



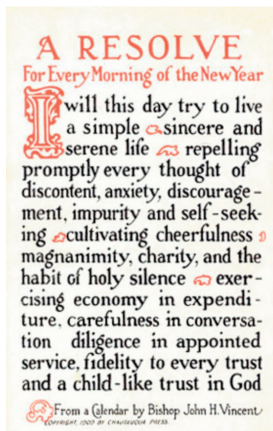
An undenominational publication devoted to the teachings of Jesus and His apostles and dedicated to those who seek the truth.

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Resolutions That Need To Be Kept

Most of us have failed to keep our New Year resolutions. Spiritual goals commit us to be more diligent in reading the word of God. It's not too late to start anew! The facts:

- 168,000 Bibles are sold or given away every day in the United States.
- BibleGateway.com asked 2,000 people, "What English Bible translation do you primarily use to memorize Scripture?" Responders said: *King James Version* (43%), *New International Version* (29%), *New King James Version* (12%), *English Standard Version* (7%), *New American Standard Version* (4%). The *New Revised Standard Version*, *Christian Standard Bible*, *The Message* and *American Standard Version* each received 1%.
- The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture reports 4 out of 5 Americans read the Bible once a month. Nine percent read it every day.
- If you read 150-200 words per minute, it will take 70 hours to read the Bible through. Reading one hour a day will cover the entire Bible in 10 weeks. If you read 11 1/2 minutes a day you will go through the Bible in a year.
- According to Phil Sanders, featured speaker on "Search for the Lord's Way" television series, sponsored by *Churches of Christ*, you can read the New Testament in one month if you read only 9 chapters a day. Website: www.searchtv.org/



Early 20th century New Year's resolutions post card.
Source: Wikipedia

Would you like to have a daily Bible reading chart? Contact "Christ for Today" at the addresses on the back page!

ASK GOD'S FORGIVENESS, AND FORGIVE OTHERS



The person on the other end of the phone identified himself as the state coroner. He asked the woman who answered to come identify a body he believed is her brother. Upon arriving, she was led into the morgue and confirmed the body as her younger brother. The coroner explained that he was working in a quick mart when a group in their twenties came in and shot him five times. They murdered him for the thrill of it.

They were caught and convicted of multiple murders in several states. The reporter got in touch with the woman and wanted to know what she thought about the people that had executed her brother in cold blood. Her answer stunned the reporter, "I forgave them," she said. That woman is my mother, her attitude of forgiveness had a profound and liberating effect on me.

My mother had experienced a childhood filled with anger, lies and violence. Although she had a religious

upbringing, she didn't understand forgiveness. She dusted off her family Bible and started to search the Word. Her fingers stopped at the passage "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The key word in that passage was "all". All had sinned against God and that included her. Mother began to search for how to get right with God.

Her search led her to Acts 2:38, where she read: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

My mother knew she had to turn away from all the hurt, anger, violence and lies from her upbringing, and follow the Bible teaching to please God.

She came across this Scripture: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). She learned that God could change the way she felt. Gradually, "the peace that passes understanding" filled her heart (Philippians 4:7). She was able to forgive the killers of her brother.

Seek God's forgiveness for yourself.

— Tim Bonzagni, Kent County,
Rhode Island Church of Christ

COMMUNICATE WITH THE ALMIGHTY

On October 3, 1918, Major Whittlesey and more than five hundred of his men were trapped behind enemy lines. The men found themselves in a small ravine taking on heavy fire. By the second day of battle only two hundred men remained. From a distance the American artillery started sending big artillery rounds in an effort to help the shrinking army. Without exact coordinates the rounds began to fall dangerously close to the men in cover, threatening to wipe out all of what was left with friendly fire. Their only hope was a single pigeon which was their source of the archaic communication. The pigeon flew with a simple petition strapped to its leg and amazingly missed every bullet that was directed its way. The message read: “We are along the road parallel to 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven’s sake, stop it.” The bird delivered the message and Major Whittlesey and his men were saved that day!

Today, communication has come far. We all attest to its advantages. We must never forget the most advanced communication we have, the communication with God in Heaven.

This is a dangerous world in which we live. Spiritually speaking, it is not much different than the battle Major Whittlesey and his men faced on that day in 1918. As a matter of fact,



it seems that the harder you try to do good, the more open you are to enemy attacks. Scripture says that “the days are evil.” What are we to do? Communicate with God! Pray to be saved from the darkness of this world.

When we are pinned down in the dark ravines we must remember to send out our petitions to the only One that can truly protect us. “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). If we try to live our lives without praying and communicating our petitions to God, we will find ourselves without help and without hope. When we find ourselves in the battles of this world this new year, we must all resolve to PRAY!

— Shane Belanger
Lyconia, New Hampshire Church of Christ

FIND THE LORD'S CHURCH

AND GROW SPIRITUALLY

When someone mentions the “Church”, what enters your mind? For some it’s “stained glass windows,” “rules and regulations,” “priests’ molestation scandal,” “money appeals,” and “self-righteousness.” For others: “place of refuge,” “family,” “friendship,” “encouragement,” “truth,” “answers,” and “love.” The images run the gamut.

God designed the church—the collection of people rescued by Christ and called by His name—to be a light in the darkness, a family of encouragement and peace, a reservoir of love. It combines every race, rich and poor, male and female, erudite and illiterate, gregarious and reserved into one unified body of Christ. However, this “church” is comprised of broken people like you and me!

In Matthew 13:24-30, God describes the kingdom of heaven (the church) as a field with bad seeds planted amongst the good. The farmer (God) says that the removal of the weeds (people pursuing evil) will hurt the good crop (those pursuing righteousness). His plan is to let them grow together to be divided at harvest (final judgment).

God uses weaknesses of my brothers as tools to build godly character in me. When I am patient with my brother and sister, choose what is right and “godly,” the good seed matures.

Maybe this is why God places eternal ramifications on loving our brother. “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10). Some use the deficiencies of believers as an excuse to detach -- be “spiritual” from a distance. God, however, equates loving our brothers with loving God. We cannot have fellowship with God without having fellowship with His people—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

I challenge you to pursue the Lord’s church—His people—and love them, even as God patiently loves us. Each effort to forgive one another will make us more like Christ and reflect God’s light to others. God bless us this year as we build relationships in His church!

— Christopher Black
Melrose, Massachusetts Church of Christ

LIVE A GODLY LIFE

In making a new year's resolution, why would anyone resolve to "live a godly life"? If a "resolution" is an "intent" to do something, or a "commitment" or "promise" to fulfill, is it arrogant to commit to be God-like? Is it just a wild promise that will frustrate me because I cannot achieve this goal? How about a compromise to just "live a good life"?

To sort out questions such as this, we must see what the Bible states and consider some practical aspects of making it our intent this year to live a godly-life. First, living a "good life" or being a "good person" is only one element of a godly life. One way to look at this is to say that all godly people are good people but not all good people are godly. "Good" is readily pictured as being honest, treating one's neighbor fairly, keeping one's word – all of the characteristics that are not "bad". What makes the difference between just being a good person and being a godly person is being converted to Christ. One prime example from the Bible is that of Cornelius. Cornelius was indeed a very good person – but it required his being baptized with water to become a godly man (Acts 10:1-44).

With one being converted to Christ, a second aspect of a resolution (to live a godly life) can be more readily understood. Jesus encourages, even commands His disciples to live a godly life. "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the



day of God..." (2 Peter 3:11). "Godly" means to have the qualities and characteristics that Christ/God have. Impossible? Not at all because God Himself empowers those in His family, His church. He gives His children His Spirit to live in them. Romans chapter 8 has a thorough discussion of how the Spirit works in the life of a Christian. Galatians 5:19-26 contrasts the sinful, bad life with that of one who has the Spirit living in him.

Thus, the short answer to how does one keep a resolution to live a godly-life is: (1) to be converted to Christ and (2) to continue to mature spiritually. "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness self-control" (2 Peter 1:5-9). You get the idea – it takes effort, work to keep any resolution and especially one to live a godly life. But you and God working together can accomplish this worthy goal!

— George Caruthers
Manchester, Connecticut Church of Christ



SHARE YOUR FAITH

This past year I received word that my alma mater was going to bestow an honor on me and my family. When I found out, I wanted to tell others. Whenever we have knowledge of something good it usually moves from our heart to our lips and we must tell someone.

To a Christian it is the relationship we have with God through Christ that must be told.

To the extent that we realize the importance of being in a right relationship with God through His Son, we will be most inclined to share with others the faith we have. Jeremiah when telling others of God received ridicule and hardship. However, he couldn't stop because God's word became in him: "a fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). When Jesus' disciples were told by the Jewish rulers to quit preaching the glorious gospel of Christ, they replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29).

Perhaps you have resolved this year to share that which is the very essence of your being -- your faith. Adding to your resolve is the knowledge that Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6) and that people will be judged by God.

May I make these suggestions to help you meet your goal in 2016:

Pick out one person with whom you would like to share the gospel.

•

Pray for an opportunity to speak to that person in a setting that would be conducive to sharing your faith.

•

Pray that God would work on that person's heart so that he/she will be receptive to the gospel.

•

Start a conversation that would lead to a spiritual discussion as well as a serious search of the scriptures.

Questions relative to a person's understanding of who Jesus is or that would make someone consider his own eternal destiny can go a long way.

•

Repeat steps 1-4 with someone else.

•

May God bless you in your resolve to share your faith in 2016.

— Anthony Melakian
Manchester, Connecticut Church of Christ

VERSES FOR A NEW YEAR

"You crown the year with Your bounty" (Psalm 65:11).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Meto proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:18, 19).

"The man who trusts in the Lord...will be like a tree planted by the water. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7, 8).

"Now listen you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:13, 14).

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them' (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

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