

Making resolutions for the New Year

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

I can barely catch my breath. The Rose Parade came and went. USC won the big game. Confetti remains on the ground and greeting cards are still occupying mailboxes throughout the land. The trashcans that line our street are filled with gift boxes, wrapping paper, and drying Christmas trees. Most of our decorations are packed but not completely put away. Our annual festivity of well wishing is in the air and optimism seems everywhere. It is the first week of January and so I say to you, "Happy New Year!" Media advertising has gone from food and gift items to diets and exercise programs and everything that didn't sell at Christmas time seems to be now on clearance. A new year has begun.

The start of a new year is often met with a mixture of adventure and apprehension. There is the thrill of hope in successful ventures ahead and, for many, the fear of failure and losses to be lamented. So many have made resolutions of change to ring in the New Year only to be disappointed and disillusioned shortly thereafter that some have given up all hope. I heard someone say to me that they resolve to make no resolution for the New Year; that way they would be sure not to fail. And in a sense they were right.

Without any goal, there is no failure of it. It is also true that you can lose no race that you never enter. But I also want you to consider that without any possibility of failing, there is no success. Without any chance of losing, there is not an opportunity to win either. And you are meant to win.

The Bible is a book of hope and teaches the power of God to change lives. It is a calling to a better life and open to all who will receive it. We struggle to our own peril when we ignore the principles laid out for us, the revealing of the secrets to the abundant life that Jesus said he came to bring. In living the Christian life, the Scriptures teach a balance between being content today and a willingness to make the necessary changes for a more purposeful tomorrow. These words from I Timothy 6:6 put it succinctly: "Now godliness with contentment is great gain." Jesus taught people to focus on the cares of today without worrying about tomorrow, while turning away from lifestyles now that hinder us and our opportunities for the future. The passages are replete with seemingly lofty goals of living with an abundance of divine love, joy and peace. And truly these would be lofty in the sense of unreachable if there was no power for real change. But there is power.

I think many people misunderstand the concept of "repenting from sin." They relegate the phrase to old-time religion and an outdated message. And, yes, while there is a ring of King James English in it, the concept of turning away

from anything that separates us from the power of God to live out our intended purpose is always real and relevant. God, who made you, loves you. He has a purpose for every person. He desires what is truly best for you and describes what our lives and future can look like if only we would follow him. This does mean changes.

So I encourage you to make resolutions. Resolve to follow God's will for you. Resolve to say, "Yes" to him and all that he has for you, both now and forever. Resolve to put away lifestyles and habits that separate us from

God's will for us. Resolve to trust God. Resolve to rest in the love and grace, forgiveness and peace, that comes from him through his son, Jesus Christ. Resolve to get into the Bible this year; read the whole thing. And let every day be a day of resolution; a day to remember to stay on course.

Instead of merely resolving to increase your financial position and to acquire more things" as in years past, let this year be a year of stepping deeper into the water of life.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View