

Growing in Christ: Introduction

Luke 14:25-35 ~ January 14, 2024

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

- New Year's Resolutions – how many have set them? (41% make them)
- According to U.S. News & World Report, 80% of New Year's resolutions fail by the second week of February
- On average, 9% of people either completely or mostly keep their New Year's resolutions

WHY SHOULD WE SET GOALS?

- Can't we just "love God" and call it good? Only 10% of Christians have grown in the last ten years
- Just like we now have to make an effort to eat healthy foods, we have to be very focused and keep our faith at the forefront of our lives.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

- Verse 27: *Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*
 - It isn't simply praying the Sinner's Prayer
 - The Bible gives us guidance on how to live
 - We won't be perfect, but are we faithful? Do we seek to be obedient?
- Verse 28: *For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?*
 - Becoming a disciple takes discipline and planning
 - Do we sit down and really think through our faith and how we want to grow? Where are you strong in your faith? Where do you struggle?
- Verses 34-35: *Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; they throw it away.*
 - Compromise with the world
 - Love the ways of the world

BACK TO SETTING GOALS

- Following Jesus is a deliberate act – it takes obedience, effort, and focus
- Jack Shitama, *One New Habit, One Big Goal: Change Your Life in 10 Weeks*
- He focuses on a slow but sure process...goals that can be achieved in 10 weeks. Research supports the idea that it takes an average of 66 days to develop a new habit.

FOR US TODAY

1. What are some goals you'd like to set in 2024?
 - Spiritual – Bible reading and prayer
 - Physical – care of our temples
 - Financial – care of the resources God gives us
 - Family – precious relationships
 - Self-Care – wholistic health
2. Which one of these goals is most important to you?

HOLY SPIRIT MOMENT

- Some of you are ready for a challenge, and some of you are saying, "I cannot do one more thing." Some of you are walking into 2024 excited about new possibilities, and some are drained and exhausted.
- For those who are struggling – put self-care as your first goal
- We are taught that as Christians, we always need to be looking to God and others. But the scripture says to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves
- It is not selfish, but God-honoring, to care for ourselves
- How can you honor God by taking better care of yourself? That is counter-cultural but it is very Biblical. Society wants us to be more, do more, be better, do better, climb the ladder, never be satisfied, go big or go home. The Bible says, "Love your neighbor as yourself."