

I Resolve...

Long Beach Alliance Church • December 27th, 2009 • Happy New Year! • Pastor Chris Lankford

COME NOW, YOU WHO SAY, "TODAY OR TOMORROW WE WILL GO TO SUCH AND SUCH A CITY, AND SPEND A YEAR THERE AND ENGAGE IN BUSINESS AND MAKE A PROFIT." YET YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOUR LIFE WILL BE LIKE TOMORROW. YOU ARE JUST A VAPOR THAT APPEARS FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND THEN VANISHES AWAY. INSTEAD, YOU OUGHT TO SAY, "IF THE LORD WILLS, WE WILL LIVE AND ALSO DO THIS OR THAT." BUT AS IT IS, YOU BOAST IN YOUR ARROGANCE; ALL SUCH BOASTING IS EVIL. THEREFORE, TO ONE WHO KNOWS THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND DOES NOT DO IT, TO HIM IT IS SIN.

~JAMES 4:13-17 (NASB)

1) New Year's Resolutions

- A) According to organizational guru Franklin Covey's™ annual New Year's Resolution survey, the Top 10 Resolutions for 2010 are:
- 1) Stop Smoking!
 - 2) Get into Better Shape!
 - 3) Lose Weight!
 - 4) Enjoy Life More!
 - 5) Quit Drinking!
 - 6) Get Organized!

- 7) Learn a New Talent/Skill!
 - 8) Get out of Debt and/or Increase Income!
 - 9) Spend More Time with Family/Friends!
 - 10) Help Others/Volunteerism!
- B) Vision is an essential element of the Christian life (Proverbs 29:18). We engage God's vision through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8). Without faith in God, without His vision for us, we are hopeless (Hebrews 11:6).
- C) Faith is made up of three elements in the Bible.
- i. First, we must "have faith" in Jesus Christ through the teaching of God's Word, the Bible (Romans 10:17). This is the "content" of our faith.
 - ii. Second, we must "believe" that Jesus is Savior and that salvation is through Him alone (Hebrews 11:6). This is the "trust" element in faith.
 - iii. Third, we must be "faithful" and live righteous lives (Romans 1:17, 2 Timothy 2:11-13). This is how we "persevere" in faith.
- D) In other words, vision and discipline combine together to produce "faith." They are inseparable in practice. If one "has faith," one will "do righteousness" (James 2:14-26).
- E) Any "resolutions" we have (visionary disciplines) need to be submitted to "God's will" (James 4:13-17). The Bible calls on us to constantly improve our character (being) and actions (doing), but to do so "without arrogance, in the Lord" (authentically).

2) How Can I Know God's Will For My Life?

- A) If our resolutions need to be submitted to "God's will," how do we discover God's will for our lives? Can we know God's will? Is it possible to have resolutions which are in line with the will of God? **YES!!**
- B) Despite popular opinion, God's will is not hidden from His people. God has made His will abundantly clear in Scripture (Romans 12:1-2).
- C) Historically, the writers and people of God did not "walk around in the dark," confused as to the will of God:
- 1) Paul was an apostle by the will of God (Ephesians 1:1).
 - 2) We find security in the will of God (Colossians 4:12).
 - 3) The will of God is common knowledge and practice for all Christians (1st Thessalonians 4:3)
 - 4) The will of God is so clear in Scripture, it is viewed as the polar opposite of mankind's unstable and unpredictable ways (1st Peter 2:15, 4:1-6).
- D) Examples of God's will in Scripture include:
- 1) Giving thanks in all circumstances (1st Thessalonians 5:18).
 - 2) Love fellow followers of Christ (John 15:12). Love your enemies, be generous toward them (Luke 6:35).
 - 3) Live according to the Spirit (being), which will produce fruitful actions (doing) (Galatians 5:22-23).
 - 4) Know and do the Word of God (the Bible) in our everyday lives (James 1:22).

3) The One Great Source For Knowing God's Will

- A) God has made His will clearly known through the written Word of God, the Bible, the Scriptures (2nd Timothy 3:16-17). We are called to know God's Word (2nd Timothy 2:15) and be sanctified by God's Word (John 17:17).

- B) The reading and understanding of God's Word, and the fruitful actions which come from God's Word are a distinctive mark of every follower of Jesus Christ (Luke 8:11-15).

- C) The study and understanding of God's Word is one of the highest callings in all of Scripture (Acts 6:2) and is the mark of the spread of Christianity (Acts 6:7, 13:5, 20:32). Christianity is not spread by good works, but by God's Word!

- D) The only "weapon" of attack which a follower of Christ has in this world against those things which press in on every side is God's Word (Ephesians 6:17), a genuine help in (even) the darkest times of need (2nd Corinthians 6:2-10).

- E) The instruction of the Word in our lives is more valuable than any earthly treasure (1st Timothy 6:17-19). Every New Year's resolution pales in comparison to the knowledge of God through the Bible (1st Timothy 4:8-9).

- F) God's Word is the only way to know the truth, and avoid subtle lies which can destroy (2nd Timothy 4:1-4).

- G) While contemplating New Year's resolutions, will you make it a top priority to read God's Word to discover God's Will? "Whatever is not from faith (content, trust, perseverance) is sin!" (Romans 14:23). Dig into God's Word this year!