

His Workmanship: Westside

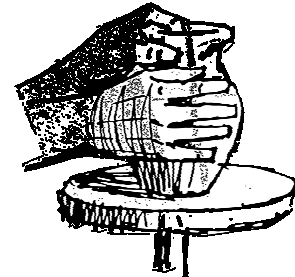
"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

—Ephesians 2:10

Vol. XXIV

December 27, 2015

No. 52



Isaiah 64:8

Resolutions and Resolve, by Nancy DeMoss

This week we mark the beginning of a New Year. As we approach this new beginning, making resolutions to live a better, healthier, and more productive life has been part of our tradition. Mickey Anders tells of a woman who drew up a list of resolutions for New Year:

1. I am going to clean up this dump as soon as the kids grow up.
2. I will go to no doctor whose office plants have died.
3. I'm going to follow my husband's suggestion and put a little life into my life by living within our budget.
4. I'm going to apply for a hardship scholarship to Weight Watchers.
5. I will never loan my car to anyone I have given birth to.
6. And just like last year, I am going to remember that my children need love the most when they deserve it the least.

Many people make their resolutions like the boy who said, *"I resolve not to eat spinach anymore. I don't like it anyway."*

Perhaps you still make New Year's resolutions. I can remember that my dad would challenge us to make New Year's resolutions and tell us that if we made our resolutions and kept them all year long we could have anything we wanted. Now that sounded like a big offer; I can remember our saying, *"Anything?"* And he would say, *"Yes.*

Anything you want, if you keep your resolutions all year long." And we would challenge him with, *"Even a horse?"* That was the biggest thing we could think of to ask for. And he said, *"Even a horse, if you keep your New Year's resolutions all year long."* He knew what it took us a few years to learn—left to ourselves, we would not be able to keep those resolutions. But he also understood that there was value in taking time to evaluate what the areas of need in our lives were, and what areas we wanted to focus attention on as we continued in our growth in Christ.

As you read some of the biographies of great Christians of the past, you'll find that many of them did make resolutions. They would ask God to search their hearts and show them areas of need, and then they would list things that they wanted to see changed in their lives. Many times, those resolutions would begin: *"Resolved, that...this will happen or that will happen in my life..."* Jonathan Edwards, an 18th Century Christian and American thinker and leader—one of the men influential in the first Great Awakening in the United States—made a list of 70 resolutions. He made wrote them over a period of a couple of years in his memoirs. All these resolutions were written by the

time he was 20 years old. Let's look at those resolutions and some of the different areas that he focused his attention on. As we read these, we'll find ourselves saying, *"How can someone who is not even 20 years old come up with this kind of thinking?"*

PURSUE THE LORD IN YOUR YOUTH. One of the challenges for the young is to understand the importance of seeking the Lord and setting our hearts to pursue Him, even in our younger years. Now it's never too late—even for the gray hairs—to start this pursuit. But, oh, the value of seeking the Lord early in life as Jonathan Edwards did!

REVIEW RESOLUTIONS. At the beginning of those resolutions, Edwards made this note: *"Remember to read over these resolutions once a week."* I think that's where we went wrong as children in my family. We wrote the resolutions and then didn't think to review them; by the time a few weeks had passed, most of those things had slipped our minds. But Jonathan Edwards didn't let these things slip his mind. He made them a part of his everyday life. And the things that he resolved as a teenager did become characteristic of his life. Edwards resolved to live a purposeful life.

PURPOSEFUL LIFE. Edwards would not let life just happen to him. Even
continued on p. 2

Resolutions, Resolve, from p. 1 as a teenager, he said, "I want to live intentionally. I don't want just to drift through life." He identified what was his purpose in life. He knew he existed for the glory of God. This was what moved him and motivated him and drove him even as a young man. He said, "Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, but what tends to the glory of God... Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and resolved to do so, whatever difficulties I meet with, no matter how many or how great those difficulties." He said, "No matter what happens in my life, no matter what I face, no matter how hard it is, I want to live my life for the glory of God." Isn't that what the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Cor 10:31? "**Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**"

With Use Of Time. Now we say, "How does this live out—this matter of living to the glory of God?" Well, some of his resolutions show the very practical way that he envisioned living life for the glory of God—for example, in his use of time. He said, "Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but to improve it (or use it, or maximize it) in the most profitable way I possibly can." He realized that one day in eternity he would be giving account to God for how he used his time here on earth, so he wanted to be able to look back and to say, "Lord, God, I have glorified You with what I did with the moments that You gave me here on earth."

Wholeheartedly. He wanted to live wholeheartedly. He said, "Resolved, to live with all my might; while I do live." Can you imagine most of us thinking that way? You know, once we settle the issue that life's not about me—it's not about my convenience, it's not about my comfort, it's not my happiness, it's not about who likes me or who accepts me, it's not about "am I fulfilled in what I'm doing here in life"—but all that matters is that God is glorified, that He is pleased with my life—then we can endure and bear up under circumstances and challenges that we might not otherwise be

able to face. If we know that our sole purpose for living is to bring glory to God, we have one direction and one aim.. Edwards resolved to live purposefully and for only one thing—for the Lord, Col 3:23. He would praise God with his whole heart, Ps 9:1; 111:1; 138:1. He would seek God with his whole heart, Deut 4:29; 2 Chr 16:12; Ps 119:2, 10. He would keep God's law with his whole heart, Deut 26:16; 30:10; 2 Kg 23:3,25; Ps 119:34, 69. He would love God, serve Him, and turn to Him with his whole heart, Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:2, 6; Josh 22:5; 1 Kg 2:4; 8:48; 1 Sam 12:20, 24; Mk 12:33; Ps 119:58; Jer 3:10.; 2 Chr 6:38.

I challenge you to glorify God in the family, office, and community where He has specifically placed you. Are you excitedly anticipating what God might do in and through you in the coming year?

Pressing On, Growing, Studying Scriptures. As part of glorifying God, he resolved to grow—not just to stay where he was spiritually; but to keep pressing on, to keep seeking new heights in his relationship with the Lord. He knew that the study of Scriptures was an important part of growing. Spiritual growth and fruitfulness was how he would bring glory to God, Jn 15:8, so he said, "Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, that I may find myself to grow in the knowledge of the same... I'm resolved to strive every week to be brought higher spiritually, and to a higher level of grace than I was the week before." This is a challenge, isn't it? We find ourselves wondering, "Am I further ahead spiritually this week than I was at this time last week? Have I grown in grace, in my knowledge of Christ, in my knowledge of His Word in the last week? Have I grown in the last month?" Think about where we were a year ago. As we look back over this past year, can we say, "I've grown spiritually. I know more of the heart and the ways of God. I've grown in grace. I'm not where I want to be. I'm not where, by God's grace, I'm going to

be. But by God's grace, I'm further in my walk with Him and in my ability to glorify Him than I was this time last year"? Do we love Him more? Do we know Him more? Are we pleasing Him more with our lives? Are we growing in our walk with God?

So have we settled the issue? Edwards did. He settled the issue: "The purpose of my life is to bring glory to God, and that's all that really matters." Have we settled that issue? If we haven't, then life will be for us one non-ending wrestling match—resenting, resisting, struggling with the circumstances that come into our lives. But if we say, "Lord, all that matters to me is that You are pleased, that my life reveals to this world what You are like," then life is settled, stable, and we are at peace. It was one of the Wesleys who said that our job here on earth is to give the world the right opinion about God. That's what Edwards was saying: "I want, with all my might, in the way I use my time, in all of the details and circumstances of my life, I want to shed great glory on Who God is."

The Examined Life. It was very important to Jonathan Edwards to live an examined life. He didn't want to take it for granted that everything was okay in his life. He was purposeful about saying, "Let's stop and see where we are in each of these areas of spiritual growth." He resolved, really, to live an accountable life—to be accountable to God for where he was in his spiritual walk. He said, "Resolved, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent,—what sin I have committed,—and wherein I have denied myself;—(and not just every night but) also at the end of every week, month, and year." He said, "Resolved, to inquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking... At the end of every day, it's important to me to look back on the day and see—have I been temperate in my eating and drinking habits?"

We say, "Why should that be something that we should examine every night? I'm not continued on p. 3



Psalm 133:1

God makes my heart clean in 2015 "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." —Ps 51:10

Resolve and Resolutions, from p. 2
sure I want to think about this before I go to bed every night." But Edwards realized that if he was going to give glory to God, which was his supreme purpose in life, that it mattered that he would eat and drink to the glory of God, Rm 13:14. So he said, "Every night before I go to bed, I'm going to let God search my heart." Now what was Edwards saying? He said, "On a regular basis, constantly and diligently, I'm going to examine my heart to make sure that I'm in Christ." There's a false theology prevalent here and now that says, "If you pray this prayer, you receive Christ, and then you have eternal security, and you will never be separated from Christ." So, then, those who believe that false Calvinism forget about the whole matter of their salvation. But Paul said, "Examine yourselves—not just once, but repeatedly—and make sure that you are in the faith," 2 Cor 13:5. Edwards was looking for neglect or negligence in his life, any slacking or lessening of zeal. "Resolved, constantly, with the utmost diligence, and the strictest scrutiny, to be looking into the state of my soul, that I may know whether I have truly an interest in Christ or not; so that when I come to die, I may not have any negligence respecting this to repent of." Churches today are loaded with people who are living any way they want to live—giving into their flesh, living in perpetual, habitual sin. They're banking their eternal security on the false belief that they prayed some prayer, or they walked some aisle, or they signed on some dotted line in some meeting, or their mother told them that about Jesus when they were four years old, or even that they

Discipleship Here At Home

were baptized. But there's no evidence in their life that they are in Christ. Edwards said, "I'm going to examine myself and make sure that there's evidence that I am in Christ." Edwards was saying, "I'm not going to take for granted something as important as the eternal condition of my soul." Now this doesn't mean that he lived in fear that he would be separated from Christ; but he said, "I want regularly to evaluate and make sure that there is credible evidence that Christ lives in me and that I belong to Him," see Ps 26:2; 139:23-24.

Taking Stock. When was the last time we stopped and took stock spiritually—evaluating our hearts toward God? Do we love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength? Edwards asked himself questions in every area of his walk with the Lord. "Do I have pride? Am I dead to all desire for praise? Do I have the presence of God in my life? Am I free from the fear of man? Do I embrace the cross in every way it presents itself to me? Am I willing to give up my ease and my convenience to minister to others? Or do I expect them to conform to my hours, my ways, and my customs?" He is saying, "Am I ready to give up a point when I'm contradicted? Am I content with whatever is or may be, feeling that God, the Author of all events, does and will do all for my good?" Great men and women of God have stopped to ask themselves in the presence of the Lord, "What needs to be addressed in my life?"

Jonathan Edwards made resolutions to keep himself accountable before God. As we've seen some of the resolutions Edwards determined to keep, we may have thought of some resolutions we'd like to make this year. We take our cars in for a tune-up periodically. Well, then, continued on p. 4

Rejoice The Shreves are expecting their first baby in April.



to everyone who is preaching and teaching while Jim is on vacation.

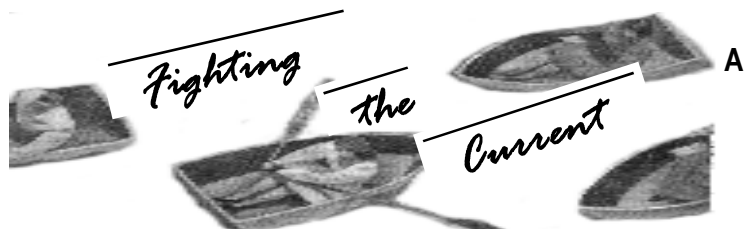
PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Brittany Tope's** mother **Gayle**—biopsy of spot on liver shows breast cancer has spread; **Brittany's** grandmother—on dialysis
- the **Savarese's** grandchildren, **Frankie Kosik, Lorraine** and **Christian Harrod**—breathing difficulty, using nebulizer, or inhaler and steroids
- **Jordan Corray's** colleague and mentor **Craig Smith**—in ICU with brain injury after fall from roof; friend **Kylie Cabalka**—staph infection complications; out of ICU to rehab and making progress
- **Sarah McMurray's** mentee **Lakesha Griffin**—age 12; safety, stable home place
- **Connor Boyd's** friend **Christian Lyons**, high school freshman—leukemia
- **Berney Charo's** brother **Eliud**—prostate cancer
- **Kory Tope's** uncle, **Skeeter Schulz**—broken hip
- **Judy Strand**—preparing for liver transplant by chemo drugs; also broken arm, post-surgery pain
- **Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
- **Ernesto Gonzalez's** father **Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma, some improvement after 2nd chemo
- **Linda Szymanski's** grandson **Slade**—broke elbow
- **Letha Fink's** brother **Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, diagnosed with neuro-muscular disease
- **Bill Dennis**—home recovery following rehab
- **Noah Hadders's** teacher **Sharolyn Elmore**—chemo for breast cancer
- **Larry Campbell's** FL partner **Terry Hargadine's** wife **Michelle**—cancerous lymph nodes removed, latest scan shows no new mass; chemo continues; **Terry**—knee replacement recovery
- **Kayla Knighten, Christine Adams's** daughter, needs our prayers; **Judy Strand** requests prayer for her son **Joe**; pray **Ed's** son **Rodney Schulz** and **Sheryle's** daughter **Tiffany** receive the gospel; pray the **Wilkeses's** son **Mike** and grandson **Drew Lehner** return to the Lord.
- **Sylvia Chapman, Brett's** grandmother—third stage pancreatic cancer; **Brett's** grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Connie Doss**—cancer returned

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

- Christian Harrod; Addison Tope; Rocco Jr. Ann Cox; Logan Corray; Pat Wilkes**—asthma
- Orchid Cox**—chronic blood clot condition
- Jonathan Hadders**—RA
- Autumn Hadders**—epilepsy; celiac disease
- Kirk Johnson**—MS; **Amanda Mailloux**—IBS
- Menards**—**Lloyd** diabetes, Alzheimers; VA help; **Virginia**, blindness from macular degeneration
- Sandra Perry**—diabetes complications; oxygen
- Cheryl Reames**—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis
- Judy Sartin**—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis
- Judy and Mike Strand**—hepatitis treatment
- Lynda Szymanski**—COPD, lung weakness

Travel The **Wilkeses** are visiting family in NC. **Mina Gonzalez** is in TX & AZ visiting family until 12/30. **Sarah McMurray** and **Nate** are traveling till tomorrow.



Exposing current trends *abortion, medical ethics*

Malevolence or Benevolence: Fetal Tissue Research, by Tony Perkins
 "You don't need to kill a young human to get effective stem cell," said Dr. David Prentice last week at Family Research Council when he lectured on "Malevolence or Benevolence? Fetal Tissue Research, Planned Parenthood's Abortions, and Embryonic Stem Cells." Prentice, one of America's most distinguished bioethicists and stem cell experts, currently serves as Vice President and Research Director for the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research arm of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List. He is also Adjunct Professor of Molecular Genetics at the John Paul II Institute of the Catholic University of America and an Advisory Board Member for the Midwest Stem Cell Therapy Center at the University of Kansas, which was developed under his leadership. Previously, he served more than ten years as Senior Fellow for Life Sciences at FRC and, before that, for more than two decades as a professor and researcher at several major universities.

Prentice showed an interactive map, GetYourCare.org, produced by the Lozier Institute and others, that displays how accessible community health centers are across the country as compared to Planned Parenthood centers. He noted that were Planned Parenthood a country, it would be the sixth largest abortion provider in the world. And he emphasized that as opposed to embryonic stem cells, adult stem cells "are where the real successes are." After cataloging a host of effective adult stem cell treatments, Prentice made clear that embryonic stem cell research is not just a medical failure but a moral one, as well. "To get embryonic stem cells, you have to destroy a young human being. It's simply unethical to sacrifice a life like that as an experiment," he said.

We must thank God for the work of this brilliant scientist who sustains his leading-edge scientific expertise on the solid rock of unchanging moral truth. Morality and science not only can co-exist but thrive. Prentice proves it. And adult stem cells, as he demonstrates so persuasively, truly do save lives. Prentice's fascinating website, "Stem Cell Research Facts," has moving videos of people whose lives have been transformed by adult stem cell treatments.

Resolutions, from p. 3

if our cars, which are primarily metal and wires, need some adjusting now and then—how much more do we, who are flesh and spirit?

Father, as this year comes to a close, we want to make sure that we settle the issue of why we're living. We declare to You that we want to live purposeful lives—we don't want just to exist or drift. We want to live intentionally. We want our lives to bring glory to You. We want to live in Your Presence and in Your light. We want to grow in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Lord, at this time next year we want to love You more than we do now. So Lord, give us Your grace to be intentional about the way that we live, to live purposefully, and to live a growing life, all for Your glory. Search our hearts and reveal to us our sins, and remove wickedness far from us. Remove complacency, pride, and fear from us. Give us zeal for You to know Your heart and Your ways. Create in us committed and faithful hearts. In Christ's holy name. Amen.



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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, A Life-Changing Encounter with Christ from "The Gospel According to John," Kenny Boyd

- **sermon**

Sunday afternoon

- **sermon**, "Value," Berney Charo