

I am sure I have told you the story about the morning in sixth or seventh grade when our dog broke free from the leash and took off running. I was going to be late and for the first time in my life, I swore out loud. “Get back here you d ___ dog!” I am not sure what shocked me more, the fact that I thought those words, or the fact that they came out of my mouth. But I am equally as sure that I looked around to see if anyone had heard me. Now to understand the rest of my comments we must establish that while most of the world does not even consider d ___ a swear word. I did and still do. And I am sad to say that I have slipped and used that phrase more than once, but not often. And I don’t think I had spoken it out loud again at all even up to my 10 year class reunion. It was there that I ran into a class mate, who said: “Oh I remember you; you’re the girl who swore at her dog.” Wow, what a way to be remembered.

The funny thing is that we sometimes do the same thing to ourselves. We take some mistake, some failure, some slip up and we degrade ourselves over it until we almost come to believe that we are not capable of much more. In other words, we allow ourselves to be defined by that one moment. This would make George Eliot very uncomfortable, if of course, he was still alive. I know he would not have liked us defining ourselves by our failures because of this phrase he is quoted as saying:

“It is never too late to be what you might have been.”

Maybe that is why people are so drawn to the ideas of resolutions at New Years. They allow us to think about the people we want to be and make plans to work toward that goal.

So, if you want to be kinder practice small acts of kindness each day. Say please and thank you. Let people get in line before you. Open doors. Think before you speak – is what I am about to say helpful, is it thoughtful, is it meant for the good of others?

If you want to be stronger practice small act of repeated discipline. Walk every day, take the stairs instead of an elevator, wash the dishes by hand, lift weights – in other words push your self a little more each day and do it repeatedly. Or better yet, drop a bad habit and replace it with a healthy alternative.

If you want to be more forgiving you have to practice forgiveness. Stop thinking of yourself as a victim, most of what happens to you is not done intentionally. Show grace, sometimes people lash out when they are hurting, remember you have done that too! If you want to be more forgiving remember that God has extended it to you through Jesus Christ.

Gigi Graham Tchividjian put it this way:

“Make the least of all that goes and the most of all that comes.” Don’t regret what is past. Cherish what you have. Look forward to all that is to come. And most important of all, rely moment by moment on Jesus Christ.”

Maybe this year’s resolution could include a closer look at the vows of membership – I promise to uphold the church through my prayers, my presence, my gifts, and my service. And if you can’t think of any practical steps – just ask. Until then here are a few ideas:

Sunday morning small group attendance at 9am. Participation in choir, uke band, Youth group, Bible studies, watch your email for the prayer needs spoken each Sunday and pray specifically for them, work at the Clothes Closet and the Food Pantry, come up on Wednesday mornings to help take care of the church property maintenance, etc.

When Paul was speaking to the Philippians about setting a goal to strengthen faith and to know and follow Christ closer he wrote: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Pastor Polly