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I know we are all thinking it. What will the New Year be like? What will change? What will the new president be like and will the changes be good for me and my family? Will the economy turn around? I could add many questions and would not even scratch the surface of the expectations and the fears regarding 2009.

Maybe a better question might be "What should I do, as a Christian, to make this year the very best year in my walk with Christ?" How can the "New" Year be different than the "Old" Year? Now those are questions I can help with!

Many of us think about the age-old tradition of resolutions. We make them and sometimes break them in the first few weeks of the year. Why, because resolutions of words are powerless without the Word of God behind them. We get into the mode of the "Little Engine that could" and believe that if we say "I think I can" enough times then what we seek will magically come true. A positive attitude is great and commendable but if we are acting in our own power we will have little long-term success over our desires, our addictions, our temper, our resolutions and, ultimately, our lives. People in 12-step programs know that without a power beyond themselves they will most likely fail in overcoming their addictions. That power (the only power that really works) is God.

Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." John 15:5 declares, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." If God is the center of your New Year's resolution, it has chance for success, depending on your commitment to it. Do you want to make a difference in the lives you touch? Seek God in your actions toward those lives. Do you want to break a habit or addiction? Seek God's help, stay in His Word and hang out with His people. Do you want to look and feel better? Then claim the promise that your body is God's temple and do what is necessary to take care of it. Do you want to become a real and active part of your church? Then support your church with prayer, time, your giftedness and your resources. Do you seek to improve a relationship? Then invest in that relationship and realize that it will improve if your investment is made without expecting something in return from the other person.

Here's my best advice for you. If you want to make 2009 a better year, love better. God's Word uses the word love 551 times, about half in the Old Testament and half in the New Testament. It is used carefully, specifically and it is not an option for becoming a resident in God's Kingdom. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that if we are to love in a Godly way we must love patiently, love with kindness, love without boasting and love without pride. We must love seeking the good of others, not yourself. As Christians, we love without rudeness or selfishness. We don't keep tabs on the "wrongs" of the other person. We love delighting in truth and rejecting evil desires. We love in a way that invests our trust in the risk of relationship and we love so that you protect the interest of the other person. We love hopefully and steadfastly and we have faith that the love to which we are called never fails. Paul reminds us here that the sound and fury of eloquent voices, loud drums, prophetic pronouncements and knowledge do not hold a candle to love. Yes, if you want to be an "impact player" in the world of 2009, love well.

In Christ's Love, Pastor Randy

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