Commitments For The New Year

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Date: 03 January 2016

Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.
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[5:00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.
Amen. I mean, they're just going on about it, whatever the game was that they were playing.
They were talking about staying up all night to play this game and then going into work and hardly being able to stay awake. And they were giving each other kind of emotional high fives about how spectacular their game lives were.
Impressive, you know? I would want to employ them if I listened to them and said, that's the kind of guy I want. And here's the truth. We kind of chuckle at that. I mean, gamers in excellence, you know, there they are.
[8:05] And so we stop and think, yeah, that's not me, but then stop and think about it. There are some of you here this morning that actually when you put it together, if you were to chronicle the effort, you're going to spend countless hours on Facebook.

I mean, since when did anybody really care about what you had for breakfast? Do you understand that? But there are some people that have to take these little pics of, well, I had oatmeal again today.
It's the ninth day in a row, but I think everyone out here wants to know I had oatmeal. Or there are some that are going to just, their lives are going to be consumed by Pinterest. I mean, one thing after another.
It's Pinterest this. It's Pinterest that. I mean, in the old days, it used to be Home Shopping Network. How many of you described that? Home Shopping Network, you know, and I don't want to say this, but I will.
You know, some elderly people, you know, they haven't got to the Pinterest stage in life, but they're still kind of stuck on Home Shopping Network. You know, I don't know what channel it is, but you walk into their apartment and you go there to visit with them.
[9:07] And what are they doing? I mean, dialed up to where you can hardly hear yourself think, and they're having an opportunity to look at one little jewelry item after another. You know, it just kind of scrolls through, and there they are just with the phone in hand deciding what are they going to buy.

And there's Amazon. There's Amazon. You know, we'd have to admit that there are things in our lives that we spend far more time focused on than we really should.
Every one of us. And we'd also have to admit that the things we stay focused on and persist in working on really reflect what we believe is in our best interest.
The things we stay focused on, the things we continue to work on, really reflect what we believe is in our best interest.
Furthermore, and I want you to recognize that this is a very, very important truth for us to get our heads around, persistence and focus on single objects eventually have a great impact on us.

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[10:26] They really do. Eventually, what we stay focused on ends up having an effect. It has an impact. And to put it this way, we become like what we worship.

We become like what we worship. Let me have you think with me about several different passages that undeniably mark this truth.
Turn in your Bibles first of all. You're there in Psalm 27. We will come back to it. But turn to Psalm 115, verse 4 through 8. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.
Just stop there just for a second. Everybody look up so you don't miss this. We make idols. Idols make us.
Pretty vicious little cycle when you stop and think about it. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see.
[11:31] They have ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk. And they do not make a sound in their throat.

Verse 8, underline it in your Bible. Those who make them become like them. So do all who trust in them.
Those who make them become like them. You make idols. Idols make you.
Let me have you look at another passage in relationship to this. Keep your finger there in Psalm 27. We're coming back to it. But I want you to turn to Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 5. One of the things that Scripture over and over again in the Old Testament really hammers away at is just the absolute idiocy of making idols.
Now aren't you relieved that you are not an idolater? I mean the truth of the matter is that I would venture to say there are none of you that have little shrines in your house where there is some little piece of ceramic.
[12:43] Maybe I shouldn't go there. There's no place in your home where there's a little shrine that has some hand cart. Well, probably not there either. Let's just try this.

We're not idol. We're not idol worshipers, are we? There's nothing that we really are so supremely interested in that it has a special place in our life. Right? Stay with the text.
Jeremiah chapter 2, just look at verse 5. Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel.
Thus says the Lord, What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me? And went after worthlessness and became worthless.
Can I play this out for you just to think practically? The larger issue is this, is that being focused on singular things ends up having a significant impact.
[13:51] We become like what we worship. And so let me tell you this and have you recognize it. The things in your life that predominate your agenda and your time are leaving an imprint on the way you think and the way you act.

If your discontentment seeks to find its satisfaction on Amazon, on Pinterest, on Home Shopping Network, and games, your dissatisfaction will metastasize beyond that narrow sphere to affect far more in your life than you can ever imagine.
And all God's people said, yes, I get it. I understand. Would you say that with me? I get it. I get it. I understand. I have an unrelenting battle in my own soul with idolatry. And I want this morning to be focused on the supremacy of God.
God, not other things. We become like what we worship. I want you to look at a more encouraging passage than Jeremiah.
[15:26] While Jeremiah may be indicting, I want you to turn, finger in, Psalm 27. We're coming back. We're coming back. But go to 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. Oh, by the way, do you know what people should do when pastors preach?

Huh? What should you do? You ought to pray. I don't care if you close your eyes. I'll assume you're praying, not sleeping. Go ahead and say it.
Help him, Lord. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. I gave you some pretty sobering, oh, bad passages that deal with the fact that when we seek after worthlessness, we become worthless.
2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
I'll never forget hearing Dr. James Boyer, in his late 70s, a Greek professor, say that if he had one sermon to preach to believers, that would be the one.

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[16:52] I don't know that I could narrow myself down like that because whichever passage I'm in, that's the best one. But I have to tell you, this one's full. Full.

Full. Full. Our focus on Christ. Our focus on Christ.
Will help us grow to be more like him. Our focus on Christ. Will help us to grow to be more satisfied people.
How many of you understand moody? I mean, just kind of, you know, you understand moody. You can be moody and self-focused without any extra practice.
How many of you are in that space with me? It's like, I can do that. There is no remedy for that poor person apart from being focused on Christ.
[17:59] And your, let me rephrase that. My occasional unhappinesses are always directly related to my lack of focus on Jesus. Write that down.

Not about me. What about you? You know me. I've told you me before. And my purpose in telling you me is not to focus on me, but to help you understand. You don't have to stay that way.
And I want you to notice that here is David going back to Psalm 27 now, who is actually in a very, very challenging place.
Psalm 27 is an interesting psalm because the passage that we're looking at is set against the backdrop of unrelenting pressure.
And usually when we're in a position of unrelenting pressure, here is what our prayer often is. Just get me out of here. How many of you been there?
[19:07] Bad situation in marriage. Bad situation in work. The kids aren't being cooperative. Everything's going south. You don't have a job. You're sick. Whatever it is, you know, Lord, here, here, do me a favor.

Just get me out of here. The context of this one scripture that we look at this morning is David in the midst of adversity, and he says against the backdrop of his enemies and those who hate him and those who are intentional in their desire for his destruction, he says there's one thing that I've desired.
There's one thing. So I want you to think with me this morning. What really is at the heart of David's desires? Let's look at it in a threefold sense. David's threefold desires begin, first of all, with this fact.
David desired an intimate relationship with God. That's what it says there in verse 4, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Is that talking about sitting in church seven days a week, 24 hours a day?
And the answer is not in your life. Not in your life. How many understand that the truth of the matter is that the scriptures make it undeniably clear that our relationship with Christ is not something that is dependent entirely upon our being here?
[20:33] Jesus said this. He says, I am with you what? What? Always. I'm with you always. And even in David, the psalmist's life, when you think about this statement, the desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, it's not talking about a location in particular.

It's talking about a relationship. Remember how the 23rd Psalm comes to a conclusion, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
What was David reflecting upon? He was reflecting on the sweet outcome of his relationship with the shepherd would be a lasting and an eternal relationship in the presence.
I want you to recognize that rooted in the Bible's picture of our relationship with God is this incredible fact that he who dwells in heaven and is the Lord of all that is created has chosen to reveal himself to us and actually to dwell with us.
The greatest blessing of the Garden of Eden, and we often think, I shouldn't say often, but we occasionally think about the Garden of Eden, and it generally has to do with, well, if Eve hadn't sinned and hadn't sinned, we wouldn't have weeds in our lawn, right?
[21:53] I mean, you know, every now and then you think, well, the reason we have weeds and our gardens are tough and women have the pain and childbearing is because of what? You know, so if these things were gone, well, the greatest blessing of Eden was not the absence of pain and hardship and suffering.

It was the intimate communion that they enjoyed with Christ. In the cool of the evening, what did God do?

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He came down and dwelt with them. He communed with them. And over and over again, as we think through some of the sweetness of the Scriptures, we recognize that one of the recurring themes that runs through the entire Bible is this, I will be their God and they will be my people. The idea in that thought is this personal relationship, personal. And here is David who says, listen, this is the one thing that I've asked.
Here's what I want. Here's what I want. I want to have an intimate relationship with God.
[23:10] David was intentional about this. And I would propose that David understood that an intimate relationship with God was not something that could be nurtured just by casual and occasional attention to it.

How many of you have learned the hard way that when you don't invest energy and time in a relationship, whether you like it or not, it can kind of lose some of its sweetness?
Do you understand that? One of the things that I have enjoyed doing in premarital counseling as I get the couple together and early on in our conversations, I ask them, okay, go ahead, tell me how much time you spend kind of in the courtship phase.
You guys understand that? Courtship phase? Am I right? Two weeks? Huh? Oh, yeah. She knows and he's, whatever, you know. I'll be there. I'm sorry. Jared, Will, you know how many weeks it is, right?
Two weeks, right? I ask them to say, how many hours do you spend a week in your relationship? And a couple usually sits there and, and I've had, they're not even living in the same city.
[24:24] Oh, we text each other through the day. I bet you your employer really appreciates that. You know, yeah. And then as soon as we get off work, we get on our phones, you know, we're driving down the aisle. How did your day go?

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I've had them tabulate the hours and come up with dozens, dozens. And I say, do me a favor, write that, that total in the front of your Bible.
And in complete innocence, they do that. They kind of, you know, we put 22 hours into nurturing our relationship in courtship.
I say, do me a favor. Make a commitment to God that you're going to spend at least half of that time after you're married. And guess what? They kind of giggle and think, oh, that'll be easy.
Judith is sick this morning, her third cold in the season. I'm looking forward to spring already. And after I'd finished my time with the Lord, and she hadn't gotten up yet, I took a cup of coffee.
[25:43] Because I know coffee has an aroma that does a very interesting thing to my wife. And I carried the cup into the room. And, you know, get the... I said, how are you?

I said, do you want coffee? No. I said, well, I brought it up here. I put it right by the bed. You know what I was doing? I wanted to spend time with her. David wanted to have an intimate relationship with God.
And he knew that meant investing the energy and time. There's a second thing that I want you to mark here in the passage. You look there, he says, dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.
David desired a captivating view of God. Beauty is something that enthralls us into appreciating it. It is in seeing beauty that we find great satisfaction and joy. And every single one of us here finds satisfaction in beauty.
[26:57] People are enthralled with beauty, whether it is in China or in India or in America. Wherever it is, when you look at a spectacular sunset and you are enjoying that on the beach or wherever it is, you can't help yourself when you are around others and say, wow, isn't that beautiful?

And the person who is looking at that joins with you in saying, yeah, yeah, that's beautiful. John Piper reflects on mankind's appreciation of beauty to be a glimmer of his being made in the image of God.
I think that's right. Because you'll remember that as God created things, he took pleasure in what was taking place. And according to his word, he said, let there be light.
Let there be the oceans, the creation all around. And he took pleasure in those things. Our lives are really enhanced by glimpses of beauty.
The first good snow is beautiful, isn't it? Every one of us, when it eventually comes, we'll need people to help with the plowing and shoveling. But other than that, you know, guess what? I did get that in, so remember that.

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[28:17] You know, hey, we're going to find pleasure in the first snow. How many of you like the way it clings to branches? Before the wind and everything else gets a hold of it.

Just unbelievable, spectacular. And about a week later, what has happened to all that beautiful snow? It has become a pain. I mean, it's caused ruts.
It's made you shovel. There's a lot of bad things, you know. And then that snow that was so beautiful at first now just lies in ugly, dark piles at the end of your driveway or wherever else.
And you're thinking, oh, I can't wait for spring. And then spring comes and what happens?
Crocuses. Crocuses. I mean, just blow me away.
Daffodils. Just a little out of the ground they pop and wow! How many of you get cold chills when you think about, that's beautiful! We really do long to see beauty in its many forms for each reflects the glory of our Creator.
[29:28] But I want you to stop and think with me. What really was David talking about here? How could he even think that our invisible God could be glimpsed?

Think about that. This is David, Old Testament. Let me read the passage to you again. To gaze upon the beauty of the God who has never allowed himself to be seen.
I want you to think with me of what David was referencing. Let me read a quote from John Piper again.
Beauty is what God is. His wisdom is beautiful wisdom. His power is beautiful power. His justice is beautiful justice.
His love is beautiful love. Beauty is what God is. So, when David said that he wanted to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, what he was speaking of is that David wanted to gain an understanding.
[30:49] He wanted to be able to comprehend. That's what's involved in this word gaze. To comprehend the attributes and the nature of God. So stop and let me ask you this. When was the last time that you actually consciously, deliberately, reflected carefully upon the attributes of God?

Hey, here's how a lot of our devotional lives go. God, you got five minutes. 457, 458, 459.
Bye, I'm gone. You know, it's like, hey, I've done my thing. And then you wonder why you still remain sour and unhappy and your life is not fulfilled in the sweetness of your relationship.
You haven't been gazing at the beauty. You've been just going through the routine. David says, listen, I want to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.
Third, David desired a deeper understanding into his word and nature. There, the last part, it says this, and to inquire in his temple. The word inquire is a word that is used mostly in the Old Testament in a theological or a religious context, and it really means to inspect carefully.
[32:10] It was a word that was used in relationship to the sacrificial animal. And what was the deal with the sacrificial animal? When you used an animal for sacrifice, were there particular standards that you had to pay attention to?

Yes. You had to look carefully to determine, is this animal one that is acceptable? And the idea was to kind of scrutinize it carefully and to think about it carefully and pay attention to it.
It also means to meditate, to work at something over and over again with a conscious and deliberate desire of gaining more from it.
I am not a musician, and I would never profess that music is a gift for me or an ability.
I do enjoy good music. And I've learned in observation some of the principles of becoming proficient at music is that in order to grow to the point that you can really become capable, you have to practice, what's the next word?
[33:26] Incessantly, unrelenting discipline produces sweetness. I have a neighbor right across the street who is a saxophonist that makes part of his living by playing in concerts and orchestras and jazz bands around the city.

Evidently, he does fairly well at it. And one of the things that I can tell you is that Judith and I have listened to him over and over again, kind of warming up and then going through the various musical...
By the way, a saxophone carries in a neighborhood. Do you understand that? I mean, you can hear him. And he practices and he practices and he practices and he practices.
And his ability to enjoy flows out of his deep commitment to exercise.
I've never in all of my years of ministry or counseling come across a single person who fell into sin, became discontent or moody, or struggled with deep disappointment with God that could not, when they reflected on it carefully, track back their dive into difficulty to their lack of pursuit in the Word of

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God.
[34:53] Think about that. There are some of you sitting here this morning, the truth of the matter is that your soul is wounded by the circumstances of life.

And I would plead with you that you must stop and think carefully, what is that wound attributed to? Is it attributed to a God who is unfaithful and indifference to your well-being?
Is it attributed to his lack of interest in your personal state? Is it attributed to his lack of love for you? Or is it that you have taken your eyes off of the absolute supremacy of his glory and his unrelenting love for you?
So what can we do as we look into the new year and we think of, so let's be focused. First, admit that where you are is not where you should be.
I want you to think about that. Admit that where you are is not where you should be. Let me say it again. Admit that where you are is not where you should be. Admit.
[36:04] In fact, here's what, you know what, it's so easy to preach a sermon and survive it and go out and forget about it. Do you follow that? Here's one of the things that I would plead with you. When you're driving home, say to your wife, I'm not where I should be.

By the way, she does know. Say to your husband, I'm not where I should be. I was listening to the preaching of the word of God and the spirit of God touched my heart to realize that I need to do something about what's going on.
I'm not where I should be. Number two, plead with him to change your desires. Isn't that nice? Think about that.
Plead with him to change your desires. How many of you have been effective at kind of ginning up your own desires? I'm a little cold this morning and my heart's not fired up for Jesus and I really don't feel like singing and like, you know what, I just as soon lie in bed and feel sorry for myself. You know, how many of you are glad that you don't have to make your thoughts entirely on your own accommodate the glory of Christ? You can go to him and say, listen, I'm not where I should be and I want you to change my desires.
[37:21] Others, Philippians, work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is he who works in you. Let's follow the next part, both to will.

What does that mean? To have the right desires. Both to will and do his good pleasure. I can count on him to help me. So go ahead and let him know that you're depending on him.
Third, have confidence that he answers the humble and persistent prayers of his children. How many of you will find that, okay, yeah, I'm a mess. I'm not where I need to be and I'm going to go ahead and ask him, but if he doesn't answer in the next five seconds, I'm done.
I'm going to go back to being kind of a surly, unhappy saint. Do you remember the story of the importuning widow? Do you remember that one? She just wore the unjust judge out by asking again and again and again and again.
I look at some of your faces and I see the kind of the sorrow and the disappointment and I recognize that I can't fix it. But here's what I know.
[38:35] I know the one who can. And when you come to him with a broken and a contrite heart and you say, listen, do something to change the attitude of my heart, if you persist, he will do it.

Fourth, dive into his word intentionally and daily. By the way, diving into his word is not something that happens in a 45-second little rendition with the daily bread.
Fifth, and this is a kicker. Obey in every instance where his word instructs. Would you write that down?
Obey in every instance where his word instructs. Here's why. Obedience is the key that unlocks the door of understanding and much of our blessing.
So, first question that I want you to leave here thinking is, am I where I need to be?
[39:46] The answer for all of us is no, I'm not. The second question is, will you, with the power of the Spirit of God, do something to make a difference?

That's a question. I can't answer. But I do know for me, one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold his beauty, to inquire. Let's close in prayer.
Our Father God, this morning as we think carefully about the passage of Scripture, we recognize that this text is directed to those who know Christ. I have no doubt that there are those here this

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morning that do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
And my plea would be this, is that your Spirit would bring them to the point where they understand that the deep and abiding discontentment and their fear and caution really is reflective of their lack of relationship.
[40:59] that your Spirit would draw them to the place of trusting in Jesus Christ, in whom is salvation alone. Let those who are here that are believers be conscious and deliberate in setting their affections on the things that are worthy and the scope and sight of eternity.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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