

Spiritual Resolutions for 2017

As a New Year begins, I am reminded of the fact that we are one year closer to the day of our death, or the day the Lord returns. We are one day closer to that great day when we shall stand before the Lord in judgment.

2 Cor 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad

That day when He will either say...

"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" - Mt 25:34

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" - Mt 25:41

Since we are one year closer to that day when our final destiny will be forever determined, let me use this opportunity...

- To provoke your thinking as to how you have used this past year
- To suggest some resolutions for the coming year

My goal is to encourage us to make better use of the time we have left, and to prepare us for the day of reckoning that awaits us. We ALL have room for improvement. How do I know? Because we are HUMAN!

Let's begin, then, by asking...

In the past year has our relationship with God and Christ improved? Have we drawn nearer to God?

James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you

Bear in mind that a close relationship, with anyone, depends upon good communication! Have we been faithful in listening to God through His Word? Another year has gone by; did we read through the Bible this year? If not, and especially if we never have, can we honestly say that we are taking our relationship with God seriously?

Have we been steadfast in talking to God through prayer? Any effective communication requires a two-way street! Therefore, devoted Bible study should be joined with fervent prayer. Has our degree of prayerfulness increased or decreased this year? When I pray for my food or lie down to sleep at night can't be the only time you need our God!

Has our relationship with brethren improved? Has our love for one another increased this year?

1 Thes. 4:9-10 - But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more

Are we any closer to one another than we were a year ago? Have we been in the homes of brethren? Have any of them been in our homes? Do we even know who our brethren are? Each year brings new members into the family of God. Have we made the effort to know them? Even by name?

Has our relationship with those in the world improved? As people of God, we have an important responsibility toward those in the world

Matt 5:13-16 - You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the

world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven

To be a positive influence ("**You are the salt of the earth**")...To demonstrate a better way ("**You are the light of the world**")...Have we made progress this year in developing meaningful relationships with people in the world so that the light of Christ can be seen in our lives! So the gospel of Christ can be communicated to them!

Or are we like most "neighbors" in this day and age...Living next to each other, but not really knowing each other? Having forgotten the lost art of "Christian hospitality"?

The questions I am raising can be summarized in this way: "**Another year has gone by; have we made good use of the time the Lord has given us, or have we wasted it?**"

It is likely that all of us in some degree have not made good use of the past year. But at this point, let's apply the words of Paul: "**Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**" (Phil. 3:13-14)

For the year ahead might I suggest:

Resolve to draw nearer to God and Christ...

By having a daily study program of God's living and abiding Word...

Heb. 4:12 - For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart

Acts 17:11 - These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Read the Old Testament this year...

Rom. 15:4 - For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope

1 Cor. 10:11 - Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come

2 Tim. 3:14-17 - But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work

Read the New Testament also...

James 1:21 - Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls

1 Pet. 2:2 - as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby

By being diligent in prayer

Heb. 4:14-16 - Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

Let's be a thankful people

Col. 4:2 - Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving

1 Thes. 5:16-18 - Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks

Perhaps Daniel's custom of praying three times daily would be worthy of emulation

Dan. 6:10 - Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days

Resolve to become closer to the brethren...

By making it a point to learn every one's name... Get a directory...Each week, connect a couple of names and faces until you learn them all...reconnect with some member you have been close to before but things have grown distant...

3 John 14 - but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name...

By having a different person or family in your home each month... It doesn't have to be a fancy dinner...Just a simple visit to become better acquainted...

Or by visiting a different person or family each month...It might not always be convenient to have people in your home...But you can arrange to visit them in their home (if you are alone, take someone with you)...

1 Pet. 4:9 - Be hospitable to one another without grumbling

Resolve to get to know non-Christians better...

By having one new neighbor or co-worker in your home each month...Or by visiting one new neighbor or co-worker each month...It doesn't have to be a fancy meal or formal visit...It is amazing how far simple hospitality and neighborly kindness can go...To build meaningful relationships...In which opportunities can be created to share the gospel..

These resolutions may sound simplistic; but if implemented, they go a long way...

- To producing the kind of lifestyle that is becoming of Christians
- To increasing closer relationships with God, our brethren, and the lost
 - That will bless our lives
 - And be a blessing to the church and our community
- To create a clearer conscience next year at this time
- Time is a precious commodity, given to us by God...
 - That is truly like a vapor - **James 4:13-15**
 - That needs to be carefully redeemed – **Eph. 5:15-16**

I hope that these suggestions for resolutions for a new year will help you in making better use of it!

Finally, let me share with you the following poem...

"A New Year, A New Beginning"

The old year ends, a new begins
With pages clean and new;
And what is written on each page
will now depend on you.
You can't relive the year that's past,
Erasing every wrong;
For once a year - or day - is spent,
It is forever gone.
But don't give up in dark despair
If you have failed some test;
Seek God's forgiveness and resolve
Henceforth to do your best.
Resolve each precious day to do
Things good and kind and pure;
Though days and years may pass away,
These things shall still endure.
You know not where your path may lead
Nor what's beyond the hill;
But know that God walks at your side,
If you will do His will.
All things are possible with God,
Though days be bright or dim;
So do your best and know that you
Can leave the rest to Him.

- Author Unknown