

Resolutions

- This is the time of year when the fitness centers are all buzzing with new, but soon to be disregarded, memberships. On average it's understood that at the beginning of each year anyone who wishes to join a gym will find them somewhat crowded to say the least. It's also understood that the best time to join a gym is around April or so when the "thrill" of being fit has waned quite a bit.

So how many people have you ever known who've made New Year's resolutions that didn't quite keep them? Have you yourself ever made resolutions that you've, for the most part, kept? A resolution, as defined by Webster, is "the act or result of resolving something" or "the thing determined on; decision as to future action". So a resolution is not to be understood as a promise, which can be broken. If it was a promise, most of us would then be considered guilty of not keeping our word, especially to ourselves. It is to be understood as a decision on the part of the one making it, to make a determination that would, if carried out, bring the one making it a positive result in whatever good they've decided as being good, either for themselves or for others. Whether it means making up with those we might have a grudge against by being humble enough to be the first to approach them, or resolving to make a positive difference by some act of kindness toward someone we may not even know. Resolutions can either be secular (*some physical act that would help improve self or another*) or spiritual (*an act that would bring self or another person closer to God*). The following are seven "spiritual" resolutions that **all** children of **God** need to seriously consider if we ever hope to be "spiritually fit".

1) Read and Study my Bible More

Ecc 12:12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and **much** study *is* a weariness of the flesh.

- "There, see? That's why I don't do **much** studying! Even the Bible calls it a weary task." Yes, that's what it says. But it also doesn't say anywhere either that we aren't to at least study **sometime**! The key concept here is "moderation". How will we ever be able to explain to others what the **Bible** says on any given subject if we aren't faithful in, at least, moderately reading it ourselves. When stating to my accountant years ago that I wasn't taking anything out of the business because I just wanted to see it become successful, he made a comment. "If you don't pay yourself at least a little something you'll get discouraged. And discouragement will cause you to fail." So how does that statement apply here? If we don't read "at least a little something" on a daily basis it could cause **us** to fail. Just as smoking is a difficult habit to break for someone who's smoked for years, a good habit to get into would be to read from **God's** word on a daily basis. And when we can get our consciences to the point of bugging us when we neglect a daily perusal of the **Bible**, as a smoker gets a little edgy without his weeds, we've established a habit not to be ashamed of. And I don't know of any statistic where daily **Bible** usage has ever caused anyone to die of lung cancer.

2Ti 2:15 Study (*Gk.4704- to make effort*) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (*Gk.3718- to dissect [expound] correctly*) the word of truth.

- How can we be able to explain what the Bible teaches unless we first fill our minds with it? We seem to fill our minds with a lot of other stuff, but will that stuff last into eternity, or even remotely get us there?

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (*Gk.4146- copiously: -abundantly*) in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

- How often have we prayed for wisdom? Godly wisdom comes with daily Bible reading. How often have we worshipped God not knowing whether the songs that we sing are scriptural or not? Do we unknowingly teach others false doctrine through them? Such discernment only comes from further understanding which only comes through making the effort to study.

Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, **when ye read, ye may understand** my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

- We can't understand unless we read! Comparing wisdom and understanding to a woman, Solomon gives the idea of it as being something positive once retained.

Pro 3:13 Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15 She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. 16 Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. 17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace. 18 She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.

- Let's then resolve to strive to understand more spiritually and not just get our Bibles out when there's nothing good on television (*because, frankly, there really isn't anything that compares*).

2) Volunteer More

Php 4:3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which **laboured with me in the gospel**, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow-laborers, **whose names are in the book of life**.

- Not much feels better than the positive sensation that comes from having volunteered for something in order to take the load off of another. Especially when it comes to facilitating a Bible class or doing other works than go to the furtherance of the gospel message getting into the minds of others. There should be no excuse for not volunteering for at least some of the teaching. The more teachers the less time there would be needed for others to teach. The book of life is filled with the names of such **volunteers!**

3) Care More

- How many among us would just love to be known as one who really couldn't give a hoot to an owl with laryngitis? We all would like to be known as someone who really cares about others. Don't we? But to what extent would we go to get such a recognition? Do we care "to be seen of men" (*Mat 23:5*) or do we care "in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly" (*Mat 6:4*)?

Luk 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*, 34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

- 20/20 hindsight is a great thing. We can often say to ourselves how we would have been the Samaritan in this story not having been a Jew living in that culture at that time. Is today any different? And not just for the obvious. Sometimes it's the little things that count. A kind reassuring word or a thoughtful unexpected deed can go a long way toward lifting another's spirits. We need to ask ourselves "On a scale from one to ten, how do I rate in caring?" If we're honest with ourselves we can all do a little better in that department. "How do my brethren see me? Am I self-centered or am I selfless?" (*And not just to be seen of the brethren either.*)

Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members **should** have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

- Where do I stand in caring for this congregation? What would I give up, time-wise, to show how much I care?

2Co 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

4) Be More "Self"-less

- How often have we thought that certain brethren look like they're doing just fine but not really know what they go through when not in our presence? Just because someone outwardly appears to be like life is a bowl of cherries doesn't necessarily make it so. We all have problems because we live in a sin stained world. And as the saying is so true, there's always someone else who has it worse.

Rom 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.

- “God first, others second and me last” should be the resolve of every faithful Christian. Never the other way around. And even when we think we have God first in our lives but often put our own desires ahead of others we really aren’t putting God first.

1Jn 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?

- We cannot think of any one of God’s children in a lesser light than we think of ourselves. As Jesus affirmed:

Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. *Speaking of neighbors...*

5) “Visit” Others More

Jas 1:27 Pure religion (*Gk.2356- From a derivative of 2357- this word has a sense of demonstration attached to it. It involves an action.*) and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit (*Thayer: to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with the eyes*) the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

- We all need to look back over this past year and ask ourselves “how often have I visited other members of this congregation”, especially those who haven’t been in the assembly for whatever reason, “can I even count on one hand the number of times?” Or “do I need the other hand and maybe even a foot or two?” The more we understand the personal struggles others are going through maybe the more petty we just might think of our own. That is, if we really are serious about not always being a “woe is me” type of Christian that only wants attention no matter how they get it.

6) Be More Positive

1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- Have you ever considered how there are those you just love to be around and have company with? Do you hang with them because they are a delight or are they like the wind blowing through an open window on a birthday cake snuffing the candles out? Which would **you** prefer? Positive or negative? Remember, misery loves company. Which then, do we each need to be personally?

7) Be Converted According to Truth

Luk 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and **when thou**

art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33 And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. 34 And He said, **I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.**

- Just because a person is baptized doesn't necessarily mean they are converted. Peter, at that time, wasn't converted until on the day of Pentecost when he stood before the crowd and accused them of crucifying the Christ they had always waited for. He no longer feared what would be done to him for doing so. Later, his conversion was evidenced in front of the rulers, elders and scribes in Acts 4.

Act 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Act 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

- Being truly converted means we put our very lives on the line for something we hold dear to us; such as the gospel (*if in fact it does*).

Act 21:10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

- What is "the will of the Lord"?

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

- If you have but one resolution to make this coming year, whether or not you've been baptized, but especially if you've not been, because you are not a Christian, you need to resolve to change that because God is patiently waiting for you. And you need to be grateful for that. But His patience won't last forever. There are seven more resolutions that you need to make in order to be a faithful child of God.

#1. You need to hear

Romans 10:14 ..."how shall they believe in Him **Whom they have not heard?**"

#2. You need to believe

Heb 11:6 ..."for he that commeth to God **must believe that He is...**"

#3. You need to repent

Act 3:19 ..."**Repent** ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

#4. You need to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, Who alone can save you

Joh 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

#5. You need to have your sins washed away

Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

#6. Once you've done all these things, you need to remain faithful

Romans 6:4 "...we also should walk in newness of life."

#7. You need to resolve to keep growing

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen.

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