

# New



# year, new you

It's the spiritual connections that make the resolutions work

By Scott Harrup

**Admit it.** You've made your share of New Year's resolutions.

We all have those embarrassing lists. They looked great on December 31. You were convinced you could shed a few pounds, read some good books and kick into high gear at your job.

But now you're writing off most of those goals as self-deluding hype. You lost weight, then gained it back with a bonus pound or five. You stayed with your reading list until the new season of 24 grabbed you by the adrenal glands. And your job has remained ... well, a job.

MAYBE  
NEXT  
YEAR

Caught in the doldrums, you wonder if the whole New Year's ritual has any value.

You've got a lot in common with the ancient Israelites.

About 3,400 years ago, God freed the Israelites from centuries of slavery in Egypt. In doing so, He called for a complete makeover of their lives and reworked their entire calendar. Passover was the first big celebration each year because God wanted the Israelites' descendants to always remember what He had

done for them.

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, God led His people to Mount Sinai. There He gave to Moses detailed guidelines for how the Israelites were to live as a peaceful and worshipful society. And that's where things got complicated.

From God's perspective, those laws would help His chosen people live holy lives and enjoy their inheritance in Canaan. From the Israelites' perspective, those laws were overwhelming. Kind of like

a colossal New Year's list of resolutions someone else gives to you that you know you can never keep.

But God's Law was never designed as a personal to-do list. Anyone who treated it that way inevitably ran into a point where he or she broke the Law. The secret to obeying the Law was establishing a love relationship with God.

At the heart of the Law was this fundamental command: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with

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own traditions. By the time of Christ there was an encyclopedia's worth of do's and don'ts to keep in focus.

Jesus came on the scene as the ultimate reminder of the love relationship God had desired all along. Some experts in the Law tried to interrogate Him about which do's and don'ts were the most important. He went right back to Deuteronomy 6:5, then expanded on its meaning.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).

When you think of life from Jesus' perspective, your goals take on the correct level of priority. Suddenly it's not a tragedy if your New Year's resolutions have fallen by the wayside. Sure, there are benefits to trimming your waistline, sharpening your mind and impressing your employer. But those are all just details.

If you take Jesus' approach to your life's to-do list, you only need to ask yourself two questions. How much do you love God? How much do you love others? **tpe**

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E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

1	1 Samuel 1-3
2	1 Samuel 4-7
3	1 Samuel 8-10
4	1 Samuel 11-13
5	1 Samuel 14, 15
6	1 Samuel 16, 17
7	1 Samuel 18-20
8	1 Samuel 21-24
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10	1 Samuel 28-31
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26	1 Kings 12, 13
27	1 Kings 14-16
28	1 Kings 17, 18
29	1 Kings 19, 20
30	1 Kings 21, 22

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