

The Solution to Resolutions

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January 1, 2011 – I hereby resolve to. . .

How many of us fall prey to the idea of massive changes and new lifestyles at this time of the year? Yes, the intentions are good, but the flesh is very weak in most situations. We are creatures of habit, old habits are overtly powerful and almighty; it isn't surprising, as we have been repeating them consistently over weeks, months, and perhaps even years. “I will eat better,” “I will not procrastinate,” or “I will not gossip” are common resolutions heard in my community and are noteworthy to say the least. Unfortunately, what tends to happen is that two, maybe three, weeks pass by and then the old habits slip in and resume their place in our lives. Why is it that so many good intentions fall by the wayside and are heard no more? Perhaps the idea of “resolution” is flawed.

The etymology of “resolution” is multi-layered; however, I like to think creatively when I look at words. “Resolution” becomes “re-solution” - a solution that needs to be applied over and over again. I like to ponder that this term's structure lends itself for repetition. It is arguable that a resolution is a temporary fix, with an underlying expectation of failure. And yet, despite all the hoopla of resolutions at this time of year, I still want to change my lifestyle; to move beyond the limitations I've imposed on myself and have the sum exceed the total of my parts. What can I do?

As a teacher, I have noticed a common trend with many students. Many of the problems facing them could easily be remedied with one or two tutorial sessions. Simple? One would think so; however, it rarely turns out that way. At the start of each semester my students talk about goal setting, prioritizing, and time management. Many students approach me and say they are turning over a new leaf and will not procrastinate but will seek out help when needed. And just like so many who make New Year's resolutions, many of these students fall back into old, comfortable habits and struggle on their own to achieve their desired goals. As admirable as these intentions are, they are rarely developed into habit-status and rarely result in goal achievement.

I, too, have my own issues in my multiple roles as educator, husband, parent, and Christian. Too many times I have been caught up with planning and grading, endeavouring to provide lengthy feedback to each of my students at the expense of my health and time spent with my family and my God. Paradoxically, I weaken my abilities as a Christian educator when I focus too much on academia and “the job.” Every year I set out to find balance between my personal life and my career, and many times I fall short in both categories. This became all too apparent to me when I recently listened to my five-year-old son pray at worship: “Please help Papa be done his grading soon so he can spend time with me.” My eyes were opened and it was then that I needed to find a viable, long-lasting solution.

Taking time away from my career is difficult to say the least. I have invested much of my identity into my role as teacher and it seems contradictory to back away from my compulsive desire to keep doing more as educator. But it is something I need to do and do immediately. I, like my students, cannot just say this is what I'm going to do. I will fail, and will fall hard should I rely on my own guidance in this issue.

I am opting now to make a different sort of decision about change, finding a solution to these temporary resolutions. I, of course, am talking about our Christian walk with our Maker. It boils down to seeking the One with all the answers and the ability to implement inner change rather than struggle like my students to do it all myself and then live with the inevitable return to the old ways. This year I am stepping away from my "I resolve. . ." list, because it puts the emphasis on "I" which in turn puts a "re" in front of the "solution." I look to simplify this situation by seeking out the Solution – the One who can truly implement change, continue to guide me, and pick me up when I fall; only then can I truly grow in all my other roles, including that of educator. I will start my 1/1/11 with a renewed focus on the One: the Solution to all resolutions.