

Tips For A Happier New Year

Text : **Philippians 3: 7-21**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Have you made a New Year's resolution for 2011 ?

1. 40 to 45 % of Americans make a New Year's resolution each year.
 - a. 25% don't make it past the first week.
 - b. Less than half make it to 6 mo.
2. The most common New Year's resolutions are :
 - a. Lose weight
 - b. Exercise regularly
 - c. Stop smoking
 - d. Manage money better
3. Resolutions are useful because people who make them are 10 times more likely to achieve their goals than those who don't.
(*University of Scranton. Journal of Clinical Psychology*)

B. What were your New Year's resolutions last year ?

1. Were you one of the minority who accomplished his/her goals ?
2. Do you even remember them ? (Many don't.)
3. Meaningful, practical goals are essential to success in any sphere.

C. The start of a new calendar year is a good time to take personal inventory.

1. **II Cor. 13: 5- Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test ? (*Hold self accountable*)**
2. Ask, During 2010 have I improved in that which matters.
 - a. Am I closer to God that I was when the year began ?
 - b. Is my faith stronger than it was a year ago ?
 - c. Have I grown in the wisdom and true knowledge of God's will ? (*discernment*)
 - d. Does my light shine more brightly in the community than it did last year ?
 - e. How much fruit have I born for Christ within this year ?
3. Are there ways I can insure that I mature more next year than I did this year ?

By this lesson we will observe a few things we can do to make 2011 productive.

I. Keep your eyes forward ... focused on your eternal goal.

A. Learn from the past, but then put it behind you.

1. One can rewrite history, but he cannot change the past.
 - a. Even great athletes lose games.
 - b. No one in the baseball hall of fame has even a 500 batting average.
2. One of the keys to success is to forget past failures and press forward.
3. Dwelling on past victories can be just as detrimental to success.

B. God's word instructs us to :

1. **Phil. 3: 13b-14** ... forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, **14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**
 - a. Forget past
 - b. Keep pressing forward
2. Paul had made much worse mistakes than any of us, but he kept on serving.

C. Collectively and individually, we must be forward thinking this year.

1. Regardless of what this congregation was it stands before God accountable for how it uses today to God's glory.
2. Regardless of what YOU or I was ... we stand before God accountable for today.
3. Each year we are accountable for more because we are more mature. (**Eph 4:11ff**)

D. **IMPORTANT** : We must not allow ourselves to be distracted by competing interests.

1. Satan is above all most deceitful.
 - a. He is the father of all liars. **John 8: 44**
 - b. His method is to us hidden traps. **I Tim. 2: 25-26 , I Tim. 3: 7, 6: 9**
 - c. He is a master of disguise. **II Cor. 11: 13-15**
2. He hides the will of God in a flood of other good things.
 - a. When he couldn't defeat the true church, he created a multitude of other churches.
 - b. He uses the busyness of life to distract those who find it from serving God.
 - c. He even uses our love for our family to compete with our love for God.
3. **Col. 3: 1-2** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**
(Compare ... **Heb. 12: 1-2 , I Tim. 5: 5**)

II. Challenge yourself. (*Lead a life under power, not as a leaf on the breeze.*)

A. Spiritual growth is God's plan for your life.

1. **II Pet. 3: 18-** Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2. **Eph. 4: 11-16 ...** Grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. (cf- **2:21**)
3. As you take spiritual inventory (**II Cor. 13:5**) how much have you grown this year?

B. Some are growing. (*Perhaps more than they realize.*)

1. Growth is often more obvious to others than to one's self.
 - a. Growth is obvious in the prayers that are lead.
 - b. Growth is obvious in the ability to understand the scriptures.
2. Spiritual growth doesn't just happen; it is developed with effort. (*byproduct*)
3. Physical growth can be affected, but if one survives, it happens.
 - a. One the other hand, social maturity is created though experience and effort.
 - b. Likewise, spiritual maturity does not just happen.

C. We must challenge ourselves in a way that fosters growth.

1. We must develop the total man ... body, soul, and spirit.
 - a. Physical health requires effort. (*We cannot surrender to pain or do what feels good.*)
 - b. Mental health requires that we challenge our mind. (*Expand our world view.*)
 - c. Likewise, spiritual health requires that we keep exercising our spiritual muscles.
2. One never becomes too old to develop spiritually.
 - a. Retired people have more time for spiritual pursuits. (*Prayer & meditation*)
 - b. The more we have learned the easier it is to learn.
3. Challenge yourself to learn to do something for God that you've not done before.

D. Preach the gospel to yourself every day. (*Read , Study , Meditate , Pray*)

III. Turn the focus of your life outward as well as upward.

A. Loving one's neighbor means putting that neighbor's welfare equal with his own.

1. Jesus instructed us that as well a loving God, the Christian must love others.
Matt. 22: 39- The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'
2. Loving one's neighbor is having an eye as well as a heart for others.
 - a. Most of people live in a world of "me and mine" but not the person who loves.

- b. The one who loves his neighbor turns his eye outward to see their needs.
- 3. It is this love which distinguishes the Christian from the rest of the world.

John 13: 35- By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.

B. Challenge :

- 1. Secretly do one good deed each week for someone else.
- 2. Watch for opportunities and plan what you will do.
- 3. You tell no one, **but** God will see and reward you openly. (*No thank you moment*)

Matt. 6: 1-4 Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

(**Cf- Matt. 5: 14-16 ... It must be done so God is glorified.**)

C. When you give, open your hand widely.

- 1. **Deut. 15: 11-** For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'
- 2. We have been richly blessed.
 - a. "Free you received, freely give." **Matt. 10: 8** (*apply to both spiritual & physical*)
 - b. The very reason Christians earn is to be able to give. (**Eph. 4: 28**)
- 3. Open you hand to bless **all** the way ... NOT just half way.

D. The greatest need for awareness is to be aware of their spiritual poverty.

IV. Deal with others as God has dealt with you.

A. Do not keep a record of wrongs committed against you.

- 1. This is an essential component of love.
 - I Cor. 13: 5-** (Love) is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
- 2. We forgive others because God has forgiven us. (**Matt. 18: 21-35**)
 - a. He did you wrong.
 - b. You didn't deserved it.
 - c. Now get over it. *Forgive him and move on.*

3. Be quick to forgive so hard feelings will not become deeply engrained.

B. Likewise, be quick to apologize.

1. Our Lord taught us to be quick to resolve disagreements.
Matt. 5: 25- Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.
2. No matter which way the dispute goes, resolve it quickly.
Eph. 4: 26-27 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.
3. When repentance is from the heart, there is no reason for delay.
4. We urgently need role models in this area; **be one.**
5. Offer no excuse or self-justification. ***“I did wrong. I’m sorry. I’ll try not to ...”***

V. Listen more and talk less.

A. James 1: 19- This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

1. God gave us two ears, but only one mouth so we know which is more important.
2. Listening is NOT a passive activity.
3. Actively listening is not the same as just hearing.

B. Dr. Cecil Osborne wrote some helpful suggestions about how to listen.

1. Don’t grab the conversation. (*That reminds me of ...*)
2. Don’t let your eyes wander; look at the speaker.
3. Validate the feelings of the other person.
4. Don’t interrupt.
5. Don’t try to top the other person.
6. Don’t criticize.
7. Don’t argue
8. Ask appropriate questions

VI. Approach the year (*life*) with a positive attitude.

A. We are of all people on the earth most blessed.

1. Even bad times in America are better than good time in most places.

2. We are children of the King of Kings. (**Rev. 1: 5**)
3. God has the ability to give us whatever HE wants us to use in His service.
 - a. **Phil. 4: 19** - ... **my God will supply all your needs according to His riches** ...
 - b. **I Tim. 6: 17**- ... **God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy** ...
4. **Matt. 6: 33** ... *Our being supplied is conditional upon our trusting and serving Him.*

B. As we dedicate ourselves to serving God we must learn to expect good things.

1. **Read ... Rom. 8: 26-39**
2. Even things that don't appear to be good will be worked to our good in the end.
3. If God did not withhold His only Son, what good thing will He withhold ?

C. We need to celebrate more.

1. Open our eyes to all the good that is around us.
 - a. "Count your blessings" , not your problems.
 - b. **Perspective** .. We have some water -vs- the glass is only half full.
 - c. Often we fail to see our blessing because we're concentrating on what we want.
2. Christians should be the happiest people on the earth.
Phil. 4: 4- Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
3. We not only know we are protected and provided for here on earth, we know our eternal destiny.
 - a. **I John 5: 13- These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.**
 - b. No matter how good this life is, it is the worst thing you will ever endure.
4. As the prophet David urged God's people of old, so I urge us.
I Chron. 16: 34- O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His loving-kindness is everlasting.

D. Rejoice that He has called you into His service.

1. Because you know the gospel you have the opportunity to share salvation with others.
2. You have the keys to open the kingdom to those you know and love. (*key to ark*)

CONCLUSION :

- A. **If you are in Christ, this have the potential to be the best year ever.**
- B. **Optimistically Focus forward, challenge ourselves to focus outward and upward.**

Lesson Text :**Phil. 3: 7-21**

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **13** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; **16** however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. **18** For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, **19** whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. **20** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **21** who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Supplemental Lesson Text :

Rom. 8: 26-39

- 26** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; **27** and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.
- 28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
- 31** What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? **33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; **34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. **35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36** Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."
37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.