

His Workmanship: Westside

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

—Ephesians 2:10

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No. 1

Resolutions and Resolve, by Nancy DeMoss

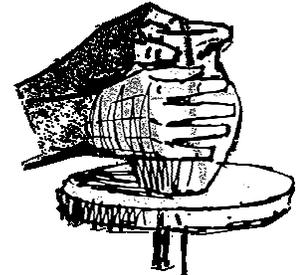
Last week we began a New Year and looked at the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards, an 18th Century American thinker and leader. He wrote them over a period of a couple of years in his memoirs—all before he was 20 years old! He made a habit of examining his life. In these resolutions, he purposed that he would live an intentional life—he would live life for the glory of God. He resolved that he would live a life of spiritual growth—he didn't want to stand still spiritually, but he wanted to be growing in his relationship with the Lord all the time. These set the course for his life and explain (in some measure) why he became a disciplined, earnest, usable servant of the Lord.

CHECK UP. When was the last time you had a physical checkup? That's something that we try to do regularly to stay healthy. Now, when is the last time you had a spiritual checkup? I find it helpful at certain times of the year—at the beginning of a new year, at my birthday, at my spiritual birthday—to stop and take stock. Where am I in my walk with the Lord?

Sometimes I'll ask those who know me best to give input into my life in that process and say, *"Do you see some areas of my life where I'm blind and need evaluation, areas that need development and*

growth?" I find it's helpful to stop and ask God to develop spiritual goals in my heart. *"Lord, what do you want to do in my life during this next year?"* Now is the time to listen to Him, to get into His Word, and to let Him direct my steps in the priorities He has for my life. I want Him to shine light in my heart and say, *"Here's how you're doing."* The fact is, things in our lives and within our spirits can get lodged in our hearts and get so established that we may not even realize they exist until we go into the Great Physician's office and say, *"Lord, show me what You see that I may not see."*

Edwards said, *"Resolved, whenever my feelings begin to appear in the least out of order, when I am conscious of the least uneasiness within"* (that means when my conscience is troubling me even just a little bit) *"or I am aware of the least irregularity without"* (that means when I see something in my actions, in my external behavior that isn't consistent with the Word and the ways of God what will I do?) *"I will subject myself to the strictest examination"* (that means I will not let it go; I will stop and say, *"What's the issue here?"*) We do this physically. When we get symptoms of maybe a stomach problem or a head cold—when we have physical symptoms—immediately we say, *"What's wrong? What can I do to fix*



Isaiah 64:8

this? What can I do to get at the root of what is causing this symptom in my life?" But in our spiritual lives so many of us just ignore the symptoms. We let them go. We overlook them. Edwards says, *"I'm not going to overlook these symptoms. I'm going to go back and say, 'What do I need to deal with? What does God need to deal with in me?'"*

We check ourselves in so many areas of our lives. There's not a day goes by that we don't look in the mirror. We want to know, *How do I look?* Some of us step on the scales every week. We want to see how we're doing in relation to controlling our weight. We get regular dental checkups. In most states, every four years we have to take a driver's test—a written test to renew our driver's license. The state says we have to live an examined life. Most of us regularly reconcile our checkbooks. We take our bank statements and put them up next to our checkbooks; we want to see how we're doing financially and make sure that the money we think is in the bank actually is in the bank. Edwards said, *"That's the kind of life I want to live spiritually."* So daily, weekly, monthly, annually, he sought God and said, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,"* Ps 139:23-24. Have you taken some time recently
continued on p. 2

Resolutions, Resolve, from p. 1 to lay your life open before the Lord and say, "Lord, search me"? A doctor's office has so many fancy machines today that the technicians can put you in and see things inside that you can't see. Likewise, we say, "Lord, put me under Your X-ray machine. Show me what You can see that I can't see. Whatever You say to me, I will agree with You. I will confess it. I will trust You for the grace and power to let You change that area of my life."

AIM AT THE TARGET. Those who practice archery know that in order to hit the target the archer has to take aim purposefully. Edwards determined that his life would be purposeful—that his aim was to glorify God with all his heart. He purposed to live a holy life, and he made practical plans to accomplish holiness in his living.

Speak Truth. He said, for example, "Resolved, in narrations (that is, when I'm speaking, when I'm telling stories) never to speak anything but the pure and simple truth." It mattered to him that, in his speech, in his words, that what he said in everything would be true. This is an area where the Lord challenges all of us. May He make us increasingly sensitive to the truthfulness of every word that we speak. It's tempting to exaggerate when we are telling stories or giving examples—we don't think of narrations as an area where we need to be strict about accuracy or the facts. But this was important to Edwards. We may have to back up and re-state something that we just said—not because we intend to say something that isn't true, but sometimes because as the words come out of our mouths we realize that's not exactly how it was. The Lord challenges us to intend to speak the truth to every person in every situation, no matter what the cost—and when we don't, to go back and restate it—to make it correct. Why is that important?—because God is truth. If we want to be like Him, then there must be in us no shadow of turning, no variation, no hy-

pocrisy—just purely speaking the truth. Being careful with his words was a matter of practical holiness for Jonathan Edwards.

Honor the Lord's Day. Another matter of practical holiness that was important to Edwards which we have really lost today is the matter of keeping the Lord's Day. For him, that was a way of living out the holiness that God had put within him. He said—now, to most today, this will sound very dated, but it shows us the heart of believers who have lived in past generations—"Resolved, never to utter anything that is sportive or a matter of laughter on a Lord's Day." That sounds overly strict to our modern ears. What was he saying? "The Lord's Day has been set apart for consecrated and holy purposes. I'm going to consecrate myself and set apart that day for the Lord." That may sound like he lived in a straitjacket.

As we examine the lives of those who lived spiritually mature lives, we realize that spiritual maturity doesn't just happen. We don't wake up one morning and find that we're spiritually mature. It's a process. And it's a process that requires intentionality.

"You mean we can never laugh on Sunday, never joke on the Lord's Day?" Edwards is referring to frivolity—to idle conversation, to things that don't matter, to wasting away the moments of the Lord's Day—living the Lord's Day for our own pleasure, rather than for God's pleasure. When we live the Lord's Day for His pleasure, we find that we really are refreshed and renewed and that the purpose of the Lord's Day is fulfilled in our lives. To Edwards, this was a matter of personal, practical holiness.

Be Pure. He expressed it another way. He said, "Resolved, never to do anything of which I so much as question the lawfulness." What was he saying? "If I have any question in my heart about whether what I'm about to do is acceptable to God and His Word, then I'm not going to do it. If

there's any doubt in my heart that this is Biblically acceptable, that it's lawful according to the Word of God, then I don't want to do it." So many of us today try to see how close we can get to sin without getting caught up in it. How powerful we would be if we today had the heart of some of our spiritual forebears, men who would say, "I don't want to get as close to sin as I can. I want to know how close I can get to that which is pure and holy and good and above reproach."

Paul tells us, "Whatever is not of faith is sin," Rm 14:23. If there's doubt in our heart that God is giving (us) freedom in His Word, then we say, "Why do it?" Edwards's biographer, commenting on these resolutions, spoke about his passion for purity. "The man who could thus write"—who could write these kinds of resolutions—"was not one who could easily trifle with sin. He had a sensitive conscience." Isn't that what we want? We want consciences that are sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit—that God doesn't have to shout to get our attention. We want to be so sensitive that the slightest prompting and whispering of His Holy Spirit through His Word and through our consciences becomes something where we quickly say, "Yes, Lord."

Edwards said, "I want to live a life that is above reproach." Edwards knew that he had a sinful flesh to deal with—that he was not always going to live blamelessly, so in his resolutions he also purposed to live a life where he was constantly waging battle against his sinful flesh. He knew that it was a battle. He knew his propensity to displease God. So his resolutions show that he was relentless in this warfare against his own sinful flesh.

Find the Root. He said, for example, "Resolved, whenever I do any sinful action, to trace it back, until I come to the original cause." He didn't want merely to chop off dandelion heads that would grow right back into weeds. "I want to find out what's at the root of the sinful act I committed—continued on p. 3



Psalm 133:1

God's harvest we'll glean in 2016 "Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." —Ruth 2:2

Resolve and Resolutions, from p. 2
ted. And then I will carefully endeavor to do so no more and to fight and pray with all my might against the root—against the original (cause) of that sin." He wanted to get down at the root of these weeds of sinful flesh in his life.

He said, "Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, in my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be." He knew that there were some things in his life that perhaps had a stronger grip than others. We can think of some sin issues we have battled with for years and years. Edwards was recognizing that these besetting sins do exist. But he said, "I'm not going just to resign myself to having to live a defeated life for Christ. By the power of God's Spirit I'm going to wage a relentless warfare against that sin and against its roots." His biographer said that Edwards could not be contented while one sin remained in him. He longed for the holy perfection of the heavenly world and anticipated with joy that day when he should awake with the divine likeness. That's what gives us hope, isn't it? Knowing that God is in the process of sanctifying us, purifying us, transforming us—if we are willing to live this examined life, to pursue holiness, then we know that "it is God Who is at work within us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Phil 2:13. Edwards recognized that he could not fulfill these resolutions in his own power. In fact, in commenting on these resolutions, one writer said, "He was too well acquainted with human weakness and frailty, even where the intentions are most sincere, to enter any resolutions rashly or

Discipleship Here At Home

from a reliance on his own strength. He therefore looked to God for aid, who alone can give success. His whole dependence was on the grace of God." At the beginning of these resolutions, Edwards wrote these words: "Being conscious that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly plead with Him, by His grace, to enable me to keep these resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to His will, for Christ's sake." So we see here a man who knew he could not please God in his own strength, in his own energy—that as resolved as he was, that it took a whole lot more than some New Year's resolutions to live a holy life. It took the grace and the power of God. So we say, "I can't do this without God's help. So I'm pleading with You, Lord, if these resolutions are pleasing to You, then, Oh, God, would You be the One who fulfills them in me?" These resolutions remind us to pursue holiness. No one accidentally follows Christ. Those who are called of God take deliberate steps to walk in the path of righteousness.

Develop Discipline. One of the things that comes out in Edwards's resolutions is that he purposed to live a disciplined life. "Discipline" is not a word we're crazy about. Discipline sounds like work. It sounds hard. And it is. In fact, "No discipline, for the moment, seems pleasant, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it," Heb 12:11. When we get on the treadmill in the morning or go out to do strenuous walking, that isn't pleasant. But we desire the result that it's going to produce that is worth the discipline. Edwards was saying in his resolutions, "There's an result that I have in mind. I can envision what it is to be like Jesus, and I'm willing to pay a price to get from here to there." So he purposed to live a disciplined life—to live temperately, to bring every area of his life under the control of the Holy Spirit.

For example, he said, "I'm resolved to maintain the strictest temperance, in eating and drinking." In relation to his physical continued on p. 4

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- **Mike Bennett**—hospitalized in FL with serious staph infection in hand
 - **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; • **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** **Letha Fink** remains in Portales, NM, with family grieving the loss of her sister.
Rejoice The **Shreves** are expecting their first baby in April.

Resolutions, from p. 3

habits, he said, "I'm going to be disciplined. I'm going to be temperate." Why? Because he wanted all of his life to bring glory to God. Apparently, Edwards discovered what many of us have learned in our own lives—if we're not temperate in those most simple, basic areas of life—what we eat, what we drink—then we're going to be more vulnerable to be lacking in discipline and in temperance in other areas where the implications of lack of discipline may be more serious.

For example, one of the purposes in our lives may be to live a morally pure life—in thinking, in habits, in relationships—to live a life that is morally above reproach. But what would make us think that we can live a morally pure and disciplined life if we are not disciplined in the simple things of our exercise, our diet, what we do with our physical habits. "Make no provision for the flesh," says the Spirit, "to fulfill its lusts," Rm 13:14. Take care of the details. "Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things," 1 Tim 4:8. It does profit a little. In the big scheme of things, what we eat and what we drink and exercise and these physical habits aren't the all-important thing. But they do lay a foundation in some very practical ways for other disciplines in our lives.

Learn Duty. Edwards said, "I'm resolved never to do anything but my duty, and then, to do it willingly and cheerfully, as unto the Lord, and not to man." Whether it's easy or hard, whether I like it or not, whether it's convenient or not—I'm going to do what I'm supposed to do. I'm going to find out my duty, and I'm going to do it. Today so many of us tend to live our lives based on what we feel like doing rather than what we know we're supposed to be doing. So what is our duty? Scripture is very clear about some aspects of our duty as men and women. For example, Paul said to Titus that he was to teach older men and women something; older women were supposed to teach younger women something. Older women are to be reverent in the way that they live. It's a duty. They are not to be slanderers. They are not to be addicted to much wine. They are to be temperate in their habits. They are to teach what is good to younger women. If you are an older woman, the things that Paul listed there are your duty. He's not saying, "Do them if you feel like doing them." He's not saying, "Be temperate, be reverent in the way that you live, do not be a slanderer, and teach younger women if you feel like doing it today or if you feel qualified to do it." He's saying, "This is your duty." To the younger women he is saying, learn from older women—this is your duty. Learn to be discreet, chaste, busy at home, kind, obedient to husbands. To the younger men he is saying your duty is to be sober-minded, self-controlled, showing honesty, integrity, reverence, an example of good works. Do your duty.

Jonathan Edwards resolved to live an intentional life. Perhaps you have been prompted to make some spiritual resolutions. What is it that God has put on your heart to believe Him to do in your life over this next year? Are there areas of sinful flesh that you'd like to see victory over? Are there areas of holiness that you need to pursue—areas God has been putting specific issues on your heart? Have you thought, "I need to deal with this, I need to deal with that?" Start by resolving to pursue holiness. And then pray, "Oh, Lord, I can't do this on my own. All my hope is Christ and His righteousness living in me and living His life through me. By Your grace, oh, Lord, perfect that which You have put in my heart to do for Your glory."



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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**, studies on the attributes of God: "Show Me YOUR Glory," Jim Reingrover
- **sermon**, "New Theme for 2016: Abide and Abound," Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon

- **sermon**, "An Expository Lesson on Luke 22," Jim Reingrover

New Wednesday night study: The Thessalonian Letters

First Friday

Everyone is invited to an application of the book of Joshua this Friday evening, 1/8, 7 pm, at the Howells' house, soup and salad supper before study. RSVP and see **DeWayne Howell** for details.