

New Year Resolutions

What is the most depressing day of the year? British psychologists have calculated that the most depressing day of the year is January 11. Winter days are dark and cold, holiday excitement has worn off, Christmas debts are coming due, and New Year's resolutions have all been broken. The celebrations, gift-giving, and good intentions that once made us feel happy and excited now press down and leave us feeling hopeless.

Many of us have made promises to ourselves to mark the beginning of the New Year. We made pledges such as: I'm going to save more, exercise more, or spend less time on the Internet. We begin the year with good intentions, but before long old habits tempt us to take up our old ways. We slip up occasionally, then more frequently, and then all the time. Finally, it's as if our resolution never existed.

Instead of choosing our own self-improvement goals, a better approach might be to ask ourselves: "What does the Lord want me to change?" Through the prophet Micah, God has revealed that He wants us to do what is right, to be merciful, and to walk humbly with Him (Mic. 6:8). All of these things relate to soul-improvement rather than self-improvement.

The apostle Paul taught that soul-improvement is better than self-improvement and may even result in improvement of both the soul and the self. "...Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1Tim. 4:7-8). God will help us to do this if we work our resolve. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love... Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:16-17, 20).

So as we begin a new year, let's resolve to be more Christ-like. For additional help, look to the examples of others who succeeded in their resolutions:

I will be like Paul and forget those things which are behind and press forward (Phil. 3:12-16).

I will be like David and lift up my eyes to the hills from which my help comes (Psalm 121:1).

I will be like Abraham and trust my God implicitly (Heb. 11:8-12).

I will be like Enoch and walk in daily fellowship with my heavenly Father (Heb. 11:5).

I will be like Moses and suffer rather than enjoy the pleasure of sin for a time (Heb. 11:23-29).

I will be like Job and be patient and faithful in all circumstances (Book of Job).

I will be like Joseph and turn my back on all evil advances (Gen. 39:7-12).

I will be like Gideon and advance even when friends are few (Judges 7:15).

I will be like Andrew and strive to lead my brother to Christ (John 1:40-42).

Humble Enough to be Served

Are you humble enough to allow yourself to be served by another? I wondered which was more humbling in our day—to wash another person's feet or to have someone else wash yours. Both those who were serving and those being served were presenting distinct pictures of humility.

When Jesus and His disciples were gathered for the Last Supper (John 13:1-20), Jesus, in humble servanthood, washed His disciples' feet. But Simon Peter resisted, saying, "You shall never wash my feet!" Then Jesus answered, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (13:8). Washing their feet was not a mere ritual. It could also be seen as a picture of our need of Christ's cleansing—a cleansing that will never be realized unless we are willing to be humble before the Savior.

James wrote, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). We receive God's grace when we acknowledge the greatness of God who humbled Himself at the cross, and acknowledge that our own sins made it necessary for Him to serve us in that manner (Phil. 2:5-11). Who among us is humble enough to admit he needs to be served?

Never Too Old to Change

There are sayings in many languages about the difficulty of changing long-established habits. In English, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." In French, "Ce n'est pas à un vieux singe qu'on apprend à faire la grimace" (You can't teach an old monkey how to pull a funny face). In Spanish, "El loro viejo no aprende a hablar" (An old parrot can't learn to speak).

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" to "see the kingdom of God," he replied, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:3-4). Author Merrill Tenney suggests that Nicodemus was saying, in effect, "I acknowledge that a new birth is necessary, but I am too old to change. My pattern of life is set. Physical birth is out of the question and psychological rebirth seems even less probable. Is not my case hopeless?"

Jesus' reply included these words, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (v.16). That is the offer of new life and a new beginning for anyone, young or old. Whatever our age or situation in life, with God's power, it's not too late to change. Because God' word is powerful, change is possible.

Just Think About It

One state passed a law forbidding the Bible to be read in the public schools, and the same state passed another law requiring that a Bible be placed in every prison cell in the state. What reasoning! A fence at the top of the cliff is much better than a hospital at the bottom.

Four steps guarantee absolute failure for parents: the wrong example, a lack of correction, a breakdown in communication, and no teaching of God's word. (James R. Cope)

The artist who painted "Jesus at the Door" is said to have purposely left off the knob from the door, for the door represents the human heart, and on that door, the bolt is on the inside. Jesus stands and knocks. But He will not come in unless we open the door.

One of the great discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he could not do. (Henry Ford)

Why I Drank

I drank for happiness and became unhappy.

I drank for joy and became miserable.

I drank for sociability and became argumentative.

I drank for sophistication and became obnoxious.

I drank for sleep and woke up tired.

I drank for strength and felt weak.

I drank for relaxation and got the shakes.

I drank to make conversation easier and slurred my speech.

I drank for confidence and became doubtful.

I drank for courage and became afraid. (From a former alcoholic)

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Proverbs 23:31-32 says, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles

in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper."

A Moments Wisdom

Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself.
Most folks think work is a fine thing as long as it doesn't take too much of their leisure time.
Every time history repeats itself, the price of the lesson goes up.