

God's New Year Resolution

Listen Up "Caterpillars": What God has done for the butterfly is only a hint of what He wants to do for us.

Ropes of Sand?

According to a [YouGov poll](#), only about 26% of Americans plan to make any New Year's resolutions. Those most likely to do so are between 18-34 years-old (33%). The likelihood of resolution-making decreases with age, with 30% of 35-54 year-olds likely to make resolutions, and only 17% of those 55+ likely to do so.

Why do so few engage in this tradition and why is there less participation as people age? Don't we usually think of older people as being the ones attached to tradition, especially when it comes to the holidays?

Could it be a track record of broken resolutions that jades people against even planning to accomplish anything new, exciting, empowering, and uplifting? Have the yearly reruns of unused gym memberships, expanding waistlines, unfulfilling jobs, and increasing debts pulled the plug on idealistic initiatives? Has it become less painful to surrender to apathy than to overcome inertia?

Teaching old caterpillars new tricks



To soar, caterpillars have to become new creatures. In order for that to happen, they have to stop chomping, cease the

persistent pursuit of more green, and halt compulsive consumption.

Have we been going about change and growth in the wrong way, the wrong order? Perhaps we need to focus more on being than doing? I've heard it said, "If you want to do what you've never done, you must become what you've never been." We can see a powerful, down-to-earth, example of this truth in the life of the caterpillar.

Caterpillars can't fly. They don't have the wings or the shape. Caterpillars can't sip. They don't have the equipment nor discernment to delicately extract nectar from the interior of a flower blossom without destroying it. Caterpillars commence their destructive appetites (from a farmer's point of view) by devouring the eggshells they hatch from. The only time they pause from eating is to molt (shed their skin), so they can eat and grow some more. After molting, many caterpillars resume their frenzy by eating their old skin!

To soar and sip, caterpillars must undergo a transformation—a metamorphosis. They must acquire new tastes and new tools. They have to become new creatures. In order for that to happen, they have to stop chomping, cease the persistent pursuit of more green, and halt compulsive consumption.

Caterpillar soup, anyone?

To become butterflies, caterpillars have to make a clean break from the past by literally going out on a limb. They must position themselves for the miracle of metamorphosis by sealing themselves away from the world for a while. They are vulnerable and appear unproductive, but the stillness of the chrysalis is God's means of unlocking their potential.



Newness of life means no more search and destroy, but a life in Him to share.

Caterpillars bring no building supplies inside their silken construction tarps. This isn't a DIY project. Only God can transform sideways-munching jaws into straws (yeah, I know, it's called a proboscis) and bring wings out of seemingly nowhere. This is a messy process, as Scientific American describes, "First, the caterpillar digests itself, releasing enzymes to

dissolve all of its tissues. If you were to cut open a cocoon or chrysalis at just the right time, caterpillar soup would ooze out." Later, that "protein-rich soup" will "fuel the rapid cell division required to form the wings, antennae, legs, eyes, genitals and all the other features of an adult butterfly."

Once the transformation is complete, the butterfly can see things with their compound eyes that are impossible for caterpillars to envision with their simple eyes. They flutter through the air instead of fumble around on the ground. Butterflies have active appetites, but disseminate life from one flower to another as they dine. The self-indulgent search and destroy missions of their former lives are forever behind them.

God's New You Resolution

What God has done for the butterfly is only a hint of what He wants to do for us. God's resolution is to provide *newness* of life for each of us (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17). He wants to give us a *new* song (Isaiah 42:10; Revelations 14:3), show us *new* things (Isaiah 43:19; 48:6), give us a *new* heart along with *new* names (Ezekiel 36:26; Isaiah 62:2; Revelations. 2:17), and bring us into the *new* heavens and *new* earth (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter. 3:13; Revelations 21:1). It all begins with us renewing our minds:

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2, KJV).

3 R's to a New You

God has a three-step process for us to enter this newness.

Recognize that we have an either-or proposition from which to choose: be conformed or be transformed.

There are people, customs, and other forces in the world seeking to mold us, shape us—conform us to their image. However, there is also a path available for personal transformation that resists being defined by anyone or anything outside of God. Either we choose to be transformed or we will be conformed by default.

One tricky fact about this choice is that both actions in Romans 12:2a are passive, meaning that we're not in charge of the processes of being conformed or transformed. What can we do about the situation?

"What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but...You can give Him your will" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 47).

Remember that being transformed isn't a once and done decision.

Romans 12:2b says we must undergo continual renewal of the mind for our transformation to stick. Just look at the word: RE-NEW-ING. The prefix "re-" has "the meaning of... 'again and again' to indicate repetition." Adding the suffix "-ing" to renew "indicates continuing action, something going on now" and "can suggest that an action is going to happen in the future, especially with verbs that convey...movement from one...condition to another."

The point is that the Bible writer has realistic expectations. He is encouraging us on a course of continual progress, not instantaneous perfection. There's no need to give up on ourselves, our high ideals, or God. Keep praying. Keep getting acquainted with God's promises. Keep positioning

ourselves for the miracle of metamorphosis. Keep yielding ourselves to the One who began the good work in us, because He has made Himself responsible for completing it (Philippians 1:6). This may sound corny, but remember, "Big shots are only little shots who keep shooting."

Rejoice that you're not alone in your efforts.

Romans 12:2c affirms that your transformation is His will, His resolution. It's God's good and perfect will for you and me to be what we've never been and do what we've never done. It's His good and perfect will for us to see things from a newer and higher vantage point than possible before (Ephesians 2:6). It is God working in you and me to bring about the lasting transformation that so easily eludes us (Philippians 2:13). In the words of Darwin Hobbs:

*God is able to do just what he said he would do
He's gonna fulfill every promise to you
Don't give up on God, cause he won't give up on you!*