

Improve Your Life

1. *Turn off the TV and read your Bible.* The Psalmist said of the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2).
2. *Hang up the phone and pray.* I never cease to be amazed at how much time some people spend on their cell phones. Is all that talking necessary or profitable? "Pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas. 5:16).
3. *Get up out of bed an hour earlier and come to Bible study.* "As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed" (Prov. 26:14).
4. *Cut down your credit card purchases and give.* Give to the poor. Increase your contribution at church. "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
5. *Change the conversation from sports, weather, and politics to spiritual things.* Do that at home. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7). Do that at work, too. "He who wins souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

- via Manslick Road Speaker

Toward Better Communication

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

Can you imagine better advice for getting along with others? How often we hear it said that the problem in a family, a plant, an office, a school, or even a church is a breakdown of communication. Obedience to this verse would change all of that.

"Be quick to hear." Listen! Try to understand where the one who is talking "is coming from" and what he or she really means. See if you can repeat what was said so accurately that the one who said it will agree that you have stated the position accurately.

Now, make sure a reply is needed. We do not have to correct every mistake we hear. Some are not serious enough to require attention. Others, though serious, may have to wait for a more suitable time to be corrected.

Even if a reply is needed, take your time. "Be slow to speak." Think of what you are saying. Think how it will sound to the one hearing it and how it will sound if it is repeated to someone else. Ask yourself if what you are about to say will do good or do harm. Ask God to help you to say only what needs to be said. Nehemiah was asked a question by the king and managed a prayer before he answered (Neh. 2:4-5). Remember that once you have spoken, you cannot recall your words.

Above all, "be slow to anger." Anger almost always breaks down communication; shouting matches seldom end in a better understanding of each other. And, besides jeopardizing human relationships, they endanger our relation with God. We may fancy that our anger is "righteous indignation," but the Holy Spirit says: "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Are you thinking, "That's not much of a way to win an argument"? RIGHT! But it is a pretty good way to stop one. How would you like to by to argue with someone who is "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger"?

- by Sewell Hall

God's Plan

In the first century, God's plan for saving the lost and caring for the saved was made known through the apostles and put into practice by the disciples. God's plan was simplicity itself. And its success was the marvel of all the world. The gospel was sent to the lost. The poor and needy were cared for. And the church was edified.

How was the gospel sent to the lost? By congregations (1 Thess 1:2-8) and individual Christians (Gal 6:6) supporting evangelists to carry the gospel message all over the world, and by every faithful Christian “who (would) teach others also” (2Tim 2:2).

How were the poor and needy cared for? By each congregation caring for its own needy (Ac 4:34-35, 1 Tim 5:16) and receiving help from other congregations when needed (Rom 15:25-26), and by each individual Christian “doing good unto all men” as there was opportunity (Gal 6:10).

How was the church edified? By the elders of each congregation “feeding the flock of God which is among them” (1 Pet 5:2), and by Christians “exhorting one another” and “provoking one another unto love and good works” (Heb 10:24-25).

This plan is tried and proven. It worked in the first century, and it will work in the twentieth century. We do not need a new plan. We do not need an improved plan. But we do need renewed zeal for executing God’s plan.

- by **Bill Walton**

Where Will I Be In Another Year?

With the end of a calendar year and the beginning of a new one, there is always a tendency to look back — and to look forward. Evaluations are made in regards to our financial status, our career pursuits, and other important matters. Surely it is appropriate to evaluate our spiritual welfare.

Ask yourself this simple question: If I keep doing what I am presently doing, where will I be in another year?

- Will I be a stronger Christian because I am doing things that will help me grow in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)? Or, will I be weaker as a result of continuing to ignore the most important things in life?
- Will I be a better Bible student? Will my knowledge of the Word have increased through regular and consistent study? Or, will I still be only wishing that I knew my Bible better?
- Will I have brought any lost soul to the Lord through a committed effort to teach others? Will I have invited folks to visit the assemblies, or encouraged them to have a private Bible study? Or, will I only be giving lip-service to the whole notion of personal work?
- Will I improve in my ability to react to life’s provocations in a godly and controlled manner? Will I be displaying more of the “divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4) as I deal with people and problems? Or, will I still be easily provoked and often fail as trials and temptations are placed before me?
- Will I have broken that “bad habit” that has nagged me for so long? Or, will I still be offering lame excuses and trying to convince myself that “I can’t”?
- Will my example be stronger? Will others begin to recognize dependability in me? Will I be constantly striving to do all I can as a disciple (1 Cor. 15:58)? Or, will I be counted as only a “lukewarm” Christian (Rev. 3:15-17)?

If I keep doing what I’m presently doing, where will I be in another year? Or, more to the point, where will I be in eternity? Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**