

## ***The End Is Better Than The Beginning***

*“The end of a matter is better than its beginning; patience of spirit is better haughtiness of spirit.”  
(Eccl.7:8)*

As we end this year, will you do anything differently this coming year? Same routines? Same schedules? Same habits? Same financial picture? Same spiritual picture? Same type of books read? Same friends to hang out with? Or, will you put a stake in the ground and determine that this coming year will be different? More spirituality? More involvement with my church family? More reaching out? More faith? More time for family? Better saving financially? Better spiritual habits? Better care of your body? A better year?

We often call such things, “resolutions” meaning we have “resolved” to do things. But often, our first of the year resolutions last about a month and they are gone. Back to the old ways, old habits and old thoughts. Eventually these add up to a lifetime and that defines our life.

I have found that the best diet in the world is the mirror. When a person is tired of the way they look, they will do something. The best financial plans is your bank statement. When you are tired of living paycheck to paycheck, you will do something. The best spiritual plan is Sunday - when you are tired of giving lip service to the God that loves you so much, you'll start making changes. The motivation is I want to do better. I want to be better.

The end is better than the beginning...Let's make it so, by living for Jesus every day.

**- by Roger Shouse**

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## ***Mature Love***

*“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up my childish ways” (1 Corinthians 13:11)*

Someone once said that when he was a boy he used to shine his father's shoes. He did this because his father told him to and he feared being punished if he didn't.

When he became an adolescent his father started to pay him a dollar to shine his shoes for him. He then would shine his father's shoes not just because he asked him to do it but because he wanted the money.

Now that he is a man he still shines his father's shoes but for a different reason. Whenever he goes home to see his father he'll ask if he can shine his shoes for him, but not because he fears being punished. He doesn't do it because he hopes to be paid either. He does it because he loves his father and wants to make him happy.

Father, we embrace and rejoice in your commandments because we want to please you above all else!

**- by David Maxson**

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## ***God Belongs In The Center***

In the early chapters of Numbers, we are treated to a layout of the camp of Israel. Three tribes camped on the east side (2:1-9), three on the south (2:10-16), three on the west (2:18-24), and three on the north (2:25-30). In the center of the camp, the Levites were to set up the tabernacle (2:17). Why is this important? It means that God was at the center of the camp, and God was to be their focus, at the heart of everything Israel did. Dads, what about your camp? Is God set up at the center? Is He the focus of all that you are trying to accomplish with your family? Do your children understand that He comes first in all that you do?

**- by Rusty Miller**

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## ***I Can Do That!***

It's easy to become overwhelmed at the thought of a big assignment or a difficult challenge.

Sometimes the contemplation of a long and hard task makes us weary even before we begin. In such instances it can be helpful to break the job down into smaller, 'do-able' segments. As these manageable 'bites' are accomplished, the whole project ultimately gets completed.

As we think about our obligations in service to the Lord we might feel weighed down. But, if we think in terms of the single acts of duty that we can definitely achieve, everything is soon within our reach. Add in God's promised help (Hebrews 13:5,6) and we are well on our way to success. Like Paul, we can say: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

As we begin this new year, think of some of the things that need to be done; some of the things that you know you should be doing; and think positively about each one. Have the attitude that says: "I can do that!" For instance:

**I can** read my Bible every day. That's 'do-able', and in the process I will become a better Bible student.

**I can** attend every worship service and Bible study. Taken one at a time, this will soon add up to a whole year of faithful service; a whole year of gaining strength; a whole year of encouraging my brethren; a whole year of glorifying God. Wow! That's really worth doing!

**I can** talk to my friend, my neighbor, my family member, or my co-worker about my faith in Christ and the blessings it brings into my life. Who knows? That may lead to a conversion over the course of time. I can do that!

**I can** pray for my brethren, thinking regularly about their spiritual and physical well-being. As I do that they will be helped, and I will develop a stronger and more caring relationship with them.

There are lots of 'little things' that are within my grasp, and they all add up to some really good and necessary accomplishments for the Lord. All I need is an attitude that says: "I can do that!"

**- by Greg Gwin**