pink of health—something that will be true spiritually if we follow these pointers. Dictionary: *Pink means figuratively the highest degree or condition, e.g. the pink of health, the economy is in the pink of condition, the highest type or example of excellence.*

An article in the Herald “*Nutrition: Choose colour*” this week covered the way colours are important in physical health.

“Not only is it important to eat 5-plus fruit and vegetables a day, but you should be eating lots of different coloured ones. The phytonutrients we need for good health are what give fruit and vegetables their colour.”

Green ones are good for strong bones and teeth, while reds will help with a healthy heart, a better memory and a healthy urinary tract. Yellow and orange ones will also help with heart health, along with improving eyesight and boosting your immune system. Blue/purple fruit and vegetables will help you age well, while white/brown ones are needed for a healthy heart."

So it is with spiritual health—colours are important!

8. I've left the black ones till last, because the **black** jelly beans are the best! (Isn't that what most people think?) The black ones picture the Word of God—the black words on the white page of life. Most Bibles are bound in black. Our whole lives must be founded on the Word of God.

The black jelly beans are the strongest flavoured and the tastiest ones. As we suck them in and our mouths are filled with the flavour, that's how we should spiritually digest the Bible, and draw sustenance from it as it is incorporated into every part of our spiritual life.

Matthew 4:4 "Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Jeremiah 15:16 "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty."

This mentions how Jeremiah ate God's Word—he received it into himself, assimilated it, and made it part of himself.

David said in Psalms 119:103 "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

God's Word is there for us to taste, enjoy and digest.

1 Peter 2:2-3 ²"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

This shows how we grow through taking in the milk of the Word, and tasting that the Lord is good.

Let's not neglect our Bible Study this year!! We need to be reading the Word of God, filling our minds with it, so we can put it into practice in our lives, so we can grow and develop spiritually.

So I hope you enjoy your packet of jelly beans! But let's especially remember the lasting value of the spiritual jelly beans we can taste in our lives, the yellow of joy, the green of growth, the blue of trials, the white of holiness, the red of love, the orange of the rest in Jesus Christ, and the black of God's Word so we are in the pink of health!

Hope you have a colourful New Year, and a sweet one!