

Are you resolved? by Michael McCleary

As we begin the New Year people everywhere are making, or have made, New Year resolutions. Most of the time, people make resolutions that revolve around material things, such as losing weight or being smarter with their money. What are your New Year resolutions? As we get ready to enact our resolutions, let us consider some resolutions that we all should have as Christians.

Study (not just read) the Bible more:

There is no such thing as studying the Bible too much. Paul encouraged Timothy in **I Tim. 4:12-16** to "meditate" on the things of the Gospel and "give yourself to them". Paul says again in **II Tim. 2:15** "Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". The NKJV has "be diligent" instead of "study", but both mean the same thing in the context of "dividing the word of truth". The only way I can rightly determine God's word is to give myself over to it and truly be devoted to studying God's word. It is the only way to know God, Christ, and what I need to do to be saved. One resolution should be to set time aside every day to read **and study** my Bible. It is important to understand the difference between the two. Reading, just for the sake of saying "I've read my Bible today!" doesn't do me any good. However, reading and then **studying** what I've read has great profit. "Study" means "to apply oneself to the acquisition of knowledge, as by reading, investigation, and practice; to examine or investigate carefully and in detail". This means that as I read, I am mindful of not only the context of what is written, but also possible applications that I can make from what I read. I can even go deeper by cross-referencing other passages that share the same principles to deepen my understanding of what I've read. In doing this, it will be easier to remember what I've read.

Fortify weaknesses in character (I Tim. 6:11-12): All of us have certain weaknesses and strengths, and not just in context of temptations and sin. We will all find things that we wish we could change or make better if we look deeply enough. Some of us may have issues trusting other people or even God. We may have submission issues to our husbands, parents, or appointed authorities. We may have problems with our attitudes; perhaps we are too self-centered. Of course, Satan certainly

uses temptations to appeal to weaknesses within our character, such as having a hard time keeping our minds pure from lustful thoughts, or controlling our tongues. Whatever the case, set aside an hour to sit down and think deeply about your character and write down all of the weaknesses you have as a Christian and servant of God, including temptation weaknesses, and write one Scripture next to each item that can help you address it this year. Then make sure to look at the list on a daily basis to remind yourself of all the things you need to be working on.

Look for ways to express love to the brethren (but don't forget to say it either) (I John 3:18): It has always been easier to say than to do, and it is no different when dealing with loving others. Saying that we love our brethren is much different than expressing that love. One of the ways we can truly prove our love is to look for ways this year to express our affection and care for each of our brethren. Looking for ways to show I love my brother is much different than taking advantage of convenient opportunities, and being polite to my sister is much different than expressing my Christian love for her in various ways. It's especially difficult when I only see my brethren four hours a week. One way to show my love is to call brethren who are sick and check up on them or who miss worship or Bible class and tell them I missed them. If you know someone who might be having a bad week, place an anonymous card with encouraging words on their pew. And let's not forget the ever-present need to also **tell** our brethren we love them. This can often be forgotten, but letting each other know how much we care for one another can edify and encourage someone far more than we realize. Seek out new ways to show your brethren you care, and remember: even if other people don't know you did a loving deed to encourage someone, God does.

Resolution, as defined by dictionary.com is "a course of action determined or decided on; set in purpose". These are just three resolutions that all of us should make as we begin 2017. Will you resolve to better yourself as a servant of God this new year?