

## **FRESH START... Starting Over With God**

**2019**

The New Year is already in full swing and it's customary at this time to make new resolutions. Some people may look forward to making changes in their lives; to better themselves in some way or another and they make resolutions to accomplish that. Unfortunately, the majority will not follow through with them... Others are more cautious and will want to check how they fared in the past prior to making new ones. Either way, I can't seem to wrap my head around the idea that we should start making them at the beginning of the year. To me, any time is the right time!

Making goals is also something some people will do at the beginning of the year. My husband is one of them. He always calls a meeting to set our goals for the year. He wants to know where we're at and which direction we should take in different areas of our lives as a couple. He wants to determine our priorities, have a plan of action, create a budget, evaluate the list of repairs or projects to be done inside and outside of our home, plan trips to visit our out-of-town families and our personal vacation time, find ways to reduce our expenses, and the list could go on and on... I'm one who understands the importance of such meeting but I don't enjoy the undertaking. I may also add that at the end of it, which usually takes a couple of hours, I'm totally drained... Why? Because it's hard work... It's mentally challenging and when we're done, I just want to kick back, decompress.

In the dictionary, the word 'resolution' is defined as 'a firm decision to do or not to do something' and 'the quality of being determined or resolute'. However, I'm wondering if oftentimes our resolutions are not only 'wishful thinking', and the reason why so many of us abandon them along the way... As for the word 'goal', it is 'the object of a person's ambition or effort; an aim or desired result'.

Obviously, these definitions imply that any resolutions or goals I'm going to make require something from me in order to bring them to completion. I may need a plan of action and to be committed to it. It may require self-discipline and to be consistent in monitoring my progress. Unfortunately, in as much as I'd like to, there are no shortcuts... I heard many times that resolutions are meant to be broken. People may say it as a joke, but I think it's still counter-productive to voice it even before we start making them.

I read recently that thirty-five percent of us who make New Year's resolutions break them by the end of January. Only twenty-three percent of everyone who makes a resolution will see it through to completion.<sup>1</sup> That's kind of depressing... And I'm asking myself... *"Am I part of the seventy-seven percent who makes resolutions only to find I've given up before I ever really got started?"* Or *"Am I one who would not even consider making them because of fear of failure?"*

I headed out the door for my morning walk with these questions in mind. I was hoping to find the preacher so I could share with him on the subject. As I entered the retirement community, I was ecstatic to have found him - his red scarf tied around his neck -, and Granny sitting in the gazebo! She was in her 'Cadillac' with the preacher sitting across from her. A double blessing I wasn't expecting! I immediately headed up their way with a lightness in my step and a broad smile on my face.

Granny spotted me first.

"Well, well... would ya look who's comin' our way on this fine mornin'!" she exclaimed with a smile lifting her wrinkled face.

The preacher turned around and looked up in my direction. "What a nice surprise, young lady! We were not expecting to see you this morning... Come, join us!" he said as he stood up to greet me.

I made my way into the gazebo and sat down next to him. It was a beautiful sunny day with a gentle breeze coming our way. We couldn't have wished for a better weather at this time of the year. As soon as I made myself comfortable, Granny didn't lose time and asked me in a teasing way. "So, honey, how have ye been doin'? Made yer New Year's resolutions yet?"

"Nope." I answered dryly. "Have you?" I asked her, regretting already to have been so stiff in my reply. But she didn't seem to notice.

"Well, I wasn't born yesterday ya know, so I reckon I did in my younger years... But now I ain't got the desire no more to make resolutions, plans, goals or what have ya... All I'm waitin' for is my ticket to heaven, for the sweet by and by, if ya know what I mean! To finally see the good Lord face to face... to be in his Kingdom, cause ain't gonna be no more pain...no more sorrows...no more tears as the good Book says! I'm gonna be praisin' Him with my arms up, stompin' my feet anywhere I cain but on the footrest of my 'Cadillac' cause I ain't gonna need it no more!... And I'll be havin' the best shindig I ever gotten with them holy angels! Yes sirree!" she said a bit out of breath with all the excitement. "In the meantime, I reckon I'll keep livin' one day at a time, prayin' for the folks God put on my heart to pray for... Oh, ye may find me snoozin' from time to time while doin' it, but the good Lord knows all of them needs, so I ain't worry none. He'll take care of them no matter what..."

I looked at her tenderly. "Granny, you don't seem to realize how much of a blessing you are to those around you. I know you're looking forward to go 'home' but you're still much needed here... I want you to know that."

I'm much younger than she is but somehow I understood what she meant. She probably wonders why she's still on this earth when her frail body can't function as it used to and her mind isn't as sharp. She always says that as the years go by she loses some of her bearings but I never really noticed. She's such a little firecracker and a blessing to me!... But God has his reasons for keeping her on this earth and we don't know them. We just have to trust that his plans are always perfect...his timing is always right... his love never fails...

I then turned my attention to the preacher. "And how about you?.. Have you made any new resolutions for the year?"

"Well, dear lady, as you know I'm not far behind Granny in age, so my answer would probably be about the same as hers... Instead, let me throw the question right back at you! It seems you haven't made yours yet. Any reason why?"

"Well, I guess for me resolutions are mostly for self-improvement and I won't necessarily make them at the start of a New Year. The time is right whenever I realize that I need to make personal changes in certain areas of my life, may it be physically, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually. But I've had to learn to do this with the Lord's help. I need his strength for I know that I may give up along the way if I don't, which always leaves me with feelings of frustration, guilt, remorse... But he understands my human nature since he has walked in my shoes at one point. And I know very well that he doesn't love me more on days I perform well, nor does he love me less when I fail badly..."

I paused for a second and went on...

“Years ago I was addicted to a certain brand of caffeinated soft drink. I just loved the taste of it!.. I like to joke around and say that I would even “lust” after the company’s truck whenever I saw one on the road!.. For many years I drank one a day. Not bad in itself when I compared myself to other people who would drink much more in one day... But I also realized that if I’d keep on this way, my health would suffer somehow. Have you ever read the contents on one of those cans? It’s mind-blowing! So, at one point I made the resolution to stop cold turkey. As you can imagine, it didn’t work... I experienced withdrawals, so I decided to reduce my intake to three a week. It was much better but I hadn’t stopped just yet. I was frustrated, discouraged and ready to quit. But I realized there was too much at stake so I didn’t, but without much enthusiasm I must say.

“One day I decided to make some research on the phosphoric acid contained in a can and learned that it was especially detrimental to the bones. It was quite a discovery for me since early on I had been diagnosed with osteoporosis. I realized that taking a soft drink a day for so many years may have contributed to the bone loss after all... With this new information, I knew I had to stop completely. But I was also aware that I couldn’t do it on my own. So, I finally turned to God for his help. Not too long after, I realized that I had completely lost the desire for it and had no withdrawals at all as a results. Dumbfounded is not enough of a strong word to express how I felt at that moment... Did stopping heal my bones? Nope. The damage had already been done. I always prefer to postpone taking prescription drugs because of their side effects but I added calcium, vitamins D and K to my diet, stretching exercises and body resistance workout to my daily routine, which the experts say they all can help to protect the bones. These are other resolutions I’ve kept with God’s help, and I can give Him all the glory for it! I am aware that some people may be dealing with more serious addictions than mine, but when we put our faith in God, anything is possible...”

“Ain’t the Lord great! There ain’t nothing too big for Him, no sirree!.. But, honey, let me ask ya somethin’...” Granny said with a mischievous look on her face. “In yer story, are ye sure it wasn’t the driver instead of the truck ye had yer eyes on?” The preacher looked dumbfounded by her question and not sure what to make of it. But then he grinned at me and our little trio ended up laughing so hard that a couple of squirrels around us scurried away, desperately looking for a tree to hide in!

After we’ve toned down, the preacher got serious. “That is to prove that with motivation and determination, we can succeed! But I must add one important thing here... When God is at the center of our life, our approach to making any kind of resolutions and goals changes. Our decision-making is then based on God’s will for our lives and not on our own. And we certainly need his guidance and wisdom to do this. My whole life has been based solely on God’s will for me even if at times I had to make some of the toughest decisions...”

“Well, ain’t you preachin’ to the choir!.. I don’t know about ya, honey, but I sure cain agree with the preacher! Travelin’ in life with the good Lord sittin’ in the driver’s seat is always the best thang, yes sirree! It’s when we want to switch place with Him that we cain get ourself into a mess... Trust me, I know what I’m talkin’ about. I reckon it happened to me too many times in my life... But the good Lord was always willin’ to take back the wheel after I’d learned my lesson and realized that he’s a better driver than me anyway... I’m tellin’ ya, he’s so lovin’ and merciful...” she said with a certain sadness in her voice.

“I certainly agree with you Granny and I’d like to share a little story with you...” I said, setting my

eyes on the horizon, my mind traveling back in time...

"It was in 1982 when my husband suggested we look into the possibility of moving to South Florida. I couldn't deny that his proposition sounded a bit farfetched at first. I was born and raised in the Province of Quebec, and the likelihood of moving to another country one day never occurred to me... I was also not enthusiastic about the idea of leaving my family and friends behind, so my first impulse to say "NO" to my dear husband's unexpected proposition was hard to resist... But I agreed to sit down with him and analyze the pros and cons.

"You may ask what were his reasons that prompted him to even consider this idea?... Well, his parents and brothers were already living there, the weather was certainly a plus, and it was in the beautiful USA which he loved for many reasons, but primarily for its adherence to our Christian beliefs which were more prevalent in those days than in our part of the country... Also, our Province back then was in such turmoil with the Separatist Movement pushing its agenda for a complete independence from Canada, and with which we did not agree at all; ridiculously high taxes; our freedom of choice between English and French languages was dwindling; and the medical care system was getting out of control... Oh, I couldn't deny that they were all good reasons for wanting out of there, but there were many other elements to consider before we could make a wise decision on the matter... As we both discussed at length in the months ahead the logistics of such a move, and after asking God for guidance, it became clear that it would be a great opportunity for us and our three children who were then nine, seven and three years old.

"Meanwhile, my husband was appointed manager of a Real Estate office with a six-figure income that might have been quite an incentive for us to stay, but our mind was set. God had given us peace about it... We had already taken our first steps towards it by asking my father-in-law, who was already an American citizen, to sponsor us when we would apply for our visas, and by putting our house on the market.

"My husband's intention to keep working in Real Estate meant that he would have to start all over again; from getting his license to building a new clientele before he could even think of becoming office manager... We would be back to square one but we were counting on the money we would be making from the sale of our house to sustain us for a while... There was no doubt in our mind that we were ready to begin the most daring adventure of our life with God by our side!

"However, I hadn't anticipated that the reality of it all would suddenly hit me like a rock... I found myself oftentimes waking up in sweats in the middle of the night with doubts as to my ability to go through with it... My dear husband, who was totally looking forward to it, encouraged me the best he could and I realized one more time how different we were. He was the kind of guy who had no second thoughts once he had made his decision on something "*after he had done his homework*", as he usually puts it, and prayed God for his guidance... I always admired his ability to stay so focused and determined. But what really gave me the assurance that God would be with us every step of the way and that I could do this, is this scripture: "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*"<sup>2</sup> That was really the turning point for me... And I felt an amazing peace...that everything would be alright..."

When I ended, they both stared at me. I could only see wonder on their faces.

"Ain't that an amazin' story, preacher?... But let me tell ya, honey, it ain't for everybody to start a new life in a new country with three young'ns at yer heels like ya did!.. I reckon some folks and

yer kin must have been thinkin' if yer engine was runnin' but nobody was drivin'..., if ye had lost yer mind or somethin'!.." Granny exclaimed, shaking her head, bewildered.

The preacher and I smiled at her comments. "Of course! Some of our friends couldn't believe we would go through with our plans, our goal. Back then, we were considered real adventurers! My family didn't say much but I could tell they were saddened by it... But we had made up our mind, and on June 23, 1983 we left our country, our friends and my family behind... I must admit that our new beginnings were not easy for any of us, but we dealt with one challenge at a time with God being always there directing, encouraging us through his Word and opening doors for us... By the end of the first year, our family was somewhat adjusted to our new life. We were starting to feel at home in the beautiful sunshine state... Quite frankly, I can say that it is the most important, crucial goal my husband and I ever set for ourselves and our family... We made many more plans and goals in our lives. Some of them turned out to be real blessings, but others were not well planned and wise, and we had to suffer dire consequences for it... However, I can say with gratitude that even if we were the only ones to blame, God was always there to pull us through..."

The preacher commented: "You know, in some ways your story reminds me of Moses when God appointed him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt to lead them into the Promised Land. I'm sure you remember this story... God's goal was to set his people free from the bondage of the Egyptians which in itself brought great joy to the Israelites. But because of the many struggles they encountered along the way, they complained, blamed Moses and God, and even wished they could go back to Egypt, which was certainly not the case for your family in your story. They were really a bunch of ungrateful people in spite of all the signs and wonders God did for them from start to finish... But this is only one story out of many where we can see God's amazing goals and plans for his people..."

"When you think about it, from the creation of the world explained in Genesis to the return of Jesus and the creation of a new world in Revelation, God planned and orchestrated everything... And he used ordinary people like you and me to achieve his goals. It was always through their obedience and faith in Him that they could accomplish so much and succeed despite the many challenges... And he still does it through his people today," he ended, now glancing at Granny who looked ready for a nap!

"Well, I hope y'all don't mind but I'm about ready for a little snooze... Not that y'are borin' and all but I need my beauty sleep, if ya know what I mean!... Now, behave yerselves while I'm gone, ye hear?" she said, winking at us.

"We'll do, Granny!" I replied, laughing. We both hugged her and watched her drive away on her 'Cadillac', hoping she wouldn't fall asleep on her way back!

The preacher and I sat down and resumed our conversation. "I've got a question for you..." I said. "What does God think about us making resolutions, goals and plans in our lives?"

"Well, there are plenty of scriptures in his Word where we can find his answer. Off the top of my head, I can give you a few. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."*<sup>3</sup> *"Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it."*<sup>4</sup> *"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."*<sup>5</sup> *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."*<sup>6</sup> God isn't against them but we're reminded that it's always best to seek his wisdom and guidance.



Does this answer your question?"

"It certainly does!.. And I can tell you've read the Bible more than once in your lifetime to have memorized verses like you did!" I said, amazed.

"I surely did, dear lady. It's my daily bread and I couldn't live without it." he replied with a warm smile.

Oh, I would have liked to keep chatting with him but I realized it was time for lunch. So, I thanked him and left.

On my way back home, I began to think about my life as a young single woman. I realized that none of my goals, plans and decisions had been made with God in mind. How could I have done otherwise? I didn't know Him...Oh, I certainly knew about Him but I didn't really know Him... The thought that I would need his help to live my life never really crossed my mind back then. After all, had I not been given a brain and enough common sense to make my own decisions without getting Him involved in what I thought were only trivial matters in his eyes?

The preacher's words then echoed in my mind: *"When God is at the center of our life, our approach to making any kind of resolutions and goals changes. Our decision-making is then based on God's will for our lives and not on our own."*

What I learned many years ago is that God is interested in every aspect of my life, even in its smallest details. What is of concern to me is also of concern to Him. Without being overbearing, he wants to be involved in my life as a whole; not only in the bits and pieces I'm allowing Him to be part of... He's my Creator. I'm his child, his daughter. As a mother, I carried my children in my womb, I gave birth and nurtured them. As I watched them grow, I was always there to love them, watch over them, teach and train them in the ways they should go. I was always there to support them, direct them, help them, and encourage them in their endeavors. I always had their best interests at heart, expecting nothing in return but their love... Even now that they are adults and living a life of their own, I always hold them close to my heart... Who can put an end to a mother's love for her children? No one... So, I can venture to say that I have a glimpse on how God, our Creator and Father, feels toward us, his children.

Oh, it's truly the desire of my heart that my plans be God's plans for my life; my ways be his ways as I walk with Him; my motives be as pure as his motives; my priorities comply with his priorities; and that I am as loving, kind, compassionate, merciful, forgiving and faithful as he is... I know these may be lofty goals to aim for but when I study and obey his Word, work in collaboration with Him, I cannot set limits to what I hope to achieve. He will be with me every step of the way. I may not reach my goal as quickly as I would like to, but I'll get there in his perfect timing. I don't want to be discouraged if delays, detours or roadblocks pop up from time to time. I will instead trust that he knows what he's doing, and I'll just take the next step...

<sup>1</sup><https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions>

<sup>2</sup>Joshua 1:9

<sup>3</sup>Proverbs 3:6

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 37:4-6

<sup>5</sup>Proverbs 16:3

<sup>6</sup>Proverbs 19:21

© My Walks With God

You may reproduce part of the content of this website for non-commercial purposes only. May not be reproduced or featured on any other websites without permission of My Walks With God. For additional information or to obtain permissions, contact: [mywalkswithgod@gmail.com](mailto:mywalkswithgod@gmail.com)