

New Year's Resolutions

A resolution is "a firm decision to do or not to do something. It is an act of will. But the big question is: Who's Will?

The New Year(s).

The New Year is, indeed special in the Bible. In Exodus 12: 1 God spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt; he said, **2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.** Chodesh HaAviv,¹ the Month of Spring. It was for the express purpose of commemorating God liberating the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Then there is also the "civil year", the point in the year from which the years are counted. Yom Teruah "day of shouting/blasting", or the Feast of Trumpets, also called Rosh Hashanah, the "Head of the Year". It commemorates God's Creation and our need for repentance and forgiveness. God is big on commemoration. Consider the 7 feasts of Israel. Also consider Memorial Stones--There are at least three times in the Bible where memorial stones are set up. These each become significant locations throughout biblical history. Bethel, Gilgal, Ebenezer. To everyone else, the stones were just a heap of rubble, but to the people of God, they were a constant reminder that Yahweh was a personal and powerful God, working wonders on behalf of His people. And so Biblically, times, and feasts and stones of memorial or remembrance are specifically to commemorate something God has done. So, when we want to commemorate something at the beginning of the year, it's important that it be based in God, and how He is working in our lives, and what He has done.

Preparation- The place to start is in repentance and prayer.

Repentance-Repentance is preached throughout the whole Bible (Acts 3:19). Repentance is a type of resolution, a change of direction in life based on belief, a re-engagement of our will to follow the person of God in relationship.

Reflection- In our reflection, we should assess the Previous Year. How was your relationship with God last year? Did you make resolutions or spiritual goals? How did you do?

Prayer we ask God for guidance. Ask God to reveal Her will for your life. Prayerfully consider how you can better serve God in the new year. Pray at the beginning of this process. You'll save yourself a lot of grief. **James tells in 1:5-6 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.**

What Are the Dangers of Resolutions for Christians?

Holding on Too Tightly to our own Plans. As Proverbs 16:9 tells us, **The mind of a person plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.**

Using our Own Strength-- We can't change in our own strength. These resolutions must be in relationship with God and complete reliance upon the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13).

Proper Motivation--What is the motivation behind our resolutions? James 4:3 **When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures** Is our request all about us, or is it all about God? Does it line up with what God has for us in this season? Or is it based on selfish desires? We need God's discernment to know the difference.

Trying to make God fit our timetable-- God doesn't work by our calendar or timetable. James 4:13-16 **13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your [n]arrogance; all such boasting is evil.** If we've given our lives over to God to be His servant, then how can we take the reigns out of His hand, or get into the driver's seat of our lives again. If God is in control, then we need to recognize that our plans must be centered on Him, and of course that includes our resolutions. He is able to control our lives much better than we can, and the desire to stay in the

driver's seat, and make all the decisions based on our own ideas and earthy priorities is indeed arrogant, and evil boasting.

Resolution ideas

I think you should spend time in repentance and reflection and prayer, so that you can hear from God on how He would like you to get closer to Him in relationship this year. But, as you do this, here are a few things to consider

Stay connected with your Church--Hebrews 10:23-25 **23 Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, 25 not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.** Jesus Himself attested to the power of gathering together saying in Matthew 18:19-20 **"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."**

Share the Gospel--In Ephesians 5:15-17, the apostle Paul tells us, **"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."** As the time darkens, we must make the best use of our time, because people will try more and more to restrict our opportunities to share the Gospel. But, at the same time, the evil days, people may be more receptive. We have the hope of security forever in Jesus. In Hebrews chapter 6 vs 19a that **19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and reliable and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever...** But we must be willing to share what we know. We must teach, just as Paul did in 1 Cor 15:3-6 **For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep"** And we must let them know that this evidence demands a verdict! Either choose to follow Jesus or not, there's no middle ground. Romans 10:9 **that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

Build Up the Body of Christ--Do you want to grow as a Christian? Press into God, and see what He has for you to do. We each have a calling to minister to other believers. The Holy Spirit has given each of us at least one gift as Ephesians 4:12-14 tells us **12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.** This is what will grow us up as Christians—cooperating with God in building up our relationship with Him, and listening to Him when He calls us to help build each other up. And there will be a result. As Paul continues in Ephesians 4:14-16 **14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness [i]n deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ,**

Minister to needs of people-- Find ways to reach out to friends and neighbors. If you get to know them they will share their needs with you. And then, we work together to meet their needs. If we stop short of that, then what have we really done? As James said in 2:14-17, meeting needs is truly living out our faith. **14 What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead,**

being by itself. Be intentional about participating in bringing relief to those in need in your community Hebrews 10: 24 **and let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds,** . As James reminds us in 1:27 **Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.** That is the heart of God for us. And people will notice, and want what we have. As Jesus told us Matthew 5:16 **16 Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**