

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2015 COMMUNITY COMMENT Mike Goldsby December 31, 2015

Happy New Year! I like New Years Eve, reflecting on the past year and looking forward to the next. It is a time for predictions and resolutions and affirmations for the coming year.

A New Year's Resolution has been a tradition since ancient times and is practiced throughout most of the world. It usually is an affirmation for some type of self-improvement. It can be a resolve to take a walk everyday, stop procrastinating, improve relationship with God or be more punctual at meetings.

Here's a resolution from the early 20th Century, written by Bishop John Vincent: "Every morning of the New Year, I will try to live a simple, sincere and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity and self-seeking, cultivating cheerfulness, generosity, charity and the habit of holy silence, exercising economy in daily expenditures, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust and a child-like trust in God."

That is a very admirable laundry list, but it demonstrates some of the problems with most resolutions. First, taking on too much at once is a set up for failure. How successful do you think you would be repelling every single thought of anxiety and impurity? Taking any one or two of those statements would stand a better chance of success. Secondly, none of it is measurable. How will you know if you have successfully exercised carefulness in conversation?

I found an early 1900's postcard with a simpler resolution: "Resolve to renew all of your old resolves, and add a few that are new. Resolve to keep them as long as you can. What more can a poor man do?" That actually sounds like a great New Year's toast. But it has the problem of being too vague for a successful resolution.

Some resolutions are just well intentioned ideas, like to wake up cheerful or to treat people better. But some other resolutions are actually vital life decisions, like stopping drinking or drug use or smoking.

I put these resolutions in another category, because the stakes are much higher. With these decisions, it is vital to have a plan. A resolution without a plan is just a good intention.

Stop drinking is not a plan, but going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings is a plan. Stop smoking is not a plan. But contacting your doctor or Tobacco Free Humboldt to find out about ways to stop, that's a plan.

If you are planning a big change, it will be more successful if you tell people. Write your change down on a commitment card to remind yourself. And anticipate some set-backs and failures. If you relapse on alcohol or chewing tobacco, it does not mean you have to return to your old ways. Renew your commitment. Get back on that pony.

I look forward to 2016, but not necessarily the Presidential Primaries and elections. In my monthly Community Comments, I resolve to stay positive, as long as I can. What more can a poor man do?

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment