

Seven New Year's Resolutions For Leaders

That Won't Go In One Year and Out the Other

By Al Ells, M.C.

Mark Twain said, "New Year's is a harmless annual institution, of no particular use to anybody save as a scapegoat for promiscuous drunks, and friendly calls and humbug resolutions."

The making of New Year's resolutions is a curious tradition. Notoriously crummy agents of change, fewer than 50 percent of our resolutions make it past the six-month mark.

While leaders do not typically make New Year's resolutions in the traditional sense, they do prayerfully think about the future and make resolutions to outdo the past. When viewed through the lens of fulfilling God's call, a leader's New Year's resolution can become transformative: a renewed calling, a specific mission, a clearer sense of purpose and focus.

I challenge you to anticipate the advent of 2009 with a sense of heightened awareness to God's direction in your life and ministry. Prayerfully establish resolutions that are attainable, timely, and most of all god-directed. Need some inspiration? I've provided a list of godly aspirations to help you begin.

Hold steady when the hard times come. (Ephesians 6:13)

Each year brings times of triumph and times of difficulty. The year 2009 may be one of our most challenging yet. The armor of God enables us to stand our ground during adversity. Commit to endure your trials *when* they come through grace and trust, and to shun doubt, anxiety and fear.



Maintain your temple. (I Corinthians 6:19)

How are you treating your temple? Full-to-the brim schedules and demanding responsibilities can edge out down time with God, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion. When our body, mind, and spirit are weak, we are more vulnerable to Satan's devices. A balanced diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, and low in sugars and saturated fats helps maintain energy for a busy lifestyle. Regular exercise—30 minutes a day—also boosts energy, alertness, and self-esteem. Sleeping seven to eight hours a night fights off disease, not to mention keeps us sane!



Sharpen your sight. (Habakkuk 2:2)

Being too busy and losing our focus is a temptation for us as leaders, often having far too much on our plates. Instead of feeling accomplished, we become overwhelmed and burned out. Ask God to show you how He wants to use you this year. Share with Him your need for inspiration. True vision rouses dissatisfaction with the status quo, fueling the desire to transcend the ordinary and achieve real change.



Revamp your ministry plan.

A written ministry plan is a tool to help you achieve the vision God has given you. Its secular counterpart is called a strategic plan. Here is how it should look: List last year's accomplishments. Create a vision statement for you personally, and a mission statement for your ministry. Set two or three major goals, with measurable steps and action timetables. Anything lengthy or sophisticated will be counterproductive, so be clear and concise.



Meet Him at the tent. (Exodus 29:42-46)

If worldly distractions have superseded Christ's importance in your life, I encourage you to use the 2009 as a turning point. Renew your relationship with your first love. He is more important than the work to which He called us. Without Him, our calling is rendered null. Moses and Joshua regularly communed with God at the tent of meeting where they received direction, strategy and strength. A noted father of the faith once said, "God does everything through prayer and nothing without it."

Strengthen your marriage. (Ephesians 4:32)

Marriage is hard work, and even harder for pastoral couples, whom the Bible calls to a higher standard. Add the rigors of ministry and spiritual warfare from being on the front lines, and you have a recipe for disaster if the relationship is not cared for. Schedule times of refreshing on a quarterly basis. Work on your communication. Practice healthy conflict resolution. Forgive, forgive, forgive.

Work on your weaknesses. (1John 1:8)

None of us is perfect. Instead, we are all being perfected. Use the new year to inventory your major character flaw or stumbling block that God wants to remove, and devise a plan to change. If you don't know what God wants to change, ask Him. If you still require clarity, ask your spouse or a close friend, but don't get offended when they tell you. Be gracious, humble and open to learn.

Top 10 Most Common New Year's Resolutions

- 1. Get out of debt or save money**
- 2. Lose weight**
- 3. Start a healthy habit (exercise)**
- 4. Get organized**
- 5. Spend more time with loved ones**
- 6. Develop a new skill or talent**
- 7. Work less, play more**
- 8. Other**
- 9. Kick a bad habit (i.e. smoking)**
- 10. Change employment**

Source: Franklin Covey