

December 27

WORTH IT

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Introduction

Yes, the end of 2015 is already here! Was it "Worth It"? It is natural for each of us to reflect on the past year and ask whether our time was well spent, but how do we measure success? This week, Pastor Gabe asked us to think about the criteria we typically use to score ourselves and consider what the Bible says should be the measure of success. Did we live by the Spirit or gratify the desires of the flesh? The New Year is a great time to reflect and take steps in our faith!

Discussion

1. Remind yourself of the fruits of the Spirit [**Galatians 5:22-23**]. Imagine yourself as a tree with many fruited branches grafted into it. Which fruited branch does God need to prune so it bears more fruit? Talk about what that would look like in your life.
2. Is there anything you've resolved to do in past years that has never come to fruition? What got in the way? Read **1 Timothy 4:8**. Was your goal of eternal or temporary importance?
3. Read **James 4:13-17**. We are so good at putting off today what can be done tomorrow. Though we know what is right, we often overestimate our ability to succeed, which is why we end up with New Year's resolutions! Share ideas about what steps are needed to make sure spiritual fruit has a chance to grow and sin doesn't entangle you.

Think About It

The Bible is very clear we are saved from sin by faith in Jesus, and we are not saved by anything we can do to earn God's favor. It may seem like a paradox that while we are right with God because we believe in Jesus, we continue each year to struggle against our sinful nature. As we learned in last week's message, becoming more like Jesus is part of God's plan for our redemption. The fruit that comes from living by the Spirit is a sign we are saved. Yet, we struggle to rid ourselves completely of sin. What do we do about this?! Romans 5: 1-5 calls us to rejoice that, through our struggles, we grow to be more like Jesus. And, while we struggle, God accepts us through faith and beckons us to increasingly reject worldly desires and bear good fruit [**Philippians 3:12-15**].

Do Something

1. **Reflect:** God's power is made perfect through weakness. Spend 5-10 minutes in silence before God with no distractions, reflecting in full honesty about your most persistent sin struggle. What is that thing you can never seem to master that creeps up in your life and causes worry, doubt or distance in your relationship with God and others?
2. **Surrender:** Confess to God that you are powerless to change without His help. Admit your inability and weakness to handle your struggle by yourself. Ask Him to show you the way and give you His strength. Could this be at the top of your New Year's resolution list?
3. **Share:** We are called to be God's witnesses of His work in our lives. This week, share what God is doing in your life with someone else. Let God take care of what happens next; He will take care of it.