

Resolving to Live Better
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Happy New Year - A.D. 2023! With today being the first day of a new year, it would be good for each of us to be challenged to make firm resolutions and adopt plans by which we can implement the Biblical commands, principles and precepts each has learned over the last year. It is too easy to agree with a theological point intellectually without making the needed changes to daily habits that should arise from a greater understanding of God and how He wants us to live. There must come a time when you actually put into practice the things that you learn and make the needed changes in your life.

While I don't know what you may have learned in your personal devotions and Bible studies, I do know what has been taught here over the past year in our Sunday Morning Worship services, so here is a quick review of some of the major lessons taught here in 2022. We began the year with a twelve part series on trusting God because of His character and attributes. People do not trust God because they do not know Him. They understand God in terms of caricatures of Him attributing to Him human characteristics and frailties as if He were an imaginary creature instead of the self-existent, self-sufficient Creator of everything that exists. He is utterly unlike us with infinite attributes related to time (eternal), space (omnipresent), power (omnipotent), and ability (sovereign). And even though God made man in His image, God is also unlike man in all those attributes in which man does reflect Him because He is perfect and unchanging (immutable) in all of them while man is fallen and constantly changing. God is good, loving, kind, merciful, gracious and forgiving as well as righteous, just, jealous and wrathful against unrepentant sinners. All of these combined together are described in the word holy. God is something different from and separated from all of Creation by His infinite attributes and perfections. All of these enable us to have an absolute trust in God for He never fails in carrying out His will. As part of that series we also saw that God enables sinful humans to be forgiven and become His children through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to live for Him through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and His precious and magnificent promises which range from salvation and assurance of heaven to His peace and supply for our needs in the present. God has already done His part and has given to every Christian everything needed to live the Christian life in victory over sin. However, you must be diligent to do your part which essentially boils down to a life lived in obedient trust that God will fulfill His part. (See 2 Peter 1).

I introduced my current sermon series on 1 Peter with an historical survey of God's calling and establishing the nation of Israel and then its failure as the people turned from following God to the practices of the pagans and every man doing what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). This was meant both as an explanation for what we have seen happening in our own nation and warning that this moral decline will result in the persecution of the righteous here as occurs in other nations and has happened throughout history. I have been preaching from 1 Peter since August as a means of preparing the church for properly responding to persecution. While persecution is bad, we do not need to succumb to it for we can have victory in the midst of it. So far we have laid the foundation for that in our identity in Christ as those chosen by God, sanctified by the Spirit and cleansed by Jesus, the Son. We have been born again by God's mercy and redeemed by the Christ's blood to become a "*living stone*" being built up as a spiritual house as part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people for God's own possession. All of that makes disciples of Jesus not only His slaves, but also *aliens and strangers* in this world. We have already seen the practical application of that in proper submission to civil authorities and in the work place being based on the priority of submission to God and then to those He has placed

in positions of authority to carry out His will. Christians should be the best citizens of any nation as well as the best employees or employers while at the same time being the most resistant to evil and opposing anything contrary to God's stated will.

I and the other men that have preached from this pulpit have also addressed a lot of other practical topics in living life in righteousness including God's design for human sexuality, avoiding idolatry, being compassionate, qualifications for church leaders, love and romance, godly motherhood and fatherhood, not losing heart, the dangers of unforgiveness and rejoicing in the Lord.

Those who are truly wise will seek to do as Moses said in Psalm 90:12 and number their days in order to present to God a heart of wisdom. The wise will do as Paul states in Ephesians 5:16 and make *"the most of our time, because the days are evil."* Every day should be a day to resolve to be better than you were the day before, yet, there is something special about marking the passing of a year that causes us to pause and reflect. How has my life been going? Have I been able to accomplish what I really wanted to accomplish? Have I changed and become a better person over the course of time? My quest this morning is to stimulate you to reflect on your own life and consider how well you are following God's will, and then prod you on to resolve to be more diligent in doing so with a plan that will accomplish those goals.

Resolutions

I do not find that resolutions, especially New Year's resolutions, carry much importance in our society any longer except at the receiving end of a joke, such as this humorous definition, *"A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other,"* or the fellow who quipped, *"May your troubles in the coming New Year be as short-lived as your resolutions."* Some people are cynical about any hope for change, such as the fellow who said, *"The New Year gives people a fresh start on their old habits,"* and another who said, *"Serious trouble comes when the New Year's resolutions collide with the old year's habits."* Others' reveal the evil in their own heart in their resistance to make any resolution to be a better person, such as the one who said, *"A New Year's resolution is a promise to stop doing everything you enjoy the most."*

At one time it was the common desire of American society to change as individuals into better people. Benjamin Franklin wrote down this common thought this way, *"Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man."* What many people now consider to be what they *"enjoy the most"* used to be commonly considered vices that a mature individual would have set aside, or at least they would recognize them as vices and not something to be proud of or promoted. Character mattered. But regardless of what our society may or may not advocate, the Christian is one whose hope is bound up in changing into someone more godly than they were the year before. That is why it is good for us to take note of the passing of time and give consideration to what we will be like in the future.

Resolutions are good for us because thoughtful change is good for us and resolutions require that. You may not need to go through the formality of writing down all the "wherefores" and "therefores," though that may be a good and helpful exercise, but you should take the time to examine your life and consider the "whats," "wheres" and "whys" which you lack or have failed and then make definite plans on how to change and overcome them. This should be the desire of every Christian.

Resolving to be Different

Man's Ability to Change - Some question whether man can change, but not only can man change, but he is expected to change. God created man in His image and included in that image is reason and volition. These are the ability to think and make choices resulting in changes. The evidence of man's ability to change is evident all around us. It is in the technology that continues to develop. It is in political systems that swing back and forth between oppression and liberty over time and in systems of

law that keep redefining what is good and evil. Sometimes being close to God's definitions and sometimes being quite the opposite. It is evident in humanitarian efforts made by even non-Christians to change the circumstances of those who are suffering. Even the unregenerate recognize the truth that man can change. That is what underlies the current battles over education for what is taught will shape the next generation.

Now I am not saying in any way that man can change to become good enough to meet God's standards of holiness, nor can man change to the point that he can overcome his basic sin nature. Man is in slavery to his sin, and his bondage to his sin nature can only be broken by the regeneration that comes with faith in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5, Rom. 6, 1 Cor. 5:17). He can meet God's standard of holiness only when the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to him resulting in his justification (Phil 3:9; Gal. 2:16). The Holy Spirit then empowers a change in the manner of life to be reflective of Christ. My point here is simply that all men can change and there should be an expectation that they will do so.

If the non-Christian can make resolutions and behave better in the new year than in the year now past, then even more so should the Christian change for the better with the passing of time. The stated purpose of our salvation in Romans 8:29 is to be "*conformed into the image of His Son.*" There is no doubt that God expects the Christian to change.

God's Charge to Change - Romans 12:1-2 points out that it is only reasonable for Christians live in holiness for we are to be living sacrifices to God in view of what He has done for us through Jesus Christ in saving us from sin. God expects us to resist the pressure of the world to conform us into its mold and calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Making resolutions to change in specific areas is simply an aspect of being transformed by the renewing of your mind, for it is making up your mind about what needs to change and setting plans for doing so.

God has given His commands, and every one of them and the principles that flow out of them prove that God expects the Christian to change by being obedient to Him. Colossians 3 states directly that we are to set aside the old self with its sinful habits and put on the new self who is being renewed. Romans 6 explains that we are to no longer let sin be our master because we are to be slaves of righteousness. If a professing Christian does not change but instead continues to live sinfully, then there is legitimate reason to call into question their profession. They should be properly challenged to examine themselves to see if they are indeed in the faith (2 Cor. 13). This does not mean the Christian will not sin, for the Bible makes it clear that all Christians do sin, but we are expected to walk in the light, and when we do sin, we are expected to confess them (1 John 1:6-10). The purpose of church discipline is to correct and restore erring brothers and sisters while disfellowshipping those that refuse to repent and follow Christ (Matt. 18; Gal. 6).

How then do you change?

It starts with recognizing the problem. You will not fix what you don't think is broken. You must then push on and correct the problem while establishing a new pattern of living to replace the old one. In short, you have to break old habits and develop new ones.

Developing New Habits

Breaking the Old Habits. After you recognize an area that needs to change, you need to confess to the Lord whatever sin may be involved. Take care that even if the activity itself may not be sinful, there still may be sin involved due to wrong motivations. This may take some serious Bible study to know the mind of God on a matter as well as thoughtful meditation to see how it applies specifically in your life. This includes your reasoning as well as your actions.

For example. It is easy to spot the sin in habits such as lying, having a foul mouth or failing to meet with other Christians. There are direct commands concerning each of these. Colossians 3:9, "*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.*" Ephesians 4:29, "*Let no*

unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” Hebrews 10:24–25,²⁴ “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

But what about something like spending more time in prayer and Bible Study? You may have to think through your use of time. Perhaps there is nothing sinful in itself in what you are doing with your time, but over all there may be a failure in making the most of it to fulfill God’s priorities as we are directed to do in Ephesians 5:16. Reading the newspaper is not a sin, but if you do that while neglecting your Bible, then perhaps it is. Watching TV may not be a sin, but if you are doing that and yet neglect to pray, then perhaps it is.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:23 that for the Christian, “*All things are lawful,*” but “*not all things are profitable*” or “*edify.*” Just because you can do it does not mean it is good to do. He added in verse 24 that we are to not to seek our own good, but rather the good of our neighbor. You should seek the best, not just what is lawful. So just because something is not a sin doesn’t mean it is something that you should do. Back in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul stated in regards to the things of this world that he would not allow himself to become mastered or subjected to anything for he belonged to Christ. So you may even need to avoid a good thing if you become controlled by it. Hobbies are one area that is a danger in this way. It may be a fine activity, but if you become obsessed with it, then it becomes a habit for you that needs to be broken. If you cannot easily set the activity aside, then perhaps it is mastering you, and you need to set it aside for a time just so that you remain in control.

So first, recognize the area that needs to be changed, and then confess whatever sin may be involved (1 John 1:9). Next, ask God for wisdom (James 1:5) to both understand His will and how to change. God is faithful and gives such wisdom generously to those who ask. Finally, develop a plan to change and make the first step. That may simply be to stop your current practice, but make that step trusting God to empower you to do so. Change for most people usually comes one step at a time and not in great leaps.

The first key to success in breaking an old habit is coming under conviction that it is a habit that needs to be broken. If you are not convinced of that, then you will not change, or you will resent the change forced upon you by others.

Establishing New Habits: The second key to success in breaking an old habit is replacing it with a new habit. If that is not done, I can almost guarantee that you will go back to the old habit. It is not enough to stop lying. You must also tell the truth. It is not enough to stop stealing. You must also start giving (Ephesians 4:28). It is not enough to stop receiving counsel from the ungodly, you have to develop friendships with the godly and mediate on God’s word (Psalm 1). It is not enough to refrain from music, TV, movies, internet and other entertainments that tear you down spiritually, you must replace it with music and activities that fits the Biblical standard of being true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy as described in Philippians 4:8.

How do you create a new habit? Stop the old habit and practice the new habit with great diligence. It usually takes conscious effort to do this at first, but as you continue doing it, it will take less effort, and eventually it becomes your normal way of life. For example, how do you start getting up earlier in the morning so that you can have a time of prayer and Bible reading? First, set your alarm clock at the time you want to get up and place it on the opposite side of the room from your bed. Make sure it will produce a very annoying sound which will force you to get up to turn it off. Next, do whatever you need to do to make sure you are awake enough to read and pray and not fall back to sleep. Exercise, take your shower, get a cup of coffee, etc. Then read your Bible and pray. Do this for a few days and you will be tired enough to go to bed earlier in the evening so that you can get up earlier in the morning. Repeat this process for a few months, and you will start waking up before the alarm goes off. Repeat this for a few

years, and you won't need an alarm clock. It is now your habit of life. You will then find that if you miss your quiet time with God in the morning, you will feel out of sorts all day long.

How do you change then? Stop the old habit and replace it with the new habit you want to develop. Repeat this over and over for days, weeks, months and years. But beware, bad habits and good habits are formed the same way. Whatever becomes your routine will become your habit, so there must be continual monitoring if your habits are not only what is good you, but also whether you want something better for your life?

What Needs to Change

Fundamental Issues - There are many things in our lives that probably need to change. Most people consider a diet immediately after the holidays to get rid of the extra girth they have added in all the feasting. Or they may consider some particular vice they would like to stop such as a bad diet, smoking, drinking, cursing, etc. It is also common to consider a good habit to begin or renew such as regular exercise, healthier diet, Bible study, etc. However, even though those are good things to do and I encourage you to do them, they are actually side issues that should be the result of a more fundamental change that should take place. Strive for a deeper examination of your life and the motivations behind your actions.

One of the reasons that people cannot change enough to match God's standards is simply because the outward actions are not enough to meet His standards. Let's face it, there are many members of cults and even false religions that can out perform the average Christian in meeting a set standard of doing good things. But outward conformity to God's laws is not enough. God looks at the heart and weighs the motives (Jeremiah 17:10, 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9). God wants us to change from the inside out. Your fundamental view of life and what is important must change and not just your outward behaviors.

What are these fundamental issues? Here are some of them.

1) *The quest to personally know God Himself and walk with Him.* This was the cry of Moses to God in Exodus 33:13 "let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee" and in verse 18 "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" John 17:3 tells us that Jesus came for the purpose that we might know the only true God. The Christian is continually grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (1 Peter 3:18). Paul stated in Philippians 3:10 that he sought to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death. Those are all good examples for all of us to follow.

2) *The quest to worship God in spirit and in truth* (John 4:24). The heathen worship false gods, and tragically many professing Christians do not do much better because while they strive to worship the true God, they do so in accordance with their own desires and schemes instead of according to God's commands. That is in reality also false worship. A fundamental pursuit of the true Christian is the proper worship of God. We fulfill it with the true sacrifices that God desires which are the sacrifices of praise that come from a broken and contrite heart and spirit as explained in Hebrews 13:15 and Psalm 51:17.

3) *The quest for personal holiness.* God commands us to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). Ephesians 1:4 states that He saved us so that we might be holy and blameless before Him. The true Christian wants to be cleansed by God and have a clean heart before Him (Psalm 51:2,10). The desire is to live a life separated from the world and unto God. (Romans 12:2). A corollary to this is the desire to know and do God's will. That separates us from the world and its practices.

4) *The quest to be used of God for His glory.* All that a Christian does, ranging from any good deeds to what and how he eats and drinks, are to glorify God (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Paul was able to rejoice in his unpleasant circumstances because he sought God's glory (Philippians 1) and pressed on toward the goal for prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13).

5) *The desire to see others know Jesus and follow Him.* This is the motive for fulfilling the great commission in making disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). We were saved for the purpose of

proclaiming the excellencies of God to the nations (1 Peter 2:9). This has a corollary in learning and using your spiritual gifts, for as you know and use your spiritual gifts, then the whole body is built up and becomes more effective in the task of discipleship including teaching obedience to Christ as explained in (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12).

The result of all of these is that your life is lived for God instead of yourself because you are in submission to the Spirit and conducting yourself in a manner worthy the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27).

Regular habits of reading and studying the Bible are fundamental in developing in all these areas just mentioned. I put an updated version of the Bible Reading Chart which includes several options on reading through the entire Bible including Chronologically. Whether you read through the Bible in a year or in a shorter or longer time, fundamental to knowing God and serving Him is knowing His word)

The fundamental issues come down to two particular commands. Jesus states them in Matthew 22:37-40, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*” “*This is the great and foremost commandment.*” “*The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” “*On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*”

Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind? How do you practically demonstrate that in your daily life? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? How do you practically demonstrate that in your daily life? All the rest of the fundamental general issues as well as all the particular issues too arise from these two commandments.

Particular Issues: There are many particular issues. I do not know which ones you need to work on the most, but I do believe if you will seek the Lord and give some thought to it, you will be able to recognize what you need to resolve to improve.

Let me ask you some questions. None of these are meant to be accusatory, though they make you uncomfortable. Their purpose is simply to stimulate your thinking.

Loving God: Do you really love God with all your heart, soul and mind? What is more important to you than God? Anything that is would be an idol. How much time do you spend in your own Bible study, prayer, meditation and personal worship? It is enough that you are actually getting to know God and His will better over time? How does the time spent in those activities compare to time spent in your hobbies and being entertained? Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) are? Are you using them? How much time do you spend in serving the Lord? How does that compare to time spent in your hobbies and entertainment? How about your finances? Do you give joyfully to the Lord’s work? How does your giving to Him compare with spending on things that are for your own pleasure? Do you ever use the Lord’s name in vain? Do you treat Him in any way as less than the holy being that He is?

Loving your neighbors: Do you love your neighbors as yourself? Do you honor your parents? Children, do you obey your parents? Is there anyone you hate? Do you have a grudge against anyone? Are you quick to forgive and be at peace with others so far as it depends on you? Have you made a covenant with your eyes and refrain from adulterous glances and thoughts? Do you steal? Do you give your employer a full day’s work? Do you cheat on your taxes? Or are you honest in your finances and generous with your time and finances to help others in need? Is your life marked by truth or do you lie about anything even if it seems innocent to you? Are you characterized more by gossip or by edifying others and protecting their reputation? Are you discontent and want what your neighbor has or do you rejoice in your neighbor’s success?

Godliness or Worldliness: Do you love the world and the things in the world or God? Is your mind set on things above or the things of this earth? (Colossians 3:2). Have you considered the members of your earthly body dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed? (Colossians 3:5). Have you put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth? (Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:31). Have you put on the new self (Eph. 4:24f). Is your mind set to think on what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praise worthy? (Philippians 4:8). Is your life

marked by walking in the flesh with its idolatry, heresies, enmities, strife, jealousy, disputes, envying, drunkenness and carousing or by walking in the Spirit with His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? (Galatians 5:19-23).

Getting Help

Until we receive our resurrection bodies and our conflict with sin finally ends, all of us will have plenty of room to continue to improve and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The question that remains is “will you continue to improve by making the needed changes in your life?” Will you break the bad habits and replace them with new ones that are good? Take courage for you are not left on your own to do this. It is a matter of obedience to God to step out in faith to do it, and you can rely on the Holy Spirit to empower and help. In addition, God wants us to take advantage of an additional source of help, and that is one another within the body of Christ.

The body of Christ is to grow together (Ephesians 4:11-16). Too often we are afraid to share our areas of weakness lest someone judge us for it. Yes, there will be people who will do that, and when they do, they are in sin. However, we cannot let that stop us from asking for help from other Christians. We need to let others know the areas we are struggling with and working on so they can pray for us, encourage us, give proper advice and hold us accountable. That is one of the functions of the body of Christ.

In the bulletin this morning I have put in an insert to encourage you to do that. You can fill it out with your resolutions and then give it to someone you would like to help you. Ask them to pray for you and hold you accountable. If you want to remain anonymous, but want prayer, then put your request down and leave your name off, or put your name down and put “unspoken” on the resolution line and give it to me, or put it in the faith box, and the matter will be prayed about.

Let’s all be more serious about living for Christ and helping one another. Don’t put it off any longer. We should be ready to do this at anytime, but the transition from one year to the next is a good time to make resolutions and make the changes needed in one’s life.

*Dear Master for this coming year, Just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness, or any earthly thing -
I do not ask to understand, The way Thou leadest me,
But this I ask: teach me to do, The thing that pleaseth Thee.*

*I want to know Thy guiding voice, to walk with Thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear, And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin, A happy year will be -
If I am seeking just to do, The thing that pleaseth Thee.”*

Selected

Introduction

Trusting God Series: God can be trusted because of Who He is, His character & attributes

1 Peter Series: Understanding your identity in Christ enables you to live a godly life even when persecuted

The wise number their days (Ps 90) & make the most of their time (Eph. 5:16)

Resolutions

Resolutions are good for us because thoughtful change is good for us and resolutions require that

Resolving to be Different

Man's Ability to Change

God's Charge to Change

Romans 12:1-2

Colossians 3 & Romans 6

Developing New Habits

Breaking the Old

Recognize the need, confess any sins, seek the will / mind of God

Seek what is best, not just what is acceptable or good - Eph. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:23-24; 6:12-20

The first key to success in breaking an old habit is coming under conviction that it needs to be broken

Establishing New Habits

Replace old bad habits with related good new habits

It takes conscious effort & diligence to stop an old habit & replace it with a new one

Beware: Bad habits & good habits are formed the same way. Whatever becomes routine becomes your habit

What Needs to Change

Fundamental Issues (Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9)

1) To Personally know God and walk with Him (Ex. 33:13; 1 Pet. 3:18)

- 2) To worship God in Spirit & Truth (John 4; Heb. 13:15; Psalm 51:17)
- 3) Personal Holiness & doing God's will (1 Peter 1:16; Psalm 51:2,10; Rom. 12:2)
- 4) Being used for God's glory (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31)
- 5) Seeing others know and follow Jesus (Matt. 28:19,20; 1 Peter 2:9; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12)
- 6) Loving God & Your Neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40)

Particular Issues - Thought provoking questions

Loving God: Do you really love God with all your heart, soul and mind? What is more important to you than God? Anything that is would be an idol. How much time do you spend in your own Bible study, prayer, meditation and personal worship? It is enough that you are actually getting to know God and His will better over time? How does the time spent in those activities compare to time spent in your hobbies and being entertained? Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) are? Are you using them? How much time do you spend in serving the Lord? How does that compare to time spent in your hobbies and entertainment? How about your finances? Do you give joyfully to the Lord's work? How does your giving to Him compare with spending on things that are for your own pleasure? Do you ever use the Lord's name in vain? Do you treat Him in any way as less than the holy being that He is?

Loving your neighbors: Do you love your neighbors as yourself? Do you honor your parents? Children, do you obey your parents? Is there anyone you hate? Do you have a grudge against anyone? Are you quick to forgive and be at peace with others so far as it depends on you? Have you made a covenant with your eyes and refrain from adulterous glances and thoughts? Do you steal? Do you give your employer a full day's work? Do you cheat on your taxes? Or are you honest in your finances and generous with your time and finances to help others in need? Is your life marked by truth or do you lie about anything even if it seems innocent to you? Are you characterized more by gossip or by edifying others and protecting their reputation? Are you discontent and want what your neighbor has or do you rejoice in your neighbor's success?

Godliness or Worldliness: Do you love the world and the things in the world or God? Is your mind set on things above or the things of this earth? (Colossians 3:2). Have you considered the members of your earthly body dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed? (Colossians 3:5). Have you put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth? (Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:31). Have you put on the new self (Eph. 4:24f). Is your mind set to think on what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praise worthy? (Philippians 4:8). Is your life marked by walking in the flesh with its idolatry, heresies, enmities, strife, jealousy, disputes, envying, drunkenness and carousing or by walking in the Spirit with His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? (Galatians 5:19-23).

Getting Help

God helps us change through the ministry of both the Holy Spirit and the rest of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16)

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) Count how many times the word "resolution" or a related word is used. 2) Discuss with your parents the changes you need to make to be a better in the New Year.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What are your thoughts about New Year's resolutions? What are the difficulties with them? What are their benefits? Can a person change for the better? Why or why not? Can a man change enough to meet God's standards? Why or why not? What did Jesus' death accomplish for those who believe in Him? What evidence is there that God expects Christians to change for the better? What is the first step in changing? Why is it difficult to know the sin that might be involved in a habit that needs to be changed? What principles guide the Christian in their use of liberty? What do you need to do after you identify any sin problem? What is needed in addition to breaking old bad habits? How do you create a new habit? Give an example from your own life. What are the fundamental issues to consider when thinking about changes that may need to be made in your life? What are the two foundational laws God has given us? In what areas do you see these principles operating in your life? What specific areas do you see changes that need to be made in your life? In loving God? In loving your neighbor? In increasing godliness and reducing worldiness? What are your specific plans for making these changes? Who will you ask to pray for you and hold you accountable in making those changes?

Bible Based Resolutions for Living Better

I will, like Paul, *forget* those things which are behind and press forward; like David, *lift* up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help; like Abraham, *trust* implicitly in my God; like Enoch, *walk* in daily fellowship with my heavenly Father; like Jehoshaphat, *prepare* my heart to seek God like Moses, *choose* rather to suffer than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; like Daniel, *commune* with my God at all times; like Job, be *patient* under all circumstances; like Caleb and Joshua, *refuse* to be discouraged because of superior numbers; like Joseph, *turn* my back to all seductive advances; like Gideon *advance* even though my friends be few; like Aaron and Hur, *uphold* the hands of my spiritual leaders; like Isaiah, *consecrate* myself to do God's work; like Andrew, *strive* to lead my brother into a closer walk with Christ; like John, *lean* upon the bosom of the Master and imbibe of His Spirit; like Stephen, *manifest* a forgiving spirit toward all who seek my hurt; like Timothy, *study* the Word of God; like the heavenly host, *proclaim* the message of peace on Earth and good will toward all men; and like my Lord Himself, *overcome* all earthly allurements by refusing to succumb to their enticements.

Realizing that I cannot hope to achieve these objectives by my own strength, I will rely upon Christ, for "*I can do all things thorough Christ which strengtheneth me.*" George Burger

Making Resolutions, Getting Help

Fill out this form with your resolutions and then give it to someone you would like to help you. Ask them to pray for you and hold you accountable. You may also write down your request and leave your name off or put your name down and put "unspoken" on the resolution line and put it in the faith box. You or the matter will be prayed about.

RESOLUTION:

Understanding and agreeing that I need to make changes in my life in order to be more like my Savior Jesus Christ and bring Him greater honor and glory, and/or demonstrate a greater love to other people, I make the following resolutions:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

By sharing my resolution(s) with you, I am asking that you diligently pray for me in these areas and hold me accountable in implementing these changes. You have the right to ask me about how I am doing in these areas at any appropriate time.