

The WINE

The newsletter of Sobby United Methodist Church



A New Year Worthy of God

by Marshall Segal, staff writer at [desiringGod.org](https://www.desiringgod.org)

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-new-year-worthy-of-god>

Before you make resolves for the new year — before you start a reading plan, or choose a diet, or buy a journal, or step on a treadmill — find a *why* worth changing for. As many more have observed before me, our resolutions often wilt because we didn't have a *why* big enough to weather the inevitable temptations, distractions, and setbacks.

So what will your *why* be for the year to come? For me, I want my life to prove the worth of my calling from God. Not my calling to ministry, but my calling *to God* — the calling every genuine Christian shares.

My *why* comes from 2 Thessalonians 1:11: *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.*

What evidence do we see in our lives that we have been called by God? What might someone else see in us this year that would suggest something supernatural has happened? What habits might hint that we have been claimed by heaven? Will we live worthy of our calling — or not?

Could We Ever Be Worthy?

Does a Christian resolution for *worthiness* rub you the wrong way?

continued

From Pastor Todd, continued

“We pray for you that our God may make you worthy of his calling.” But none of us is worthy of this calling. Surely the apostle Paul knew that more than anyone.

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. (Romans 3:10-12)

Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. (Romans 11:35-36)

How could a sinner ever merit *anything* from God? We can't. And yet God himself says, through his apostle, that we can be considered — *by God* — worthy of his calling. What would that mean? *Not* that we could ever earn or deserve this calling, but that we could increasingly *honor* the calling we have received by grace alone, based on the merits of Christ alone.

Godliness Honors God

Apart from Christ, we will never *deserve* to be called children of God, but we can still disgrace the calling we have been freely given — or we can adorn our precious calling with an ambitious godliness. “*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works . . . so that in everything [you] may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*” (Titus 2:7, 10). Our lives can become a wild, grace-filled bouquet laid upon the saving and sufficient work of Jesus — a worthy *reflection* of his love, his cross, his power, his worth.

Again, Paul says, “[*We pray*] that our God may make you worthy of his calling . . . so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). This is the worthiness of another world. As it grows and spreads in a redeemed life, it doesn't welcome praise to itself, but gladly bows to worship Christ. The worthiness God finds in us glorifies the greatness of Jesus.

Our worthiness proves his worth, not ours. Why? Because worthiness in us is an evidence and expression of his grace. God makes us worthy “according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We strive for a worthiness that draws others' curiosity and admiration *not* to ourselves, but to him. We want them to think, *Someone who lives like that must know something about life, about reality, about God that I don't yet know. I want to know what they know and love like they love.*

Worthiness in Real Life

So what might this worthiness look like in another new year? A few verses earlier, Paul unfolds the worthiness he sees blossoming in the Thessalonian church: *We ought always to give thanks to God for you,*

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From Pastor Todd, continued

brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.

(2 Thessalonians 1:3-5)

How specifically was their worthiness displayed? Their faith and love held fast through suffering. And not just held fast, but grew. And not just grew, but grew *abundantly*. The apostle could see that God was for them and *in* them, because they were seeking God with greater intensity, trusting him with greater peace, and loving one another with greater devotion. *Greater* — greater faith, greater love, greater patience, greater peace, greater discipline, greater joy — *greater* is a *worthy* resolve for a new year.

Where, specifically, could you grow abundantly in the next year? What area of your spiritual life and love for others needs to be revived or nurtured toward greater maturity? Find a *greater* resolve to focus on, and hold onto, as you step into another January.

Made Worthy in the Valley

Don't miss that the church in Thessalonica was made more worthy through their suffering. "*We ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring*" (2 Thessalonians 1:4). Their hardships had become a dark and painful backdrop on which their faithfulness could shine.

Would anyone have seen their steadfastness in Christ if they hadn't experienced adversity? Suffering, for them, offered an opportunity to experience more of God's strength and mercy, and suffering also made it easier for others to see the God who was motivating and sustaining them. How might that change how we think about the sufferings that will come over the next year? When our plans and resolves are inevitably disrupted and disappointed, will we assume suffering is only an enemy? Or, in the hands of our God, could suffering actually be a strange and precious friend of our worthiness?

The *Who* in Good Resolves

New resolves often fail without a well-defined, deeply-felt *why*, but they also fail because of a misplaced *who*.

Look carefully, again, at verse 11: "*To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every*

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From Pastor Todd, continued

resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.” Who makes our lives worthy of such a calling? God does. Who fulfills our resolves for good and our works of faith? God does. Whose power will be the decisive agent for lasting change in our lives? *His power.*

Good resolves begin and end with God. Which means good resolves begin and persevere through prayer. And so Paul does not merely *charge* the Thessalonians to live worthy of their calling; he *prays* for them to be made worthy. *“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling. . . .”*

So how might we pray for greater faith and love in the new year?

Lord, I am not content to have last year’s love for you. I want a deeper, sweeter, more active faith in you. Nurture what you have planted in my soul. Prune away more of my remaining sin. Make the sufferings to come magnify your work in me. By whatever means necessary, cause me to grow and to grow abundantly. In Jesus’s name and for his greater glory in us, Amen.



resurrection 2024

If you know of any youth who would be interested in attending Resurrection 2024 (January 19-21) in Pigeon Forge, please contact Kathryn Mullins as soon as possible.



To the congregation of Soddy United Methodist Church:

Thank you very much for a wonderful year of worship and ministry together!

And thank you for the lovely poinsettia given in our honor, the cards, food, gifts, and other expressions of love during the holiday season. We’re so very grateful for you!

~Pastor Todd & Felicia

Children's Christmas program



Children's Christmas program



Children's Christmas program



Upcoming Birthdays!

January

- 10 Todd Kingrea
Barbara Wilson
- 19 Martha Sheeks
- 21 Gene Knipp
- 26 Paul Smith
- 28 Sherrill Card



February

- 9 Kathy Jones
- 16 Serena Wood
- 17 Brenda Easter
- 18 Sue Harper
- 19 Suzie Weber
Stephanie Parrott
- 21 Betty Smith
Amanda Jolly
- 25 Gabrielle Musgrave
- 26 Brett Kingrea
- 28 Andrew Stulce

Upcoming wedding anniversaries!

January



February

14 Ray & Nancy Woodall

2 Thomas & Barbara Hendren
5 Kevin & Kathy Jones
14 Dan & Sue Hultgren



BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY...

LENTEN SERMON SERIES:

THE ROAD

- "Hit The Road, Jack" • "The Rules Of The Road" • "Taking The High Road" •
- "The Road To Hell Is Paved With Good Intentions" • "The End Of The Road" •
- "Going Down That Road" • "Running Out Of Road" • "Road Trip" •



Monday, January 1st

NEW YEARS DAY

Tuesday, January 2nd

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Wednesday, January 3rd

Potluck dinner (5:30 PM)

Sunday, January 7th

"Promises Of Restoration"

Tuesday, January 9th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, January 11th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, January 14th

"Keeping The Vows"

Monday, January 15th

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Tuesday, January 16th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)
United Methodist Women (12:00 PM)

Thursday, January 18th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

JANUARY 19th- 21st

RESURRECTION 2024

Sunday, January 21st

"Checking Our Position"

Tuesday, January 23rd

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, January 25th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, January 28th

"Faith And Guidance"

Tuesday, January 30th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)





February



Thursday, February 1st

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, February 4th

"The Party That Almost Wasn't"

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Tuesday, February 6th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Wednesday, February 7th

Potluck dinner (5:30 PM)

Thursday, February 8th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, February 11th

Hymn Sing

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD meeting

Tuesday, February 13th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Wednesday, February 14th

Valentine's Day

ASH WEDNESDAY (6:30 PM)

"The Loneliness Of Vulnerable Love"

Thursday, February 15th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, February 18th

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**LENTEN SERMON SERIES:
THE ROAD**

"Hit The Road, Jack"

Tuesday, February 20th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

United Methodist Women (12:00 PM)

Thursday, February 22nd

Choir practice (6:30 PM)

Sunday, February 25th

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

**LENTEN SERMON SERIES:
THE ROAD**

"The Rules Of The Road"

Tuesday, February 27th

Marys & Marthas Bible study (10:00 AM)

Thursday, February 29th

Choir practice (6:30 PM)