

The End Is Better Than The Beginning

Ecclesiastes 7:8 *"The end of a matter is better than its beginning; patience of spirit is better haughtiness of spirit."*

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 plan 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

Second Mile Religion

There are two classes of men: those who act only when circumstances force them to do something, and those who gladly volunteer to act regardless of circumstances. One says: "What do I have to do?" The other says: "What may I do?" One is always looking for a way out of his duties. The other is always looking for opportunities to do good.

We are not left to wonder which attitude pleases God. We are taught to look for opportunities to do good (Gal.6:10). Jesus favored the son who did his father's will rather than the one who merely "talked" obedience (Mt.21:28-32).

A man deserves no praise for engaging in only the barest minimum of service to God. What would you think of a father who measures the time he is to spend with his children down to the last second, and then, when their time is up, forbids them to "bother" him? Or what about a husband who refuses to give his wife one penny more than is absolutely necessary for living? Does such a man deserve commendation? Yet this attitude correctly describes many in their relationship to the Lord -- they are satisfied with doing only what they have to do, AND NOT ONE THING MORE!

Jesus taught, *"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain"* (Mt. 5: 41). If Jesus commanded 'go the second mile' as the proper response to an unjust Roman law, how much more does He expect it from us who have His perfect law? When was the last time *you* went the second mile?

- by Rick Duggin

What Shall We Call It?

There is an old story about a certain denominational church which was raising money for a new building. In keeping with denominational custom, they sent the ladies of the congregation out to beg for money from the businessmen of the town. On being solicited for a donation one businessman replied, "Tell you what I'll do. If you will put a sign on the front of the building, 'This is a Church of Christ: I'll give you a hundred dollars.'" "Oh no," gasped the lady, "We could not do that, because it is not a church of Christ."

"Very well," replied the businessman, "If you will put up a sign, 'This is **not** a Church of Christ,' I'll still give the hundred dollars." "But you don't understand," cried the lady, "It is a church of Christ, only it is not a church of Christ, that is, you see, in a way of speaking . . . goodbye!"

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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