

## Leadership Letter

### *What's on God's agenda for you this year?*

Do *New Year's Resolutions* work for you? I just googled 'new year's resolutions' and do you know how many results there were? Almost 14 million. People are interested in seeing change in their lives and they see the beginning of the new year as a great time to turn over that new leaf, to have a clean slate to write on, and to hopefully overnight be a different person!

Steve Errey in his blog writes, *'Let's face it — it's pretty pointless waiting all year to decide on one or two things that you kinda, sorta want to stop doing, but that you know full well you're not really committed to following through with anyway. How crazy is that?'* I think you already know the fail rate on resolutions is extremely high - here are a few reasons:

**1. Lack of motivation and commitment:** If your resolution is based on what you think you should do or what others have encouraged you to do, or simply a 'great idea', the chances are it will fizzle out pretty quickly. Where there is a lack of foundation of meaning or personal relevance there is no sticking power. What we need is to go below the surface of our lives and look at what really matters to us.

**2. You go it alone:** Most of us need the encouragement of others to help us follow through on decisions. Find a buddy that you relate to, do things together, motivate one another, and most important of all – keep one another accountable to that resolution that is most important to you.

**3. It lacks authority:** If your boss says, 'have this on my desk in the morning' generally if you want to keep your job, you work your upmost to get that job done. When we set out to make a change in our lives or see a new habit develop, we have to ask ourselves, 'What is God saying to me?' If, as you pray, you sense that God is giving you an assignment to follow through on, there is a new authority in your life. This isn't just about me! This is about pleasing God. Allow God to put his finger on the areas of your life that he is wanting to help you change. And remember, the Holy Spirit is a gentleman and won't overwhelm you with more than you can cope with.

**4. You have a list instead of your 'one thing':** We tend to make lists for everything – even those who hate lists, still write them even if they are only in their heads. And we do the same for new year's resolutions. Things like: Eat better, go to bed earlier, exercise more, spend more time with the kids, be a better husband – wife – boyfriend – girlfriend – friend... These are all pretty nebulous and of course lack any clarity of what change we desire to see. These lists often focus on the externals, the way we behave, what we do rather than who we are becoming. What is the one thing that we want to see transformation in, that affects our identity and the real me.

**5. Then there's the things everyone talks about:** If you read blogs then you will quickly

discover some things being shared constantly. For instance:

- Our goals aren't SMART enough— specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time oriented. But we can have greatly written smart goals but where there is no passion, there will be no positive results.
- We make them too big and out of our reach. It's great to have ambition but we get there in bite size chunks.
- We lack time management and find that there is no space in our calendar for this new activity.
- We neglect making a clear plan and action steps to see this thing happen.
- We forget the 'technology helps' available - apps on our phone that beep at us and remind us of what we need to do when. On and on it goes.....

These are all useful helps and tools but at the core we need to have a heart that is desperate for transformation and seeking God's help to be the person he has made us to be.

So, where does that leave me? What do I do? Take a look at the A to Z of debriefing and dreaming below. You can be hard core and go through each one or just pick those ones that seem more relevant right now and spend some time thinking and praying about them.

### **The A to Z of ideas for debriefing and dreaming.**

What's gone before, what is to come? Where I have been and where do I want to go?

**Instructions:** As you go through each letter of the alphabet below, some will have the letters TL next to them which stands for Traffic Light. Stop, Start or Continue.

- Think about last year and this coming year and ask yourself questions to do with the heading for each letter.
- Then ask, 'What do I want to stop from last year?'
- Then ask, 'What do I want to continue that I was doing last year?'
- Then ask, 'What do I want to start in this coming year?'

**A - Assignments from God** – TL: We could say everything we are doing is an assignment from God if we are walking in his ways. However, we don't always have that sense of God anointed calling or experience the finger of God on us to do something specific. TL – Am I to stop an assignment, start a new one or continue what I have been doing?

**B – Bad behaviours & attitudes** – TL: We may say, 'I wish I wouldn't do that' and perhaps feel regret after saying or doing something. We know what they are. Stop wishing and ask the Lord, 'What is the root of these negative behaviours?'

**C - Community life** – TL: How have I or do I want to relate with others? How am I involved in encouraging, coaching, mentoring, giving hospitality and making time for people?

**D - Desires:** What do I dream about, have ambition or expectations for, hope for or want to see happen?

**E - Encounters with God:** How has God met me this last year? What were the circumstances and what can I do to create an environment for further encounters this coming year?

**F - Focus:** What was my one thing last year that brought life? (perhaps one thing for personal, relational and ministry life). What do I want to focus on this year?

**G – Growth:** How have I grown or developed spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally, relationally in this last year? How would I like to grow in this new season?

**H - Healthy lifestyle – TL:** How am I living up to the abundant healthy life right now? – eating, exercise, sleep, pace of life...

**I - interests – TL:** What hobbies have I been engaged in and do I want to develop?

**J - Joy level:** There are all kinds of joy stealers that can bring stress, sadness or depression. How has my joy level (scale of 1-10) been this last year and how can I increase it in the new year?

**K - Know God deeper - TL:** What are the ways I connect with God? What spiritual rhythms or disciplines have I practiced and what new ones do I want to introduce?

**L - Losses & lessons:** What lessons have I learned from the experiences of this past year? How have I encountered God in the events on my journey?

**M – Mentoring - TL:** Who have been the key people in my life? Who invested in me and whom have I invested in? What space in my calendar do I have for others in this coming year?

**N – Needs:** What are my greatest needs right now and what do I anticipate for the coming season?

**O – Opportunities:** What doors are in front of me? Some closed, slightly ajar, or wide open?

**P - Prayer life - TL:** How am I relating with the Lord in prayer? What creative ways can I use to connect with the Lord?

**Q – Questions:** What questions am I holding that haven't been answered? Identify them and lay them out before the Lord.

**R - Roles – TL:** As I think about my relational and ministry roles, what changes, challenges and opportunities do I need to think about?

**S - Sabbath keeping – TL:** What does Sabbath look like in my life? What would I like it to look like?

**T - Training input:** Where are the wells that I am able to drink from and be encouraged, resourced and satisfied? What books, retreats, courses have I and can I receive blessing from?

**U – Undo:** What would I change if I could do it over again?

**V – Vacation:** How refreshing have breaks been in my life? Are they long enough, having the right ingredients, going to the right places and being with the right people?

**W - Worship practices** – TL: How have I spent time in worship? How can I create some fresh expressions in this coming year?

**X - X-ray:** If there was a scan to show fitness, stress and sickness, what would show up in my body? What changes do I need to make in order to be a good steward of my body?

**Y - Yearly rhythm** – TL: What spiritual, personal and relational rhythms have been and should be part of my life?

**Z – Zone:** Am I functioning in my zone? My sweet spot? How often, for how long and am I satisfied?

**Prayer for the new year**

*Lord, at the beginning of this new year, I offer you my life.*

*Come take my voice, may the words I speak be filled with encouragement and goodness.*

*Come take my hands, may the work they create be generous and giving.*

*Come take my feet, may the journeys I walk be led by your Spirit within.*

*Come take my life, for I love your goodness, your kindness and your leading.*

*Amen.*

Happy evaluating, dreaming and transforming for this coming year,

Til next month

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