

RESOLUTIONS

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According to statistica.com, the three most common New Year's Resolutions for 2018 were these:

- 1) Eat healthier
- 2) Get more exercise
- 3) Save more money

Many (most?) of us would probably do well to heed all three in 2019!

Christians' New Year's resolutions usually focus on more regular Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance. Is there some correlation between those and the three from the web site?

Yes, we can feed our souls a healthier diet with more Bible reading and much less "junk food" that has no spiritual value. We should strive to be "*nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed*" (1 Timothy 4:6). God's word contains both "*milk*" and "*solid food*" (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14). Bon appétit!

What happens when you eat but don't exercise? (Flabby is not healthy!) Even more crucial is spiritual exercise. ". . . *Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things*" (1 Tim. 4:7, 8). That includes prayer and church attendance, but involves far more. Do we mean it when we sing, "We'll work till Jesus comes"?

Now, what about saving more money? God has much to say about money – how we obtain it, how we spend it, and whether we trust in it. Saving is wise: "*Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it*" (Prov. 21:20). But hoarding is sinful (see the parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:13-21). Our challenge: Find the right balance! Let's be more concerned about saving our souls than saving money!

Easy or Difficult?

Is the Bible easy or difficult to understand?

That's really not a very fair question because the Bible, in a sense, is both. There must be a sense in which it is easily understood because it is God's desire for all men to understand and be obedient to His will (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). How could God expect something of all men that is beyond their capacity to do?

There are also some parts of Scripture that are difficult. Even Peter acknowledged this fact, specifically regarding some of Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:16). Any honest student of Scripture is going to agree with Peter. But just because there are parts that are difficult, it does not mean it is all difficult and beyond our comprehension.

This is precisely the point at which some people make a tempting, but false, leap in their thinking. After all, if all of Scripture is difficult, would this not excuse their lack of obedience? How can you do what you don't know or understand?

Mark Twain is credited with a statement that is probably closer to the truth and more honest than most people want to admit. He said it wasn't the parts of the Bible that he didn't understand that troubled him; it was the parts that he did understand.

It's an age-old problem. Man's failure to do what is right is not because he doesn't know any better; rather, it is but a failure to do what one already knows he should.

Many times, people aren't in need of knowing more; they're in need of doing what they already know. The plea of God is for mankind to repent, to change the mind, heart, and will, from self-service to submission to His will. Are we willing to do what we know? It might seem easier just to plead ignorance or an inability to really know; that is, at least for now.

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin (James 4:17).

--David Deffenbaugh (Oklahoma City, OK) via Old Paths

Trouble With My Pinky Nail

The nail on my left pinky finger had a talk with me the other day. He said, "I really like being a part of your body; but I do not like being attached to any particular part of the body. I think that I should be able to wander around freely. I know that I cannot go just anywhere and everywhere; but I would like to be on the right hand some weeks, and maybe be on the thumb sometimes instead of always on a finger. Sometimes I might even like to try being on a toe occasionally."

I tried to explain to the little nail that it was not a question of what he wants, but a question of what the body needs. My body needs each of its parts to stay in their place and to faithfully do their task. While it might be more fun for parts of the body to jump around from place to place and from role to role, that is not what will be good for the body. I need him right there on my left pinky. If I cannot count on him in that role, that nail is of very little use to the body as a whole.

I had a talk with a Christian the other day. He said that he does not like committing to one congregation. He does not like being in submission to a given eldership. He sees himself as a member of the body of Christ in a general sense, not as connected to a particular part of the body.

Do you have any idea what I should say to him?

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17, ESV)

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)