

## Crossroads Community Church

Despite the heavy snow the Spirit of God drew us to His altar of praise. Worship was heartfelt and filled with joy as we welcomed a New Year of ministry. Bob read Isaiah 61:3, Revelation 3:15-17, Hebrews 7:10, and 2 John 1:1. Pastor Don shared announcements and prayers, we pray for those who are homebound due to physical limitations, we pray for loving people to come to their aid. We also pray for prodigals, we pray their hearts would be tender and return to God. We keep the Ferguson family of Orangeville in our prayers as they have suffered great loss in a house fire this past weekend, may God comfort them and send provisions their way. (If you are able help contact Shoeless Joe's restaurant in Orangeville for details).

Pastor Don came forth and prayed over the service grateful for the past year and thanking God for the blessed year ahead. Then he posed a question, "Have any of you ever made New Year's resolutions?" Then He asked, "How many have been kept?"

I think we can all agree that it is difficult to keep our resolutions. It is a New Year so we are all given a fresh start, and since we can't change our past we need to change our present so we can have a better future. So this year I suggest we make this simple resolution, promising to ourselves and God to change for the better. The Apostle Paul says this, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 3:12-14).

We can learn from the past so we don't repeat the same mistakes but we must keep going forward. We all have an imperfect past, less than praiseworthy moments, just as Paul had when he persecuted many Christians, (Acts 7:59-60, 8:1, 9:1). We all know that Paul was a religious leader of his day, but all that religion did not shield him from his shady past, it did not remove his sinful tendencies and did very little to set him free. Later he discovered that he did not need to be a slave to his past, Paul shifted his focus towards Jesus and this is what changed everything. He was now free from his past through Jesus and Paul could now move forward and intentionally make daily changes, he now had the power to live for God. Making changes takes intentional determined effort and Jesus gives us the power to do so. Learning to daily live for Jesus won't always be convenient and that is where God intervenes when we trust Him, just as God did for Joseph in Genesis 37-39. Joseph had it easy being his Dad's favorite but it quickly changed when his brothers sold him as a slave, or when he was falsely accused of taking advantage of his master's wife, he suffered many trials but he kept his focus on God and God was with Him and God turned things around for Joseph, in the end Joseph was rewarded for his faith.

Beloved, Paul instructs that we need to work towards our goals and keep our focus on them, (Philippians 3:12-14), many of us put pictures on walls or our fridge to motivate ourselves to attain them, should we not do the same with our relationship with God? Should we not continuously put reminders of our faith in front of us to keep our focus on Him? After all since we are going to spend eternity with Him shouldn't our desire be to know Him more and more? James puts it like this, #1. We should humble ourselves so God can teach us, #2. We must resist the devil so we won't give into temptation, #3. We ought to draw near to him so He draws near to us, #4. Replace our bad thoughts with godly Thoughts and #5 In repentance confess and express remorse for our wrong doings, when we do all this regularly we are assured that God will lift us up, He will always be with us? (James 4:7-10). This is God's way for us to achieve a stronger relationship and maintain a healthy spiritual life. So once again let us together promise God that this year we will focus on getting to know Him more and become better for it, Have a fantastic week seeking God's presence and Happy New Year , Asherey Shalom!

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