

Michael's Message

When we look back at the events of the last year, we might see a year of accomplishments and joyful events or we might remember frustration and tragedy. Regardless of prior events, we all pray and hope that next year will be better.

Many people start to think of New Year's resolutions. Some think of losing weight or going on a diet while others want to eliminate a bad habit or establish a new routine. After many years of failed New Year's resolutions, I have resolved to make no new resolutions.

I do try to make improvements in myself and my life, but they are not tied to a change in the calendar. I am usually responding to repeated mistakes or am noticing a particular weakness. When I feel that my relationship with Jesus Christ has grown distant, I examine myself to see what I might be doing or failing to do.

Usually I am not reading scripture with the same devotion as usual or my prayers have become rote. Everyone has periods when their spiritual lives become dry and that spills into the rest of life. When I feel distant from God, I become less joyful, disciplined, and loving.

When this happens, I will start reading scripture with more attention. I will start to look for the words that God may be directing to me on that day. Scripture is not something we read like a newspaper, but is more like the letter that we receive from a loved one. When you receive a letter from a brother, mother, sister, or dad, you do not read it as quickly as possible. You read it slowly so that you can savor the other person and remember the love that you share. When you read scripture you do the same thing, treasuring the words, enjoying the insights, and reexperiencing the relationship.

If you do not currently read the scripture daily, I encourage you to begin the practice. We have devotionals that are available for our members. If you prefer to read scripture without a devotional or commentary, the Presbyterian Church has a daily prayer routine that I have found quite useful. You read two Psalms, an Old Testament Passage, Acts or an epistle, and a gospel passage. There are also suggested prayers.

Maintaining the spiritual discipline of daily scripture reading can help you become a better disciple of Christ. Scripture can both be a source of comfort and challenge and we need both. God wants us to know that we are beloved children of God and does not want us to hurt others or ourselves.

I hope that you have a wonderful new year filled with God's blessings. I pray that you grow closer to God through Jesus Christ as you experience the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in scripture.

Michael

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