

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1. lose weight
2. exercise
3. drink more water
4. quit smoking

TAKING STOCK SPIRITUALLY

At various times in the year, the first week of January, or as Lent and Easter approaches, I find myself discussing whether making resolutions is biblical. On the one hand 'it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast'.¹ So we know that no efforts or resolve on our part can save us from the consequence of sin. Praise God that Jesus has already paid the price for this through his death on the cross. On the other hand Hebrews challenges us to 'throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus'.² We certainly cannot become more Christ-like in our behaviour without the Holy Spirit, but getting rid of sinful habits and establishing good ones does require some effort on our part.

These landmarks are as good a time as any to take stock spiritually and consider who God wants us to be and what he wants us to do in the year ahead. So perhaps I can share with you three biblical resolutions to consider.

'Consider how we may to spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another'.³ The Christian Medical Fellowship is a fellowship. It is individual Christian medics encouraging one another; praying together; studying God's word together and reminding one another of the goodness of God. It is this that builds us up as the body of Christ. If this is going to happen it is up to each one of us to give time and effort to encouraging one another. This is why CMF has set out a vision to have a Christian 'link' for every locality, workplace, speciality, church and deanery. If there is no link in your place of work perhaps we shouldn't just hope for someone else to do it – think about starting something.

'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests

but each of you to the interests of the others'.⁴ In your relationships with one another 'have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant'.⁵

As our health service undergoes massive change it is crying out for servant leaders, women and men who will put patients, carers and colleagues first – rather than prioritising their own personal convenience, or defending their professional privilege. Challenging though this may be, there have seldom been more opportunities to take on clinical leadership positions. We are commanded to be 'salt and light', so should we at least consider if we are called to be servant leaders in our practices, clinical commissioning groups, hospitals or deaneries?

'In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect'.⁶ For many in the health service, patients and staff alike, life seems very uncertain and hope is in short supply. As Christian doctors we have hope in Christ Jesus, an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.⁷ As we live out this hope serving our patients and our colleagues we will be asked to give the reason for the hope that we have. We really do have good news that is worth telling. Perhaps we can all resolve to consider how we can do this more effectively.

Nick Land is a consultant psychiatrist and medical director in the north of England and former Chairman of CMF.

references

1. Ephesians 2:8-9
2. Hebrews 12:1-2
3. Hebrews 10:24-25
4. Philippians 2:3-4
5. Philippians 2:5-7
6. 1 Peter 3:15
7. Hebrews 6:19