

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## Why Don't We Seek?

By Gary Henry

### Why don't we seek

### God more diligently than we

**do?** If we are willing to acknowledge that God is our ultimate need, why is it so hard to do what we should about that need? For most of us, there is an obvious need for greater motivation.

To be frank, the problem comes down to a single word: *self-righteousness*. The failure to seek Him diligently comes from a refusal to see the hideous ugliness of our own sins against God, sins that will condemn us forever if we don't devoutly throw ourselves upon His mercy. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). We wouldn't have any trouble living our love for God if we understood how fortunate we are to be loved by Him! Godly zeal is the product of gratitude.

This principle is illustrated poignantly in Luke

7:36-50. There Jesus rebuked the self-righteous ingratitude of Simon, a Pharisee who had criticized a sinful woman who lovingly approached the Lord. Jesus pointed out that she loved Him more than Simon because she was more conscious of the sins she needed to have forgiven. "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (v.47). If our seeking of the Lord is lukewarm, it is because we don't see that we have anything very serious to be forgiven. A passionate pursuit of God is only generated when we face the horror of our destiny without His grace.

The most powerful motive force in the world is a deeply felt appreciation for the forgiveness God mercifully makes available to us in His Son. We will truly love God only when we see something of the price He has paid to love us. "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that

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if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14,15). Having been stripped of our self-righteousness and made to grieve our emptiness, we will seek God with an earnestness that is eternal.

## Just Wad it Up and Start Over

By Dee Bowman

New beginnings are a necessary part of life. I remember doing my math homework and running across a difficult problem. I'd work on it and work on it and finally, in sheer disgust, wad up the paper and throw it in the vicinity of the trash basket. Then I'd get a new page and start all over again.

We need to take to re-examine how things are and make resolutions to make them better-to start over again. It's like a new page, so to speak, one that is uncluttered and where there is room for new purposes and fresh plans. And I suppose all of us like the idea of being able to start over again.

Forgiveness of sins is the best of all possible new beginnings. Can you imagine

what life would be like if we have to carry around the baggage of all the mistakes, all the misjudgments, all the immoral things we have done in the past? The sheer weight of the guilt would be imposing, if not impossible to bear. The angelic annunciation stated that "He shall save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). That's the best of all new beginnings.

So maybe it would be the best of a new beginning to start with a fervent, personal prayer for forgiveness. That's what I'm going to do. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" we are told (1 Jn 1:9). That's about as good a way to begin the begin anew as I can think of.

I have put together some other resolutions, fitted for the refrigerator door or the mirror in the bathroom, in the hope that they will help us be better servants of His.

I am resolved to get closer to God, to make a special effort to read and study His word and put it to work in my life.

I am resolved to put first things first, to put my relationship to God first in my life and then

arrange everything else in its proper order.

I am resolved to make plans each morning to do some deed of kindness that day, then to look for an opportunity to make my resolution a reality.

I am resolved to keep my role-whatever it is-in perspective and to perform the obligations it calls for with diligence and concern. I will try and be a better father, mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, employee or employer.

I am resolved to be confident about who I am-a Christian. I will not be ashamed and I will look for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus.

I am resolved to take at least 10 minutes each day and be with God-to dismiss all the cares and problems of my life and be thankful, to ask Him for His help and forgiveness, and praise Him for His blessings.

I am resolved to learn the value of the short prayer, to stop and pray several times a day and thereby let God be a part of all that I do, no matter the size or significance of the project.

I am resolved to look for good things in people, to respect the common folks, to give something to the less fortunate,

to notice those who have little or no recognition.

I am resolved to budget my time so that God's cause is part of them. I will not allow anything to crowd out the time I have decided to give.

I am resolved to say "I love you" more and mean it.

I hope these suggestions will be a beginning place for a new beginning for you. I want to do better, don't you?

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### ***Tell Me the Old, Old Story***

**By Yvette Rouse**

My husband, Larry, and I have always enjoyed telling our children stories. I love to recall a classic fairy or folk tale, while Larry creates characters of his own, complete with plots to help solve the current issue that our children might be facing. But the stories from God's Word are, by far, the best stories of all.

The real lives of men and women recalled to us by the Holy Spirit far surpass any literature man has penned on his own. How familiar are our children with the great heroes of old? How familiar are we ourselves with these rich lessons so that we can share them? Do

we know more about the ongoing saga of Britney Spears than the incomparable life experiences of our Lord Jesus Christ? What WWF wrestler can compare with the mighty Samson? (**Judges 13-16**) What modern magician can make an iron ax head float on the surface of the water? (**2 Kings 6:1-7**) What movie crew can create live bodies from dry bones as Ezekiel witnessed? (**Ezekiel 37:1-14**) What more important vote could we cast than the one the Israelites voiced on Mount Carmel for the Lord? (**1 Kings 18:20-40**) What "Transformer" can become more changed than when the penitent sinner who gladly receives God's grace through faith and is raised a new creature from the waters of baptism? (**Romans 6:3-6**)

As John and the writer of Hebrews pointed out, we are limited by time and space from recording so many other amazing events. (**John 20:30, 21:25; Hebrews 11:32**) But how blessed we are to have received so many marvelous stories to build us up in the faith, comfort us in our sorrows, and enrich our lives each day.

Do we know the "old, old story"? Does it burn in our hearts to share it with our family and

others like Jeremiah? (**Jeremiah 20:9**) Are we depending on Bible class teachers to share it with our children in an hour or so each week? Let us redeem the time we have (**Ephesians 5:16**), and remember that the Bible is the one story that touches all our lives and does not have an ending.

### ***Do We Lay It to Heart?***

**By Robert Turner**

Every parent knows the difference in "Do I have to go?" and "Do I get to go?" "Do I have to go to bed?" means the child wants to stay up. "Do I get to go to the show?" means the child wouldn't miss it for anything.

Isn't it strange that some of us will wave those same clear signals with reference to the Lord's services, and not see that we are being just as transparent as our children? "Do we have to go to Bible study?" says the same thing about our desires as it does when voiced by our child. When one asks, "How much must I give?," he is clearly saying, "I do not want to give anything, and would like to know how little will pay the bill." Either that, or he has failed to grasp the most fundamental and essential

element in the spirit of acceptable service unto God.

There can be no coming to Christ except we deny or give up self (**Matt. 16:24**). Translated into the context of "doing" this means we must first want to do all possible (100% committed) to serve the Lord. The proper spirit must motivate the doing, or it is shallow and empty -- may even be an abomination in His sight (**Hos. 6:6**). God told the priest of Judaism, "If ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name...then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessing; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (**Mal. 2:2**).

Lay it to heart! That means truly respect God; take Him seriously. The priests had offered polluted bread on the altar (**Mal. 1:7**); offered blind and lame animals as sacrifice (Mal. 1:8). They said of worship, "What a weariness it is!" (**Mal 1:13-14**). To make this current, they said, "Do we have to do or give?" "Do it any old way, just get it over with; we want to go home to the TV." And to top it off, when rebuked, they acted so innocent and said, "When did we ever do that?"

"Oh, that there were one among you that would shut the

doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain" (**Mal. 1:10**). Better to close up shop -- call it off -- than to play at worship, and not "lay it to heart."

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