

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Happy New Year! Now What?

We start the year off with good intentions, but bad follow-through...

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What Happened:

It's the dawn of a New Year, a time when many of us plot to do some internal remodeling in the form of some New Year's resolutions. Sadly, many of us make the same set of resolutions year after year.

According to *Time* magazine, about half of us made at least one New Year's resolution this year. Some of us commit to lose a little weight or gain some muscle. Others say we'd like to get organized or work harder in school.

Most of us never follow through. In fact, *Time* says more than a third of us never even get *started* on our resolutions, letting them slip away before we've even tried. Only 12 percent of us succeed in achieving our resolutions.

God loves us just the way we are—but we could all still use a little improvement in one area or another. Why is it so hard for us to change, even when we want to?

Experts say that often we fail at our New Year's resolutions because we don't have a plan: We want to lose weight, but we don't plot how to do so. Consequently, we slip back into the same habits. We say we want to study harder, but we don't bother to figure out how that would look day to day. Does it mean spending a half-hour more with the books? Turning off the television while doing algebra? Many of us know we need to change, but we don't know how.

Sometimes, we actually don't *want* to change. We might want to lose weight, but we don't want to stop eating those sweets. We may need to get organized, but we can't bear taking the time to clean. Bad habits are tricky that way.

Talk About It:

Some people make fun of New Year's resolutions—maybe with good reason. There's nothing magical about making a commitment on the New Year than any of the 364 other days of the year, but there's nothing wrong with trying to improve ourselves. Often, the things we try to correct with resolutions are things that distract us from God, which makes them sins that *should* be squelched.

Have you ever made a New Year's resolution before? Did it work for you? Why or why not?

Have you made any resolutions for 2011? What are they? Why did you decide those things needed work or needed to be fixed? If you've made a resolution, have you put forth a plan to help you achieve your goals?

There's a saying that "God loves me too much to leave me the way I am." What do you think God would want you to work on this year? Would your resolutions and the resolutions God has for you match up? Do you think it's important to always try to improve yourself? Why or why not?

What the Bible Says:

"When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it" (Ecc. 5:4-5).

"When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said" (Num. 30:2).

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord. But I tell you, do not swear at all...Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matt. 5:33-37).

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).