

Spiritual Resolutions For 2011

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For many, the beginning of a new year is a time of reflection, assessment, and setting of goals. January 1st is like getting a clean sheet of paper with which to write on. We have a sense of renewal and a new energy that speaks to our gut, saying, “Do it better this year!”

Many New Year’s resolutions are the same for most people. They have to do with weight loss, exercise, financial gain, and quitting bad habits and starting good ones. Do you have any spiritual resolutions for this year? God’s word is full of people just like you and me who determined some things about themselves spiritually and worked at them. Let’s look at some of those resolutions from men and women of faith and see how we can benefit from their example.

Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself (Dan. 1:8). With all the filth in the world and the temptations to be like the world, we need to purpose to keep our hearts pure. There are movies and TV shows we don’t need to watch, places we don’t need to go, web sites we don’t need to click to, and people we simply don’t need to hang around.

Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a young woman (Job 31:1). Guys, we are bombarded by immodesty and provocative women everywhere in this culture. It’s not easy to change the channel (or turn it off), look the other way, or simply flee as Joseph did (Gen. 39:12). We need to be teaching our daughters about the danger of how certain dress and actions affect men. What a needed resolution for today!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego made up their minds not to bow down (Dan. 3:16-18). Isn’t it easy to go along with the crowd? Having the fortitude to stand up for what is right when everyone around does not is an exceptional quality. These 3 men did so in the face of certain death. The worst we might face today is verbal ridicule or possibly a loss of some promotion. How much more should that give us boldness to stand with God and not man?

Joshua, as head of his house, set a goal for his family to serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15). Wouldn’t you love to have a dad like Joshua? There was no doubt where he stood. He was a leader and a faithful servant. He talked and walked his faith in God. We husbands and fathers could use Joshua as our example so that we might echo, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”

Lois and Eunice determined to teach their children and grandchildren about God (2 Tim. 1:5). What more important gift can you give a child or a grandchild than showing them God through His word and your actions? Mothers and grandparents are blessings to us, as Timothy’s was to him, when they teach God’s word to their little ones. Who knows what God will do with the soul who heard His word through little ears?

Daniel made a habit of praying 3 times a day (Dan. 6:10). How often do we go to God in prayer? I think too many times I have limited my prayers to thankfulness for the food and help in times of sickness. That is not sufficient to build a relationship with my Father in heaven. As Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 2, we should include prayers, supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings. What a powerful and maybe neglected tool we could work on this year.

Nehemiah shared his resolution with others, causing the people to *“rise up and build”* (Neh. 2:18). Nehemiah had already determined what resolution he had in mind for the walls of Jerusalem. He didn't keep that to himself. He got the king involved in his plan. He got the governors involved. His passion and determination got the people of Jerusalem involved. Perfumers and dignitaries were building walls! What could we accomplish in our lives spiritually in 52 days (or 365) if we shared our spiritual resolution with others who could encourage and help us?

Paul had accomplished much, but pressed on to his goal (Phil. 3:12-14). Some of you are those rare individuals who set goals and accomplish them with flying colors. You are the ones who see opportunities, not obstacles. We all can take a lesson from Paul in not dwelling on the past, but looking forward to things to come. It is easy to sit back and see all the good things you have accomplished and feel satisfaction. Don't let that slow you down from growing more, helping others, and finishing your race.

Jonah did like most of us who set out on goals. He went backwards before he went forwards (Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-3). Discouragement, setbacks, excuses, and flat out failure will always be in the way of reaching our goals. The devil does not want you to get better. He does not want you to succeed in anything spiritual. Jonah headed to Tarshish when God told him to go to Nineveh. We sometimes head the opposite way God wants us to go too. May God give us a “fish” that turns us around and puts us back on the path of obedience.

“The man who starts out going nowhere generally gets there” (Dale Carnegie). We need to make an honest assessment of ourselves spiritually and see where growth needs to take place. Once the key areas are targeted, write down your goals and keep them where you will see them every day. Next, share your goals with someone. It will help keep you accountable. Finally, don't quit! Keep going! Press on! May God bless us as we *“rise up and build”* in 2011.