



Christian Report

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 1 January 2022

Resolutions, Resolutions! — by Dan Cartwright

Well, here we are again, at the beginning of 2022, and quite naturally, the subject of New Year's resolutions surfaces once again for many of us. Some of us old guys have long since tried to put the subject behind us, having made them, only to break most of them along the way. A simple internet search of the term 'New Year's resolutions' will yield a veritable plethora of ideas and articles, as well as tips on keeping them.

The practice of making of New Year's resolutions has a long history, going all the way back to days of the Babylonian empire, and had to do with making promises to various gods. Participation rates, along with success and failure rates varies depends on whose survey you are using. I'm sure we all have stories about resolutions we've made through the years.

I'd like to set our personal experiences aside for now and talk about a set of resolutions crafted by a man who was perhaps the greatest theologian ever to grace American soil. His name was **Jonathan Edwards**. If we know about him at all, it is probably in connection with a famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, and/or the first Great Awakening in 18th century America.

Edwards was born in 1703, the son of a Puritan minister in Connecticut. His mother was the daughter of a minister from Massachusetts. While he delighted in religious studies from a very young age, it was when he was in his late teen years, that he experienced a turning point in his spiritual quest. In the Spring of 1721 he wrote:

"I was brought to a new sense of things, to an inward sweet delight in God and divine things, quite different from anything I had ever experienced before. I began to have a new kind of apprehension and idea of Christ and the work of redemption and the glorious way of salvation by him."

A year later he began writing a series of life

resolutions he felt would greatly assist his spiritual growth in grace and God-centered living. The first 21 resolutions were crafted in a single sitting in 1722, which were added to at various times until, in August 1723 the list included 70 resolutions. He then read them once a week for the rest of his life.

Who among today's evangelicals would take up a such a lifelong commitment? Some of us might even call it a legalistic attempt to please God. That would be an erroneous assumption. Edwards himself acknowledged who could provide him with the ability to keep his resolutions, including a short preface to the resolutions themselves:



"Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly intreat Him by His grace to enable me to keep these resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to His will, for Christ's sake."

What follows is the list of resolutions, each one beginning with the word **"Resolved"**, indicating a firm decision made with a soul deep gravity. Here are the first ten resolutions, to whet your appetite and peak your interest.

1. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I meet with,

how many soever, and how great soever.

2. Resolved, to be continually endeavoring to find out some new contrivance and invention to promote the aforementioned things.

3. Resolved, if ever I shall fall and grow dull, so as to neglect to keep any part of these Resolutions, to repent of all I can remember, when I come to myself again.

4. Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be, nor suffer it, if I can avoid it.

5. Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

6. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.

7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

8. Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God. July 30.

9. Resolved, to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.

10. Resolved, when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom, and of hell.

When we take a closer look at Edwards' resolutions, several major themes emerge.

One of these themes concerns suffering and affliction. Edwards writes, "Resolved, after afflictions to inquire what I am the better for them, what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them." Edwards' view of God saw both the good and the bad in his life as stemming from the hand of God,

Edwards' resolutions also reflected a deep

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sense of mortality and human frailty. Some see the puritans as death-obsessed. Every student of history knows that life was frail and fragile in the eighteenth century. We would do well to remember that life continues to be frail and fragile today; even with all of our medical and technological advancements. No matter how many new remedies with unpronounceable names Big Pharma sends our way, and no matter how many “age-defying” products fill store shelves, we are but frail mortal humans, who should live our lives with eternity in view—looking beyond this life to the life to come.

Ultimately, Edwards’ goal in making and keeping resolutions isn’t self-fulfillment, as many of ours would be but the glory of God. The irony is that in seeking self-fulfillment, one actually, in the words of Christ, loses his life (Matt. 10:39). In his very first resolution, Edwards provided us with his goal for all of life.

“Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God’s glory and to my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration.”

If you are considering your own resolutions for this new year, and following in Jonathan

Edwards’ footsteps, here are a few general guidelines that will get you off on the right track and have the best chance of success:

- **Set 1-3 resolutions.** If you have say 5 things you would like to accomplish in the new year choose those that mean the most to you.
- **Be specific.** If you want to spend more time reading and studying the Bible, determine how many minutes per day that should could be based on your normal schedule.
- **Be realistic.** Maybe you’ve decided it’s time to read the entire Bible, from cover to cover. Based on your daily activities with work, school, raising a family, and whatever other responsibilities fill your life, is a year too short a time for the challenge? Set reachable goals.
- **Have a roadmap.** Some of us remember taking road trips and navigating using a cumbersome road map or Road Atlas. We would set milestones for our journey, based purely on a set daily distance, or major cities and landmarks. Reusing our goal of reading the entire Bible in a year, create or find a Bible reading plan that

you can manage and that supports your specific, realistic goal.

Additionally, and using Jonathan Edwards’ example, let three simple principles resolutions be your guide:

1. **Let the glory of God be the ultimate goal of any resolution you make.**
2. **Consider resolutions that will last a life time instead of just a year.**
3. **Like Jonathan Edwards, draw from God’s strength to keep them!**

You can find a complete list of the seventy resolutions here: [The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards](#)

Jonathan Edwards (October 5, 1703 – March 22, 1758) was an American revivalist preacher, philosopher and theologian. Edwards played a critical role in shaping the First Great Awakening,



The Greatest Work in the World! - Dr. Warren Wiersbe

There are many good things that a man can do in the world today. But I have a conviction that the greatest work any of us can do is to help lead people to Jesus Christ. You do not have to be a “full-time Christian worker” to be a soul-winner. In fact, many of our greatest soul-winners are dedicated men and women who hold “ordinary” occupations, but who use every opportunity to witness for Christ.

We use the word “soul-winner” so often, and yet I wonder if we really know what it means? Perhaps it would be helpful to us if we discovered from the Bible just what a soul-winner is and what he is supposed to do. As I was studying this subject, I was interested to find many pictures of the soul-winner in the Bible; and I want to share some of these pictures with you.

The soul-winner is a shepherd.

“Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a

soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

James is speaking particularly about Christians who may stray from the truth, but his words also apply to the lost. If it is important for us to guide wandering *believers* back into God’s way, how much more important it is to guide *unbelievers!* We are shepherds, out seeking the wandering sheep. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6). If the lost sheep is left to himself, he will die; and if the lost soul is left to himself, he will perish forever.

Here is one reason society is in a mess: people have strayed from the truth. It was a gradual thing. First men *questioned* God’s truth; then they *criticized* it; then they *ignored* it; then they *laughed* at it. The world would rather believe lies than face God’s truth, in spite of the fact that these lies are leading men to death.

Jesus told the story about the shepherd who

went out into the wilderness to find the lost sheep. What a beautiful picture of the soul-winner!

“But none of the ransomed ever knew How deep were the waters crossed, Nor how black was the night that the Lord went through, E’er He found His sheep that was lost.”

The most important characteristic for a shepherd is *love*. The Good Shepherd so loved us that He laid down His life for the sheep. Do we love lost souls enough to search them out and share the Good News with them? Or are we so wrapped up in our own plans that we do not have time to think about the other person? We are supposed to be shepherds who help to guide the wandering back into the fold.

The soul-winner is a hunter.

Proverbs 11:30 says, “**He that winneth souls is wise.**” That word “winneth” has the idea of

“catching, as a hunter catches an animal.” We are supposed to “capture” souls!

In many ways, the lost sinner is just like an animal. Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus, **“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”** (Acts 9:5). What is a goad? It is the sharp stick that the farmer uses to prod his lazy animals. God was “prodding” Saul; He was treating Saul like a stubborn animal! The lost sinner is just like a stubborn animal: he wants his own way, and yet he does not realize that his own way leads to death.

Just as it takes love to be a shepherd, so it takes *skill* to be a hunter. It takes skill to “capture” lost souls. The hunter is careful not to frighten the animal. He is very careful not to permit his scent to be carried to the animal. I wish more Christians were that wise! Too often unsaved people “get the scent” from the church and know all the things that are going wrong! We Christians must be very careful not to get in the way of the wind, but to let the “wind of the Spirit” blow as He desires.

Hunters will use different approaches in capturing animals. Many different kinds of traps are mentioned in the Bible, because you cannot use the same approach with different animals. Too often you and I use the same approach with every lost person, and we wonder why we often fail. It takes skill to be a hunter, and it takes skill to be a successful soul-winner.

The soul-winner is a fisherman.

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Christ called four fishermen to be disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John. And remember that fishing was not their hobby; it was their life’s work. To them, catching fish was not fun: it was a matter of life or death!

Do you know why Jesus called four fishermen? Because fishermen know how to

stick with the job and get it done. You will rarely see a fisherman sitting around doing nothing. He is either casting his nets, or cleaning his nets, or repairing his nets. He is always wrapped up in fishing. So it is with the soul-winner: he is always involved in witnessing—and *he stays at it!* The most important thing about a fisherman is his ability to stick with it, because fishing can be a very difficult and disappointing vocation.

Too often, we “fishers of men” give up too soon. When the going gets tough, we decide to head for shore and give up fishing for a while. We sit around and discuss fishing instead of heading out to the depths to let down the nets! One preacher has suggested that most Christians have ceased to be fishers of men. Instead, they are owners of beautiful aquariums, and they spend most of their time moving the fish from one tank to another!

In Bible days, fishermen had three methods of fishing: hooks, spears, and nets. Peter let the hook down and caught the fish that contained the money for the taxes. If you plan to use a hook, be sure you have the right kind of bait, and be sure you stay alert so you know when the fish is there! It takes real skill and patience to use the spear, but this is a good way to get fish. Just keep your eye on the one you want, and spear him!

But the best way is the net, because you can catch more fish that way. It requires several men to use the nets; soul-winners must learn how to work together. To be sure, not every “fish” will be a good one. Jesus warns us that the net will contain all kinds of fish, some good and some bad (Matthew 13:47-50); but the presence of the bad fish is no reason for us to reject the good fish. Not every fish we catch for the Lord will be a true believer, *but many of them will*; and the more we try to catch, the

bigger will be the percentage of true believers.

If we are going to bring souls to Christ, we must be like the fishermen that Jesus called: we must have persistence. Only God can give the catch, no matter how hard we may toil. And let’s remember that only God knows how big the catch is! Let’s not get so wrapped up in numbers that we forget how important one individual soul is to Jesus Christ.

The soul-winner is a harvester.

Jesus tells us to “look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35-38). It takes all kinds of workers to have a harvest: people to plow, people to sow and water, people to fight weeds, and people to reap the grain. But all of them are a part of the harvest! This is why soul-winners are compared to harvesters: we need to practice cooperation. Not compromise, but cooperation, a willingness to work together.

There is no end to what God will do for the Christian who does not care who gets the credit. The important thing out in the field is not competing for attention, but reaping the harvest. We are laborers *together*, and each one must help the other.

God has given us some marvelous tools for harvesting the grain: radio, television, literature, cassettes (CDs/DVDs), computers, and a host of other tools. We are not to use these tools to impress each other, but to gather in the harvest. I fear that too often we harvesters are using the sickles on each other instead of on the grain! It is discouraging to see how one Christian attacks another Christian, or one worker criticizes another worker; and all the time the harvest is going to waste. One of the basic laws of the harvest is *partnership*: one sows, another reaps, but God gives the increase.

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Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to announce that MinistryWatch has listed CMF as one of their “Shining Light” Ministries. To become a MinistryWatch “Shining Light,” a ministry must have earned a 5-star rating on MinistryWatch’s 5-star financial efficiency scale. Further, those ministries on this list have a Transparency Grade of “A.” That’s MinistryWatch’s highest transparency grade. Out of 700 ministries, only 13 meet these strict criteria.

<https://ministrywatch.com/ministrywatches-annual-list-of-shining-light-ministries/>

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The soul-winner is an ambassador. *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Imagine! We are God's ambassadors!* This certainly puts dignity into this business of winning souls! Instead of apologizing when we witness for Christ or make a visit in a home, we ought to act like dedicated dignitaries, sent by God—because that is exactly what we are! *"As my Father hath sent Me, so send I you" (John 20:21).*

As ambassadors, we have been chosen and commissioned; and our task is not to preach ourselves, but to represent the One Who sent us. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). We represent Him, and we carry His message of peace. When an ambassador is sent to a foreign country, all his needs are met by his government, and he is protected by their armies. So with us: God has promised to meet all our needs, and His protection is our assurance of victory. All that the government asks is that the ambassador be faithful, and that is what God asks of us.

God is not at war with the world, but the world is at war with God. Our task as ambassadors is to tell the world that God loves sinners, Christ died for sinners, and that men can be reconciled to God. One of these days, God *will* declare war on the world; but before that happens, *He will call His ambassadors home!* While we are waiting, let's be faithful ambassadors, representing Jesus Christ in the way we live and the words we speak.

The soul winner is a fireman. *"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" (Jude 23). "Is not this a brand*

plucked out of the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2).

The lost soul does not have to die to be in the fire; he is in the fire of condemnation right now! "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18). Lost people are already living in the "suburbs of hell," yet they think their life is wonderful! Our task is to pull them out of the fire, because they are unable to save themselves. In other words, soul-winning requires *urgency*.

Perhaps this is why many Christians avoid trying to win souls: it is a bit risky to put your hands in the fire! Certainly soul-winners get "burned" occasionally but it's worth a few scars to rescue somebody from *eternal fire*. Sometimes the situation gets a bit "hot," but we must keep right on witnessing, because God may use us to snatch some precious soul out of the burning. And God has promised to be with us when we go through the fire, so there is really nothing to fear.

The next time you look at a lost soul, remember that he is already in the fire of sin and judgment. The worst is yet to come! Sin has so numbered him that he does not even feel the pains in his soul, and this is what makes his situation so tragic. Oh, the urgency of it! We must reach into the fire and help to pull them out! As those angels took hold of Lot and pulled him to safety out of Sodom, so we must lovingly snatch the brands out of the burning, before it is too late.

The soul-winner is a witness. *"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? And He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it? And shall He not render to every man according to his*

works?" (Proverbs 24:11-12).

The picture here takes us back to an Old Testament Jewish village. Here is a man who has been condemned to die. The elders are taking him outside the village to stone him to death, and you see the man as they go by. *And you know that the man does not deserve to die!* You have the one piece of evidence that will save his life! What are you going to do?

Some of us might say: "Well, I don't want to get involved." Or, "It's too late to do anything now." Or, "Who am I to tell others what to do?" God says, "Excuses! Excuses that will cost a man his life!" As soul-winners, you and I must be witnesses who have *honest concern*. It must burden us that men and women are being dragged off to judgment! It must concern us that we have the one message of life that can save them! The time has come for us to stop making excuses! Christ has left us here to be His witnesses, *and our witness is the only thing that can save sinners from eternal death!*

What does it take to be an effective soul-winner? It takes the *love* of a shepherd, the *skill* of a hunter, the *cooperation* of a harvester, the *dignity* of an ambassador, the *urgency* of a fireman, and the *heart concern* of a witness.

Let's ask God to make us the kind of Christians that He can use to win others to Christ. Winning souls is the greatest work in the world—the most rewarding work in the world—the work that God blesses and that brings Him glory for all eternity!

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Are You Interested in Becoming a Local Leader?

Christian Military Fellowship exists to help you fulfill your calling in Christ to share the hope that is in you with those with whom you interact as part of your daily life. Toward that end we encourage you to complete the briefing material we send to our new members:

[Orientation \(Brief #1\)](#) that shares an overview of the Christian Military Fellowship ministry.

[Developing a Local Ministry \(Brief](#)

[#2\)](#) that shares the Biblical foundation for you local ministry and delineates the logical steps in beginning your local ministry.

[Pray and Plan \(Brief #3\)](#) that shares the most important activity of all! Asking Jesus what He would have you to do and then being obedient to follow His leading in your local ministry.

By completing the Orientation Exam, Leader Certification Questionnaire, and Developing a Local Ministry Exam you can become a

CMF Local Representative. This will begin your journey of obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 18:28-30). If you choose to begin this process, you may send your completed briefs to us by snail mail, e-mail or FAX. You may download and complete the Adobe Acrobat Forms ([Brief 1 Exams](#) [Brief 2 Exam](#)) and forward them to us as an attachment or just include the information in the text of an e-mail and send them to Leader@CMFHQ.ORG