Panel Discussion
Presentations

Should Christians Make New Year's Resolutions?

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Adventist Youth (AY)
Summary
It's the new year and everybody is making their list of resolutions. While the world is following behind this trend, should we as Christians be making new year's resolutions? Are there any dangers to having these grand plans of self-improvement for personal gain?
Scripture References
Proverbs 16:3
Program Audience
ALL
Preparations and resources

Select a panel of various ages and experiences to sit on the panel to answer the listed questions.

The new year brings with it a feeling of renewal. A burning passion for taking life by horns and overcoming every obstacle that held you back in the previous year. It is the time of year where the gym and parks are full of people taking charge of their health with proper exercise. Students fill libraries and study rooms, preparing for the new school term or semester with nothing but getting full marks on their minds. Old friends and family reconnect, promising to keep in touch throughout the year. Bad habits are thrown out, with no intention of returning.

Inevitably, most new year's resolutions fail. A new year has no particular significance beyond indicating that the earth just took 365.256 days to orbit the sun. So does it

even make sense to have a new year's resolution? What does the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy have to say about making new year's resolutions?

Ellen G White in Youth Instructor, February 11, 1908, commented on the significance of a new year.

> "*Although in one sense the first day of a new year is no more to God than any other day, yet he often puts into the heart of his children at that time a desire to begin the new year with good resolves,—perhaps with plans to carry out some worthy enterprise,—and with purposes to depart from the wrongs of the old year, and to live the new year with new determinations.*
>
> *In God's plan for his ancient people, he gave the command, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle." We have no tabernacle to set up as had the children of Israel, but we have a work of building to do, the importance of which all need to understand. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building," said the apostle. If we will work with God in the building of this tabernacle, establishing it firmly on the broad principles of heaven, then it can truly be said of us, "We are laborers together with God. We are yet in the early part of the new year. Let this work of consecration and progression be begun without delay. Let this first part of the new year be given to the work of pruning away the branches of selfishness. Let the mind turn with clear discernment to the work of examining critically our individual course of action.* "

In the Signs of the Times, January 2, 1901 she also wrote:

> "*The old year, with its burden of record, is fast passing away. The new year, with all its possibilities, will soon be ushered in. What advancement have we made in the knowledge of Christ during the past year? Are we prepared to show, more decidedly than ever before, that we are on the Lord's side?... ...Shall we not, at the beginning of this new year, give ourselves and all we have to God? Shall we not listen to His voice, which*

> *calls us to a renewed contest, to a more thorough consecration of ourselves and our intrusted capabilities to His service?*"

In the book Testimonies for the Church vol. 2, chapter 42, she wrote a letter to her son on his birthday. The language is similar to what we use when we talk about new year's day. Here are some quotes from the letter.

> "*As you enter upon a new year, let it be with an earnest resolve to have your course onward and upward. Let your life be more elevated and exalted than it has hitherto been. Make it your aim not to seek your own interest and pleasure, but to advance the cause of your Redeemer.*"

"*You cannot exert an influence upon the world without a decision. Your resolutions may be good and sincere, but they will prove a failure unless you make God your strength and move forward with a firm determination of purpose. You should throw your whole heart into the cause and work of God.*"

"*Desires for goodness and true holiness are right so far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Good purposes are right, but will prove of no avail unless resolutely carried out. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians; but they made no earnest effort, therefore they will be weighed in the balances and found wanting.*"

"*A new year of your life now commences. A new page is turned in the book of the recording angel. What will be the record upon its pages? Shall it be blotted with neglect of God, with unfulfilled duties? God forbid. Let a record be stamped there which you will not be ashamed to have revealed to the gaze of men and angels.*"

From the previous quotes, Ellen White does not seem to be opposed to the concept of resolutions. However, she makes it clear that the resolutions that should be given highest priority are the ones that improve our spirituality and relationship with God.

Here is a short Video on resolutions:

The Bible is silent on the concept of new year's resolutions. This practice was not as prevalent at that time. The Bible, however, has a lot to say about planning for our future and the role God plays in it.

Proverbs 16:3 "*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.*"

Proverbs 19:21 "*Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*"

Psalm 127:1 "*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.*"

From a biblical perspective, our plans should first be approved by God and fall within His purpose for our lives. This automatically will remove plans that are made for any selfish reasons. In Philippians 4, we are given the guide as to how we should make our plans and the type of plans that the Lord approves:

Philippians 4:6-8

"*6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

But how can we know what God's will is, or hear God's voice if we are not walking with him? How can we know for sure that the resolutions we have come up with are not just for our own selfish desires? We can start by first making the resolution to commit our hearts to Christ.

Psalm 51:10-11 **"***Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*"

God's Holy Spirit will speak words of life to our hearts and lead us into all truth, once we are willing to allow Him to direct our steps.

Proverbs 16:9 "A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps."

When we are lead by the Spirit in solemn humility, we will commit all our plans and resolutions to him, understanding that we have no control over the future. It is very possible that after making grand plans for a new year that our lives might end before the new year even begins. It is only through a Spirit of true humility and selflessness that can only come from God, can we take this reality in stride.

James 4:13-17 "*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit*"— *yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*"

Regardless of the plans that we have for our own progress and prosperity, we should always remember that God has an even better idea. A plan that will result in eternal

prosperity and earthly peace. This is confirmed in:

Ephesians 3:20 "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,*"

Finally, **Jeremiah 29:11** reminds us that God always has our best interest at heart. "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*"

Panel Discussion questions.

- I am making a positive change towards health and the care of my body. Therefore, I am planning to start my gym membership this January, is this a proper resolution to make?
- My new year's resolution is to work for the Lord; therefore, I will be doing everything good my hand finds to do. I will be joining the Choir, assisting in the children's department, helping children with their homework afterschool. Every week I will be doing visitation with the community services team, I will be joining the pathfinder and adventurers club and I will contribute my talent on Sundays to help the deacons and deaconesses spruce up the church. And if there is anything else I am called to do, I will be ready. Do you agree that this is what God wants for me?
- The last time I set new year's resolutions, by February, I had fallen off track. So this year I am not making any grand plans, I am just going to take it one day at a time, whatever happens, happens.
- I don't wait on the new year to make resolutions, I have them all through the year, that way, if I fail in January, I start over in February. Do you think this is a reasonable strategy?

Tags
New Year
Planning
Plans
God's Will
Request
Ellen White

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Comments

Eustace Robinson (not verified), Dec 14 2019 - 4:40pm
I never thought making new year's resolution were a bad idea I have made many with caution knowing fully that the plans I make it's only with God I can have success, somehow I love this discussion and will set out to have an A.Y program making use of this information.

- Reply

Zebulon Kelly (not verified), Dec 17 2019 - 5:40pm
I am more excited to have this Topic on our Sabbath AY so interesting.

- Reply

Permalink

Mary T (not verified), Dec 18 2019 - 10:17pm
This should be an interesting topic for discussion and I will certainly direct our Youth Leader to explore the resources here and set out a programme for AY. Indeed we can make all the plans and resolutions but if it is not God's will in our lives then they will not fall into place. Proverbs 16:3
I love the scripture that is in this information. Much appreciate it

- Reply

Ronetta Cort (not verified), Dec 20 2019 - 4:45pm
This is a very controversial topic and I'm very enthusiastic to listen to the views of our congregation when I use this. Thank you for such a great program

- Reply

Permalink

Anonymous (not verified), Dec 20 2019 - 10:15pm
Great Idea for an AY program ! Thank You

- Reply

Belinda Paliya... (not verified), Dec 22 2019 - 9:51am
Thank you for your response through this program. I will gather all the members during AY for new year proper resolution. I am the first person to leave my job to build the new church which I had started and more to do in the church activities in the small brand Sabbath school church. This idea had empowered me to encourage others leaders of the church. Thank you so much.

- Reply

Permalink

Dobuol Jock (not verified), Jan 10 2020 - 4:17pm
God knows what's best for me, He will lead me as his will. Amen

- Reply

конспект уроко... (not verified), Jan 24 2020 - 2:17pm
Generally I don't learn post on blogs, but I wish to say that this write-up really pressured me to take a look at and do so! Your writing taste has amazed me. Thanks, very nice article

- Reply

Frances christie (not verified), Dec 23 2020 - 1:25pm

Very excellent program. I am making a sabbath divine hour sermon from this and carry the questions over into ay. God bless your ministry.

- Reply

Karo Yama (not verified), Dec 24 2020 - 11:57am
I love this discussion and looking forward to share with my church as we look forward to another year.

- Reply

Anonymous (not verified), Jan 02 2021 - 6:31pm
I love this program. Its gives a clearer view on how to make resolution, not on our own but with God's help and guidance. Thanks for this program. Am currently using this program at my church. It's a wonderful program. Thank you

- Reply

Permalink

Coreen (not verified), Dec 31 2021 - 11:28pm
This is a very self searching and inspiring program and I will be doing it for Sabbath School. Continue to be led by God in delivering these insightful programs

- Reply

Gillian Riley (not verified), Jan 01 2022 - 4:44am
Absolutely love this!!
It’s a must to do this month as I was searching for a good idea to fill one of the sabbaths. Great Job! The information here is always top tier!!!

- Reply

Anonymous (not verified), Jan 01 2022 - 5:58pm
Great for Ay

- Reply

Den Sosia (not verified), Jan 04 2022 - 8:10am
Always coming through with great ideas

- Reply

Lizzie k (not verified), Dec 30 2023 - 4:30pm
Thanks I love it I think I will apply the program with the sabbath schools. Thanks

- Reply

Permalink

Simonica (not verified), Jan 31 2024 - 12:23am

I used this theme and aspects of this program as the first AY program for the new year. I had a group “sing order my steps” for special music and afterwards I made them do vision boards in groups where they highlighted goals for AYS for the upcoming year. It was really well received. Thank you for sharing this program idea with us.

- Reply

Permalink

Your name

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