

Three Resolutions you NEED to make in 2025

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[0:00] Joshua 24, if you've got your Bible, Joshua 24. I know I've not had a chance to say hi to everyone this morning, but I trust you all feel welcome. I know we've got some new folk and familiar folk coming back.

Bless you this morning. We're going to look at the theme of New Year's resolutions. Of course, it's a bit of a worldly kind of concept, but yet there's value, I think, in setting some personal goals to think about what can I do for the year ahead.

Some of you might think I'm going to start a diet, learn something new, get fit, save money, whatever it be. People say that there's New Year's Day and then there's what's called Quitter's Day. Quitter's Day is about two weeks later because 90% of people give up on all their resolutions just within a few weeks. So let's not be like that, I pray, with these resolutions we're going to talk about this morning.

Three resolutions that you must make this new year ahead based on a Bible passage. Three resolutions I urge you to make. To live your life for God.

[1:11] And all of us face really a whole heap of different kinds of world views, different thoughts and thinking. There's a whole lot of conflicting choices we have before us.

We might think, well, maybe I've got to change my job or this or that. Some different relationship. We're going to have to navigate our way through a whole lot of new things. And there's all kinds of competing allegiances for us to line up with or not.

Different choices. The Bible talks about choices. So that's the kind of theme today. Obviously we're living in a world that cares little for Christian truth and values.

And the spirit that drives the world that we're living in has got a whole different kind of world view, hasn't it? Rather than the biblical world view. And actually more often than not, the world that we're living in delights to call evil good.

They just change the label. And then they call good evil. As an example of this, there's been some recent movies out over recent months I've heard about. One's called Wicked.

[2:12] Wicked. It full on promotes witches. They're kind of not hiding it anymore. It's about witches. Then there's one people might have heard of. Dear Santa. It makes Satan into a likable character.

Where a child writes a letter, actually he misspells it and he says, Dear Satan. It's like they're not hiding it anymore. It's like in your face, full frontal, isn't it? And the ignorance of some professing Christians is palpable about some of these kind of things as well.

Many are brainwashed and really misled over such things. Many are deceived, seduced by the world's ways. And it's important to get the headset right.

We're going to talk more about that tonight. And it seems like immorality seems more and more blatant, more militant, more anti-Christ, isn't it? And we're talking about resolutions this morning. Think about, in contrast to the way the world thinks, how can we make some resolutions purposefully as God's people? And can I urge you, no matter what you do, to make the decision to honour God with your life.

[3:18] To make that decision to honour the Lord with your life. Someone was just mentioning this morning how they've kind of refreshed their faith and they've got back on track. That's a good decision to make, isn't it?

We could all think of that. And to keep on making those kinds of decisions, the decisions that will glorify God, to resolve that. The time came when Joshua was urging the people of his day to come to a decision, to make a godly decision.

And the call is the same call for you and me in 2024, shortly 2025. The call is the same for us today. So, just to introduce really the Bible passage on drawing these thoughts from is in Joshua 24, from verse 14.

And it reads, Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth. Follows on a bit from what Brother Jesse was saying. This is Joshua speaking.

He says, Serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord.

[4:27] And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And it reads on, The people responded to Joshua, verse 24, And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

Now, to set the scene a bit, the people in Joshua's day were conflicted. They had affiliations with other kinds of gods, so-called the pagan gods, the gods of the godless world of their day.

And they were attached to them. They had cherished these idols. They had these patterns that had been established by their fathers. This was tradition, after all. Their culture.

And we had a guy on the doorstep yesterday saying, Well, look, I've been a Buddhist. My family's a Buddhist. My grandfather, you know, back through history, we've all been Buddhists.

[5:42] Well, just because your fathers have been doing something doesn't make it right, does it? And we can be like that too, follow the father's gods, which might be false gods. People tend to follow in their father's footsteps.

I met a man lately, and he was telling me he's a third generation electrician. And what's more, he's training his little tot, his tent, to start using the tools to get him ready to be the fourth generation electrician.

And you might say, Oh, well, I'm a second, third generation atheist. You don't have to stay that way. You can choose to not follow the gods of your fathers, right? We all have to choose for ourselves. False gods abound, don't they? Even in our world. And we've got to make a break from them. Even if it might be breaking tradition, culture, the long heritage that we have of a certain religion, if it's a false one.

And the word shows us time and time again that there's these conflicting masters, isn't there? We cannot serve conflicting masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. You've got to make the choice, one or the other.

[6:48] And we're fast approaching a new year. So it's a timely time to think, Hey, this is kind of like a line in the sand. This is a new year, a new approach I can take for my life.

It's often a time to check things, isn't it? To reflect back and to plan ahead. We think of the future of decisions, of change, of commitment, of resolution. And we want to choose wisely, not just for our own sake, because it impacts our wider family circle too, doesn't it?

Because we want to choose wisely for the sake of our family. As well. That hopefully we'll make a righteous choice such that our generations to follow are going to walk in their father's steps in a good way.

So we all have to make a choice, friends, today. A resolution. So that's the kind of concept today. Resolutions. Resolutions. There was an old time preacher long ago, the revivalist Jonathan Edwards.

Now I don't know all of his particular views on this or that. But Jonathan Edwards had a long list of 70 resolutions for himself, for his life.

[7:52] He made this big long list. 70 resolutions. And Edwards framed these resolutions because he wanted to choose right. He wanted to live a godly life.

And so this is to help him do that. To live a life of discipline, of devotion to the Lord. And so Jonathan Edwards, he made these resolutions. You can look them up on the internet.

I think by and large they're all quite apt and relevant and helpful. Edwards made his resolutions as a way to help himself to focus his life on God. We all need to choose wisely, don't we?

How to live. And the choices we make, and those choices have consequences too. It's like when Moses urged the Hebrews before they crossed the Jordan in Deuteronomy 30 verse 19.

Moses says, I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that both thou and thy seed may live.

[8:54] Choose life. Choose life. God says that still, doesn't he, to every one of us. eternal life, of course, in Christ. What road will we take? Will it be the embarking on that road that will determine blessing or will it bring cursing?

Will it be the narrow way, God's way, or will it be the broad way that leads to destruction? God says before every one of us, stark choices. In Joshua's day, the people cried out, the Lord our God, we will serve.

This is an essential choice, a response I trust we can all make. Trust the Saviour. Trust Him. Choose life. Eternal life. It's Christ.

It's Christ and His saving. There's no greater blessing. And Joshua urges the people, leave off your false gods. Whatever it is that's false, leave off of them.

You know, we could all think, I know my family had a heritage somewhat of Catholicism.

Catholicism. And we leave off the false. We want to find the truth, don't we? We leave off the false gods.

[10:00] And come out of whatever it is that's false, of paganism. We trust in the Lord. All of us have this vital decision for all of us to make, to prepare for eternity to come.

Get saved. Choose life. Choose life. Trust Christ as your Saviour, your Master. Think of it. As we trust Christ, we can be assured of heaven.

It's a certainty, a hope, a glad, sure hope. And our Lord calls you and me in this time, in this place. Choose life. Choose life. Really the central point of a life well lived is to choose Christ.

It's to choose Christ. To trust Him, to say, yes, I choose that. I trust Christ. To choose to live purposefully, intentionally, God helping us.

1 Corinthians 10.31, Paul writes, whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

[11:01] These are the framework we ought to have over our life, isn't it? That have our priorities right in all the dimensions of life. To go God's way. To glorify God as the ultimate priority for my life.

How can I glorify God in every aspect? Think of it, eat, drink, whatsoever you do. It's all encompassing, isn't it? And how can I glorify God in every aspect of my life?

When you look at Edward's 70 resolutions, we've just got to pick a few out of the list. Edward's number one resolution was this. He was resolved to live for God's glory.

Resolved that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory. End quote. That's a good motto, isn't it? I don't think we can argue with that slogan that whatever I do, I'm going to glorify God.

To do whatever is to the most glory of God. Of course, the most God-glorifying thing that we can do is to trust Christ to save us. Back to the text we started with, Joshua 24, 14.

[12:11] Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. Joshua urges the people to step over the line. Who are you going to serve? Is it going to be the Father's gods?

The forefathers' gods? Or is it going to be the Lord? Really, there's multitudes in the valley of decision. There's choices here that Joshua gives. He urges the people, choose you this day whom ye will serve.

Choose today. Again, sometimes we think the New Year's Day, okay, it's a new way of thinking, it's a new path, it's some new resolutions, some new decisions, some new choices.

We don't have to wait until January the 1st, mind you, today. We can make it happen now, already. There's resolutions here that we can make in our own lives. So, we're going to take a look as I say to you three things you could extract from this passage, from these words.

Really, three simple things I put to you. Three things that you must do in 2025, okay? Fear God, serve God, and listen to God.

[13:21] Okay, these are three things that we ought to do. Firstly, fear God. Fear God. The first choice that God calls us to is to fear the Lord. Fear God. Joshua 24, 14, now therefore fear the Lord. Now, I want to tell you this morning, there's a whole lot of fears that people can have.

A whole lot of fears. Some of them are quite funny. You might have heard some of these before. We'll test your word knowledge today. These are some quite odd fears that people can have. Now, some of you might, you know, especially when it's party time, have a fear of globophobia. Globophobia. A fear of balloons.

Oh, don't pop that balloon near me. Don't squeak that balloon near me. Globophobia. It's a real thing. A fear of balloons. You might have phobophobia. A fear of having a phobia.

[14:20] You might, around the meal table, you might have churophobia. A fear of cheese. Now, I've got to be careful about this one because I've still got a living relative relative.

You might have pantherophobia. Now, some of you wouldn't apply because your mother-in-law is quite nice. a fear of mother's-in-law is called pantherophobia. And then you might have panophobia. A fear of everything. So, there's lots of fears people can have. I'm being a bit light-hearted today. But, can I put to you this morning, there's actually a good fear that you can have. It's called theophobia. Theophobia. Theophobia. The fear of God. That's a good fear. The Bible speaks positively about having the fear of God.

It talks about reverence, of awe, of profound respect, and honour of our God. It's a healthy fear. Now, you might say, how can a fear be a healthy thing? As parents, you might know that it's a good thing when you teach your children to have a fear of a hot stove.

[15:28] Children, listen to mum and dad when they say, don't touch that hot stove. That's a good fear to have. Helps you from hurting yourself. I know some of you, not me of course, but some of you might have the fear of a speed camera.

A fear of the police, the blue and red lights behind you. The fear of doing something wrong. That's actually a good fear, isn't it? It's a good fear to have a fear of doing something wrong.

And I know growing up, I still have a fear of him today, but a fear of the father, a fear of your dad. When you're thinking about, thinking about doing something wrong.

Well, I better not. Dad's watching. You know, the fear of your father. That's a good healthy fear, isn't it? Because it can help you to do right. It can help you from, to not do wrong.

And think of it, brother, sister, today, the fear of God. We recognise his holiness and his majesty, don't we? The fear of God. It's actually a blessing to fear God. We see Proverbs 1, verse 7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[16:32] Fear of the Lord is a blessing. And it's really true wisdom, really it's the smartest thing that we can do is to fear God, isn't it? To honour him. It's really the smartest choice you can make to fear God.

Hebrews 12, 28, it says, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. How about when we approach God, when we want to serve him, are we doing it with reverence, with godly fear, to have that purposeful living, that we've been designed to glorify God, to honour him?

It's the chief end of man. But sadly, our world lacks the fear of God. We see Romans 3, verse 18, of the world we're living in. There's no fear of God before their eyes.

They just mock and scorn. They make jokes and they make movies that are full of connotations and sad, godless thinking.

And people stare up at the skies at night and they imagine there is no designer. I can't fathom that, that there is no fear of God before their eyes, that they deny the creator, even though the evidence is staring them in the face.

[17:43] Despite all of the evidence, they still deny the creator. There's no fear of God. That's our world, isn't it? People generally. In contrast, what does a God-fearing life look like?

We stand in awe, we see the heavens declare the glory of God. We stand in awe of who he is and we come under his authority. We find our true purpose and fulfilment in Christ.

In him we live and move and have our being. And we see the philosopher of Ecclesiastes wraps up the whole kind of bundle of what life is all about.

He says, let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments. This is the whole duty of man. Fear God. God. It just captures the essence of what's the core truth of life, of living, is to fear God.

It's the whole duty of man. And this knowledge of God, it should motivate us that our every action would be driven by this desire to glorify him, to glorify and honour him, adore him.

[18:49] Can we evaluate our daily activities with this truth in mind, to fear God? Do we want to live a God-fearing life? What does that look like?

We could all unpack that for ourselves. How can I take my faith seriously? How can I live in the light of my accountability to God? Because the truth is, brother, sister, everyone, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

We will all give account. Everyone will give an account. You might have to give account before the taxation year. About the accounting that really matters.

Amen? It could happen before July, couldn't it? To give an account of ourself unto God. And that reckoning time will come then.

And Matthew 5.16 is clear. Let your light so shine. Are we using our life to point others to our Lord? To so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven?

[19:55] Do we have that sense of accountability? Are we entrusting our lives to our Lord to glorify him, to honour him? That's the truth of stewardship. Stewardship.

This principle of stewardship, of accountability that applies to our time, our possessions, our relationships. we ought to give ourselves to our Lord willingly, cheerfully, not out of duty, but because he deserves every bit of who we are, the whole lump of our life.

Do we fear God? Then it ought to show in God glorifying ways and a God glorifying life. Think of it, friends, in this context of giving glory to God.

Do we appreciate the value of time? Edwards put it in one of his resolutions, number five, he says, resolved never to lose one moment of time, but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

That's a good slogan too, isn't it? To resolve not to lose one moment of time. It's too precious. What about us? Are we using our time in the most profitable way?

[21:05] I know I've got to confess there's times I do a bit of scrolling. And time just evaporates, doesn't it? And you've got to watch that. I've got to watch that. I'm being honest to you. Time.

What about us? It's life, isn't it? Every moment of time, it's our life, isn't it? And once it's spent, there's no getting it back. And Ephesians 5.16 tells us of the need to redeem the time.

In other words, make the most use of it, because the days are evil. Time is a gift from God. And the Lord wants us to steward our time wisely. Every precious moment.

Here's what Edwards put it in one of his resolutions, number seven, quote, resolved, never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

End quote. That's a good one, isn't it? That we could have such a mindset that whatever I'm doing, it's not something I'm going to be ashamed of, it's not something that I'm going to be regretting when actually that's the last hour I'm going to live.

[22:07] Because one day, one hour will be the last hour. One day will be the last day. One hour will be the last hour that we live. To have that mindset, hey, I'm not going to do anything in this time that I have that's going to take away from my Lord.

It's a good life motto, isn't it? And what does it look like in a practical way? To be conscious of our time, our mortality, to live in the light of eternity.

Can we get rid of the idle distractions in our life, to declutter? Can we choose activities that glorify our God? That is what we want to put our time into, to build our faith, to serve others, to glorify God, to live resolutely for God's glory, to redeem our time and prepare for eternity because that's what counts.

Can we live today in the light of eternity? As the psalmist says, so teach us. He's praying, Lord, teach me, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Number our days. As you get older, you think, how many days, the number of days I can project to live is going to gradually get less and less, isn't it? How can I use those days, God helping me that I'll have, to use those days wisely?

[23:19] It's wise for us to keep an eternal perspective in our lives, isn't it? So number one, number one resolution for 2025, fear God. Glorify God with your life.

Secondly, what's more, is serve God. Serve God. Joshua says, now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth.

Fear the Lord and serve him. Joshua says, serve him in truth. Now truth here, it speaks also of the sense of faithfulness. Service, a service should be a faithful service.

Yield to him. Really, everybody is a servant. servant. What's different is who is the master, isn't it? It's a truth. What's different is who we serve.

Who is your master? And the word serve, the word serve here, it speaks of a labour as a form of worship. It's interesting when you look at the word serve, service, ministry, it's very much connected with worship.

[24:24] They go hand in hand. Service and worship, they're very allied. Romans 12 tells us, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Also, we've got the sense of worship, the sense of giving our life as a body, a whole being. We're wanting to render ourselves as a sacrifice, such that it will be reasonable, it will be a service, it will be a worship.

The best service that we can render is to minister unto our Lord, isn't it? To wait upon him. It's about lordship and servanthood. Of course, we know that lordship salvation is an error, where it makes some claims that are not so, but lordship sanctification is a truth.

Lordship sanctification. In other words, let's have the blessing of being in his will. We get saved by grace through faith, not of works, yet we want to be his workmanship, we want to be having that holy living is such that he is lord of the life that I live, God helping me as saved people, that we can put our faith into action.

As it reads in Ephesians 2.10, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, it's his will that we do serve. God has ordained that we should walk in them.

[25:52] Here's a resolution that we want to make to serve God, to serve God. Now we can all serve in different capacities but it's about having the heart and mindset of a servant, isn't it?

When you think of this term, picture if you like a servant in a royal court, always attentive, always attentive, always ready, always listening, always ready to act on the king's command.

This is the mindset we should adopt in serving God, isn't it? That we're a servant in waiting, ready to hear the master's call to respond to what he puts on our heart to do, to be a servant, as a servant in a royal court.

And really we are, aren't we? He's the king of kings, he's the lord of lords, there's no greater king, there's no greater royalty, there's no greater royal service that we can have. I know Julie and I were blessed in our trip of a lifetime that we go on about to be in London one day and we went past the gates of Buckingham Palace and there was a smart looking woman and man there at the gates and they said, would you like to come in to the palace?

Would you like to come in and visit Buckingham Palace? And Julie and I, I was dressed really scruffy actually, had an old parker on and some daggy jeans and yeah, sure.

[27:15] And so they invited us in to the palace. We had a guided, well, partly guided tour of going through some of the back rooms in Buckingham Palace and just a picture of a royal court, something special.

And this was one of the royal court servants invited us in and we like that too, aren't we? That we are like the servants of the royal court. We're the servants of the king.

We want to invite people into the king's presence, into the king's home, to know heaven. And so there's a sense where we're such a servant. And there's rewards ahead for faithful service too.

2 Corinthians 5.10 it tells us, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he have done whether it be good or bad.

Of course the context here is talking about the judgment seat of Christ, the judgment of believers. So there's a sense where there's going to be some recognition. The Lord wants our heart, that's the main thing.

[28:15] And he wants our heart to serve the king wholeheartedly. We see Joshua 24, back to Joshua 24 again, verse 23, Joshua says, Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart, incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

I like that expression, incline your heart unto the Lord. Amen? Is your heart inclined unto the Lord? Which way are you leaning?

Are you tending to incline your heart away from God? Or will I incline my heart unto God? I'll have that inclination, I'll have that preference that God is who I want to lean unto.

Are we leaning unto other gods? Who are we serving? It's a question, isn't it? And we need a communion with God such that he wants our whole heart. The context here is, hey, you've got to make a choice, you're going to keep serving those strange gods or are you going to serve the Lord? You can't have both. You can't have a divided heart. It's the same as in the context of a marriage, isn't it?

[29:29] That there's one, not multiple, people, that we have a devotion, a whole heartedness. And Edwards put it like this in resolution 53.

He says, resolve to cast and venture my soul on the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust and confide in him and consecrate myself wholly to him.

This resolution that I'm going to give him my whole heart, my whole heartedness. When it comes to setting our hearts, inclining our hearts, to fear God, to glorify him, to have that heart, that mindset, that attitude, I want to be his servant.

I want him to be my Lord. The will of God matters to me. In fact, it should be our daily prayer, shouldn't it? Thy will be done. Thy will be done.

Not my will be done. Thy will be done. In earth, that's in my life, in my shoe leather, such that God's will is done in our life. And so, the will of God is that we be saved and that we worship him.

[30:32] Of course, John 4, 24, God's searching for worshippers. He wants people to worship him in spirit and in truth. When we get saved, we become a worshipper. It follows, doesn't it?

When we are saved, we become his servant. God calls us to serve him, to love him. Now, how do we spell love? Love. T-I-M-E.

We show what we love, who we love, by how we spend our time. Isn't that true? If we love God, then we'll give him our time.

It won't be a sacrifice to give time. We'll use our time to serve our Lord, to honour him. That we'll use our time to align our life to his will. Let us incline our heart unto the Lord.

Amen. Lamentations says, let us search our ways and try our ways and turn again to the Lord.

Edward saw the danger of neglect as well. When he made his resolutions, he wanted to avoid the danger of that.

[31:34] And resolution 49, he says, quote, resolved that neglect never shall be, if I can help it. Now, we can all neglect. That's why we need to make resolutions sometimes.

Hey, I fouled up last year. I want to do something different this one. Hey, I look back with regret of the neglect, and I want to do something different. I want to be more in his will.

Neglect is something to avoid, isn't it, if we can. Will we do our best for our Lord? Or will we miss that? Will we neglect our duty to God? Or will we be like Daniel?

Daniel purposed in his heart. He inclined his heart, he purposed in his heart. He says, I'm not going to defile myself, I'm going to do right. He made a deliberate choice. Friends, brothers, sisters, here today, when we fear God, we're going to make wise choices as his servants.

We're going to have that mindset, hey, it's going to cost me, but I'm going to purpose in my heart to do the right thing. And we need to be minded to have a daily accountability to our Lord, to have a regular self-examination, to keep that humility, that dependence on the Lord, to ask the Lord to

guard our heart, to keep our mind, our habits, to line up with his will.

[32:49] And so really, as we fear God and serve God, we ought to do that wholeheartedly. It's a wholehearted service. We read on, back to our text again, that it tells there, as it reads in the middle there, that Joshua exhorts them, put away the gods which your father served, put them away.

we separate ourselves unto him, we stop serving other gods. Now, put away, it means remove. Of course, we know when they removed idols, they made a definite destruction of them.

We can't have it both ways. We can't have idols, whatever they be. You might have a statue of Buddha or whatever it is, but no, it's actually much more than any idol of a god of such.

But any kind of idol, anything that takes his place, any of those false gods. Of course, we know as Moses went up to the mount, and he was there with the very glory of God in Exodus 32.

What happened next? When Moses was there, all the glory was there, the manifestation of God was there, the interaction with God in such a personal way was there. Moses walked down the mountain in Exodus 32.

[34:06] 6, it says, the people rose up to play. The people rose up to play. And Aaron created the golden calf.

Aaron, his right hand man, the one who was the spokesman, Aaron, of all people, Aaron. He says, give me your earrings and I'll take the gold and we'll make this golden calf and we'll glorify this golden calf and give glory to this calf that it's brought us out of Egypt.

What a mockery, what a shame that they could be so filled. And friends, we can too. Idolatry, it's all around us.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me, Exodus 20 verse 3. Renounce the false gods, renounce them, the false gods of our life. God wants our whole heart.

Think of the present day idols, what it is. It's whatever takes his place. It's whatever takes his rightful place. We ought to separate our souls from that, that will hinder our walk with God and rather seek to fulfil God's will, even where it's costly.

[35:18] And Moses, by faith, he separated himself unto God from sin. You see that there, Moses himself. He had everything. As he was in the palace there, as he could have been called, some would have reckoned him to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He was really treated as royalty, as the royal prince. But no, he said, no, don't call me that.

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Moses was willing to separate himself. And God's will is separation, that we be a holy people. We see, for example, 1 Thessalonians 4, 3, it's the will of God, our sanctification, our holiness, that we abstain from fornication, from immorality.

Sadly, these days, there's much compromising going on, and a lack of separation, a condoning of error. But the false gods have got to be thrown out, pulverised to dust, destroyed.

God calls us to a decision. And friends, today we don't have molten idols, idols, I don't know if any of you have such things in your home, but there's other idols, aren't there?

[36:30] Other things, whatever it be. And we know, hey, oh, that's questionable, I should throw it out. Do it, do it. Put away the gods, the false gods.

And it's like in Elijah's day, Elijah came to the people, he said, how long are you going to stay on the fence here? How long are you going to sit on the fence here? How long are you going to dilly-dally and just waste time?

How long are you going to halt here? How long are you going to stop here sitting on this fence between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him. But if Baal, then follow him.

We can't be such a person that we kind of say, I'm following Jesus, but I'm going to hang on to this. I'm following God, and I want God's will for my life, but yeah, don't ask me to give up this or give up that or put my time into this or that.

I just want it to be comfortable. And we're sitting on the fence in this kind of comfort zone, but God calls us to a decision. And we see 1 Peter 1 tells us God has called us to be holy, as he is holy.

[37:40] And so think of it, friends, this godly discipline and this aspect of God's will, this faithfulness is a good principle, it's a vital

principle, but the children of Israel, they regularly messed up on this one.

Can't you identify with them? Thank God the Bible tells it warts and all, doesn't it, of the people of God, of the Hebrews, from Adam to today, that we tend to foul it up.

And the children of Israel regularly messed up on this one. Flip-flopping all the time, weren't they? And Edwards put it like this, resolved to be strictly and firmly faithful to whatever God entrusts to me.

And he quotes Proverbs 20, verse 6, a faithful man who can find. Resolved to be strictly and firmly faithful. And that's a good quality for a servant.

So we've seen resolutions to make, fear God, number one, serve God, number two, and a third truth I could extract from this passage, another key truth that we can determine to make is listen to God.

[38:49] Listen to God. We see that there in Joshua 24, in the people's response, verse 24, notice the response of the people to Joshua's call. They make a resolution to listen to God.

His voice will we obey. His voice will we obey. Now our Lord says, my sheep, hear my voice. It's a characteristic of my sheep.

It says they hear my voice and it says they follow me. Now we must have the word of God. What's the voice of God today? It's in between the pages, it's in between the covers of your Bible.

Here is the voice of God. Here is the voice of God. It's the word of God. We must have the word of God. Trouble is, when you think about it, and I know it's true for me, there's so many voices now, isn't there?

There's so many voices, so many channels, there's so many people talking to us, and there's this huge communication problem that we have. We have all this high-tech communication, but we're not always good at hearing the stale, small voice.

[40:03] We don't always tune in, do we? There's so much to occupy people's minds, to keep people busy, plugged in. They're walking around with plugs in their ears. Whatever they're listening to, maybe some of it's good stuff, but when people are going around something plugged into their ears and playing something all the day long, you wonder, can we hear his voice anymore?

Are we letting distractions drown out his voice? His voice will we obey? Fundamental to glorifying God is truth.

Truth matters. the people cried out, the Lord our God will we serve? His voice will we obey? Simply put, we need to heed God's voice.

Now, can I caution you, this is not an extra biblical revelations. That's a huge mistake in some new-fed churches. The pastor gets up there and he says, I've got a word for you, sister, brother, and the Lord's told me this and the Lord's told me that and I've had this vision and I've gone to heaven and I've had a conversation with Jesus and this is, give me chapter and verse for that one. Honestly, it's a huge mistake. Extra biblical revelations, a huge mistake. Supposed dreams and visions and revelations. No wonder we can't hear his voice anymore.

[41:33] We need God's clear voice, don't we? It's in the word. It's Bible. That's Bible that we need. Do we actually care what God says? Do we care enough to read it and study it?

Seems like God's voice is ignored by the many. Many seem to have a spiritual hearing impairment. I've seen what some people say in social media, whatever, and I just want to shout out to them, read your Bible, read your Bible.

It's going to help you to choose right. Because Satan is the master of half truths, isn't he? And we're living in this world where there's a biblically illiterate church.

And it's so easy for the devil to con and deceive. Doctrinal dysfunction abounds. We must have the voice, his voice, the word of God. It's fundamental.

It's how we counteract Satan. As our Lord says, what did he say? It is written. That's the answer when you're tempted. The Bible is the offensive weapon in our armory, the sword of the spirit.

[42:41] So Edwards made a resolution again to quote him to study the word of God. Here's his resolution, quote, resolved to study the scriptures

steadily, constantly, and frequently.

That's a good motto too, isn't it? To study the scriptures, it's essential to search out what is biblical, what is actually biblical, what does God say, what is thus saith the Lord.

As Psalm 119 says, the psalmist says, I have chosen the way of truth, thy judgments have I laid before me. Friends, we need the word of God, don't we?

The whole counsel of God, to overcome Satan's attacks, to overcome our own doubts and weaknesses, to cling to the promises of God, God's truth. Meditate on it, develop a study habit, memorise the word of God, hide it in your heart.

I know there's a scripture reading kind of plan there that I saw, have a planned approach to, hey, okay, it's January the 1st, I'm going to read Genesis 1, that would be a good thing to do, wouldn't it? [43:51] Amen? And to keep on it, keep on doing it, amen? To rely on the Holy Spirit and to glorify God we need the word of God, don't we? Our resolutions cannot be achieved without the grace of God, by human effort alone, we're going to be like the, it's going to be quits' day and all those resolutions, all those fine, grandiose intentions are going to come to nothing, we're just going to give up, we need the Holy Spirit to give us the keeping on, keeping on, don't we?

We need the Holy Spirit to help us, because in my own strength, I'm going to fail every time, but thank God we've got one who strengthens us, our Lord Jesus, Paul says, I can do all things, all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me, so our dependence is upon him as we trust in the Lord, not on our own, in our own heart, our own strength, not in our own understanding, but in all our ways we're going to acknowledge him, and he's going to direct our paths.

Friends, there's much need for caution, there's much talk of spiritual power, there's often a false spirit at work, witchcraft even, in churches, I've heard some shocking things, there's some wacko things out there, the more you see what's going on in some quarters you think, where is the discernment level?

Where is that? Where is the word? Where is the word of God in that? There's much talk about the Holy Spirit and words of revelation, but the word of God itself is missing, that's a big problem.

How will we know what the spirit of God is doing or saying? He won't work in contradiction to his word. And we see when the word is at work, it's going to impact our life, we'll see the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

[45:51] We'll see those qualities of God's working in our everyday, impacting our life, our relationships. Edwards remarked, he resolved some practical things as well in marking his relationships.

I'm not meaning to overemphasise Edwards, it's just a helpful resource that he developed for himself. But Edwards said this, resolved never to speak evil of anyone except I have some particular good purpose for doing so.

That's a good motto, isn't it? I know I can make the mistake of speaking evil, that's not a good thing. And further he says resolved, he talks about showing others love, cheerfulness and graciousness. So when God is at work in us, when we're making resolutions that honour him, it's going to impact our living as well. God, he's going to help us seek holiness, he's going to help us rely on his grace to enable us to fear God, serve God and hear God.

When we need his help to leave off the false gods, there's a cutting off, there's a putting away of the false gods and again Joshua's resolution and if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day.

[47:06] choose you this day, whom you will serve, whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites in his land you dwell, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

now, you can't speak for someone else, but you can speak for the me, can't you? It's your choice, it's your choice.

You can say as for them, they will serve the Lord, but no, it's about me. It's the one staring ourselves in the mirror, isn't it?

It's the choice that we make, personally, each one. And as we come to a time of New Year's resolutions, of course, it's just a worldly concept on the calendar, really, but it's a sense where, hey,

it's a new year, maybe it's time to have a new outlook, to have a new freshness, a refreshing of my resolution.

You may have some in mind, as I say, you might have some intentions of giving up some things that you know aren't doing you any good, or starting doing some things that will do you some good.

[48:38] You might have all kinds of resolutions, but here I suggest to you three resolutions to include in your resolutions. Fear God.

Fear God, people. How can I truly honour him in my life and be accountable to him? God? fear God more?

Serve God from your heart, not out of a drudgery or a duty, not out of a burden that's imposed on you or dictated to you, but serve God from your heart, from your whole heart, willingly as a true worshipper.

Serve God. How can I make my life an offering of worship? worship? Because service really, it's worship. They're connected, service and worship.

And lastly, listen to God more. When we're hearing so many voices that drown out his still small voice, so many voices calling out for our attention, make sure you hear the voice of God by being a student of his word.

[49:47] Find the time, make the time. Hey, if there's time that's going to help me grow to fear God, to serve God, to hear God, I want to make that my resolution to be more inclined to the Lord.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that your word tells us that I will be done. Lord, may our hearts cry being asked for me, asked for me.

I can't speak for others, but I can speak for myself. Lord, that each one might have that heart's cry each individual here today might say, ask for me.

Lord, I want to fear you, I want to know you, if any of you have yet to trust you. Lord, we pray that their hearts cry might be, Lord Jesus, save my soul.

I trust you to take my sin and pay for it, to walk in your truth. As such a man, a woman, saved by your grace, walking by your spirit, Lord, that will learn ways to wait on you as a royal servant would wait upon their master, to wait upon you, to serve you, to worship you, to have that heart that's wholehearted.

[51:04] And Lord, also help us, we pray, help us, Lord, that we might have a willingness to hear from you. And Lord, to tune out the other voices when they're contrary, Lord, to tune in to what your Holy Spirit prompts us as we pray, as we seek your will, we seek your face, we'll have the promptings of your spirit, but they won't be in discord with your word.

Lord, we pray that we'll have a heart to study it, to heed it, to honour your word above every other consideration, that we might be a Bible-based people.

Lord, help us to grow, to learn. Pray for everyone here amongst us that we all might have that heart.

Lord, help us as it can be a chance for a new dedication, a new resolution to have such a heart.

All for your glory we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.