

"I Am Resolved"

God has wonderfully given us this year. What have you done with it and what will you do with the coming new year? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to find ways to draw closer to God, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Will. When you consider how much God loves us, it's only fitting that we give Him the full measure of our love and devotion. Each week we come into your home with a Bible lesson, because we want to know everything we can about the God we love. We're always so delighted when you spend this time with us. We want to be part of your life each week.

As we think about this past year, let me say thank you to each of you, our viewers. Your encouragement, prayers, and kind words have truly lifted our hearts. You've made this year wonderful, and we expect nothing but good in the coming year! Each day we live is God's gift to us; and how we use our days is our gift to God. God didn't create us to waste our lives in things that don't matter. He wanted to bless us and to be close to us. He wanted us to know His love and enjoy His grace. He opens His heart to us so that we might have forgiveness of sins and the peace that passes understanding.

This time of year people make resolutions or commitments to improve their lives. Some vow they will lose weight, some change their diet, and some stop bad habits or start good habits. The best thing we can do to make life better is to go back to the basics of drawing close to God. I want to challenge you today to examine yourself and rebuild your spiritual life, if you need to. Build your faith, build your hope, and build your love! Make this a year of growing close to God!

Now if you'd like a copy of our study on spiritual growth, we offer this information free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream our program online at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3 verses 1 to 4, and learn how to resolve and to do better in the coming year.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossian, chapter 3, verses 1 through 4. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for the promise that we have, of being able to live with You when Your Son Jesus returns. And Father we're thankful that You have given us such hope and such life. Help us, heavenly Father, to love You and to do Your will always on this earth as it is done in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

As we think of this year coming to an end, it's fitting for us to examine our souls. Do we please the Lord? Do our words and lives honor Him? Can we say that we're closer to the Lord today than we were this time last year? 2 Corinthians 13 verses 5 to 6 says, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"

We first need to honestly look at ourselves. Let's put aside pretense and look deep into our hearts. We'll probably find things there that we don't like, sinful thoughts and behaviors for which we're ashamed. You know, it's time to put away our pet sins and to repent from our hearts. Those who are outside of Christ need to become Christians by obeying the gospel, and those who are members of the Lord's church but have strayed away, they need to come home, asking for forgiveness from the Lord.

Now once you've made your soul right with God, and we'll talk about how a little bit later in this program, you need to begin some spiritually healthy habits. The second thing is to begin reading your Bible every single day. Sadly, many Christians have never read the Bible all the way through. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 verses 2 to 3, "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you've tasted the kindness of the Lord." Reading the Bible is how we listen to God, how we come to know Him, and how we learn the way to please Him. Now if you follow the yearly Bible reading guide that we have online at searchtv.org, you can read the whole Bible within one year.

Now reading the Bible will build your faith in Jesus Christ. John 20 verses 30 to 31 says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Now the more you study God's Word, the stronger your faith will become. Faith still comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, or the Word of Christ (Romans 10 and verse 17).

Psalms 1 verses 1 to 3 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." Now I hope you understand that God's Word is not merely a guide to right and wrong; it's also the path to blessing. God teaches us what is right in order to bless us and to prosper us. God knows what's best, and He gives us the Word to guide us in the way that brings blessing.

Third, begin praying again. Pray humbly, fervently, and regularly. 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 17 says, "pray without ceasing." Now this is not suggesting that we pray 24 hours a day; well, nobody could do that. The Bible here is saying that we should not quit praying. Some people quit for days on end. They pray on Sunday or when they're with others, but they've ceased praying on their own. Your Father in heaven wants to hear from you. Don't stop talking to Him.

Now Jesus, the Son of God, needed time with the Father. And the Bible says in Luke 5 and verse 16, "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." God wants to hear from you too. You don't have to beg Him to listen to you. Prayer was God's idea. Some religions think God is too busy to listen, but God is like a father who cares about every aspect of His children's lives.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:7 to 11, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

Prayer is how we give thanks to the Father. It's how we as Christians ask for forgiveness. Prayer is how we seek help from the Father for ourselves and for our loved ones. Prayer is how we pour out our hearts to the Father when we're hurting or afraid. Prayer is how we grow intimate with God. If you

want to transform your prayer life, take a few minutes before you pray, and think about the One to whom you are speaking. You're talking to God, the Creator of the Universe, who made you, loves you, and cares deeply about every aspect of your life.

When you pray, ask in faith. I don't believe in my praying; I believe in God's answering. I believe in the power of God who hears my prayers. The Bible says in James 1 verses 5 to 8, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Fourth, start attending church regularly. The Bible says in Hebrews 10 verses 22 to 25, "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

We need the strength of brethren to keep our faith and our love strong. Worshiping God at church regularly keeps our hearts focused on God. We take the Lord's Supper each Lord's day to remember what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, sacrificing His body and blood for us. Singing, and praying, and hearing the Word preached helps us to keep God in our hearts and to learn of all His love. Giving of our means allows us to demonstrate our love to God. Worshiping with the church is vital to keep our faith and our love strong! And oh, how we need to do that.

Fifth, let's live with moral excellence or virtue. You know, we don't hear much today about virtue or moral excellence, but God honors moral purity and righteousness. Living sexually pure lives, paying our bills, keeping our word, and treating others as we wish to be treated, these are all signs of faith and devotion to God. Now Christians live godly lives because they love Christ and they want to do what is right.

The Bible urges us in 2 Peter 1 and verse 5, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge." Romans 12 and verse 9 teaches us to "Abhor what is evil; and to cling to what is good." The Bible teaches us in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to 22 to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

1 John 2 verses 15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world or the things that are in the world. And if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that's in the world—(well, that's) the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away (John says) along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." Now how we live matters to our souls, because sin is offensive to God, it's always been offensive to God, so let's live as people who love God and show it by our holy lives.

Number six, let's imitate Jesus Christ by serving others. The Bible in Romans 12 and verse 15 urges us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep." We should be loving and compassionate to those who are in need. Galatians 6 verses 9 to 10 says to the churches of Galatia, and not just one church but to many churches who all could go together and help, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we (that is all those churches of Galatia) will reap if we don't grow weary. So then, while we (that is all the churches of Galatia) while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

Now the world identifies us as followers of Christ by the love that we show one another. The Lord Jesus said in John 13 verses 34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, that you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Now acts of love and kindness open the door of faith to unbelievers, and that's why we need to do this. And when we are able to give love, and they see our love, they become thankful. And you know what, they're more willing to learn about Jesus Christ.

The Bible points us to our victory over death and sin in the resurrection and urges us in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Now when we're busy serving God, God smiles on us. And our labor isn't wasted. God rewards those who put their trust in Him and serve Him by serving others. Christians serve because they know the goodness of God and they want to be like Him.

Seventh, let's encourage others to serve the Lord Jesus. Listen to me, nothing you'll ever do tomorrow will be more important than sharing the gospel with someone who is outside of Christ. And one way that you can do that, of course, is by encouraging them to watch the SEARCH program, there are many other ways, but this is one of those ways and we hope that you'll invite your friends to watch the SEARCH program.

Now Christians are responsible for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. Matthew 28, verse 18 to 20 says: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

Now that's why we share the good news about Jesus Christ, you see that good news about Jesus Christ is too good to keep to ourselves. We've got to tell everybody, everywhere about His love and His grace. Jesus died on the cross for our sins to reveal His love and grace to everyone. God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead to give us a living hope and to demonstrate once and for all that He is the Son of God. Christians tell the great story of His death, burial, and resurrection because they know the gospel is what people need most in life.

I tell you, money won't last and youth vanishes, but God's promises last forever. You can count on them. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse you from sin; only the Word of God can lead you to righteousness; and the Lord's way is the only way that leads to heaven. So let's follow Jesus. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful for Your love, and we're thankful for the truth that leads us to eternal life. And Father we pray that Your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Build your faith, build your hope, and build your love. Do this to make the coming year the best it can be! Paul wrote the church in Thessalonica these words in 1 Thessalonians 1 verses 2 to 3, he said "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

My friend, can these words be said about you? Can those who know you well say that you have faith, hope and love? Do they thank God for your work of faith, your labor of love, and the steadfastness of your hope in our Lord? Do your friends see Christ living in you? Do they see the love

of Christ, the joy of your salvation, the peace that passes understanding, and the hope of heaven in you? Have you spiritually matured any in the last year?

How you nurture your soul this year will make a difference in your relationship with God and in how you live your life. Will 2016 be a year of spiritual improvement or decline?

If you are not a Christian, you can become a committed one today. Believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Turn your heart and life from sinful ways to living for Christ; that's what repentance really is! Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the presence of others. And be baptized, immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is when the old man of sin is crucified with Christ, so that you may be free from sin (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). So live every day faithful and devoted to the Lord. And don't let anything come between you and the Lord.

Well we hope today's challenge to examine yourself and to grow has blessed you. If you want a free printed copy or CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. We offer Bible Correspondence courses that will help you learn more about God and His will for your life. If you'd like to have one, just let us know. We also offer free study sheets that go along with our programs. Now you can download them free at our website before each program or you can call and request them. Now we won't ask you for money or put you on a list.

We do ask that you please worship with a church of Christ in your area. They care about your soul. And that's why we never ask for money. And if you are looking for a church home, a biblical one, we'll help you find one. Well, we'll be glad to have you back next week. We hope that you'll keep coming and watching the Search program. So keep searching God's Word with us. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.