



What are you going to do in 2017?

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I've never been one to put much stock in making resolutions. This is the time of year when everyone seems to understand that they need to eat less, save more and commit to healthier living in the year ahead. Along about February everyone seems to find their way back to "normal" and the January resolutions are long forgotten.

While I think the whole fixation with resolutions for the new year is over-rated, I do think there is value in looking ahead and planning. If I want my life to look different at this time next year, it's not just going to happen on its own. It takes intentionality, it takes focus, it takes planning and preparation and most of all; it will require action. Change, especially good change, doesn't just happen. It's going to take something on my part – and most of the time it's going to require a sacrifice.

As a follower of Jesus, I'm never done in my discipleship journey. Jesus is always calling me to pick up the cross, deny myself and follow Him. There are still areas of my life that don't look like Jesus. What do I need to leave behind or what do I need to take on so that I live and look more like Jesus?

I think it's very important to look forward to the year ahead and ask: What am I going to do in 2017? What needs to change? What do I need to do differently? As a disciple of Jesus, my ultimate goal is to take on His character and competency; that's the end picture I want to see. What I do today, or next week or next month will help determine how I finish my race and I want to finish well.

If I'm going to be kinder, more patient, more loving, more gentle, more joyful, more faithful, more peaceful, or more self-controlled at this time next year; it won't just happen. More than that, it won't just happen through my sheer determination or effort. It takes a work of God's Spirit, yielding to the Spirit, recognizing those areas that don't look like Jesus while yielding to His grace and the Spirit's transforming work. This kind of growth requires growth in self-awareness and to become more self-aware typically means I've got to slow down long enough to get "in step with the Spirit." The Spirit of God is always revealing but I'm not always paying attention.

So as we look forward to 2017, let's not do it with a naïve "whatever will be will be" posture, nor fall prey to the temptation of believing that we can control our own destinies if we just try hard enough. Let's commit to walk in step with the Spirit, inviting Him to reveal to us what needs to change in us so that we come to look and act more like our Savior. Let's invite Him to examine our lives and to empower us by His grace to live different, transformed lives. Let's order our lives around what the Spirit is revealing to us so that we might live in such a way as to display His glory to the whole world.

Make some time in the next day or two to ask the Spirit what needs to change in you in the year ahead. Where does He want to work in and through your life? Don't just make a self-improvement list, but listen to the Spirit to show you the work that God wants to do both in you and through you in the months ahead. I find it helps to write it down. I also plan to share mine with a couple folks and would encourage you to do the same. Then trust the Spirit to empower you, put boots on the ground and live in obedience to Him.

Let's move beyond apathy or aimlessness. Let's move beyond just talking or thinking. Let's put our faith into action. I want to grow in 2017. I hope you do as well.

Christ's Peace,

Lance

