



TAKING AIM AT YOUR DESTINY: An Alternative To New Year's Resolutions

I. INTRO

- A. About 150 million Americans make New Year's resolutions every year. A quarter of those people will abandon their resolutions in just a week. Fewer than half will still be on track by summer. Ultimately, only 8% will be successful. That's a lot of disappointed people.
- B. For the next several minutes, I'd like to speak with you about, "Taking Aim At Your Destiny: An Alternative To New Year's Resolutions."
- C. Within the last 9 weeks we have held two memorial services here at KHC. Both have been beautiful celebrations of the life each of the two men lived. During the most recent memorial service I had the thought that someday people would be attending my memorial service. Each of us needs to face up to this fact.
- D. Think of your memorial service – there are family, friends, and co-workers there. Let's say one of the objectives would be to come up with a snap-shot phrase describing the essence of your life. What would you want that snap-shot phrase to be?
- E. These snap-shot phrases are called epitaphs and oftentimes they are written on a tombstone.
- F. Here are some epitaphs that have been collected from around the US, Canada, and England...
 - 1. May 30, 1916 - March 4, 1981: She was a lady, proud and willful - yet kind and giving. Always faithful, with a joy of living. Her health was frail. But her spirit was strong. She gave her all and now she is gone. She was one of a kind.
(Would you be satisfied with that?)
 - 2. "Chuck", Clarence R. Whitton Sept. 6, 1924 - May 23, 1988: Received the good conduct medal. Three bronze stars and the Victory medal while serving under General George Patton in the American theater of World War II **(Would it be OK with you if the defining moment of your life was behind you?)**

3. Uniontown, Pennsylvania: Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake – [He] Stepped on the gas instead of the brake.
4. Silver City, Nevada: Here lays Butch, He was quick on the trigger, but slow on the draw.
5. From Albany, New York: Harry Edsel Smith – [He] Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down. It was.
6. From Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada: A victim of fast women and slow horses.
7. In a Ribbesford, England, cemetery: Anna Wallace -- The children of Israel wanted bread and the Lord sent them manna, Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife, And the Devil sent him Anna.
8. Here lies Ned: There is nothing more to be said-- Because we like to speak well of the dead.
9. Written by a Vermont widow: Sacred to the memory of Jared Bates who died August the 6th, 1800: His widow, aged 24, lives at 7 Elm Street, has many qualifications of a good wife, and yearns to be comforted.
10. This particular epitaph was found in Montrose, South Dakota: To he who passes by: As you are, so once was I; As I am now, you soon shall be, So prepare yourself to follow me. (Another message is scratched onto the tombstone: "To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went.")
11. Capone, Al – (self-written) My Jesus, Mercy
12. From a grandchild: My Grandpa is not gone, But forever part of me. His hugs, kisses, and laughter live on eternally

G. Based on the research of Dr. J. Robert (Bobby) Clinton, who directed the Leadership concentration in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Seminary from 1981 to 2011, Consider the following...

1. 500 leaders in the Bible
2. 100 leaders with life information
3. 49 with information on how they finished
4. 13 finished well (26%!)

H. **Seven Barriers To Finishing Well:**

1. Misuse or abuse of **money**
2. Abuse of **power**
3. **Pride**; self-centered ambition
4. **Sexual mis-conduct** (90% of pastors involved in this start with a counseling

relationship)

5. **Family problems** - wife &/or kids
6. **Plateau:** recycle things we've learned as well as in spiritual life because of being busy with "ministry"; lack of spiritual depth because we're focused on success - recognize it and do something about it!
7. Emotional &/or psychological **wounding**

I. **What Does It Mean To Finish Well?** (If we're not intentional about finishing well, we probably won't.)

1. **Personal**, vibrant relationship with God; intimacy with joyful obedience
2. **Learning** rather than plateauing/stagnating
3. **Christ-like character**; fruit of the Spirit
4. **Maintaining conviction** re: God's truth and living it out
5. **Accomplishing God's purposes**; knowing God is with us
6. **Sense of destiny** - Believing that God will do what He said He would do

II. BODY

A. *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* --Hebrews 12:1-3 (NASB)

B. **Six Essentials of Proactive Living** -- These are not exhaustive; this is not a formula

1. **Life Purpose:** Sharpening you focus *"So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. --1 Corinthians 9:26 (NLT)*
 - a. (Not in your outline) *"For David... **served the purpose of God** in his own generation...and then he died."* --Acts 13:36 (NIV)
 - b. "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby... Find out what God is doing – and put your hand to that.
 - c. How many of you have ever been waiters or waitresses (moms)?
2. **Perspective:** God develops people over a life-time *"Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your **progress** may be evident to all. [16] Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things..."* 1 Timothy 4:15-16a (NAS)

- a. God is not after **perfection** in your life...God's desire is **progress**
 - b. *My Heart, Christ's Home* by Bob Munger
 - c. Snap-shot of my own depravity recently...un-dealt with anger
3. **Personal Renewal:** Regular experiences with God *"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."* --Acts 3:19 (NASB)
- a. What's a one-word synonym for the phrase, "change your mind and attitude to God and turn to him"? (the "R" word)
 - b. The **privilege of repentance** – the captain of the ship in the middle of a raging storm...
 - c. Repentance ushers in the active, vital presence of God!
4. **Spiritual Disciplines:** Activating grace *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all [people],¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."* --Titus 2:11-12 (NASB)
- a. What is it that instructs us to deny ungodliness & worldly desires -- & [empowers us] to live sensibly, righteously, & godly in this present age?
 - b. For many people, we fall into the trap of **trying to exercise willpower instead of grace** – "I'm going to love my wife, even if it kills me!" (What's it going to do?); "I'm going to lose 10 pounds even if it kills me!" (What's it going to do?)
 - c. So how do we **activate grace** over-and-above willpower (it's not that willpower is bad, it's that grace is better! Willpower, or self-control is a fruit of the Spirit)...Here's the answer – you're not going to like it...SURRENDER. When we surrender, the grace of God comes and does in us and through us what we could never do on our own. My wife needs and deserves a better husband than I can be... My kids need, and deserve a better Dad than I can be.
 - d. Those in Recovery – who are working the steps -- understand this better than most of the rest of us – The first step of the *12 Steps* is what? **...Admitting that I am powerless**
 - e. Do you want to know why the Recovery Movement has been so successful over the last several years (at least in Christian circles)? Because it begins with activating GRACE.

- f. If you are here today and you have never admitted that you are powerless – and if you have never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, you can activate the grace of God – to do in you and through you what you could never do on your own – today by...
5. **Lifelong Learner:** Commitment to personal growth *“Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.”* --Psalm 111:2 (ESV)
6. **Mentoring relationships:** Staying connected *“So don’t go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many advisers.”* --Proverbs 24:6 (NLT)

III. CONCLUSION

- A. William Cary went to India from England in 1793. The leadership from his church would not support him – they told him, “If God wants to convert India, He’ll do it with no help from you.”
- B. He saw no converts for 5 1/2 years.
- He said, “When I left England, my hope for India’s conversion was very strong.” (The hope for whose conversion? India’s?)
 - He expected a whole nation to be converted to Christ
 - 5 1/2 years - no converts
- C. “But amongst so many obstacles, it would die, this hope - unless upheld by God. Well I have God, and His word is truth. And though superstitions of the unconverted were a thousand times stronger than they were, though I were deserted by all and persecuted by all, yet my faith fixed on that sure word would rise above all obstructions and overcome every trial - God’s cause shall triumph. The work to which God has set His hand will infallibly prosper; Christ has begun to besiege this ancient and strong fortress and will assuredly carry it out. Christ must reign until Satan has not one inch of territory left.”
- D. 5 1/2 years with no converts...
1. But when William Cary died:
- He’d planted 26 churches
 - Translated the Bible into 34 languages
 - Established a Bible college
 - Trained 200 nationals
 - 40 other families had joined him fm. England & America

2. Why? Because he possessed a *focus*, a *passion*, and a *vision*...What about you?

E. P.A.S.S. Life Group Questions:

P - Participation (get everyone involved in the opening dialogue)

1. Do you have a history of setting New Year resolutions? Why or why not?

A - Application (making it personal)

2. Is it surprising to you that only 26% of the leaders found in the Bible (where we have info on how they finished) finished well?

3. Which of the seven barriers have you seen hinder the life of Christians and church leaders the most in the past? What can be done to prevent this more successfully?

4. Review the Six Essentials of Proactive Living. If you had to choose just one to focus on this year which one would it be and why?

S - Scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

5. What would it mean for you "*fix your eyes on Jesus*" (Heb 12:2) more consistently?

6. Do you see yourself as "*the joy set before Him*" (Heb 12:2)? Why or why not?

S – Sharing (aim for a time of honest reflection, authenticity, and transparency in a safe atmosphere modeled by you). [Choose one of the following as a final dialogue question.]

7. As we move into 2016 what are some areas of personal concern for you? (could be relational issues, financial, work related, national/political issues, church issues, etc.)

8. As a Life Group how can we best help and serve one another to be focused and intentional about what God is doing in our lives, our, group, and KHC during 2016?