

Reverse Resolutions

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January 1 has been described as “everyman’s birthday.” On one hand, it’s just another day that we use to mark time. But on the other, there is a newness about it, a sense of beginning again. Because of that, the start of a new year is often used for making resolutions. Some of the most frequent ones are things like: lose weight, eat better, exercise more, get out of debt, and watch less television.

While it is a good thing to make goals for progress, the problem is usually in the keeping of the resolutions. According to a recent study by the University of Scranton, 45% of our fellow Americans usually make New Year’s Resolutions. But only 8% follow through and keep them.

But that’s not what the word means. Resolution or resolve means to “make up your mind, decide firmly, determine.” The word is used in Acts 11:23 of the preaching of Barnabas who “encouraged them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.” Nothing halfway or half-hearted there.

Consider making some “reverse resolutions.” Since the other kind are easily made but poorly kept, perhaps we will be successful with these. Maybe we can reverse the trend instead of having more of the same.

Eat more. Everyone is trying to cut back and cut out. Let’s eat more. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:16). The word “hunger” means “to desire strongly” and is the same word to describe Jesus’ condition after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2). Can you imagine how hungry you would be? Food would be all you could think about, what you needed to survive. That should be our attitude toward God’s word.

Peter said we should desire the word like newborn babes do their milk (1 Pet. 2:1-2). When we have that kind of craving and deep desire for God’s word, it will have a direct effect on our lives. It will help with self control. You will be “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath” (Jam. 1:19). It will help with anxiety. “Be anxious for nothing” (Phil. 4:6). It will help with how you feel about yourself. “Casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

Spend more. Everyone is saving and storing. Let’s spend and be spent. “The bad news is time flies; the good news is you’re the pilot” (Michael Altshuler).

Spend more time praying. Jesus told a parable in Luke 18:1 to “show that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart.” “Pray without ceasing” (1Thess. 5:17) indicates that our communication with God is continual and ongoing. What would it look like if you compared the time you spent praying with the time you spent talking, texting, and tweeting?

Spend more time encouraging. Joseph was called Barnabas by the apostles which means, "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36). Have you ever thought about what nickname best describes your work for God?

Spend more time on other people. Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). At the end of the year, you may have vacation days or sick days left that fall in the category "use them or lose them." We must see our opportunities the same way.

Watch more. Everyone wants to watch less television or become less attached to technology. Let's switch channels and watch more. The Scriptures speak of our responsibility to be watchful.

Watch more for the devil. "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The reason we make resolutions in the first place is to withstand the temptations of the devil. We cannot afford to underestimate our enemy. He wants us to fail.

Watch more for lost souls. In this area especially, we need a better savings plan. The Son of Man came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). We must make the mission of our Master our mission as well.

Watch more for the weak and wayward. Sometimes it will be those in the family of God who need saving (James 5:19-20). One of the purposes of the worship services is not just so we can be encouraged but so we can look around and see who has made it a habit to forsake our assembling together. Do this work "in the spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1).

Watch more for the Lord's return. "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:12). That means we have our eyes pointed in the right direction to see Him coming.

Do you want to know the best way to keep a New Year's resolution? "Make it something you really want." The usual kind may lead to a happy and healthy 2016. But these reverse resolutions will make you stronger spiritually and lead to life eternal.