

What Are You Willing To Give Up?

The world that we live in is not one of spiritual-mindedness. It is not a world of godliness or one of righteousness. The world in which we dwell is one full of sin and all kinds of evil. It is a sad thing to look at the world knowing that most people are not going to make it to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). What is perhaps even more sorrowful is looking at attitudes that individuals have in the church.

Think about all the blessings we have as children of God. Look at all the many things He has done for us and what a debt we owe that we will never be able to repay. Yet, although we understand and say, "Yes, I owe a lot to God", we often fail to act as though we truly believe that. Why is it that we claim to understand the blessed state of being a child of God but do not put our best foot forward to be pleasing to Him? Do we not believe that only the faithful will make it to heaven? Do we not believe, as Jesus said, that only he who does the will of the Father will make it to heaven (Matthew 7:21)?

I believe a major reason why Christians are not as committed as they should be is because they aren't willing to give up the things of the world to live for the Lord. John said in I John 2:15, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The world and God are on opposite ends of the spectrum. How can you have both? John says later in vs. 17 that the world is passing away. It's only the one who does the will of God who will abide forever. We forget just how temporary our lives are here on this earth. We get caught up in thinking that this is most important, the here and now. It's not!! All that we have on this earth won't be here eternally. It is going to be passing away. Does it make more sense to concentrate on the things that will one day be passing on or is it better to put our efforts into that which will be here eternally? Most anyone will tell you, "Yes, we have to concentrate on spiritual things", but how many are doing just that?

What are you willing to give up to go to heaven? Many in the world expect to go to heaven but do not do anything to insure it. Many Christians expect to go to heaven but do not want to give up worldliness. Paul told Timothy that times would come when men would be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"(II Tim. 3:4). The same thing is true today. People just have too many things to do. "I'm too busy to serve God", would fit a lot of peoples actions. Those whose busy lives interfere with their commitment to the Lord will have much time in eternity away from God to think about all the times they were too busy to be spiritual.

I ask again, what are you willing to give up to go to heaven? Are you willing to give up things that would interfere with your attendance in worshipping God (hobbies, concerts, sports, etc)? Are you willing to give up the short, tight, and low cut outfits designed only to be seen by others? Are you willing to give up talking, acting, and behaving like those of the world? Are you willing to give up worldly associations that might hinder you from being a faithful Christian? If you are not willing to give up even these few things, how can you say you are willing to sacrifice to go to heaven?

Heaven has its cost and so does the life of being a Christian, but the benefits of the sacrifice involved far outweigh the burdens of this life. Think of what Christ was willing to give up so that you could have these blessings (II Corinthians 8:9). He gave up His very life. How much of an inconvenience is it for you to live a faithful obedient life to make it to heaven? It should not be a burden at all but simply a small sacrifice for the love and kindness He showed to us. Abstain from every appearance of evil (I Thess. 5:22) so that you may reap the reward of heaven.

- by Shane Williams

The End of Days

As we draw to the close of the year, our thoughts turn naturally to the swift passing of time. If you are like me, maybe you've spent a few moments mulling your own brief life. Maybe you've even given some thought to the long history of mankind, or contemplated man's final destiny. Have you ever wondered what you will be doing on the last day? No, I don't mean the last day of the year, or even of your life - I'm speaking of the very last day. Here's what Jesus said He will do for you on the last day if you will believe and obey Him: "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." --John 6:40

But here's what will be happening to you if you refuse to believe and obey Jesus' words: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." -- John 12:48

"We spend our days like bright and shiny new dimes." With each passing day we purchase our last day. Let the buyer beware.

- by *Steve Klein*

Challenges for the New Year

The beginning of a new year provides an excellent opportunity for us to pause, ponder, plan, and prepare for the future. We hope that the new year will especially cause us all to think about our spiritual service to God and how we can improve in the fulfillment of our duties to Him. Let us challenge you in these specific areas:

1 - Spend more time in prayer. Don't allow the day to begin or end without spending time in prayer to God. Throughout the day, stop and petition Him for help and strength. And, by all means, don't just wait for a crisis to develop before you think to pray. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

2 - Study your Bible more consistently. Use one of the available daily Bible reading schedules, or come up with your own plan to read on a regular basis. Don't just rush through a few verses. Instead, really study the text to learn its meaning. Before you end a reading session, think about how you can make application of what you've read in a real and practical way. "Give attendance to reading . . ." (1 Timothy 4:13).

3 - Attend every Bible study and worship in this new year. This, of course, is your duty -- but it is also a privilege. BE HERE! Make this a high priority. Why would you not want to be present to worship God and study His Word? "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . ." (Hebrews 10:25).

4 - Teach the lost. We all have friends, neighbors, co-workers and family members who are lost in sin. They NEED us to share the gospel with them. Make a firm commitment to reach at least one of them with the "good news" this year. If each Christian would bring just one person to the Lord each year, we could soon convert the whole world. Let's do it! "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19).

5 - Live a pure, godly life. Nothing else matters if we are not living faithfully for the Lord. Think about this, and let it be manifested in how you talk, where you go, who you associate with, how you dress, etc. Others are looking to you, and evaluating Christianity on the basis of what they see of it in you. "Ye are the light of the world . . . let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

In a very real sense, having a "Happy New Year" depends on how well you fulfill your spiritual duties to God. Think!

- by *Greg Gwin*