

Quitters Day

Has anyone made any 2023 resolutions? Anyone keeping them? Although most new year's resolution go belly up by the 2nd Friday of January (a.k.a. National Quitters Day), I still think they have some value because they communicate, even in a small way, our deep desire to be a better version of ourselves. The New Year's Resolution that perennially tops the charts is to get physically fit. This is probably because of all the year-end feasting, which starts at Thanksgiving, runs through Christmas, and concludes on New Year's Day. If getting in shape is one of your resolutions, try the 5 "ITS" to make it stick past "Quitters Day."

The ITS to Success

The 1st IT is "Why It." Everything in life starts with why. You want to shed a few, slim down, and get stronger, why...just to exercise more (Seinfeld illustration)? If you asked me why I pump iron and cycle, I'd answer, "To keep my girly man physique, stay out of the doctor's office, and have more energy to do what God wants me to do."

The 2nd IT is "Do It." By that I mean make it doable. If you resolved to be more fit this year by going to the gym five days a week for two hours per time but have never set foot in a gym in your life, well that's a sure-fire set-up for failure. However, if you resolve to go to the gym two times a week for half an hour each time, that's doable and the chance of sustaining your "get-fit" resolution will rise exponentially (don't forget: you can't out train your fork).

The 3rd IT is "Partner It." By that I mean rely on others and not your own will power. Anything worthwhile is hard. Therefore, you need a partner that will both challenge and encourage you even when you're tired, sore, and would gladly give your entire kingdom to lay on the couch, binge watch TV, and munch on a bag of Doritos.

The 4th IT is "Discipline It." Here I mean to rely on discipline, not motivation. This may sound strange but motivation is tied to our feelings (which are up and down) while discipline is tied to our values (a better version of myself). Therefore, discipline says you go to the gym regardless of how you feel because feelings have no say in the matter. As Arnold Schwarzenegger put it, "When someone asks me to skip the gym I say, 'No Chance!'" Thomas Edison said a hundred years ago, "Success is 1% inspiration (genius) and 99% perspiration." If he relied strictly on motivation we'd still be burning candles at night for light. Has any progress ever been made, in any endeavor, without discipline? We all said, "NO!"

The 5th IT is to "Schedule It." We are slaves to dates and deadlines. Without scheduling, our resolutions are mere dreams and empty aspirations. So, instead of vaguely saying, "My 2023 resolution is to get fit" tell Siri or Alexa to schedule it: "Gym on Monday, January 9, at 6:00 AM." Half the battle for sustaining resolutions is scheduling it and then just showing up on time.

These five "ITS" will sustain your fitness resolution, and any others you might have made, not only past "Quitters Day" but for the rest of the year.

Bay Point's 2023 Spiritual Fit Resolution

The past few weeks I have been praying hard about Bay Point's 2023 Resolution. Of all the things it could or should be, the one that God keeps laying on my heart is that we need to get spiritually fit by seeking him. Other than there is no greater spiritual exercise than seeking God, we have three mammoth decisions facing us this year that will forever shape the future of our church. And not for one second do we want to make them based merely on human convention/wisdom.

Three Mammoth Decisions

The first decision is in response to the church leadership's recent decision to start the process of disaffiliation from the UMC. I can't explain all the "whys & whatfors" now but that in and of itself is huge. Once this happens, we need to seek God for the path he wants us to take.

The second decision regards how we successfully implement our 5/25 vision of growing our church to 500 "All In" disciples by the end of 2025, especially given that ministry has changed so dramatically since the pandemic? Not only must we figure this out because people so badly need Jesus, and he is the best thing for them now and forever, but practically-logistically speaking, our campus is too big for the current size of our congregation. We either "go big or go home" so other than trusting God and habitually doing IGPS, we decided to bring in a church consulting firm to help us discover our "secret sauce." However, we need to seek God to ensure the process is led and inspired by his Spirit.

Our 3rd major decision is how can we do our mission better of making disciples that make disciples? Disciple reproduction is the healthiest thing a church can do and we need to get better at it. The other day I played golf with a Christian. When I told him I was a pastor he asked, "Your church making any disciples these days cause that's the only thing that matters." I replied, "Not as many as we want or will in the future!"

Banner Text

The banner text for our 2023 congregational resolution of getting spiritually fit by seeking God is I Chronicles 16:10-11

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

Applying the 5 ITS

To make sure we "seek his face always" especially past Quitters Day, let's apply the five "ITS" of our New Year's Resolutions.

Why It: When we seek God, he will most certainly answer our three big questions. We will then have the unshakable confidence that he is leading us and we are not leading ourselves!

Do It: Seeking God is not only our duty and delight, but it is also doable. Therefore, let's encourage and challenge ourselves to seek God five minutes a day just for Bay Point's future.

Partner It: Everything in our culture is designed to pull us away from God and distract us from him (anyone have a smart phone?). I recently confessed to a brother that lately it's taking a Herculean effort on my part to focus long enough to get through my morning devotions and I'm a preacher! Maybe it's the same for you, so let's "partner it" so that we can mutually encourage and challenge one another to seek God. I give you permission to stop me at any time and ask, "Are you seeking God for our three big three questions?" I promise to give you my honest answer providing I have the permission to ask you the same. Cool? Cool!

Discipline It. I have a colleague that lovingly crushes me every time I am unmotivated to prayer. "Do you believe God answers your prayers?" "Yes" I respond. "Then why would you ever miss a prayer time?" he asks. "Because I am a knucklehead" I reply. Seeking God is not easy or natural, it requires mucho discipline. But remember what spiritual discipline is: a constant ordering of our priorities to enjoy God and all that he has for us.

Schedule It: What is a resolution without a date? A dream and empty aspiration. For all that is at stake, we need to schedule that five undistracted minutes to seek God. Everyone, take out your phones now, do it now.

Conclusion:

In Jeremiah 29:13 God promises that when we seek him with all our heart, we will find him and the amazing future he has planned for us and so much more. Because "quitters never win and winners never quit," I want everyone to fill out your "Seek God" 2023 Spiritual Resolution Card" and bring it to the front as we dedicate them to him.