



What do you think about new year's resolutions? Here is what several preschoolers said about them: "I will brush my teeth twice a day, and wash my hands after going to the bathroom and before eating."

"I won't tease dogs - even friendly ones. I will avoid being bitten by keeping my fingers and face away from their mouths."

"I'm going to start eating more healthy foods so that I can be big and strong."

"I'm going to start cleaning up for myself because my dad has to do it."

"I'm going to do more chores so that I can get bigger allowances."

David Dewolf said, "I make it a habit to resolve to not commit to something for the New Year, simply because I find it a waste of time for me."

Jeff Goins said, "Don't waste your time with resolutions this New Year. Instead focus on something far better: resolve. While the words are similar, the difference is significant. A resolution is something you make. Resolve is something you have."

You probably have your own ideas about why you do or don't make New Year's resolutions. For most of us who have had problems succeeding in this area, we find the greatest challenge lies in changing our behavior. The problem with changing behavior is it requires a change in our

thinking. Psychologists have determined that the default attitude of "not trying to do it," in effect, just strengthens the desire to do whatever behavior we were trying to prevent.

In Romans 7:21-25, the Apostle Paul spoke about this dilemma. He said, "I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (NIV)

Perhaps we would not consider our need to go on a diet sin, or our failure to exercise or follow a budget. What we do find is, as with the Apostle Paul, there is strong opposition that occurs when we try to improve our lives by discontinuing less desirable habits.

Paul uses the Greek word "nomos," which has been translated "law." In this passage of Scripture, it implies any strong habit which we generally allow to impact our lives. Along with the desire to do what is right, in many instances there is an equal desire to do just the opposite. Often there is only the will, a wish, and a desire to make life changes while we struggle without the power to accomplish the goal. If you've made resolutions in the past, you are probably saying, "Been there and experienced that!"

In Paul's frustration he said, "What a wretched man I am!" If you've tried hard and at the end of the day still found yourself unsuccessful, you can probably identify. But here is Paul's conclusion, "Thanks be to . . . [Read the rest >>>](#)



If memory serves us well, it can teach us many valuable lessons. However, if we're not careful, the past may paralyze us. *USA Today* recently reported the story of Michael Perry, a man who trapped himself in nostalgia. After the September

11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, news media throughout the world covered the story. Michael saw the tragedy as an opportunity to capture a snapshot of history for his children, so he began collecting newspapers. His collection spanned 50 states and 30 countries, costing him \$150,000. 14 years later, Michael now has 1,026 newspapers.

While Michael's kids have shown little interest in his collection, Michael has revisited his collection every day, drinking up the pain and sorrow of the tragedy. He told *USA Today*, "As time goes on, I just can't move on. Maybe it impacted me more than I thought. I revisit the collection every day. It's still so devastating. . . . A lot of my friends are like, 'Move on, there are more important things happening. . . .' I'm sitting here stuck 14 years ago."

The Key of the Past

The past is a key which provides 20/20 insight into our successes and failures, triumphs and tragedies, victories and defeats, wisdom and follies, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. When viewed properly, it can serve as a springboard toward unleashing the potential of the present; when viewed improperly, it can paralyze, maim, and blind.

Each of us will advance into the new year with memories from 2015. Some will be pleasant and cheery: a job promotion, a friend's engagement, a major answered prayer, a new home, the birth of a child or grandchild, a new relationship, or the confirmation of a clean bill of health. Other memories will be tragic, painful, and disappointing: the loss of a loved one; a job layoff; health complications; financial strain; relational challenges at school, work, home, or church; terrorist activity; political instability; or global unrest.

The Potential of the Present

The new year may officially start on January 1; but depending on how much mental baggage you have rolled over from last year, you may find yourself in the same old rut in 2016. As you reflect upon 2015, what things would you like to change about the year? Make a list of what worked and what didn't, and keep it in mind so you can move forward. Here's the key to unleashing the potential of the present: Don't dwell on missed opportunities, failures, tragedies, losses, or let-downs. For me, I've found my focus most rewarded when I concentrate on Jesus Christ. If you are disappointed because you want others to like you, then learn to like yourself. Remember God loves you as you are, and He is working in your life to mold you into the image of His Son, Jesus.

Maybe you want to avoid overreacting to conflict. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and pray for God to love others



through you. Do you want to manage your time better? Then strategically plan your days and weeks. Take note of time killers and remove them from your life. (This may mean deleting your Facebook or YouTube app from your phone or setting a timer when using social media.) Make time with God your first priority, and He will help you organize your calendar.

Hebrews 12:1-2 provides good insight we can apply to our quest for a happy new year: *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses . . .* [Read the rest >>>](#)



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