

Question: Do you think Jesus would encourage us to make New Year's resolutions? If so, what do you think he would consider the most important resolution for us to make?

New Year's resolutions are but another way of setting goals for ourselves in the coming year. Since Jesus had a clear sense of purpose and goals for his life on earth, he also encourages those who would be his disciples to follow this example (John 13:15 cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). The most vital goal that Jesus would have us strive for is that of love. "As I have loved you," he said, "so you must love one another" (John 13:34). He called love the greatest and most important of all the commands (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31). Therefore, I believe Jesus would have us resolve to pursue more loving relationships in our new year.

Studying the way Jesus loved and served those around him is essential to fulfilling this resolution, but we can also learn from the great summary of what it means to love as found in 1 Corinthians 13. Here we are told about the necessity of love, how love works in practical everyday life and that love is the one thing that we can always depend upon. Let's consider what this great chapter says.

The chapter begins by telling us that anything done without love is empty and meaningless (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Even if one could understand all the mysteries of the world and have knowledge beyond human comprehension, he is nothing if he does not use this knowledge in love. Jesus once spoke of a faith by which one could move a mountain from one place to another (Matthew 17:20), but the writer of 1 Corinthians shows that this great power is meaningless if not motivated by love. All of the words, knowledge, power and skills in the world combined can only bring harm if not accompanied by loving concern for the will of God and for the good of our fellow human beings. Nothing can replace love.

This great chapter also describes the way love acts in our daily lives: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Since God is love, this is a description of God. It is also a description of Jesus and his love for the world. We need to work toward loving like this so that this

can be a description of each one of us. In making our resolutions for the coming year, we should concentrate most on this part.

In addition, the writer of 1 Corinthians declares that love is the only thing we can fully depend upon. When all else fails, love is the only thing that will continue (1 Cor. 13:8-12). “Now these three remain: faith, hope and love,” the writer says, “But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). Someday faith will become sight, and hope will become a present reality for those who love God and one another in this way. But love will continue eternally along with those who join our God and Christ in love.

If we make no other resolution for the coming New Year, may we resolve to build genuinely loving relationships modeled after the example of Jesus and the teachings of 1 Corinthians, the great love chapter. To do this, we will need to spend time looking at the life of Jesus and at the way he related to people. Then, with his help we can change our world, one person at a time. This one resolution is comprehensive enough to achieve everything else we need to do in the coming year. If you want to make a real difference in your own life and the lives all around you, make love for others your goal for 2015.

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