

New Year Challenge One
#032, Week of 1-6-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Here is a challenge for the new year. Some folks portray the Christian life as a bowl of cherries or a bed of roses. "Come to Christ," they may say, "and your troubles will be over." Well, it's not so. Someone forgot to pit the cherries and to remove those thorns from that bed of roses. In like manner, when you become a Christian, all your problems do not magically disappear. In fact, conversion to Christ may intensify your problems. Not everyone appreciates the followers of Christ. Don't let this frighten you from the Savior.

Christ teaches you how to cope with your problems. Christ also supports and strengthens you in the midst of your problems. In addition, He personally comforts you. To experience this guidance, strength, support, and comfort in the midst of the challenges of life, you must entrust yourself to God.

No one on this earth has endured more pain and suffering than Jesus Christ. Yet, as the Bible tells us, "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). In the midst of suffering, Christ trusted His Father for comfort and strength to cope. This is what we need to do in the midst of our problems and challenges. We need to entrust ourselves to God.

New Year Challenge Two
#058, Week of 1-13-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Here is another new year challenge. The Bible exhorts, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of Godliness," (1 Timothy 4:7). Does this seem strange? It shouldn't. The word discipline in our English Bibles is the word from which we derive "gymnasium" and "gymnastics". Gymnasts must do their routines over and over again. The same goes for those involved in skating, skiing, tennis, golf, or active in team sports like football or basketball. Practice, practice, practice. That's the name of the game.

Christianity is no different. Discipline yourself. Do you have a problem getting into the Bible? Work at it. Set aside a time each day and get in the habit of reading your Bible. It takes discipline. The same goes for prayer. Practice prayer. Discipline yourself and pray regularly. Keep a written prayer list and check off God's answers to your prayers. Does a bad habit often trip you? Discipline yourself. "Flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace" (2 Timothy 2:22). Turn away from the temptation. Work on forming new habits. Discipline yourself.

Here is the catch. You don't do this alone. Christianity differs from pep talks from coaches and exhortations from teachers. The Bible says the gospel is "the power of God" (Romans 1:16). Think about it. Christianity is the power of God at work in you to enable you to discipline yourself.

New Year Challenge Three
#077, Week of 1-20-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Once upon a time, folks assumed they followed the Ten Commandments. When you talked to them about sin, they said, "I'm not so bad. I keep the Ten Commandments." Now there is aversion to the Ten Commandments. Churches stand against God's law. They often misapply the Bible with Romans 6:14, "You are not under law but under grace." Others declare they don't want to push the Ten Commandments on impressionable youngsters. Posting these moral precepts on the walls of schoolrooms is anathema.

The Bible says, "the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Romans 7:12). The Ten Commandments are precepts to follow. They are also a life to live. First, the Ten Commandments outline the holiness of God. Second, the Ten Commandments therefore define deviations from His holiness and righteousness. The Ten Commandments show our need to return to God through faith in Christ. "The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24). Third, because the Ten Commandments show us the character of God and deviations from His holiness, they also set the parameters for godly living. God says, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

The new year challenge is to return to God through faith in Christ and live out the Ten Commandments with His power and grace.

New Year Challenge Four
#146, Week of 1-27-2019

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Are you a teacher, an engineer, a lawyer, a plumber, an electrician, a doctor? What is your calling? More importantly, do you understand the question?

God called you into your vocation. Your work is not just a job. God designed you with specific gifts and talents. He bestowed a particular temperament with your calling in mind. When you recognize this vocation as coming from God, life is much more enjoyable.

There is a deeper calling you should acknowledge, the calling to follow Jesus Christ. After all, Christ is Lord (Romans 10:9). He died on a cross as a ransom payment for sin

(Mark 10:45). He is risen from the dead (Romans 1:4, Acts 1:1-11). He sits on the throne of the universe as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16).

The pieces of life fit together when you recognize Christ. He is the One who created you and sustains you. If you turn your back on the Lord over the course of life, you can hardly expect His support and encouragement. Ultimately, Jesus Christ is your leader at work. He designed you to fill a particular niche in this world. When you recognize this, life and work simply go better.

Here is the new year challenge. Recognize your vocation as a God’s calling. Recognize your talents as God’s gifts. Serve God in your calling.
