

Gym Class
“I Resolve”
January 8, 2012

Good morning everyone. It's great to see you all here this morning.

“If you keep drinking this stuff, you're going to die.”

About a year ago, as 2011 began, a very similar thought came to me, except that it didn't have anything to do with coffee. For me it had to do with my physical condition. “If you keep treating your body the way you're treating it ... if you don't lose some weight ... if you don't get into better shape ... you're going to die.”

Now, that thought didn't come to me in a dream like it did to the guy in the drama. It was more of a nagging under-the-surface

sensation brought on, as Ladell pointed out, by the milestone of the New Year. But, instead of dismissing it, as I had done on many previous occasions, I actually decided to do something about it. Oh, I wasn't worried about *literally* dying anytime soon but, as a guy on the 50-50 plan (that's where you're over 50 both in age and excess weight), I was clearly locked on to the glide-path of an earlier-than-necessary demise. And I was beginning to feel it physically from time to time: no energy, out-of-breath and every once-in-a-while a little "sensation" in my chest that wasn't quite right.

At the time, I really didn't like the idea of dieting so I decided to go investigate a local gym right around the corner from where I live. It didn't get off to a very promising start. The day I showed up no one was there and it was locked. My first thought was "it must be a sign from God that I'm not supposed to do

this” – I’m always looking for God’s work in my life. My second thought was to call and leave a message saying I’d like to learn more about what they had to offer.

So, I did that and later that day they called me back and, long story short, I joined that gym. As part of the sign-up deal you got a free introductory session with a physical trainer if you wanted it. I thought, well, it’s free and I’m kind of in a mess, so I’ll take them up on it, and looking back on it, I’d have to say that decision has revolutionized my life over the past year. I’ll talk more about Jonathan, my trainer, in a couple of weeks (actually, he’s going to come join me for an interview) but, bottom line, after that free session, I decided to say “yes” to the offer of a one month trial – working out with Jonathan three times a week – at a reduced cost.

After that month came to an end, I had a little momentum going so I decided to sign up for three more months at the regular cost. And then I decided to go for another three months and then another three months and then, in December it hit me: “wow, I’ve actually been doing this three times a week for *a whole year*.”

And, as a result of that new habit plus a decision (after much nagging by Jonathan) to start tracking calories ...

- I’m 25 pounds lighter
- I’ve lost about 5 inches on my waist
- I’ve gained muscle and lost fat. My body fat percentage is down from 30% to about 24%.
- And, now, because my BMI dropped from 32 to 28, I’m considered to be just “overweight” as opposed to “obese.” That’s what I call “victory.” Not really.

It's what I call a reminder that even though I've made a lot of progress, I'm not yet where I want – or need – to be.

- And, most importantly, I don't have that every-once-in-a-while chest thing going on.

Actually, that's *not* the most important thing. The most important thing is how, once again, God has shown up in my life through some seemingly mundane activity, this time using an experience of *physical transformation* to illustrate and reinforce for me principles of *spiritual transformation*. As I've gone through the process of seeing change in my body, it's given me insight on how God brings about changes in general in all of our lives.

And that's what I want to talk to you about over the next four weeks. I want to talk to you about four principles I've learned in my "gym

class.”

1. This morning I want to talk to you about the power of decision.
2. Next week I want to talk to you about the fruit of consistency and full-engagement.
3. In the third week, we’ll look at the value of expert advice and coaching (as I said, Jonathan will help with this one).
4. Then, we’ll close with a look at the positive payoff of pain (“Hurts So Good”).

These four principles have been huge in my physical transformation. They’re also huge in any other kind of personal transformation.

Speaking of huge ... if it’s on your list of New Year’s resolutions to get in shape physically, as part of this series, I want to encourage

you in that. In fact, I talked to the owners of the gym that I belong to, *Impact Fitness KC* (which is not the one I joined a year ago because Jonathan changed gyms last summer and I went with him) – I talked to the owners and asked if they would consider giving a special discount to anyone from NHCC who would join their gym. They were willing to do so but, as it turns out, their current New Year’s special is as good as anything they could offer to us directly.

Here’s the deal they’re offering.

- Sign-up fee waived through January.
- First month free.
- \$5 per month off of first year’s cost.

Basically, it adds up to about a hundred dollars in savings.

Currently, *Impact* is located on Vivion Road

in Riverside but next month they're opening a second location at 64th Street in the Tuileries Plaza. If you want more info, check out their website at www.impactfitkc.com. It's a great gym and it's run by a great bunch of people.

I should also add (in the interest of full-disclosure), that if you *do* sign up and you let them know that you're from NHCC, *I personally get a free month out of the deal*. I want to lay that out there, that you can actually help me continue my fitness journey and I would really appreciate it. And, you will too.

One more thing and then we'll get into today's topic. Whenever we do a series like this one or a movie series or the series based on LOST (TV show), sometimes people will scratch their head and say, "why are you doing this? Why are you trying to use

this kind of analogy to communicate spiritual truth? Why don't you just teach us what the Bible says? You don't need to sugarcoat things or give us a lot of fluff. You don't need to talk about physical transformation to communicate principles of spiritual transformation, do you?"

I suppose those are fair questions and observations ... but one of things that made Jesus so unique in his ministry was his ability to take the most mundane things of every day life – things that people were already very familiar with – and use them to teach about spiritual reality. He talked about things like ...

- fish and fishing
- farmers and farming
- brides and weddings
- bread and wine
- lost coins and lost sons

- hidden treasure and foolish investments
- fig trees and mustard seeds
- wedding parties and children's games.

And He did so, I think, to highlight the fact that God meets us not just in the “sacred places” (like church) but also in the ordinary everyday situations of life.

And I think if Jesus lived in this day and time He would probably use the analogy of working out at a gym to communicate spiritual truths. Actually, I’m positive He would because one of his greatest disciples, the Apostle Paul, often used the analogy of physical training in his letters. For instance ...

- In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he talks about the Christian life as a race we run to “get the prize” – an eternal crown that

will not tarnish or fade. The same metaphor shows up in his letter to the Philippians (a passage we'll be reading in just a few minutes).

- In his second letter to Timothy he mentions athletic training and competition *twice*, ending with the classic statement in chapter 4 verse 7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Anyway ... I don't want to belabor the point. I just think it's important to know that what we're doing in this series (or, at least, trying to do) does have a precedent that dates all the way back to our Founder and Leader. And it's part of why Christianity is practical and relevant to everyday life.

Foundations

Ok, with all of that as introduction I want to

look for a few minutes at three foundational truths about resolutions – those decisions we make to try and change our life in some way.

I'll tell you up front that these are very simple and very obvious and I'm a little bit worried that when you hear them, you're going to say, "Really, Rick? You think you need to remind us of those things?" But I *do* think we need to be reminded because sometimes the obvious is so obvious that we just overlook it, we take it for granted, and we miss out on the power that those truths can have in our lives.

And as I go through these, I want to ask you to keep in your mind one of those resolutions that Ladell asked about earlier, because, I know we've all had some form of resolution that came to us. Maybe it wasn't a conscious thought; maybe it was an impression you had where you felt, "man, I'd like to see this

change in my life." Maybe it was even a conviction from God, "Brother, you need to change *this* in your life." Maybe you even had a dream.

Get that in your mind; think about it.

OK, here's the first truth:

1. We are called by God to be more than what we are right now.

So, that little impression, that thought, that dream, matters. One of the most motivating things for me on my journey of physical transformation has been before and after pictures. I don't mean mine because I haven't taken any. I mean other people's pictures. I track everything I eat on this website called www.myfitnesspal.com and as part of that, people can blog or post how they are doing and sometimes they will post pictures of their progress. You see people

like this guy, who a year ago weighed 300 pounds and he's now down to 220 on his way to 175. It's stunning, the before and after. It's moving. There are times when I've looked at those pictures and I have tears. It's incredible.

But here's the deal: if you could somehow take a snapshot of your entire life today (not just your body, but your entire life) and then another snapshot a year from now, if you're a follower of Jesus there ought to be some kind of improvement between the two. There ought to be some kind of measurable, demonstrable change in your character or your body or your generosity or your attitude or your relationships or your ability to withstand hardship because God has called you to that kind of change and He has put his Spirit in you to make it possible. See, the idea of a Christ-follower who is not on a path of continuous improvement in at least some

area of their life is just unheard of in the New Testament.

For instance, Paul wrote to the Philippians

...

I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing:

*Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Philippians
3:12-14 (NLT)*

There's that race metaphor we talked about earlier.

To the Ephesian Christians, Paul described that continuous improvement in this way.

Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.
Ephesians 4:14-15 (NLT)

I could go on and on about this truth but I think you get the picture. God desires for his people to become more and more excellent in all areas of life. I think we need to remember that and be motivated by that ... especially when we are starting to see

progress in certain areas of our lives. It's very easy to think because we've grown and developed in one area that we're done; that we've arrived. But like Paul said, we have to press on to whatever is next in becoming more of who and what God has called us to be.

For me personally, I'm kind of wrestling with this right now, that means that even though I'm celebrating the progress I'm making and I've got these habits built that I'm going to continue in, I've also got to be asking "so, what's next in some other area of my life?"

Now, I think I should point out that one of the main reasons why Christians *don't* think this way, Christians *don't* do this, is that we don't fully understand God's grace and we mistake that as an excuse for *not* growing. Here's how that happens, see if you can relate to this:

1. We know, if we're followers of Jesus, that God loves us as we are and there is nothing we can do to earn His favor (we don't have to because it's already been given to us through what Jesus did on the cross). That's grace.
2. And because that's true we think, "because God loves so much the way I am, it's OK to *stay* the way I am." You ever have that thought? I have. I think it's fairly common among Christians.
3. Unfortunately, however, when we start thinking like that, we miss out on one of the greatest aspects of grace: its transformational power. Grace, as God intends it, is actually designed to give us the power to change. I'll say more about that shortly, but let's move on.

We are called by God to be more than what we are right now. That's the first truth.

Here's the second truth.

2. We have the God-given ability and responsibility to make resolutions.

I don't know if this has ever occurred to you but do you realize that of all God's creations, human beings have a unique gift in that we alone, as a species, are able to carefully analyze our life situation and decide "You know, I really don't like this" and then make a decision about how to change things?

We're the only ones. Animals don't do that. I mean, I have two dogs and they appear to be very smart but, in reality, they are instinct-driven creatures, not thought-driven creatures. They don't sit around contemplating their life and what they might do to change it: "Maybe I should get another

job, or a new owner. Maybe I should go to school. Maybe I should start working out.” Heck, I’d be happy if they just thought about not digging holes in my backyard, but they don’t even do that.

They don’t have that ability. Only humans – who are created in the image of a God, who is always assessing and always contemplating and always making decisions – only humans have that ability.

That’s why the Bible says that ...

The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception. Proverbs 14:8 (NIV)

The prudent person understands that they have received this great gift from God and they put it to use. They think, “Why is my life

the way it is right now? Do I like this? How might I go about improving my life? Maybe I should get another job. Maybe I should go to school and get my degree. Maybe I should start working out.” They give thought to their ways.

A foolish person, on the other hand, won't think like that because he or she is deceived about the impact of their own choices. If life isn't like they want, it's somebody else's fault – it's Obama's fault, it's the Tea Party's fault, it's the one percenters, it's the Wall Street occupiers, it's my wife, it's my spouse – it's always someone else's fault and they're just the victim. There's nothing they can do about it. The Bible says they're foolish because they don't realize the great gift they've been given in this ability and they don't accept the responsibility to use it – to say at some point: “Resolved: I *will* get another job. I *will* go to school. I *will* start working out.”

Now, what's fascinating about this (at least to me) is that sometimes Christians unintentionally fall into this particular strand of foolishness. Christians sometimes have a little bit of hesitancy about making resolutions because we're afraid it might sound like we're trying to do something in our own human effort; that somehow we're saying "I don't really need God; if I just try hard enough and buckle down, then I can accomplish this on my own."

And, I think a lot of us have heard sermons out of scripture, like James chapter 4 where it says ...

*Now listen, you who say,
"Today or tomorrow we will
go to this or that city, spend a
year there, carry on business
and make money." Why, you
do not even know what will*

happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:13-14 (NIV)

And we've heard that sermon and we've read that scripture and we don't want to fall into that trap, so we hesitate to make a resolution for fear that we'll be like the people he was talking to, and we don't want to do that. But that's not the point of James' passage at all. The point is in the very next verse.

Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4:15 (NIV)

I'm going to go back to college; I'm going to work out; I'm going to go to this town or that town; I'm going to start a business; I'm going to make that money. I have resolutions.

All James is saying is don't become arrogant about them. Don't think that because you make a resolution or a decision it's now all up to you. It's not.

As Paul put it:

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. II Thessalonians 1:11-12 (ESV)

Paul is saying, "I'm praying for you that God will fulfill your every resolve for good." That means that it's good to make resolutions. God approves of it. It also means that God enables us to "fulfill" those resolutions by his

power. That's what we are depending on. That's what we are looking for when we make resolutions as Christians. We are looking to Jesus who promised to be with us and help us.ⁱ

So, those are the first two "obvious" truths about resolutions.

- We are called by God to be more than who and what we are right now.
- We have the God-given ability and responsibility to make resolutions about our lives.

Here's the third. This is really, really obvious.

3. Changes in life rarely happen without changes in behavior.

Now, I do say "rarely" because sometimes God does break in to our lives and causes things to change. Sometimes he'll bring a

person into our life – maybe a friend, maybe an enemy; maybe a spouse or a child - and that brings about change. Sometimes God gives us a new job; sometimes he transfers us to another city and that brings about change. Sometimes God will reach into our life when we're praying and heal us instantly of an illness or disease, or maybe heal us emotionally. Sometimes God breaks in and changes your life. But, more often than not, God breaks into your life and mine with *an invitation* for us to change something in our behavior that will then bring about a change in our life.

There's a great example of this in the Old Testament. It's in the book of Haggai, which is not necessarily a book that we're very familiar with but it's a great story. The set up of it is that the nation of Israel has been in captivity in Babylon for seventy years, and there has been a decree issued by Cyrus of

Persia who has overtaken Babylon. And he says, "okay, all you Jewish people, you can go back to your homeland. You can move back and rebuild." So, a bunch of people make the trip back to Jerusalem, and when they get there, they find that everything is in total ruins. The walls of the city have been destroyed; the houses have been destroyed; the temple that Solomon built, this wonderful thing, has been destroyed as well. So, they start to work. They've got Nehemiah there, kind of coaching them on how to build the walls. They've got Ezra there, coaching them on how to build the temple. But, in the middle of all this, it's like they just kind of get fatigued. So, they get the walls done but then they kind of quit. They get discouraged and they look around and go, "man, we just better start building our own houses." So, according to scripture, they go to work, they make money, and they start building their houses. But then, there's this economic

calamity that comes, so they go to the prophet, Haggai, and they say, "what's the deal? We did God's will. We came back from Babylon. So why aren't things working out like we had hoped?" And Haggai said the word of the Lord came to him and this is what the Lord said:

Tell the people this: "Give careful thought to your ways (in other words, that's that same concept - think about your life; put this reasoning capacity to work for you). You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

Then God says, "Let me explain. Here's why: because you have put all of your resources

into building your own house instead of building My house!

Then he gives them the invitation, he says,

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD.

Haggai 1:5-8 (NIV)

If they wanted a change in the circumstances of their lives, God was saying, you need to make a change in your behavior. And here's the change you need to make.

It works the same way, almost always, for you and me. As you think about that resolution – that urge, that conviction, that

dream – I asked you to keep in mind, the only way it's going to happen, most likely, is if you change some behavior in your life. For me, it wasn't (and it isn't) enough to lament being out of shape and overweight and to earnestly desire for it to be different. Without also taking steps to change my behavior – like scheduling time to go to the gym, rearranging the budget to be able to pay for it, keeping track of everything I eat on my smartphone and my laptop – my resolution to “get in shape” is only wishful thinking.

As the old saying goes, “if you always do what you've always done you'll always get what you've always got.” As the other old saying goes, “insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

If you want something you have never had, you must do something you have never

done, most likely.

Making a Good Resolution

So, the real question is not so much what you want to see happen in your life as it is what kind of *behavior change* do you need to make to get the *life change* you want? That's the resolution you need to make.

So let's talk about what makes a good resolution. I want to give you four keys to making and keeping a good resolution. And, again, these are so simple and so obvious but sometimes the obvious gets overlooked.

1. Keep it real.

Statistics say that by February, most people will have already broken more than 90 percent of the resolutions they made. You know why? For most people, it's because

they make too many. It's kind of like the guy in the drama, remember he said, "I'm going to do this with my kids; I'm going to do this with my wife ... do this with my health ... do this with my money. They just get overwhelmed. They make too many resolutions. They're not living in reality. Better to limit yourself to one or two things even if all you know is to take one step in the right direction. Last year, at this point, if you'd have said, "Rick, here's what you're going to do, in December of next year, you're going to be doing this, you're going to be doing this, and you're going to be doing this," I would have had no clue. All I knew was, this is one thing I can do and I've got to do it.

Key #2. Whatever your resolution is - Make it personal.

And I say this because a lot of times people think, "my life is a mess because of somebody else," as I said, it's Obama, it's

the Tea Party, pick your person of the day. Remember what Jesus said? He said, "when you think about life, don't look at the speck in other people's eye and try to figure out that they're the mess ... you look at the log that's hanging out of your own eye. You take that log out first and then we'll talk about the speck." You start with *yourself*.

So, when you talk about making a resolution, don't make resolutions like, "I'm going to change the world," "I'm going to change my kids' school," "I'm going to change my wife." I'm talking about where you start. You start with you. You make it personal.

Years ago (and I've told this story before), when we first started thinking about starting a church, I was an Associate Pastor in the Parkville area. And, part of my motivation for wanting to start a church was because my church, where I was, they weren't doing it

right, as I defined "right." And I kind of had a little attitude about it. I had this guy kind of point blank me one day, he said, "Listen, it's not about them. It's about you. What are you doing? And even if they never do it "right," will you love them? God is telling you that you need to love those people." And I can remember being totally blown away by that. He said, "God is not going to do anything in your life until you think about you."

I think maybe some of us need to start there in our resolutions. Forget *them*; think about *you*.

Key #3. Look for leverage.

Ask yourself this question: What is the simplest behavioral change I could make that, if I did it over and over and over and over, would produce the highest-impacting

positive result in my life physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually (or whatever category you feel needs to be addressed)? Think about that question. In fact, I'm going to give you an assignment. That is your homework this weekend. Think about that question - What is the simplest behavioral change you could make, if you did it over and over and over, that would have the greatest leverage in your life, the greatest impact? In fact, for some of you, just making the time to think about that question will be the highest impacting thing you do all week. That's the highest leverage. You take a half hour to do that this week. That's the highest leverage thing you will do this week.

Think about leverage. And as you think about it, two suggestions:

- Years ago I heard a Pastor named John Maxwell, some of you know who he is.

He had this great statement about why people change. He said people change for one of three reasons or maybe all three of them together. He says they hurt enough that they have to; they receive enough that they are able to; or they learn enough that they want to. So, as you think about leverage, maybe that's a place to start. Where in your life are you hurting? Where have you received? Where have you already got momentum going in your life?

- The other place to look is: What "sharpens the saw" in your life? And some of you are familiar with this - Steven Covey wrote a book years ago called *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He had this analogy in it. He said when loggers do work on logs (in the old days when they did it by hand), they would do the work with a saw, then at some point they would take that saw

out of commission, take it over to the side and they'd sharpen it. And for a while it would not be used as a tool so they could take it over here and sharpen it. He said without sharpening it, they can't cut wood anymore. So, his point was, human beings need to do the same kind of thing. All of us are wanting to be doing and getting involved and making it happen, but we don't take the time to "sharpen the saw." And, for some of us, the highest leverage thing we could do would be to start putting the habit of "sharpening the saw" in our life. For you, it might mean to get more rest or more sleep. Or, take a vacation. Don't carry vacation over this year; use your vacation. It might mean you spend five minutes a day with God. You take five minutes and say, "God, this is the main thing that's bugging me today, and I

just want to lay it out there to you and ask you to be God.” I mean, every day, over and over and over. It might be the highest leverage thing you do this year. I think you get the idea.

So, keep it real, make it personal, look for leverage ... and finally:

4. Learn to “manage failure.”

I want to expand on this one for a bit because in my experience, this is probably the most important key. If you make a resolution or set a goal of any kind, at some point, you are going to fail and maybe many times over. The key, though is to learn how to manage that failure.

As most of you know, I’m a big fan of the KC

Royals. We've had a lot of failure in this town in years past. (But this year it's going to be different - we're going to the playoffs. You heard it here). Anyway, I chose that phrase "manage failure" after this week when I was listening to Sports Talk Radio and heard an interview with Dayton Moore (Royals GM). They were asking him, "you've got this great farm system and you've got these great players, but you've left some of these guys in the minor leagues. Why haven't you brought them up to the major leagues (because we really need help in the major leagues)? And he made this most interesting statement, he said, "A lot of these guys have been successes at every level they've come to. They've come to these levels and they've dominated. But, when you get in the major leagues, you don't dominate, you fail." He said, "we want these guys to experience failure in the minor leagues so they can learn to manage failure, because, when you

get to the major leagues, you've got to be able to manage failure." And I thought I'd heard him say it before, so I googled just to see, and it's amazing, over the years he's said the same thing over and over, "players have to manage failure in how they complete and how they prepare."ⁱⁱ And it makes sense when you realize the most successful baseball players, hitting wise, fail 70% of the time. Seven out of ten times they fail at what they're trying to do!

At one point they asked him about hiring a sports psychologist because the Royals had hired a psychologist a couple of years ago, and they asked him why, and this is what he said:

"As everybody knows who follows professional athletics, especially baseball, whoever manages failure the best is going to be successful, and you

need somebody on staff to keep things in perspective and help players manage failure," said Dayton Moore.ⁱⁱⁱ

Then, they asked him in another interview about this thing that the Royals do, it's called baseball chapel, I guess all the teams do this, but the Royals really promote this thing called baseball chapel. So they asked Dayton Moore why this is so important and he said:

One thing I've learned is that baseball players have been gifted to be athletes; but the only way they are able to use those gifts day in and day out and be successful is if they have the balance they need in their lives. This game beats you up terribly. It is a game of failure, and if you don't learn to manage failure, you won't be successful.

And then he added this statement which kind of got him in trouble, he said:

And the only way to manage failure, in my opinion, is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. ^{iv}

And it got him in trouble because, you know, you're supposed to keep business and faith separate ... but he's right. He's right. But not just about baseball. He's right about any kind of endeavor because failure is a part of the human condition.

Remember, Paul, that guy who wrote that bit about pressing on to perfection? He also wrote this:

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of

*whom I am the worst. I
Timothy 1:15 (NIV)*

Amazing isn't it? The guy who sets these highest resolutions also says, "I experience the greatest failures."

So how does he keep on going? How does he live with the tension of such high goals and also such a high failure rate, apparently, in his life? He understands grace. See grace, as we said before is exactly that God loves us as we are and there is nothing we can do to earn his favor. But that doesn't mean we don't try to improve. Instead, it means that failure, when we do try to improve, isn't the end of us. It's not death. It's not fatal. It's OK to fail because of grace. And that means that you can aim high. That's the transformational power of grace.

A simple example, I mentioned that I ate way too much over Christmas. I took my fitness pal and sat it on the shelf for seven days – gained five pounds. How do you gain five pounds in seven days? So, I got on the scale this week and I was like, “man, all that hard work I’ve done all this last year.” Wait, that’s not true. There’s grace! I’m still loved; I’m still accepted. Stop whining! Get back up and get going again. Get the myfitnesspal out and go back to the gym and get going!

See, we don’t need to be destroyed or discouraged by failure.

After all friends, our heritage as believers, quite frankly, is a bunch of failures. Moses committed murder, David committed adultery and had the woman's husband killed, Lot's daughters committed incest with him, Peter denied Jesus three times, Paul persecuted the church before he became a

Christian, James/John/Peter all fell asleep when Jesus asked them to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane the night he was betrayed.

And are you and I worse than them? I don't think so. Probably not. Yet all of these guys, they got back up again and they did great things for God (and then they fell back down again and then they got back up again then they fell back down...).

According to Vince Lombardi (a great football coach from many years ago), he said: "The real glory in life is being knocked to your knees and then coming back. That's real glory. That's the essence of it."

I think we need to remember that. I think it needs to be part of our strategy for managing failure.

And, I want to close with a quote which has meant so much to me in this. A couple of years ago, Jetta and I went to this retreat and we heard this guy speak and he made this statement, he said:

“Do you believe that the God of Jesus loves you beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity, that he loves you in the morning sun and in the evening rain, that he loves you when your intellect denies it, your emotions refuse it, and your whole being rejects it? Do you believe that God loves without condition or reservation and loves you this moment as you are and not as you should be? Do you believe that? You ought to believe it, because it’s true. Because *in this life*, you will never be as you should be.”

Don’t expect to be perfect. Don’t beat yourself up because you’re not perfect.

Manage failure. Live in grace. Get up and get going again. Resolve and keep on resolving.

Let's pray together:

God, thank you so much for the word that encourages us to be more than we are. And, God, some of us walked in this morning and we're a week in, and for some of us it's the food thing, it's the weight thing, it's the exercise thing, and we're already discouraged and we're throwing in the towel and saying, "well, I guess it's going to be another year of the same old stuff." And, it might be in our marriage; it might be with our kids; it might be with our parents, or our job. It's January 8, and we're already throwing in the towel because we failed this week. God, I pray that right in this moment, your Spirit would remind us

that there is no such thing as a perfect person in this world and it's okay because Jesus paid for our sins. And his grace means we can try again. God, give us the strength to know what you want us to do and then to actually try it again, to get back up and to get back up and to get back up.

We thank you for your love and your grace and your power. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ From John Piper, www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/lets-make-some-autumn-resolutions

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http://kansascity.royals.mlb.com/news/print.jsp?ymd=20090126&content_id=3772546&c_id=kc

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.peaksports.com/sports_insights_archives/aug_2008.html

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<http://www.sharingthevictory.com/vsItemDisplay.jsp?method=display&objectid=0B6089DD-07C1-4E41-AEE59F2F35B1C94F>