January 2011

Dear Center for Adventist Research,

New Year’s Day comes once a year, and with it many good intentions: to lose weight, exercise more, get out of debt, get organized, learn something new ... and the list goes on. And almost as plentiful as New Year’s resolutions is the advice from family, friends and experts on how to successfully make your resolved changes and become a new person.

Unfortunately in spite of all that positive thinking, most of these resolutions are long forgotten by Valentine’s Day. Imagining a new beginning is exciting, but all our noble plans are doomed to failure if they are based on our own desires and we are relying on our own strength to make them a reality. That sounds harsh, but it isn’t the entire picture. ... Read more

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A new year ... a new you?

By Laura West Kong

New Year’s Day comes once a year, and with it many good intentions: to lose weight, exercise more, get out of debt, get organized, learn something new ... and the list goes on. And almost as plentiful as New Year’s resolutions is the advice from friends and experts on how to successfully make your resolved changes and become a new person.

Unfortunately in spite of all that positive thinking, most of these resolutions are long forgotten by Valentine’s Day. Imagining a new beginning is exciting, but all our noble plans are doomed to failure if they are based on our own desires and we are relying on our own strength to make them a reality.

That sounds harsh, but it isn’t the entire picture. As Christians we have already been given a new beginning in Christ every day. If all our resolutions have gone awry before January is done, we don’t have to wait until New Year’s Day 2012 to make a fresh, clean start. The apostle Paul tells us, “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In Christ, we are already a new person, not we can become a new person each January if we only have the sheer willpower to make it happen. What’s more, “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. Ephesians 2:8-9.

Our salvation, our new life in Christ is a gift from God. What a difference from the New Year’s Day model of change by resolutions and determination! Through God’s grace we are new every minute of every day.

And we are not made new just for the sake of being new. God has a plan and purpose for our new lives. Paul continues, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10. In Jeremiah we read, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11.

Whatever God calls us to do, in Christ we can do it. Jesus promised, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5. In 2011 and beyond, let’s remember that we are God’s masterpieces, not our own, and proclaim with Paul, “I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13.

All scriptures taken from the New Living Translation.

Laura West Kong is the website specialist at Quiet Hour Ministries.

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Quiet Hour Ministries is echoing His request to "let your light shine before others." Matthew 5:16, NIV

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