

RESOLUTIONS

Have you made a New Year's resolution? Perhaps to lose 10 pounds or read the Bible through in 2021? Why do we make resolutions and why are such resolutions common and popular? Here are some that I noted from the Internet: save more money; build a better budget; cook one new thing each week; read more books; join a club; create a cleaning schedule you'll stick to; drink less alcohol; quit smoking; eat veggies regularly. And so on, and so on. Perhaps, add yours to the list!

We should remember, however, that according to a 2014 report, 35% of the resolvers failed their Resolutions because they had unrealistic goals (usually too many). Furthermore, 33% didn't keep track of their progress and 23% forgot all about them. So, don't worry if you don't keep your own—just keep reminding your friend about theirs!

Sometimes we need something to help us achieve our goal or resolution. One of my aims is to read the Bible through in a year and having a "One Year Bible" keeps me on track and moving. Stepping on the scales regularly is another reminder.

The idea of resolutions at the start of each year has its tradition in religions. For example, the Babylonians promised their gods that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. (I wish that some people who borrowed books from me would have been Babylonians.) The Romans promised the god Janus that they would be faithful. In the medieval era, the knights took the "peacock vow" at the end of the Christmas season each year to re-affirm their commitment to chivalry (Lennox, Doug, 2007. *Now You Know Big Book of Answers*. Toronto: Dundurn. p. 250.)

Even in our present era, at watchnight services (or Watchnight Mass), some Christians pray and make resolutions. This tradition has many other religious parallels. For example, during Judaism's Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), people are to think of their past sins and seek and offer forgiveness. People can also do this during the Christian liturgical season of Lent, although the motive is more of sacrifice than of responsibility. In fact, the Methodist practice of New Year's resolutions came, in part, from the Lenten sacrifices (see Wikipedia on the topic if it really interests you.)

There doesn't seem to be any penalty if you fail to keep a resolution, although like the notion of golf-gods, there may be mythological resolution-gods. They will punish you by adding pounds if you didn't keep your resolution to lose them. If you have made a resolution never to play the lottery again, you will certainly lose it if you didn't follow your resolution to save money. There might be kale and cabbage on sale, instead of steak, if you disregarded a resolution about eating more veggies. And so on.

It is good to have a "resolved" spirit, one in which you are determined or committed to do things better than in the past. We can say that we "made up our mind" to do something better in the future—usually next year or far enough away that it won't hamper our present activities. Our mind is "fixed" or "set" on the target and we feel motivated to

achieve it. But is our “determination” (our willpower) enough? Don’t we need support to achieve our objective, someone who knows what it takes because they have completed a similar or same thing? It doesn’t help, however, to have someone who pushes us beyond our present capabilities just because that person has completed a resolution. We need realistic boundaries and trainers who understand our weaknesses.

The Holy Spirit is like that. He takes Jesus’ statement that “*my strength is accomplished in weakness,*” and enables us to do what is impossible with our own might. The verse “*My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak*” (2 Cor 12:9) can become a reality in our lives.

We receive His grace by asking for it, not by resolving that we will somehow find it by making promises or doing more, although, of course, we “prove” we have His power when we act from our weaknesses.

I don’t mean to sound “holy” in expressing my belief that the power of the Holy Spirit is greater than any resolution we can make. I’m trying to make the point clear that we don’t have to wait until New Year’s Eve to ask for God’s power.

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Relaxing in God’s grace