

Discussion Guide: New Year's Resolutions

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NIV)*

December 29, 2002: "New Year's Resolutions" by Joe Bartemus, Pastor of Children's Ministries. Pastor Joe began his sermon by challenging us to make as our #1 Resolution, not only for the New Year, but for life in general, "to know God better."

Reading from Revelation 4 and 5, Joe challenged us to "Behold the glory of God in three persons...the blessed trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" and passionately led us through a verse-by-verse exploration of the immense glory and majesty of God.

God the Father

In Revelation 4:1-20, we behold God the Father in his glory. Our response should be to worship him...the King...the Lord God Almighty. We like the four living creatures should raise our voices continually in saying...

"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

"You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

God the Son

In Revelation 5:1-14, we behold God the Son in his love. Our response should be to love Jesus, the Lamb of God who purchased the whole of humanity for God with his blood and made them a kingdom of priests to serve God. We like the multitude of angels should raise our voices continually in singing...

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

God the Holy Spirit

In Revelation 4 and 5 we behold the Holy Spirit in fulfilling his various roles as part of the triune Godhead. Our response should be to thank God the Father for sending the Holy Spirit who leads us into a saving knowledge of his Son, Jesus Christ, and empowers and equips us so we collectively as a body of believers may "reach unity in the faith and in the

knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13 (NIV).

In Revelation 4:2 and we see that the Holy Spirit does not bring glory to himself, but leads us and empowers us, as he did with the Apostle John, to observe the holiness of God and the love of Jesus.

In Revelation 5:6, the seven spirits of God were sent out into all the earth and it is possible that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit enlightening us about the very nature of God.

Application Points:

1. Let us make 2003 the year of renewed worship of the Father in his holiness. Let us bask in the glory and greatness of who God is. Let us exalt him and marvel in his presence and his grace.
2. Let us in 2003 cast our idols (crowns we retain) at his feet as an act of worship.
3. When we pray in the year 2003, let us be mindful that the prayers of the saints are precious in the sight of God.
4. In the year 2003, let us be mindful of the fact that, through Jesus Christ, we can come directly to God the Father himself as a kingdom of priest, a community of faith, to worship him and bring glory to the Lamb of God.
5. In the year 2003, let us rely on the Holy Spirit to bring us to God. We are not relying on ourselves. It is the Spirit of God that brings us into the presence of the Father and helps us understand and love the Son. As Paul said, "those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans 8:14 (NIV)

Let us also rely on the Holy Spirit to enlighten us so that we don't just learn facts but come into a close and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ the Lamb. Let us worship the King who sits on the throne and seek to have our lives become a life of relationship with God himself. For that's the function of the Holy Spirit...to bring us to him and cause us to glory in him.

We have our work cut out for us in 2003, but what a work it is. Can you imagine a more glorious work in the year 2003 than to be a part of the kingdom of God? Nothing we can accomplish or do in the year 2003 can compare to the glory of worshiping the Father, loving the Son, and being led and enlightened by the Spirit.

Let us, as the church of Jesus Christ, rally together. There is nothing like the community of faith to come together and to adore and worship and love our God who sits on the throne.

May each of you join me in 2003 in saying that, I'm going to worship the King, the Lord God Almighty, and I'm going to love his Son Jesus Christ. And love isn't just a statement of emotion but a statement of relationship. It's to say I'm going to spend this year getting to know Jesus like I've never known him before. I'm going to fellowship with the community of faith. I'm going to come together with the kingdom of God in this local assembly. And our goal is going to be to love Jesus...to love him as we love one another.

Closing prayer:

Our Father in heaven, we love you. What a beautiful text. What a glorious morning to share with the saints in this location, people you have bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. We love you and we worship you. May this year be a year that this church, and not only this church in College Park but the church in the Ukraine, the church in Nicaragua, the church in Hungary, the church around the world in China, in South Africa, all over the world, would together lift our voices in praise to the Father, Son and Spirit. We desire you to minister in our midst. Cause us individually and corporately to love you and to commit our lives to you. We also pray this morning Lord that you would draw into your family those who do not know you as their Savior. We would love to see them come into your family. For it is in Jesus name we pray. Amen

Discussion Questions:

1. When we come before the presence of God in worship and prayer, do we really have an appreciation of who God the Father is? Who is he to you? What difference will it make for you in 2003?
2. What is God looking for as our act of worship?¹ What acts would you like to include in your worship to God in 2003?
3. When we go before the throne of grace in prayer what should be our attitude?² What will be your attitude in 2003?
4. In what ways can our lives become more of a life of relationship with God himself in 2003? [For ideas, review the Discussion Guide for Rich Vincent's sermon on 10/13/02].
5. What would you like to do in the year 2003 to get to know Jesus better...better than you've ever known him before?

As a Small Flock Group, let us renew our commitment to each other to continue in our fellowship together and encourage one another in our walk with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ with a goal of becoming more like him in every aspect of our lives.

In 2003, let us ask God to fill us with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. May we, in 2003, live our lives in a manner worthy of the Lord and may we please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.
Paraphrase of Colossians 1:9-13 (NIV).

¹ Matthew 22:37-39, John 4:21-24, John 14:15-17, Romans 12:1-2, and Hebrews 12:1-3

² 1 Peter 2:4-9 and Revelation 5:10