

Where Will You Be?

Goal setting is an important part of life. Studies have shown that folks who take the time to sit down and discern the goals they have for their life, and write them down, are far more likely to achieve those goals. This is true even if they never again look at the list!

In this season of New Year's Resolutions, I encourage you to examine and pray about the spiritual goals that you would like to set. We have created many opportunities in 2007 to read and/or listen to the New Testament together. That would be a worthy goal for 2008, as well.

Another worthy goal is outlined in the devotion below by Pastor Kerry Nelson. He writes email devotions. I include this one from December 10th because it is sometimes nice to hear the same thing in someone else's words. Thanks to Dale Harter for forwarding this to me!

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May God's blessing go with you into the New Year, Pastor Chris

From: pastorkerry@earthlink.net

"Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work. You, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it." Exodus 20:8-11

It's the holiday season. One of the organizing traditions of my grade school years was participating in a Sunday School Christmas program. While we were never members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, my sisters and I were in at least three Christmas programs during this time of year. We might not have been very faithful in worship for the rest of the year but we were there for the holidays.

It seems to me that when the 3rd commandment was first spoken, the intention behind it was not to encourage people to set time aside for worshiping God only during the months of October, November and December. And yet it seems that many folks do just that.

I can come up with countless reasons why people might not want to go to church on Sundays. Some of them are simply excuses; others are good reasons. What is more difficult is coming up with reasons why people ought to make weekly worship a part of their lives. I want to use the daily devotions this week to go after that question, "Why ought we be in worship every week?"

The first answer is probably the only correct answer there is. But that isn't to say that it will be very effective in encouraging people to change their lives, reorganizing them around weekly worship. The first answer is - God commands our presence. While our observance as Christians is different than the worship patterns of Israel, the principle still remains that God is pleased with our worship and has organized time in such a way that one day is especially set aside for that purpose.

There is an old criticism of the church that says that "Jesus intended to build a people but then the disciples got a hold of that vision and built a church." The meat of that criticism suggests that there is something inauthentic and unhelpful about constructing buildings intended to house worship services, and creating religious structures to see that worship happens. I think that criticism is just an excuse. I believe that regardless of the limitations and problems that will always exist in organized religion, there is something about the trustworthiness that, come what may, Christians will be gathering together at 11:00 on Sunday morning that is a reflection of the steadfastness of God.

God is always there. So is the church. So are Sunday morning worship services. The question is, will you be there?

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we know ourselves well enough to know that we will always find ways to rationalize our behavior and look for loopholes in the boundaries you place around our lives. We know you invite us to set time aside every week to worship you. Help us to fend off the temptation to organize our time in different ways, to allow other priorities to determine our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pastor Kerry Nelson

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