



# The Disciple

104 ELM AVENUE  
P.O. BOX 1344  
LOUISA, VA 23093

FEBRUARY 2022

540-848-6441  
LOUISACHRISTIANCHURCH.ORG  
LCCPASTORV@GMAIL.COM

If January is often a month of new beginnings, a New Year's clean slate, which we greet with a *this-year-is-going-to-be-different* kind of optimism, then February is often a month of discouraging realism. We often find our inflated hopes for change have sprung a leak, and our feet are back on the difficult ground where we started. The euphoria we felt when we made our resolutions once again didn't carry us over the arduous terrain to the promised land of transformation.

## God Wants More for You Than You Do

By Jon Bloom



We're all familiar with that euphoric feeling. It's the surge of optimism we experience when we see the gracious benefits we could enjoy if we were to achieve a certain goal. The euphoria inspires us to form a new resolve to pursue that goal. And if kept in its proper perspective, it's very helpful. God designed us to experience that feeling to encourage us to undertake the struggle of pursuing a new and better direction.

But God did not design the euphoria to carry us through the struggle. He intended us to follow through with prayerful determination, planning, discipline, perseverance, accountability, and endurance. Euphoria is the foretaste of the future grace we desire. It helps launch us on the difficult journey to obtain it. But if we mistake the euphoria as being the same thing as a resolution, we should not be surprised when our "resolutions" seem to evaporate.

### Infatuation Isn't Enough

Here are a few illustrations of what I mean:

To see the euphoria of a weight loss resolve, talk to someone who has just started a new diet program, or who has just lost 20 pounds in the last few months. But to know the real nature of the struggle and the benefits of weight loss, talk to someone who has kept off the weight for five years or more.

To see the euphoria of a Bible reading and prayer resolve, talk to someone who has just started a new plan, or has been keeping up with a plan for a few weeks now. But to know the real nature of the struggle and benefits of these spiritual disciplines, talk to someone who has persevered in them for many years.

**“Every good resolve requires the power of God, because the outcomes he wants are bigger than we can produce.”**

Now, in most cases, things like successful long-term weight loss and long-term exercise of spiritual disciplines begin with the excitement and hope of a new beginning. The eager enthusiasm is a good thing as far as it goes — as long as we remember it doesn't go very far. No one who's been on a real adventure very long is sustained by the adrenaline rush of initial excitement. Infatuation is not enough. It wasn't meant to be. We need something more.

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## God Wants More for Us Than We Do

We actually need a lot more. And the reason we need a lot more than excitement to keep us going is because the transformation we need most — the transformation God is aiming for — goes far deeper and involves far more than we typically understand or expect at first.

We make an enthusiastic, optimistic start, and maybe even make some encouraging progress, only to discover reality isn't nearly so simple. We discover all sorts of powerful appetites and habits and fears and past pain and temptations at work in us that we didn't fully appreciate. Jesus captured the difficulty in these few words: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" ([Matthew 26:41](#)).

**We are all prone to underestimate the weakness of our flesh."**

## The Flesh Is Weak

The flesh is weak. That is the primary reason our resolves, especially worthy resolves, are so hard to keep. Like the disciples in their early days with Jesus, we are prone to underestimate the weakness of our flesh. And like the disciples, this is not only true regarding our fortitude, but also our motives. Unless the Lord disciplines us ([Hebrews 12:3–11](#)), we too tend to be more motivated in our resolves by a desire to be the greatest than a desire to truly serve others out of love for them ([Luke 22:24](#)).

God wants far more for us than we typically want for ourselves. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all" ([John 6:63](#)). In his school of discipleship, he is aiming at helping us learn to walk by the Spirit so we won't gratify the sinful desires of the flesh ([Galatians 5:16](#)). For the Christian, God uses the futility ([Romans 8:20](#)), as well as our sufferings ([2 Corinthians 4:17](#)), as a means of producing a more profound transformation in us.

What God wants for us is faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love ([2 Peter 1:5–7](#)). And all these things are cultivated through the various difficult struggles of pursuing a resolve.

## How to Fulfill Every Good Resolve

We were never meant to fulfill our resolves on our own, because the transformation we need most requires a wisdom and power far beyond ours. Which is why Paul wrote,

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, 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](#))

**"God wants far more for us than we typically want for ourselves."**

Every resolve for kingdom good — which are the only kind we should pursue, whether it's weight loss, spiritual disciplines, a potential marriage partner, or something else ([Matthew 6:33](#)) — and every work of faith requires the power and wisdom of God, because the outcomes God wants are bigger than we can produce.

God set it up this way so that we would experience the maximum, multilayered, fruit-producing joy from each outcome and his multifaceted glory would shine most brightly through us. If we understand this from the outset, we can receive as God's gift the euphoric feeling we experience when we first resolve to undertake a work of faith. God grants it as a foretaste of future grace and to help us get started. But it is not a balloon to float us over the difficult road.

The real, substantial, faith-growing, love-expanding, endurance-training, joy-producing benefits are only realized through the hardship of pursuing our resolves. So do not lose heart in pursuing yours.

Jon Bloom serves as teacher and co-founder of Desiring God. He is author of three books, *Not by Sight*, *Things Not Seen*, and *Don't Follow Your Heart*. He and his wife have five children and make their home in the Twin Cities.

# The Dash

By Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak  
At the funeral of a friend  
He referred to the dates on the tombstone  
From the beginning...to the end

He noted that first came the date of birth  
And spoke the following date with tears,  
But he said what mattered most of all  
Was the dash between those years

For that dash represents all the time  
That they spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved them  
Know what that little line is worth

For it matters not, how much we own,  
The cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
And how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left  
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough  
To consider what's true and real  
And always try to understand  
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger  
And show appreciation more  
And love the people in our lives  
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect  
And more often wear a smile,  
Remembering this special dash  
Might only last a little while

So, when your eulogy is being read  
With your life's actions to rehash...  
Would you be proud of the things they say  
About how you spent YOUR dash?



**“I HAVE NOT STOPPED GIVING THANKS FOR  
YOU, REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS.”**

E P H E S I A N S 1 : 1 6 , N I V

# 10 Facts about Groundhog Day

Meteorologists have had it rough in the Hudson Valley (we're talking about you, topsy-turvy temperatures), but perhaps instead of looking to the skies for their forecasts, they should follow the lead of one furry fellow in Pennsylvania and keep their eyes on the ground.

First established by Germans in America in 1887, Groundhog Day was actually inspired by Europe's Candlemas Day, during which clergymen would bless the candles they needed for the cold season. (If the candles brought a sunny day, there would be six more weeks of winter; likewise, clouds and rain signified that winter would end soon.)

Nowadays, thousands gather at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania to wait for an aptly named groundhog to emerge with his verdict — the validity of which, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is questionable. Statistically speaking, it's more likely that Punxsutawney Phil will see his shadow than not: From 1887 to 2021, Phil has seen his shadow 106 times and only overlooked it 19 times. (There are 10 years where no records of Phil's predictions exist at all.)

***To get in the spirit of Groundhog Day — whether you want six more weeks of winter or not — here are 10 fun facts about the holiday:***

1. Punxsutawney Phil is the official groundhog forecaster on February 2, but many states have their own (like New York's Pothole Pete).
2. Phil's full name, granted by the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, is Punxsutawney Phil, Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, and Weather Prophet Extraordinary.
3. Groundhogs typically weigh between 12 and 15 pounds; Phil is 22 pounds.



4. Groundhogs only live six to eight years, but folklore suggests that Phil sips a magical drink that gives him seven more years of life.

5. The Germans originally chose a hedgehog as their animal forecaster. They turned to groundhogs instead when they discovered a large amount of them in Pennsylvania.

6. Hibernation is similar to being in a coma. When groundhogs hibernate, their heart rates drop to five beats per minute, and they can lose up to 30 percent of their body fat.

7. The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club hosts a three-day celebration leading up to Groundhog Day.

8. The popular movie of the same name (starring Rockland County resident Bill Murray) gave meaning to the phrase "groundhog day": to repeat something over and over again.

9. Phil's fans have been able to get text message alerts of his predictions since 2010. (Text "Groundhog" to 247365 in case you're interested.)

10. According to ABC News, the National Climatic Data Center found that there is no correlation between Phil's prediction and the actual weather forecast.

# GROUNDHOG DAY

*This article originally appeared on hvmag.com in 2015. It has been updated to reflect 2021's forecast and Punxsutawney Phil statistics.*



# Valentine Spaghetti Dinner



Saturday Evening  
February 12, 2022  
Dine in or Carry Out



## Board Meeting

Next Meeting  
February 8, 2022  
7:30 PM

Look for meeting documents and Zoom info on February 7, 2022.

# FEBRUARY Birthdays

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Brenna C.    | February 4  |
| Russell M.   | February 10 |
| Beverly B.   | February 14 |
| John Jerl P. | February 15 |
| Melissa V.   | February 16 |
| Alyssa T.    | February 18 |
| Corey S.     | February 18 |
| Dana K.      | February 19 |
| Melonie D.   | February 20 |
| Mary W.      | February 21 |

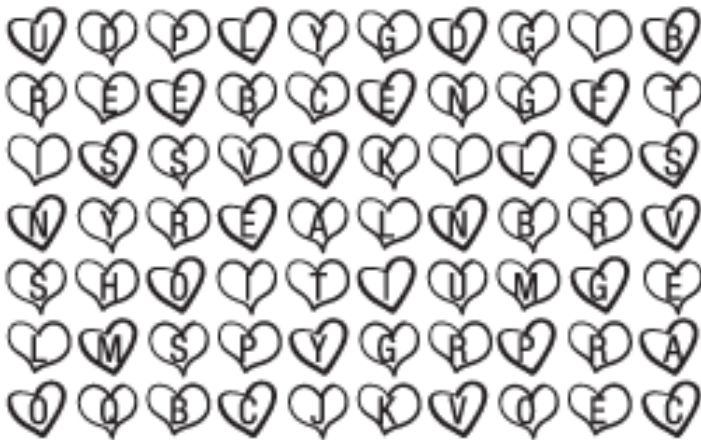




# The heart of a friend

Big-hearted friendliness comes from generously serving others.

**Directions:** Start with the first D and move according to the arrows beneath the blanks. Then fill in the letters to complete 1 Peter 4:8-10.



Above all, love each other   D  , because love  
   over a multitude of   . Offer  
   to one another without  
  . Each of you should use whatever  
   you have received to    others, as faithful  
   stewards of God's    in its various forms.

1 PETER 4:8-10, NIV

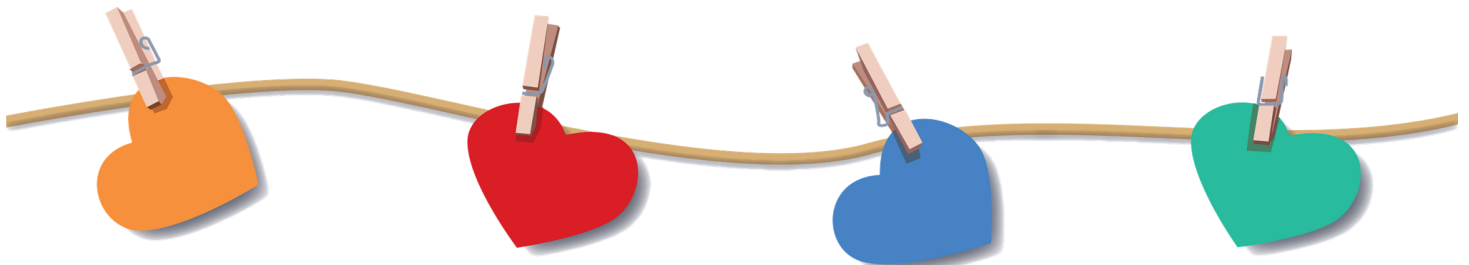
Answer: deeply, covers, sins, hospitality, grumbling, gift, serve, grace

# Puzzle!

Answer each statement (based on Matthew's gospel) True or False by circling the letter in the correct column. Then write each circled letter on the appropriately numbered line below to discover why Jesus died.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. Jesus healed Peter's wife <i>(Matthew 8:14).</i>	E	<input checked="" type="radio"/> N
2. Jesus fed the 5,000 with two loaves and five fish <i>(14:17).</i>	R	A
3. At Jesus' Transfiguration, Peter saw Jonah and Elijah <i>(17:3).</i>	M	S
4. The rich, young ruler decided not to follow Jesus <i>(19:22).</i>	T	C
5. Jesus said the temple had become a "den of robbers" <i>(21:13).</i>	I	G
6. Famines and earthquakes are signs of the end of the age <i>(24:7).</i>	V	D
7. Jesus tells a story of the six wise and six foolish maidens <i>(25:1-13).</i>	F	A
8. Judas betrayed Jesus with a secret handshake <i>(26:48).</i>	P	L
9. The Roman governor Polonius interrogated Jesus <i>(27:11-14).</i>	W	O
		<b>N</b>
	3	2
	8	6
	7	4
	5	9
	1	

Answer: N, A, S, T, L, V, A, L, O; salvation



I love my church family!