

Resolved for God's glory
By Phillip Sessa



But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank (Daniel 1:8)

Have you ever made a New Year's Resolution? If so have you kept your resolution? Most people quit their would-be New Year's Resolutions by the end of January or at best middle of February. The [ancient Babylonians](#) are said to have been the first people to make [New Year's](#) resolutions, some 3,000-4,000 years ago. They were also the first to hold recorded celebrations in honor of the new year—beginning in mid-March when the crops were planted, as opposed to January. During Akitu, a massive 12-day religious festival, the Babylonians crowned a new king or reaffirmed their loyalty to the reigning king. They affirmed promises to the gods to pay their debts and return borrowed objects. These promises could be considered the forerunners of our New Year's resolutions. They believed that if the Babylonians kept to their word, their (pagan) gods would bestow favor on them for the coming year. If they failed to keep their word, they would fall out of the gods' favor.

Although Christians would have a different motivation, is this a practice that Christians should partake in? Did you being a New Year's Resolution? It seems something is exciting about a new year that gives you the feeling of a fresh start and a new beginning. However, is there any difference between December 31 and January 1 besides the date? A ball may drop, and a cheer may ring out, but nothing mystical occurs at midnight on December 31.

For Early Christians, the first day of the new year became the traditional occasion for thinking about one's past sins, repenting of those sins, and resolving to do and be better in the future. In 1740, the English clergyman John Wesley created the Covenant Renewal Service, most commonly held on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, also known as watch night services. This included readings from the Scriptures and singing hymns.

It served as a spiritual alternative to the rowdy celebrations celebrated by the world in the new year. The church I attend spends the evening singing, reading Scripture, and praying the Scriptures. Despite the tradition's religious roots, most make New Year's resolutions not to The Lord but only to themselves and focus primarily on self-improvement (which may explain why so many tend to follow through). According to recent [research](#), out of 45 percent of Americans who say they usually make New Year's resolutions, only 8 percent successfully achieve their goals.

While in exile the Prophet Daniel didn't necessarily write a resolution, displayed a resolution that was in his heart. When his faith was tried he displayed his resolve in the Lord. When commanded to eat meat sacrificed to idols, which upon consumption would have been deemed as worshipping the Babylonian gods, Daniel refused to comply with the king's daily portion of food and wine assigned to them. Daniel 1:8 states, "**But Daniel *resolved* that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.**" The pagan food and drink were devoted to idols, how could Daniel honor these deities among pagans, when he was supposed to shine as a light for Yahweh? Daniel "purposed in his heart" keeping his heart with all vigilance, [knowing] from it flow the springs of life (Prov 4:23). To partake in eating and drinking was for him to was against his conviction, he could not partake of it in faith. He refused to **engage in compromise, and he would not be untrue to God's call of commitment upon his life (cf. Ex. 34:14, 15; Jere 1:5-6)[1]** Although exiled to a foreign land, Daniel having lived from his teen years until his final years resolved to obey and honor the Lord.

Stephen Covey in his book 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, posits that one habit of successful people is that they begin with the end in mind. He states, "One of the best ways to incorporate Habit 2 into your life is to develop a Personal Mission Statement". Many years before Stephen Covey Moses instructed in Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." There was a man who lived in a way in which he numbered his days with a heart of wisdom and penned his mission, and the resolve of his heart onto paper. Jonathan Edwards, known as America's greatest theologian made a list of 70 commitments, which are known as his 70 resolutions which he penned from the time he was 18-20 years of age, but which lived his whole life according to them.

The prologue of his resolutions reads, "Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat him by his grace to enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to his will, for Christ's sake. Remember to read over these Resolutions once a week. John Piper categorized Edwards's resolutions, and here are a few of them.

Overall Life Mission

1. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriad's of ages hence.
6. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.

Time Management

19. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if I expected it would not be above an hour, before I should hear the last trump.
37. Resolved, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent, what sin I have committed, and wherein I have denied myself: also at the end of every week, month and year. *Dec. 22 and 26, 1722.*

Suffering

10. Resolved, when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom, and of hell.

Character

27. Resolved, never willfully to omit anything, except the omission be for the glory of God; and frequently to examine my omissions.

Spiritual Life

Assurance

25. Resolved, to examine carefully, and constantly, what that one thing in me is, which causes me in the least to doubt of the love of God; and to direct all my forces against it.

Mortification of Sin and Self Examination

56. Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.

Communion with God

53. Resolved, to improve every opportunity, when I am in the best and happiest frame of mind, to cast and venture my soul on the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust and confide in him, and consecrate myself wholly to him; that from this I may have assurance of my safety, knowing that I confide in my Redeemer. *July 8, 1723.*

The list is powerful, eye-opening, and worthwhile list some 300 years after his ministry in New England.

Steve Lawson wrote in his book Legacy, A team of New York state sociologists attempted to calculate the influence of a father's life on his children and the following generations. In this study, they researched two men who lived in the 18th century. One was Max Jukes, the other Jonathan Edwards. The legacy that each of these men left their descendants stands as a study in contrasts; they are as different as night and day.

Max Jukes was an unbeliever, a man with no principles. His wife also lived and died in unbelief. What kind of a lasting influence did he leave his family? Among the 1,200 known descendants of Max Jukes were:

- 440 lives of outright debauchery
(*excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures*)
- 310 paupers and vagrants
- 190 public prostitutes
- 130 convicted criminals
- 100 alcoholics
- 60 habitual thieves
- 55 victims of impurity
- 7 murderers

The research displayed not one of Jukes' descendants made a significant contribution to society—not one! This notorious family collectively cost the state of New York \$1,200,000.00.

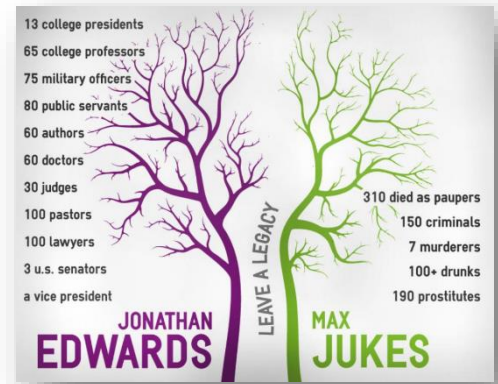
He left a lousy legacy if you would even call his life a legacy at all.

What do you think would be the fruit of the family of Jonathan Edwards? He was regarded as the most brilliant mind America has ever produced, a noted pastor and astute theologian. He was a renowned scholar and was the instrument God used to bring about the Great Awakening in colonial America. He went on to serve as the first president of Princeton College. He preached the most famous sermon in American history known as, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

B.B. Warfield said that Edwards “stands out as the one figure of real greatness in the intellectual life of colonial America.” The late R.C. Sproul once described Edwards’ work *Freedom of the Will* as “the most important theological work ever published in America.

Look at the life of Edwards. He came from a godly heritage and married Sarah, a woman of great faith. Together, they left behind a godly legacy. Among his male descendants were:

- 300 pastors, missionaries, or theological professors
- 120 college professors
- 110 lawyers
- 60 physicians
- 60 authors of good books
- 30 judges
- 14 presidents of universities
- numerous giants in American industry
- 3 U.S. congressmen
- 1 vice-president of the United States



This is a stark contrast to Max Jukes. There is scarcely any great American industry that one of Jonathan Edwards descendants has not had its hand in. Such is the lasting influence of a godly man. We can learn from Jonathan Edwards what will help us make this year count for the glory of God. Not only did Edward live this way but Daniel, and many of the redeemed of the Lord written in the Scriptures lived with resolve, and numbered their days.

However, no one numbered their days more perfectly than the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ his mother asked Him to turn water to wine, Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4) and He said in John 7:6 “my time has not yet come”, and in Matt 26:18 He said, “my time is hand”. Jesus knew when it was not His time, and when it was His time to go to the cross. He lived between these two bookends of life.

Living your life with resolve is to live a life-redeeming the time (Eph 5:16). Hundreds of years after Daniel’s time in exile, and hundreds of years before Edwards, there is one life that is the pinnacle of living with resolve, redeeming the time, and no doubt you know Him.

The poem *One Solitary Life* reads, “He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another villager where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years, he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn’t go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind’s progress.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that One Solitary Life” (Rev. James Allan Francis).

Selah:

No one lives with resolve or redeems time by accident. You only have one life to live, and between today and your last day. How will you live with resolve with fruit that remains to the glory of God? Perhaps you might need to put pen to paper or type them out, and regularly look at this examining your life, and amending them as needed. “Resolved, I will live for God. If no one else does, I will (Jonathan Edwards).”

Resources:

- <https://g3min.org/make-your-resolutions-in-2019-count-for-gods-glory/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-years-resolution.html>
- <https://lifecoach4god.life/tag/max-jukes-legacy/>
- <https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions>