

## Resolutions for 2015

Last year's final Sunday morning sermon was on this topic and had a list of seven resolutions. The question is, did we follow them over the course of 2014 or did we forget them, like many of us have been known to do, along with other resolutions that got left in the forgotten parts of our brains? For those of us who claim to own the name of Christian, these should have been second nature.

- 1) Read and Study my Bible More
- 2) Volunteer More (*the more we do the less burden it becomes on others*)
- 3) Care More (*what goes around comes around*)
- 4) Be More "Self"-less (*it's not supposed to all be about "I, Me, My"*)
- 5) "Visit" Others More (*look in on and take care of the less fortunate*)
- 6) Be More Positive (*don't have the attitude like you've just bit into a lemon peel*)
- 7) Be Converted According to Truth

We can all be converted according to truth as we read and study our Bibles more since none of us knows everything when it comes to God's word. A resolution then, as defined by Webster, is "the act or result of resolving something" or "the thing determined on; decision as to future action". So a resolution is not to be understood as a promise, which can be broken. It **is** to be understood as a decision on the part of the one making it, to determine to do something positive, whether for themselves or for someone else. Even if it means making up with those we might have a grudge against by being humble enough to do so, and/or admitting fault for mistakes we may have made since none of us are perfect. **This** year's list of resolutions has more to do with family according to what the Bible teaches and how we are to treat one another since Satan has his crosshairs set on the destruction of that one institution, next only to the church, that has a grip on God's heart. So, let's begin with the most important relationship within the family structure, that is so valuable toward the health of the rest of the family, that it, as a holy union, was sanctioned by God from the very beginning of the creation. The relationship between husbands and wives is modeled after the relationship between Christ and His church since Paul, when writing to the Ephesian brethren, said it was then a "mystery [that] is profound [and] refers to Christ and the church" (*Eph 5:32*). If the church was to emulate the typical relationship between the average husband and wife today, where would we think we would be concerning our spiritual well-being?

### 1) Resolve to make our marriages more successful.

- A successful congregation cannot succeed unless made up of, for the most part, successful marriages. As members of the church there are things we can do to aid the marriages within, but the ultimate responsibility rests on the husband and wife. And successful marriages are so because of *agape*.

Gal 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love (*Gk.25*) your neighbor as yourself."

- We don't always have to like each other in our marriages, because such is not always possible, but we are commanded to continuously love each other since

spouses **are** considered our “neighbors”. It can be seen plainly when those who hate (*and hate might be a strong word but it gets the point across*) that they don’t really love themselves.

**Eph 5:28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (*and visa versa*). **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as **Christ** does the church (*What if Christ ‘nourished and cherished’ His church they way husbands and wives do their spouses?*), **30** because we are members of **His** body.

**Gal 5:15** **But if you bite and devour one another**, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. **16** But I say, walk by the **Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the **Spirit**, and the desires of the **Spirit** are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from **doing the things you want to do**.

- How often have we been in conflict with those two entities that sit on each of our shoulders? You know who I’m talking about if you’ve ever seen the cartoons depicting the character trying to make a decision based on either doing what is good or what is evil. They had a little devil sitting on their left shoulder and a little angel sitting on their right one. The little devil tries to convince you what you really want more than anything is to do what feels good in **your** mind and forget that the little angel is trying to convince you to make the moral decision of doing what’s right. That’s the gist of making the decision between “the desires of the flesh (*human nature*) and the desire of the **Spirit**”.

**Gal 5:18** But if you are led by the **Spirit**, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, **enmity** (*Gk.2189-hostility*), **strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries** (*Gk.2052-faction: -strife. Even though this has to with congregations in general, it can come into play within the family when taking sides.*), **dissensions** (*Gk.1370- disunion*), **divisions**, **21** **envy** (*Gk.5355- ill will*), drunkenness, orgies, and **things like these** (*of which also apply to married couples*). I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things **will not inherit the kingdom of God**.

- So you see how important it is for married couples to get along. Our eternal souls depend on it! And there are things we can practice that will not incur the wrath of **God**. They are...

**Gal 5:22** ... the fruit of the **Spirit** [*which*] is love, joy, peace, **patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness**, **23** **gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. **24** And **those who belong to Christ Jesus** have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- In any marriage where there is disunion, one or both have lost their self-control or have the attitude of “it’s my way or the highway”, they can no longer say they belong to **Christ**.

Husbands (*we can all...*)  
 2) Resolve to show your wife her true worth.

Gen 29:18 **Jacob** loved **Rachel**. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 **Laban** said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." 20 So **Jacob served seven years** for **Rachel**, and they **seemed to him but a few days** because of the love he had for her.

- Wow! **Jacob** was so focused on having **Rachael** for his wife that time seemed to fly by even though he worked so hard in the meantime to have her for his own. But even when anniversaries come up, husbands, do you consider them 'anniworseries'? And was there anything you could have done to make those years go by any better? Remember the expression "time flies when you're having fun"? Does the time you've spent in your marriage seem like it went by like molasses on your windshield in **January**?

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (*Gk.1581- frustrated*).

- Being the weaker vessel has nothing to do with her mental state, even when she's often the easier of the two, in most cases, the one who cries at the drop of a hat when watching sad movies or is the one who gets all mushy while reading romance novels. Guys have been known to cry at movies or in highly emotional situations as well. But what it means to be the weaker vessel has to do more with physical strength between the two when it comes to muscular density. She's more fragile than he is, like fine China in comparison to **Kirby's** coffee mug at **Anile's**. And even though that too is the norm such is not true in all cases. So to have our prayers "hindered", or frustrated, shows the level of understanding either or both have for the word of **God**.

*"Acceptable prayer never can be offered in the tempest of passion, and there can be no doubt that such prayer is often "hindered" by the inequalities of temper, and the bickerings and strifes that exist in families. Yet how desirable is it that husband and wife should so live together that their prayers may not be hindered! How desirable for their own peace and happiness in that relation; how desirable for the welfare of children!"*

Albert Barnes

- When spouses aren't getting along the family dynamic is eschew and how can they even think their prayers will be heard by the **One** they are praying to? Do they think **God** will honor their petitions when they can't honor **His** word on marital issues **He** has given **Biblical** instructions for? Will they be able to meditate easier when in an environment of strife or in one of ease? Both have a responsibility toward making the prayer life in the marriage a successful one.

### Wives

#### 3) Resolve to show your husbands the respect they deserve.

- Do you consider him just another household money bag (*whether or not he's the main provider*) or do you respect him with the respect the Bible teaches that a Christian wife is commanded to?

1Pe 3:5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by **submitting to their own husbands**, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

- Wives, does your physical appearance rate higher than your respect level for your husbands? Is submission, to you, considered something men added to the word of God without being inspired by Holy Spirit to pen such chauvinistic demands? Remember, those same men penned words to husbands dealing with what was expected of them as well. Or do you consider submission to your husband as a fine string of pearls that you proudly wear as evidence of your love for Christ?

Eph 5:24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in **everything** to their husbands.

- Everything, that is, that's according to godliness. Christian wives need to ask themselves "Is the way I treat the relationship I have with my husband the same way I treat the relationship I have with Christ?" You may say you love Christ. But the way you love your husband, according to this passage, shows the amount of respect you have for Christ. As "members of His body" (v. 30) wives are members of His church and we understand that the church is "the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9). What would we think of a church that treated Christ the way many wives in the church treat their husbands, respect wise? Therefore, wives are to submit to their husbands in the same way they submit to Christ, unless they are hypocrites. We can all fool the public eye when it comes to our marriages, but not one of us can fool God "Who sees in secret" (Mat 6:4).

### Sons and daughters.

#### 4) Resolve to be more respectful of your parents.

- Parents, once they become such, will from that day forward always be parents. The Bible gives no cut off passage where a mom or dad ceases the responsibilities associated with being a parent. And also, there's no end to their children being responsible to them, even as adults, until they lose them in death. Likewise with each generation that follows.

1Ti 1:9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, **for those who strike their fathers and mothers**, for murderers,

- Now you may say “Well I’d never even think of hitting either one of my parents!” But aren’t there those times when you get so angry with them for reprimanding you for something you may have done that displeased them? Did you have cause to be so angry? To be “angry ...without a cause [a person] shall be in danger of the judgment” according to Jesus in Mat 5:22. But we don’t have to strike our parents to show such disrespect for them even though the O.T. law stated ...

Exo 21:15 "Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

*“There is no sin which man will not commit if unrestrained, and there is in fact no conceivable form of crime of which he has not been guilty.”* Albert Barnes

- Obviously, that law wasn’t meant for those who **do** have respect for their parents and I hope those who don’t will be cautioned by this admonition. **Absalom** was a son of **David** that had no respect for **David** as his father, let alone as **Israel’s** king. He waited by the gait that led to **David** where people would come for judgments and would lie to them saying the king didn’t have time for such matters. He would then tell them they had good causes and lamented how if only he was their judge he would not be so busy that he wouldn’t hear them.

2Sa 15:6 Thus **Absalom** did to all of **Israel** who came to the king for judgment. So **Absalom** stole the hearts of the men of **Israel**.

- Here is a case of a son who plotted against his own father. **Absalom** eventually mustered an army to take the throne from **David** because of his own pride and vanity. **David** gave orders to his commanders concerning him if he was to be caught. They were to do no harm to him. But ultimately, **David** wept sorely when **Absalom** was slain, even when he knew of **Absalom’s** desire to overthrow him.

2Sa 18:5 And the king ordered **Joab** and **Abishai** and **Ittai**, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man **Absalom**." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about **Absalom**.

- But **Joab**, after finding **Absalom** caught in an oak tree by the very hair that he took so much pride in, “took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of **Absalom** while he was still alive in the oak” (v. 15). When news reached **David** of the death of his son...

2Sa 18:33 ... the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son **Absalom**, my son, my son **Absalom**! Would I had died instead of you, O **Absalom**, my son, my son!"

- No matter how much trouble a son or daughter can get themselves into, no matter how disrespectful they can be or how destructive their behavior, a godly parent will always love them and if it came to it, would give their very lives in their stead. How can you not have respect for that?



Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

- As long as they aren't asking you to do anything unscriptural, you need to esteem them for who they are and commit your selves to their charge. Why? Because in your youth you don't "know it all" and because in their maturity, by giving you good moral advice, they may be saving you from harmful behaviors and a life of misery. After all, you have been entrusted to them by God Who loves you beyond our understanding. And along with being respectful to your parents, you need to...

5) Resolve to make more time to be with your grandparents.

- Have you ever visited a nursing home where the residents lit up when they received attention from a child that came to visit with someone else? It's sad to understand where most of them have been forgotten as though they were an old toy after the thrill of receiving it had waned. Many folks have lost their grandparents during their youth, and with that missed a great opportunity to gain precious wisdom at the feet of those who raised their parents. These aged individuals may have gone through the depression and wars that shaped the future of this world and have, or had, so much wisdom to offer that might have gone to waste were it not for passing such on to a younger generation.

Ecc 1:4 A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever (Heb.5769- [practically] eternal).

- Young people, you don't want to miss out on being the recipients of such knowledge. Even if we think we might have something new to offer, we can't impress the one who has seen more than we'll ever know unless we've taken the time to listen.

Ecc 1:9 What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

- And we all have a responsibility to take care of our grandparents.

1Ti 5:1 Do not rebuke an **older man** but encourage him **as you would a father**, younger men as brothers, 2 **older women as mothers**, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, **let them first** learn to show godliness to their own household and to **make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.**

- "To make some return to their parents" shows the responsibility we are **commanded** to fulfill when it comes to our own family who can no longer take

care of themselves. Remember, they took care of us! Where would we be as parents if it wasn't for their support? With that, parents also need to make some resolutions.

Moms and dads.

6) Resolve to be even better parents.

- Parents have been given the same obligation their parents were given to raise their children and raise them in such a way "That [God] might seek a godly seed" (*Mal 2:15*).

**Eph 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the **Lord**.

*"A command addressed particularly to "fathers," because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to "obey," it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey."*

Albert Barnes

- As the recipients of such precious gifts from **God**, parents, we have been blessed with the responsibility of being role models to our children. True, we often make mistakes we would never want our children to copy. But that's all part of the growth process that teaches very valuable lessons, sometimes to us and other times to our children. I've said the one thing I never wanted to inherit from my dad was his temperament. Sadly I did. But understanding that taught me the value of having had to control it by recognizing its destructive nature from my dad's example. In time, and with age, the volatility of his temper subsided as well did my own. His may have possibly become less potent when I left home, (*Hmmm...*) since while at home there may have been a bit of strife between the siblings.

Brothers and sisters, i.e., siblings.

7) Resolve to get along better.

- Sibling rivalry can make family life a lot less enjoyable. Even though the strength of a marriage can be measured by the husband and wife and their commitment to each other, another factor in how successful a family is depends on the kids, even when they've left the nest. The way you treat each other will reflect on the heart of the parents. And a parent is only as happy as their saddest child. We can only imagine the grief **Adam** and **Eve** must have felt when **Cain** slew **Abel**.

**Gen 4:8** **Cain** spoke to **Abel** his brother. And when they were in the field, **Cain** rose up against his brother **Abel** and killed him. **9** Then the **LORD** said to **Cain**, "Where is **Abel** your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"

- Cain's question was one we all need to ponder as members of God's spiritual family, the church. But this incident happened within the physical relationship of the first family and it should serve as precedent for every family since. Yes, we are responsible for each other when we have the opportunity to assist in whatever matter. And this includes siblings. We wouldn't want to be separated from God as Cain was for his hatred toward Abel, would we?

Gen 4:16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

- Obviously, none of us would want to be apart from the Lord or His protective and loving care. Therefore, we need to remember, we are our sibling's keepers. Amen?

This lesson on resolutions is one that we should not just resolve to do for 2015 as though the end of the year brings the end of our responsibilities to our other family members. Even if they aren't members of the church that Jesus died to build (*Mat 16:18*). And it's not one that a faithful Christian would find difficult to listen to. If it **did** cut into our hearts then it shows there's a lot of room for improvement. God desires for families to be functional according to the plan He gave from the very beginning. If our families aren't functional, how can we expect the church to be. And remember what Jesus said when speaking of the judgment and those who treated others as though they were Jesus Himself.

Mat 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.'

But if we've treated each other otherwise and failed to take care of each other, or say "boy am I glad they were here to hear this since they really need to get their act together in this relationship", Jesus...

Mat 25:45 ...will answer [you], saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did **not** do it to one of the least of these, you did **not** do it to Me.'

There's another resolution that needs to be considered by those who haven't been added to the church that Jesus died for. Please resolve to correct that. You can be added to His body by simply answering His commission to become one of His disciples, being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and learning to observe all that He commanded. (*Mat 28:19-20*)

If that is what you want to resolve to do,

Act 22:16 ... why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Charli Yana  
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