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# No More New Year's Resolutions

by Bill Allison

Are you sick and tired of making New Year's resolutions you can't keep? Why not try something different this year? Why not resolve to do something that you can actually accomplish? To get you started right this new year, I'm offering you...

## Seven New Year's Resolutions You Can Keep

1. To gain weight—at least 15 pounds.
2. To stop exercising.
3. To read less.
4. To watch more TV.
5. To procrastinate more—starting tomorrow.
6. To get further into debt.
7. To spread out priorities beyond the ability to keep track of them.

On second thought, you may want to read the rest of this article before you make any more New Year's resolutions—even easy ones!



## A Prayer for January 2nd

For the overwhelming majority of us who will make yet one more New Year's resolution on January 1st—I offer you the following prayer for January 2nd:

*Dear God,*

*I want to thank you for being close to me so far this year. With your help I haven't been impatient, lost my temper, been grumpy, judgmental, or envious of anyone. But I will really need your help soon because... I'm about to get out of bed.*

*Amen*

## Resolve Doesn't Mean Results

We make resolutions on New Year's Day to become better people. Our hearts are often in the right place, but somehow, our resolve doesn't quite translate into results.

Research on New Year's resolutions indicates that

- Within the first two months of the new year, 25 percent of us will break our promises.
- By six months, nearly 40 percent will have failed.
- By the end of the year, approximately 82 percent will be unsuccessful.

Think about your own life. Haven't you ever made a New Year's resolution to diet only to gain weight? Okay, I might be projecting my issues onto you with that example, but haven't you ever done something similar? We all start out so well, but most of us don't

finish well. As the great poet/philosopher Homer once said: “I used to rock and roll all night and party every day. Then it was every other day. Now I’m lucky if I can find a half an hour a week in which to get funky.”—Homer Simpson

### **Resolve Not to Make Any New Year’s Resolutions! (Get it?)**

While there is something in the human psyche that gravitates to new beginnings, if you really want to start this new year right, forget about making New Year’s resolutions. Don’t waste your breath huffing and puffing about how YOU are going to change yourself. Instead, do something REALLY life-changing this year: *Dare to write a personal growth plan this year.*

### **Not the Same... Not Even Close**

You might be thinking, “Aren’t New Year’s resolutions and personal growth plans the same thing?” That’s a fair question, and the short answer is no. A personal growth plan is not a New Year’s resolution in sheep’s clothing. Consider the following significant differences:

<b>New Year’s Resolutions</b>	<b>Written Personal Growth Plans</b>
Verbal proclamation starting January 1	Written plan as a guide all year long
Fighting bad habits	Surrendering to Jesus Christ first
I will change myself.	Only God can bring lasting change in me
Concerned primarily with outward change (quit smoking, losing weight, eat healthy)	Concerned with both the inner and outer person for the glory of God (spiritual growth and stewarding the body)
Me and my desired for my life	God and what He wants for my life
Self-help books only	The Bible first and foremost
My success	Advancement of God’s work through me
End of the year: 82 percent unsuccessful	End of the year: 80 percent successful

### **You Can Form... Only God Can Transform**

So why not do something different this year? instead of making New Year’s resolutions, try writing a God-directed personal growth plan for your life. Writing a personal growth plan starts with the biblical premise that God is the one who causes authentic change and lasting personal growth in our lives. However, while our personal growth is at its core a God-thing, you must understand that God still expects you to put forth effort in cooperating with His working in your life! Paul accentuates this balance of the human cooperating with the Divine for the purpose of growth clearly in I Corinthians 3:6-9:

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God [all the while] was making it grow and [He] gave the increase. So neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters, but [only] God who makes it grow and become greater. He who plants and he who waters are equal (one in aim, of the same importance and esteem), yet each shall receive his own reward (wages), according to his own labor. For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with and for God; you are God's garden and vineyard and field under cultivation, [you are] God's building. (AMP, bold mine)*

At least three facts are clear about our growth from this passage:

1. **God is the source of growth**—not any person.
2. **We are to cooperate with God in the growth process.** As Paul said, we are “workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with God...”
3. **Growth is hard work.** Note how often Paul uses words that describe the hard work he and Apollos engaged in to cooperate with God for growth. The idea of “planting” and “watering” is mentioned three times—in addition to his use of the words “labor,” “workmen,” and “laborers.”

### **A Great Way to Cooperate with God’s Work in You This Year**

It’s true that growth is a God-thing—but that does not exclude God’s desire for your participation in the arduous process. God does it but he expects you to plant, water, and work. Once I was speaking at a student conference where Joel Hanson, formerly of the great Christian music group PFR, was the worship leader. During a prayer time before our sessions, I was really blessed as Joel prayed, “God, we know you are going to do your life-changing work in this session, but help us to cooperate with you by pouring ourselves out 100 percent for you and these students.” I believe that is exactly the spirit of I Corinthians 3:6-9. At least eight times in the New Testament we are told to “make every effort” in our growth toward becoming like Jesus. I challenge YOU to “make every effort” to cooperate with God’s work in and through you this year by writing a personal growth plan.

The question is: Will you?



### **What’s My Next Step?**

If you’d like some clear, practical, and biblically-based next steps on how to write a personal growth plan, please keep reading...

