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New Year: New You....New Day: New You

BY BECKY RAMSEY, CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS REPRESENTATIVE

It is a very common habit to begin a new year by making all sorts of resolutions. These can range from choosing to make better food choices, deciding to exercise more, or eliminating negative behavior patterns from our repertoire. These resolutions often do not last even as long as it took for us to write the list.

Making changes at the beginning of the year must be more than just a resolution. Changes must become more of a transformation. Christ is in the transformation business. He wants to make changes in us whether it is a new year or not. However, the new year is a good time to think about changes that are transforming. Second Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) states: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" When we are in Christ, we must constantly be turning our back on the former sinful ways in our life. We must be looking forward to a new outlook, to a new person whom Christ chooses to be forming daily.

Those new resolutions are quick to be dropped because they began too often with wrong motives or short-sighted objectives. The types of changes that Christ desires are those life-changing ones where we choose to "live by faith, not by sight... We make it our goal to please him [God]" (2 Corinthians 5:7,9, NIV). Most new year resolutions have their roots in personal pleasing motives. We cannot just change, we must be transformed through Christ. We can only be transformed by delving into the fruits of the Spirit and crucifying the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

My goal this year is to think beyond personal goals and to think also of my classroom and each group of students with whom I work. As I go through the fruits of the Spirit, I try to see how each one could be applied in some way to different students, specific assignments, or aspects of the class itself. Peace, self-control, faithfulness, patience, and gentleness --all can have very specific applications to a classroom daily. The acts of a sinful nature are qualities that need to be weeded out of classrooms as well—discord, selfish ambition, dissensions, envy, and the like. All of these elements can create havoc in a teacher's daily laboratory. These negative components must be eliminated and replaced with more positive attributes to make our classrooms productive.

To avoid the resolution resignation trend (which too often happens after only a few weeks), we need to continue this renewal process throughout the year. We need to approach each day as a new day in Christ. Galatians 6:9 (NIV) challenges us: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Each day ask Christ to show you the new you He has designed for the day, and then walk it out...one day at a time.

When we take on a resolution for the new year, it can become overwhelming because of the length of the endurance. However, when we take on a new day's resolution, what Christ has for us for just ONE DAY—it is possible, it is conceivable, it is achievable! One day is a doable concept, while a year may become overwhelming.

So this year make it a New Day: New You -- in Christ.



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We Are Diversely One

BY JAN WILTON, CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS REPRESENTATIVE

Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, our country, communities, neighborhoods, schools, classrooms and families are a picture of diversity. Too often this diversity divides us rather than bringing us together as one complete picture of unity. People are tempted to shy away from those who are different culturally, socially, physically, or spiritually. Could it be Christian educators who can make a difference in our world by encouraging children to freely welcome those of others cultures or challenges into their space?



In the past, I thought of myself as a person who accepted others and one who has created a welcoming environment in the classroom. This was recently challenged when I had the opportunity to travel to a Muslim country.

As with all Muslim countries, the women were totally or partially veiled, wearing a hijab, head and face covering, and an abaya, a long black robe. Women had to sit in an enclosed booth in a restaurant to eat so they could unveil. It was most disturbing to see a woman totally covered in black with a scarf fully covering her face. Having eye contact with a partially-veiled woman was one thing, but it was disturbing to see only a black "floating" faceless figure.

I looked away feeling sorry for the person I could not see. My first inward response was to think this woman looked like a non-person. How could anyone develop a friendship with a "non-person"? Then I saw her eyes and smile through the veil! She smiled at me! It was a moment I will never forget! Seeing her eyes sparkle and her smile through the veil created a feeling of acceptance of me, an American woman from a foreign land. I was blessed! Immediately, I smiled back and looked into her eyes. There I saw a woman just like me. Each veiled woman was another chance to acknowledge with a nod and a smile. They were women who laugh, cry, feel heartache and pain, joy and sorrow just like me.

How do we help children and their families respond to others, immigrants who are perceived to be NOT like us? These are people who do not dress as we do, eat the same foods, or even talk our language? Mem Fox, Australian author of *Whoever You Are*, wrote this book about people of other cultures. In this delightful book, Mem shares a celebration of the world's diverse cultures. It is intended to help...

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Our Gifts to Our Children

SUBMITTED BY BEULA POSTLEWAIT, NEW COUNCIL MEMBER

It is the beginning of a new year. We have experienced another Christmas season with gifts, special meals, and special services and programs. What are your thoughts as you look back at this Christmas season? What did you give your children? What should you give your children?

Today's children receive so many things. Parents and grandparents strain their budgets to get the latest and greatest items for children. And, how long do many of those items last?

What should be our gifts to our children? I came across this item from an unknown author. It reminded me of what is really important to give our children.

First and Foremost

We give them the most precious of all gifts: the principles of brotherly love and the love of God, as taught so many years ago by Christ.

We Give Them Our Attention

For one day it will be too late.

We Give Them a Sense of Value

A place for the individual in the scheme of things, with all that accrues to the individual: self-reliance, courage, conviction, self-respect, and the respect of others.

We Give Them a Sense of Humor

Laughter leavens life.

We Give Them the Meaning of Discipline

If we falter at discipline, life will do it for us.

We Give Them the Will to Work

Satisfying work is not the lasting joy, but knowing that a job is well-done is.

We Give Them the Talent for Sharing

That it's not so much that we give as that we share.

We Give Them the Love of Justice

The bulwark against violence and oppression, and the repository of human dignity.

We Give Them the Beacon of Hope

Which lights all darkness.

We Give Them the Knowledge of Being Loved

Beyond the demand for reciprocity, praise or blame, for those loved are never lost.

What Shall We Give the Children?

The open sky, the brown earth, the leafy trees, the golden sand, the blue water, the stars in their courses, and the awareness of these: birdsongs, butterflies, clouds and rainbows, sunlight, moonlight, firelight, a large hand reaching down for a small hand,...

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Christmas Throughout the Year

SUBMITTED BY MELODEE SIMMONS

Life can become hectic during the Christmas season. With shopping for gifts and then wrapping them, decorating the house or church, families coming to visit, or your going to visit family and friends, we sometimes don't take the time to stop and remember the real reason for Christmas.

With children it can be the same. The excitement of parties, presents, Santa, Christmas trees and the pretty lights can blur the meaning of Christmas. We need to take every opportunity to tell the children why we are celebrating.

When our boys were young we had all the fun of Santa, lights, gifts and everything else, but, we also made sure they knew why we did all of the celebrating. They had nativity sets to tell the story of Jesus' birth. They heard the story in Sunday School and church. On Christmas Eve, their Dad read them the Christmas story from the books of Matthew and Luke. We felt that we had to impress on them the importance of Christ's birth.

However, this story is so important that we need to teach it throughout the year. We need to take every opportunity to tell the children about how God loved us enough to send His Son to earth for us. I like to have the children help me make a tree on the wall of our classroom. Then, each of us hangs up a bow with a gift tag that says, To (the child's name) and From God. Above the tree it says, "Our Greatest Gift". Any time of the year, we need to take the opportunity to share the story of God's greatest Gift, His Son.

Reminding the children throughout the year of God's Gift to us is the most important thing we could do.

Our Gifts to Our Children

SUBMITTED BY BEULA POSTLEWAIT, NEW COUNCIL MEMBER

(Continued from page 2) ...impromptu praise, an unexpected kiss, a straight answer, the glisten of enthusiasm and the sense of wonder, long days to be merry in and nights without fear, and the memory of a good home.

These Things We Shall Give the Children.

--Author Unknown

We Are Diversely One

BY JAN WILTON, CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS REPRESENTATIVE

(Continued from page 2) ...children understand the similarities and differences of children from around the world. Her message is simple:

"Little one, whoever you are, wherever you are, there are little ones just like you all over the world. ...No matter where we come from, within our hearts, joys are the same, and love is the same. Pain is the same, and blood is the same."

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV).

Our classrooms, families, communities, and country are like a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces of the puzzle may be different sizes, shapes, and colors. When you look at one piece of a puzzle, it is difficult to know what the whole picture will be. The pieces individually are insignificant, but when they are all joined together and become one, they show the total picture.

A jigsaw puzzle can teach us an important lesson about any group of people. The group is made up of many individuals. Like the pieces of a puzzle, they come in different sizes, shapes, and colors. Jesus himself prayed for Christians to be one so the world would see God's love in us. We were meant to love others, help others, and serve others without regard to race, color, age, nationality, or religion. When we do, the world begins to see God's love.

May the children and their families reach out to others and remember "no matter where we come from, within our hearts, joys are the same, and love is the same. Pain is the same, and blood is the same."

