

LET'S BE RESOLVED!

As we prepare to enter a new year, we should be determined to let Jesus be Lord over our lives. As we leave the old year and begin a new one, let us say to ourselves, by the grace of God, this will be a better year! Some are against New Year's resolutions because of a likelihood of not keeping them. Let me encourage you to fight the spirit of resignation to a mediocre life that settles for a settled for existence. I agree with the adage, "If you keep doing what you've been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting." Let's change for good! Many people tout change, but too often it is simply a re-working of the same old thing.

In 1978 my young wife and I purchased a new diesel Oldsmobile car. Basically, it was a 350 cubic inch gasoline engine that was converted into a diesel. The decision of General Motors to do this has gone down in history as one of the worst engineering mistakes her designers have ever made. There was an anemic power supply and eventually, if you didn't get an overhaul in time, the engine would fall apart. A change that is not complete will eventually fall apart. Our reluctance to true change results in the same effect on our country, our ministry, our business, our education and our family. Let's talk about resolutions and change.

1. Let us resolve to be people of prayer.

God's Word says, "*...ye have not, because ye ask not*" (James 4:2). We can talk about prayer, we can read books on prayer and we can be preached to and taught techniques of prayer, however we will never really learn to pray until we pray.

I still remember my dad teaching me to ride my bicycle. He would hold to the back of the seat while I pedaled. His strong grip held me up. I kept turning around looking to see if dad was holding to the back of my seat. If I saw he was loosening his grip or had let go, I fell. Finally I was up and pedaling very fast and when I turned to look for him, I discovered I had left Dad about fifty yards behind me. When I stopped concentrating on Dad holding me up and worked on balance and pedaling I was able to ride a two-wheeler. Getting a new book on prayer or listening to a new teaching on prayer can be stimulating and rewarding, but remember you'll never be praying until you spend the time in prayer.

2. Let us resolve to be holy.

One of the best ways to be holy is to not be involved with sinful activity at all. When I was a teen, someone said to me, "All young people must sow their wild oats." That may

give comfort to individuals who want to kick up their heels and ignore the righteous ways of God, but that advice is not biblical. The Bible says, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). If you believe you can do wrong and get away with it, you are only deceiving yourself. King David knew what it was to sow what he reaped. In his dying words, he gave this inspirational advice to his son Solomon, *“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain”* (II Samuel 23:3,4). David was saying if you are to effectively lead men you need to be like a *“morning without clouds.”* To keep from having a proverbial overcast and rainy day in life, our youth needs to remain tender and relatively innocent. The Bible says, *“...I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil”* (Romans 16:19). You don’t have to lift up the sewer lid to see if it stinks; it does. It is better left undiscovered. There is power in a life kept pure. *“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works”* (Psalm 71:17). Let there be no interruption in a life lived for Jesus. We don’t have to go prodigal; we can be right and stay right. I pray that our youth would be like Timothy of whom the Scripture says, *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (II Timothy 1:5).

3. Let us resolve to recover.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 2:1). If we have fallen into sin, what shall we do? Just wishing to do better will not help you overcome. Many years ago, I came across this truth, *“When I try, I fail. When I trust, He succeeds.”* The Bible tells us, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Philippians 4:13). If I can live righteously by my own power and strength, then I will get the credit and glory, but if I cannot live right except for the overcoming power of the Living God, then He must get the credit and the glory, and that is, after all, what God is wanting to accomplish: His glory revealed in us. *“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...”* (Jeremiah 9:24). *“That no flesh should glory in his presence”* (I Corinthians 1:29).

God will take over if we give our will to Him. *“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord...”* (Romans 7:23-25a). The power comes through Jesus Christ our Lord! We must come directly to Him for the strength. *“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”* (Mark 9:24). This precious father was not rebuked for his weakness, but was commended and received the miracle needed. God is not looking for people who are

independent from Him, He is looking for people who love Him and trust Him enough to act with what little strength they have. He will provide the power if we maintain utter dependence on Him. This is where the road to recovery begins. To make sure we are not detoured, we must maintain a close personal intimacy with Christ. Here is how Jesus describes the continuing victorious life: *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:4,5). If you have fallen, don’t stay down. Get up, and with God’s help, stay up!

4. Let us resolve to be people of the Book.

Resolve to read the Bible through this year. If you read four chapters of the Bible a day, you’ll have the Bible read through in less than a year. You can do it! If you get behind, don’t give up; just start right back into your regimen. Then supplement your reading with Bible memory. *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11). When we have the Word in our heart, meditation (focusing upon, thinking deeply) becomes second nature. The “blessed” person is a man or woman who meditates in the Word of God according to Psalm 1:2: *“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”* What we do with the Bible determines what God does with us! *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”* (Joshua 1:8). This is the only place in the entirety of Scripture where the word “success” is used, and it is in direct correlation with meditating in the Holy Scriptures.

5. Let us resolve to be faithful.

God said, *“Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me”* (Psalm 101:6). God gives favor to the faithful person. Let us be faithful in our home. Men and women should keep their vows to one another and children should honor their parents. Parents should rear up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Psalmist said, *“...I will walk within my house with a perfect heart”* (Psalm 101:2).

As your pastor, I would be remiss to leave out faithfulness to the House of God. When Paul was admonishing Timothy he referred to the local church as *“...the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (I Timothy 3:15). To live outside the life of the local New Testament church, is to be absent from foundation and disconnected from structure, having no grounding or supporting pillars to help hold you up in this world.

Let us own the words of the old hymn by James Fillmore:

I am resolved no longer to linger, Charmed by the world's delight,
Things that are higher, things that are nobler, These have allured my sight.

I am resolved to follow the Savior, Faithful and true each day;
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth, He is the living Way.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.