

DOES GOD HAVE A PLACE IN YOUR 2020 RESOLUTION?

Bro Chris Afekolu (Bishop)

This is the last week of January 2020. So much has been said on New Year resolutions within the year. It's a period of resolve and expectations. Our discussion today is to challenge self whether you have included God in your plans for 2020. What are the areas you have marked for improvement or what have you set to achieve this year 2020 for the Lord? To make a better plan, it is good practice to look at your previous plan (Evaluation or appraisal). How did I fare in the Lord's Vineyard in 2019? Did I really exhibit my best in the Lord's work or you have being dismal in the Lord's ministry.

REFLECTION TIME – ponder on your performance in 2019. Did I utilise the various teachings and edification rendered by church in 2019? Did I reach out to the Lost or support in the preaching of word? Did I create an impact in people's life? Did I seat by the fence; not allowing people to come in and not willing to come in. what can I do differently 2020?

Last year January, when this was discussed, two keys areas were the main drivers of our discussion.

- To set Commitment to God's House as a priority number one. **And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"** (Luke 2:49 RSV) – We need to follow the footprint of Jesus.
- Obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ was another priority number one in ours plans. **"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46 NKJV).** In the context of Jesus question, He is asking us why we should call Him Master if we did not intend to obey Him.

We then concluded that adopting these in our 2019 resolution will necessitate spiritual growth. How many consider this in 2019?

- Have I really being committed to God House?
- Have I really being committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
- Did I keep His commandments?

When King Saul failed to complete the sole assignment that God entrusted to him upon his accession as King of Israel, the prophet Samuel said to Him - Then Samuel said: **"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22 NKJV).** It's better

to obey God's commandment than praying for forgiveness (Repentance). Because of his disobedience, Saul and his descendants lost the throne, and God's purpose was filled by others. Have we really been obeying the Lord's commands. **"If you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15 NKJV)**. See also John 14:21-24. Have you been faithful to the Lord's commandments? What is your plan for Him in 2020?

One of the best ways to access the power of passion and principle in integrating God's plan in our resolution is to ask three questions: ***What? Why? and how?***

What? {Candid individual answer required – tell yourself the truth}

- What do I desire to accomplish?
- What is the contribution I want to make?
- What is the end I have in mind?

Why?

- Why do I want to do it?
- Does my goal grow out of mission, need and principles?
- Does it empower me to contribute through my role?

How?

How am I going to do it? What are the key principles that will empower me to achieve my purpose? What strategies can I use to implement these principles?

DO ALL THINGS WITHOUT MURMURINGS AND DISPUTINGS: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. **(Philippians 2:14-18 KJV)**.

The apostle exhorts us in these verses to adorn Christian living by a suitable temper and behaviour, in several instances. 1. By a cheerful obedience to the commands of God (**Php 2:14**): "*Do all things, do your duty in every branch of it, without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it.*" God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed.

2. By peacefulness and love one to another. "*Do all things without disputing, wrangling, and debating one another; because the light of truth and the life of religion are often lost in the heats and mists of disputation.*" 3. By a blameless conversation towards all men (**Php 2:15**): "*That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke; that you be not injurious to any in word or deed, and give no just occasion of offence.*"

The children of God should differ from the sons of men. Without rebuke; not finding fault with everybody and everything.

PURITY OF HEART

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8 NKJV)

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (*Titus 1:15-16 NKJV*)

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Psalms 24:3-5 NKJV). **Matthew 15:19 says** “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. {And such like; my emphasis}. These defile a person, and give them dirty or unclean hands. The ones that harbour’s these things in their hearts cannot enter into God’s presence, hence they are opposite of those with clean hands.

AN OPEN HEART

When you open your heart, your whole spirit expands. You attract the life and love that you want. You are not vulnerable, you are generous and you are outstanding in all your activities both in the vineyard and outside To live with an open heart means **to show who you are without any defensive system, without any mask**, just showing who you are according to the values by which you live life.

Our values should be that of Christ as we become Christians. {Give examples open hearted Christians}. When our hearts are closed, we live within a shell (bondage). Let’s take example from the egg. The shell needs to be broken open if the life within it is to enter into full life. What we need is the ‘**hatching of the heart**’ – the opening of the self to God.

MORE ACTION (DEEDS) LESS WORDS IN 2020

The year 2020 should be considered in your plan as a year of action and not belabouring us with laborious scriptures that are not practice. Example, if you teach on love for one another, tell us how to do this in action. Be the driver for such principle. (Give example of love in community of believers}.

There is need to open your understanding of the scriptures instead of constricting yourself. Example; the old school teacher will always rush to **Acts 6**, where seven were commissioned. Among the seven, the Bible made it clear that two of them i.e. Stephen and Philip were active in soul winning than serving table. Common sense will help those thinking objectively that 5 or 7 persons cannot be serving over five thousand brethren (**Acts 4:4, Acts 5:14** tell us the number of believers were multiplying) without additional hands. This is where you need the Holy Spirit to open your understanding of the Scriptures instead of being dogmatic thus impeding growth.

Let’s use the forces acting on a circle to illustrate this.



Path of Inertia
Sound Teachings

Centrifugal Force
Improved sound Teachings of the gospel, Apostolic examples, fellowship among disciples, and love for one another /God is seen to be practiced—and there is purity of heart, open-mindedness for the

Path of Inertia	Centripetal Force	Centrifugal Force
Sound Teachings of the gospel and Apostolic examples and love for one another/God are strived to be practiced, etc.	Teachings are based on; dogmatic, self-righteousness, Justification, condemnation, discrimination and love for one another another/God are based on hypocrisy { <i>Matt. 23:27-28</i> } etc.	Improved sound Teachings of the gospel, Apostolic examples, fellowship among disciples, and love for one another /God is seen to be practiced and there is purity of heart and open-mindedness for the Believers, etc.

The Church building is strategically located in the heart of the town. There is no reason not to grow if only we could improve in our teachings and behaviour towards the gospel. There is the school of thought that will say the Congregation was so much 15, 20 year ago, while the decline? The reason is simple; there is great increase in the centripetal force. 20 years ago, a graduate could brag with his 1st degree certificate, but today it's a different ball game. We need to up our game in the business of soul winning in the 21st century.

Adopt contemporary style and methodology without change of the Pattern used by the 1st century Christians. We need to impact on our community with the love of Christ to enable them see the Kingdom of God. Consider this in your year 2020 deliverable for the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to embrace Jesus Christ mode of preaching the Gospel. The Apostles and early disciples used same method; you cannot preach the gospel without love. **We need positive work in the Vineyard.**

CONCLUSION

Let your 2020 resolutions for God Keep tabs on;

- Commitment to God's House
- Commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ
- Do all things without murmuring and disputing
- Purity of Heart

- An open Heart and Open-mindedness
- Getting active with more work in the Vineyard and less words/talking

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:23 NKJV)

Hymn - Take Time To Be Holy 343 (SOC)