



## Letter from the Editor

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**What we're all about**

**Reach Out, Columbia** is committed to presenting the heart and works of Jesus Christ in clarity and purity. We strive to encourage a deeper, more steadfast love toward others as well as provide a vehicle for the body of Christ to come together as one voice in corporate agreement and expression of faith.

I love a new year. I love fresh starts, an opportunity to reboot, and the chance to evaluate what went well and what didn't. I'm a goal-setting, task-oriented go getter who plans just about everything. Ask my mother. She knew I was hardwired when I planned my two-year-old sister's birthday party—at age four. And yes, I make New Year's resolutions, although I prefer to call them *goals*.

History (and Wikipedia) tell me I'm not alone. "Babylonians made promises to their gods at the start of each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans began each year by making promises to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named. In the Medieval era, the knights took the "peacock vow" at the end of the Christmas season each year to re-affirm their commitment to chivalry."

The American Medical Association confirms that 40-50 percent of Americans follow the New Year's tradition of making resolutions, and that's a good thing. Surveys show people who make resolutions are more likely to improve themselves than those who don't.

If you're among the 50-60 percent of people who don't make New Year's resolutions, you'll be relieved to find that the words *resolution* and *resolve* appear nowhere in the Bible. This is probably because it's not biblical to wait an entire year to take stock of our lives and make plans to change.

"Let us examine and probe our ways," Lamentations 3:40 tells us. Galatians 6:4 challenges us, "But each one must examine his own work." And Matthew 7:5 certainly has a way of driving a point home: "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Thankfully, God's challenge to examine ourselves (and make the appropriate changes) comes from a heart of love, one that wants the very best for us. Unlike the condemning voice of the enemy, who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), God's voice never *condemns*. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1 assures us. Instead, he nudges us toward love and good works.

I love every issue of *Reach Out, Columbia*, but God's given us an extra-special collection of articles this month. You'll shake your head in heavenly disbelief when you read Anna Wilson's account of what God's doing through World Mission Centre. Vaneetha Risner's transparent look at the struggles of "perfect" parenting will give you hope. And when it comes to New Year's resolutions, you'll find two very thought-provoking pieces addressing the changes we all need to make in Ginger Cox's and Linda Wagster's articles.

Whether you're a resolution maker or not, we can all be thankful God doesn't leave us the way we are. I'm glad he, through the compelling work of the Holy Spirit, continues to sand and polish the rough edges of our character. "He who began a good work in me," Philippians 1:6 promises, "will be faithful to complete it." I pray, in this new year, God will continue to draw us closer to himself, change us to be more like his Son, and use us in his service.

Happy New Year,

*Lori*