

## My New Year's Resolution

About this time every year, people make a new one of these. It's called the New Year's resolution. "This year I resolve to change my habits and begin something new which will be beneficial to me or others." The top resolutions which people make year after year are to change their eating habits and exercise regularly so they can lose weight and get fit. It starts well. They cut out junk food and sodas. They eat more fruits and vegetables. They begin an exercise routine or maybe even join a gym. The fitness centers fill up in January. But by February the chips and hot dogs are back in the grocery cart, and the rows of aerobic machines are vacated. People break their resolutions and return to their old ways. Why is this? Despite its benefits, keeping a helpful resolution is hard. Old habits are hard to break, and new habits are hard to form. It takes discipline to deny unhealthy cravings and to whip the body into shape. Many people try to go it alone. They don't have a dietician or fitness coach to keep them accountable. Without encouragement and motivation, they break their New Year's resolution and return to their old ways.

But I have a better resolution for you to consider this year. Instead of trying to improve your body, which continues to deteriorate on its way to the grave, why not improve your mind and spirit which live forever. Mind you, it will still take discipline. It will still take diet and exercise but of a different sort. It will require a healthy diet of God's Word and an exercise of your spirit. I encourage you to make this resolution.

*"This year I resolve to read a chapter of the Bible every day and meditate upon it."*

Here is a resolution that won't add an ounce of weight to your body, a resolution which you can do from your recliner, and a resolution that will be of great benefit to yourself and others. "Blessed is the man who delights in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:1-2)

Now you may already have a good habit of reading your Bible regularly or a daily routine of your favorite devotional material, but if you don't, let me give you some help. This coming year, let's read through much of the Old Testament together, a chapter a day, and next year we'll read through all the New Testament. I'll even go shopping for you, pick out the readings, and prepare a few questions for your meditation. You just need to eat and think.

Here's how it works. Every Sunday, there will be a bulletin insert with a reading for each day of the week, a hymn, and four questions to contemplate (with the answers on the back). Sunday will be a chapter from the Psalms or other books of poetry and wisdom. Weekdays will be a narrative from the Pentateuch or other historical writings. Saturdays will be a chapter from one of the prophets. After a year, we'll have read through the primary texts of the Old Testament. The monthly newsletter calendar will also show the reading for each day. For those of you who prefer to work digitally, I will send out a weekly email to our congregation with the daily lectionary which has links to the readings and hymns. It will also be posted on our website.

But maybe you've tried this before, and after a month you got out of the habit. Here's the key. Find someone to do this with you to hold you accountable, a spouse or friend or relative. If you like, you can be accountable to me. Use the church calendar as your Bible bookmark, and as you go, mark off the daily reading on your church calendar and place it in my box at the end of the month. Just remember to sign your name. I can be like your dietician or fitness coach to monitor your progress and encourage you.

What's your motivation? After a year of this godly diet and exercise, I guarantee that you will be blessed with a sanctified spirit and a strengthened faith, for the Lord will work for your good through the means of His Word. If that's not enough, you will receive one of the following rewards of your choice to celebrate keeping your resolution: The Lutheran Study Bible, a personal edition of the Lutheran Service Book, a Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord, or a gift certificate to your favorite restaurant. You may also make substitutions at the pastor's discretion.

So, how about it? Let's make a New Year's resolution together, and with the Lord's help we'll keep it.

Pastor Temme