

Help! My New Year's Resolutions Are Slipping Away!

By Bob Young

Several years ago, I quit making New Year's resolutions. If you know too well the annual routine of beginning well and quitting too early, I think you also should quit making New Year's resolutions. What do I do instead?

I make plans rather than resolutions. At the beginning of the year, I develop specific plans for the coming year. My planning process involves prayer, seeking God's wisdom for my life, and thoughtfully evaluating priorities. I receive two benefits. I am blessed by prayerfully asking God's guidance for the direction of my life; I am blessed by the opportunity to rethink my purpose and priorities. What really matters?

Planning helps me continue forward with purpose and priority. I share an example.

Resolution: I will read my Bible every day.

Planning: I will read the New Testament this year.

How does planning differ from making a resolution? Making plans begins with important questions.

First, where am I? where am I going? Planning begins by linking point of origin and point of destination. Planning begins by defining where I am and my desired destination. Too often, resolutions are unachievable because we are not honest about where we are. Most resolutions are idealistic and unrealistic. Once the resolution fails, "There's no way to get there from here!" One way to describe the difference is this: most resolutions are subjective; planning encourages objectivity.

As an illustration, consider the task of buying a plane ticket. The first question is, where are you leaving from? Then, where are you going? If you cannot answer those two questions, you cannot proceed. The same is true with planning. Planning begins with, "Here is where I am."

Second, how will I get there? what is the process? Planning requires identifying the process that will be used. Getting to a destination requires thinking about how to get there. Drive, bus, walk, fly? Resolutions often focus on outcomes without identifying the process that will lead to success. Many resolutions are vague. Effective planning requires thinking about the process.

Third, is it possible? Realistic planning focuses on what is possible. Too many resolutions are impossible. A person can write impossible goals, but realistically thinking about where I am and what will be required to get where I want to go helps me avoid impossibilities.

In conclusion, planning helps me honestly evaluate my current situation, plan strategically, and stay on task. If I fall behind, I can catch up. I can adjust and stay on track to reach my destination. If you have already broken your resolutions or they are rapidly falling by the wayside, it is not too late to develop plans for the rest of the year.

First, where are you? where do you want to go?

Second, how will you get there? what will be required?

Third, if what will be required is not doable, rewrite the plan.

Begin where you are. Focus on the process. Be realistic.