

## Don't Look Back – Look Up

A positive outcome from my recent efforts to trim my waistline was the need to buy some new clothes. The sizes I wore for most of my adult life are baggy on me now. The pants bunched up as I tightened my belt to hold them up, so off I went to the clothing store. Now I can tuck my shirt in with a “slimmer look” instead of using it to mask my waistline. It was worth the effort.

Buying a new wardrobe was a big step for me. My conservative (in other words, penny-pinching) nature kicked in. I had a hard time disposing of the old clothes. I rationalized, “What if I go back to my old habits and need the larger size clothes again?” Could I sustain the effort to eat healthier and exercise daily or am I setting myself up for disappointment? I realized that if I hold onto the old clothes I am leaving the door open for a return to an unhealthier me. The question is, “Am I truly committed to the ‘me’ I want to be?” My plan was to be confident with God on my side.

In my case, I made the decision back in June to be healthy. I made my 30 pound goal in September and have maintained the target weight ever since. Today, I want to share with you what you can do to address your goal in the New Year.

The New Year is the time many people set new goals, commonly called resolutions. We acknowledge something that we have needed to change for a long time. The January 1 date on the calendar is sometimes an arbitrary catalyst for a fresh start. It will take more than just putting up a new calendar on the wall to make the effort a success, but take advantage of this opportunity to turn over a new leaf. Let it be a starting point. It doesn't happen by itself -- it takes a plan of action for it to happen. Lifestyle changes are just that – a change from the “business as usual” of recent times.



Although weight loss is the #1 resolution there are many other positive changes you could make. Perhaps you could seek a better balance of family and work time. The “old way” might be an obsession for success at work, and family gets whatever time is leftover. Or, perhaps you realize that God should be a priority in your life and not just a half day Sunday spot on the calendar. Perhaps the change could be to work into a new routine for daily quiet time for prayer and to be in the Word. Perhaps you anger easily. Maybe you are a procrastinator or you don't help out around home enough. The possibilities are endless. We all have something we can improve.

We have always known the right thing to do. It takes a conscious decision to make a change. Then, close the door on your old habits and be resolved to follow through on “the new you.” There will be challenging times as you work through the plan. Leave the old habits in the rear view mirror and concentrate on the road ahead of you. That road includes various stages you will go through as you work through the plan. Consider implementing the steps listed on the second page of this devotion. It is not as simple as snapping your fingers and it is magically done. The steps reflect a deeper commitment to achieve the end result.

You are not alone. You got into the old habits by trying to manage life on your own. Ask God for help, communicating with Him through daily prayer. He knows your struggles but He also knows He made you to be far more capable than you give yourself credit for. Also, seek earthly accountability partners. Your accountability partners are people who care about you, want you to grow in positive ways, but won't let you off the hook with lame excuses. I set myself up to be accountable by telling friends what I am going to do regarding exercise, and then I work hard to not let them down.



Part of my plan is to remove as many temptations as possible. I removed many of the now over-sized clothes from my closet. I have invested in new clothes that fit great now, but also will feel tight on me should I slip back into old habits. The Lord's Prayer says to "lead us not into temptation." Reduce and remove the temptations that test your resolve. It is easier to resist things that aren't readily available. There will be slip-ups, but stay firm in your commitment to achieve the goal. Don't let the occasional setback be the signal to give up. Don't leave the door open to make excuses when things get tough.



Most changes are as monumental as we make them out to be. We know what the right thing to do is. Make the right choices going forward. Be committed and don't look back. Instead, look up to God for strength. God will show you the better road ahead.

**Scripture:** *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.* (Joshua 1:9). *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### **Practical Steps to Making Change Your Roadmap to Success**

#### **Strengthening Your Commitment – Setting Yourself Up for Success**

- Make a conscious decision to make a needed change. Read Ephesians 4:23
- Believe you can change, with God's help – Philippians 4:13; Psalm 37:5
- Read what the Bible says about your habit – Joshua 1:8
- Repent for your sins – Proverbs 28:13
- Develop a Plan of Action – Proverbs 16:3, Philippians 1:6, Proverbs 21:21
- Instead of going overboard unrealistically, develop a sustainable plan – Ephesians 6:10-18
- Keep God in the loop - pray regularly – 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- Substitute good habits for bad habits – Romans 12:2

#### **Dealing With the Realities of Change**

- Seek the support of others – Galatians 6:2
- Practice what is right – 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Avoid temptation – Matthew 6:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Face one day at a time – Matthew 6:33-34
- Overcome the obstacles in your path and don't let temporary setbacks stop you – James 1:12.
- Celebrate Benchmarks of Progress – Acts 2:41-47
- Be patient – Galatians 6:9

**Question:** What behaviors would you like to change in your life?

**Prayer:** Most gracious Heavenly Father. We know there are things in our life that we need to change. Help us to develop and sustain an effort to become the person you intended us to be. Give us the willpower and strength to overcome the temptation to slip back into old ways. Amen.