

### **Becoming Resolute in Your Resolutions**

We have not yet completed the first week of a brand new year. So far so good! The world did not end on December 21st and America has not slid off the proverbial cliff! We're still here! How does it feel? Your answer would probably be like mine -- very much like last year.

So how are your New Year's resolutions coming? Are some of you readers a little sore from the regimen of exercise that you intend to keep up for the rest of your life? Are others of you feeling a little guilt because you haven't gotten in all your Bible reading and prayer accomplished? Perhaps the guilt is increased because you are reading this without having given the priority moments of this day unreservedly to God. Some of you are probably saying, "This is exactly why I have given up on New Year's resolutions; I always mess up, so what's the use? I believe in New Year's resolutions. Allow me to explain:

#### **1. We get what we inspect, not what we expect.**

Without some sort of goal, little will be attained. When we take a trip, we don't just head out of the driveway and "wing it" unless nowhere in particular was your destination. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, chapter 6, we find Alice and the Cheshire Cat are in conversation. Although this is not a direct quote, a sentence based on this dialogue goes like this: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there." As a rule, even when we are fairly sure of the route in which we are about to embark, we look at the map, or we go to Mapquest, Google Maps or enter our statistics into our GPS to set ourselves up for intelligent navigation.

I have been blessed to be married to an organized woman who likes not only to know the exact route we are taking, but how long it will take considering all pit stops along the way. This way of travel takes out ninety per cent of the stress and we are far more likely to leave on time and arrive according to schedule.

It is a good thing to have a goal for Bible reading, prayer time, family time and church activities. There is an old saying, "I would rather shoot for the moon and miss it than shoot for nothing and get it." Jesus said, "*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish*" (Luke 14:28-30). We keep from failing by first sitting down, thinking through what we want to do, have a plan, then work our plan. We often plan to fail by failing to plan. Have a plan! Work the plan.

#### **2. Make resolutions that are keepable.**

This is what often trips us up: we make a goal that is unrealistic for ourselves. I have most often found this true among those who plan to read their Bible through. You decide to read an enormous amount of the Bible every day and become frustrated after a few days and give up completely or at least to some greater measure.

This analogy may help you visualize what I am talking about: Jesus said, *"...It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God"* (Luke 4:4). We need the Bible like we need food. As a matter of fact, it is more important than our physical food. Job said, *"...I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:12). Have you noticed no matter how much you ate on Christmas or New Year's you woke up the next day hungry? Why? Basically our Lord has designed our bodies to consume food every day. Did not our Lord say, *"Give us this day our daily bread"* (Matthew 6:11). *"Give us day by day our daily bread"* (Luke 11:3). It is foolish to say, "Since I ate so much today, I will eat little or nothing tomorrow." We are not camels! We will make ourselves sick if we decide to eat a lot every other day and nothing on the days between. You cannot trick the body God has given you. I have met some people struggling with their weight who tell me, I don't understand; I only eat one meal a day and I keep gaining weight. Research has shown, if you eat little or nothing when you get up and consume little or nothing for lunch, then come home for supper, you are setting yourself up for binging with no limits. The brain and stomach have this conversation, Brain: "Hey this guy is trying to starve us to death!" Stomach: "Ok, I'll take in as much as he can shovel in and stretch myself out to hold more because I know we're not going to eat until this time tomorrow." Brain: "Good decision, I won't tell him he's full until he has maxed out!"

Now here's the comparison: You suffer guilt from lack of Bible, so you "pig-out" on the Word by reading fifty to one hundred chapters. Then with your busy work load you cut back, then the next day you cut back. Finally, you "beat yourself up" because you are not fulfilling your goal of massive doses of the Bible. In the physical realm, it is much healthier to eat moderately, three square meals a day with two reasonable snacks in between than to eat heavily and go without or eating meagerly the next day. By the same token, it is much more spiritually healthy to consume the Biblical food every day than to get frustrated and give up or ride the spiritual roller coaster of up and down devotions. By the way, if you read just four chapters of the Bible every day, you'll have the Bible read through in less than a year!

### **3. Base resolutions on what is best for you, not what others demand.**

We are good about putting each other on unnecessary guilt trips. What is best for you is not always best for other people. Fact: Some people are just much faster readers than others. I have a couple of friends that read their Bibles through once a month. I have tried to read it through in a month. I got close and perhaps one day I shall. If you can speed read, I would suggest, you might

consider slowing down and not treating the Bible like other books, because it is not just another book. Imagine this scenario conversation between husband and wife: "Dear, I really need to talk with you about something important." Imagine the spouse replying, "Okay, I have ten minutes I am going to set aside for our talk, so talk fast; I have a lot to do today." I am going to guess you have just lost your opportunity for meaningful conversation with your spouse. Let me emphasize to you this truth: The Bible is what God thinks. When you open your Bible, you are discovering what God is thinking about. Do we dare say, "Hurry up God, I don't have much time today?" We should pray with the same attitude. Jesus said, "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking*" (Matthew 6:7). I sometimes accuse Baptists and Evangelicals of using Baptist or Protestant rosary. We teach on prayer and hand out prayer guides. We give our membership the names of our missionaries and encourage them to pray specifically for them. We should not however, become a slave to a list and feel like we have not prayed until we have said everything that we said yesterday.

Others make us feel bad because we do not pray at a certain time of day. I believe there can be much good done by praying in the morning. On the other hand, some people work through the night and get off at seven in the morning. Some people's morning would come in the afternoon or evening. David said, "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice*" (Psalm 55:17). On another occasion he said, "*Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" (Psalm 119:164). The point I am trying to make is that anytime of the day is appropriate to pray and seek God's face. Paul said, "*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*" (II Corinthians 10:12). The great man of God was saying, "Don't compare yourself with others." I have known some people who live by the rule every day: "No Bible; no breakfast!" I know of one great man of God who never starts his day with the Bible, but instead reads from a spiritual writer of devotional thoughts and gets "fired-up" and then he is ready for his Bible. He uses his first reading of the day to set him in the mood and mode to "*...receive with meekness the engrafted word...*" (James 1:21).

So make resolutions based on what is good and works for you, not what others say is best.

#### **4. Don't become disappointed when you discover you are not perfect.**

As I write these words the day is overcast, cold and drab looking. Oftentimes our attitude matches the weather. We made our resolutions and already we have blown it. We can take one of three actions: 1) we can escape. We can get caught up in activity that does not address the problem; it simply anesthetizes the pain of failing. 2) We can blame. The blame game is often played because it gives ourselves permission to keep blowing it. 3) We can

become determined. This is where we need to be when we discover once again that we are not perfect. Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (I Timothy 1:15). It would have been so easy for Paul to say there is no hope for me; look how badly I have lived. No, he realized it took the grace of God (the unmerited favor of God) to save him and that’s exactly what it’s going to take to serve Him with any consistency. Let these words sink in: *“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (I Corinthians 15:10). When you fall, get back up and start over, because that grace is never exhausted. God did not bring you this far to leave you stranded in your frustration. You can be what you are supposed to be by the same grace of God that Paul operated in!

-Pastor Pope-

© 2012 [Christchurch Baptist Fellowship](http://www.christchurchbaptist.org/), Houston, Texas, Johnny Pope Pastor  
<http://www.christchurchbaptist.org/>