

The Gables – Resolutions

Opening Story:

Do you know what the top New Year's Resolutions are year after year? Here they are, according to www.usa.gov (1/14/2011):

- Drink less alcohol
- Get a better education
- Get a better job
- Get fit
- Lose weight
- Manage debt
- Manage stress
- Quit smoking
- Use, reuse, recycle
- Save money
- Take a trip
- Volunteer to help others

Can you relate to this list? I'm sure there's at least one item that each of us has tried to put into practice at some point in our lives. We all generally want to improve ourselves in some way, but often fail.

Perhaps you're wondering how many of these resolutions are actually kept? According to <http://www.proactivechange.com/resolutions/statistics.htm> , 40 - 45% of American adults make one or more New Year's Resolution each year. How many of these resolutions are actually kept as time goes on?

- Past the first week: 75%
- Past 2 weeks: 71%
- After one month: 64%
- After 6 months: 46%

The Gables – Resolutions

Dialog between Rick & Donna:

Rick: Hey Donna, did you make any New Year’s resolutions this year?

Donna: Well, yes Rick, I did.

Rick: You did? What were your resolutions?

Donna: I vowed to quit smoking and drink less alcohol.

Rick: Quit smoking? Drink less alcohol? But Donna, you don’t smoke and you don’t drink?

Donna: I know, but those are the only items on the list that I could keep.

Rick: That’s ridiculous! A New Year’s resolution means that you vow to stop doing something, which is usually bad, that you’re already doing.

Donna: Oh... I see what your point. Well, I guess I don’t just don’t have the willpower to keep my resolutions.

Rick: I understand. It can be really tough to kick a bad habit on your own. Have you tried praying about it?

Donna: Praying? No, not really.

Rick: Well, maybe you should start with prayer. In Jeremiah 32:17 it says, “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.” You see, God can help you overcome anything. Nothing is “too hard” for Him.

Donna: Yes, I guess you’re right.

Rick: Did you make any other resolutions that weren’t on the list?

Donna: Yes. I made a resolution that I’d like to take more naps.

The Gables – Resolutions

Rick: More naps?

Donna: Yes. More naps. What does the Bible say about that?

Rick: Hmm! Let me think.

- Psalm 127:2b says, “He grants sleep to those He loves”, and throughout the Old Testament it says we should rest on the Sabbath day, but I don’t think God wants us to be lazy.
- Proverbs 6:9-11: "How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.”

Donna: I guess you’re right. What else does the Bible say about resolutions?

Rick: Well, there’s one passage from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament that I can think of:

- In Numbers 30:2 it says, “When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”
- In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:33-7) it says: “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”
- There are many more passages about oaths in the Bible. I think it’s better to simply ask God to help you with whatever issue you are dealing with, rather than taking an oath. But if you must make an oath, be sure you keep it.

Donna: OK. Sounds good.

Rick: So, Donna, what are some good things we can ask God help us do during the year?

The Gables – Resolutions

Donna: Memorize scripture.

Rick: That's a great idea. The Bible says in Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Have you started memorizing a Bible verses yet?

Donna: Yes. I memorized John 11:35.

Rick: That's terrific Donna! I'm so proud of you! Can you recite it for us?

Donna: Sure. "Jesus wept."

Rick: [Pause] "Jesus wept." Is that it? "Jesus wept"?

Donna: Yes.

Rick: That's only two words.

Donna: I know. I think it's the shortest verse in the Bible.

Rick: I see. Have you thought about putting a little more effort into memorizing scripture? I mean, maybe memorizing a verse with a few more words in it?

Donna: No, I haven't. Maybe I will someday, but not right now. I'm too busy. I'll get to it.

Rick: But don't you remember what Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." The longer you put it off, the more likely you are to sin against God and others.

Donna: Yeah, I guess you're right.

Rick: Let's try to memorize a verse right now.

Donna: OK.

The Gables – Resolutions

Rick: Repeat after me, “I have hidden your word in my heart...”

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart...”

Rick: Again

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart...”

Rick: Again

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart...”

Rick: Now say it five times

Donna: [recites it five times, counting with her fingers]

Rick: OK, good. Now say, “...that I might not sin against you.”

Donna: “...that I might not sin against you.”

Rick: Again.

Donna: “...that I might not sin against you.”

Rick: Again.

Donna: “...that I might not sin against you.”

Rick: Now say it five times

Donna: [recites it five times, counting with her fingers]

Rick: OK, good. Now say the reference: “Psalm 119:11”

Donna: Psalm 119:11

Rick: Again.

Donna: Psalm 119:11

Rick: Again.

Donna: Psalm 119:11

Rick: Now say it five times

Donna: [recites it five times, counting with her fingers]

Rick: Good! Now let’s put it all together: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11”

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11”

Rick: Again

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11”

The Gables – Resolutions

Rick: Again

Donna: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
Psalm 119:11”

Rick: Now say it five times

Donna: [recites it five times, counting with her fingers]

Rick: Great job, Donna! You did it! Congratulations! [Rick shakes Donna’s hand and gives her a printout of Psalm 119:11] Now tape this verse on your bathroom mirror and review it several times a day. OK?

Donna: OK

Rick: I hope you have a Happy New Year, Donna!

Donna: You too, Rick!

Copies for participants:

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” – Psalm 119:11

The Gables – Resolutions