

January, 2012

## The New Year: An Important Question

In recent weeks many of us have focused on preparing for, and enjoying, the holidays. We have shopped, purchased, traveled, decorated, cooked, and sent greetings to people we seldom see.

Now we face the New Year, replete with plans for late night vigils, snacks, games, visiting, and making resolutions. The clock will strike midnight, the calendar will flip to a new number, and we will fall in bed exhausted.

Day one of the New Year will bring awareness of the same work, same health, same family needs, and the same concerns that temporarily faded in the glow of celebration. This sudden return to reality is often like a cold wind that cuts to the bone.

May I suggest a question to reframe our sense of purpose, renew our priorities, and re-invigorate our energies as God's person. Our answer to this question can bring greater joy than all the family celebrations of the week past. It can also provide greater gifts to our children and grandchildren than all we have purchased for them.

The question: **What am I passing on to the next generation that is of spiritual and eternal value?** What am I providing my children and my children's children to sustain them in all that life brings their way? What am I doing that helps give them an exalted purpose for all the New Years they will face? What am I leaving to those who watch how I live in the church, at work, in school, and in my community?

What attitudes, character, and example am I imprinting on receptive minds? Are those around me learning faith, hope, and love from me? Am I communicating and modeling a confident spiritual development that will show them the way in their own search for direction and meaning? When they confront illness, injury, broken hearts, broken relationships, or death will they take courage from the memory of how I lived?

We are familiar with the admonition of both Old Testament and New Testament (Deut. 4:9; Eph. 6:4) for fathers to teach, remind, train, and model right living for their children and grandchildren. But the admonition of Scripture is broader than that—it implies that each generation must take seriously our impact (personally and corporately) on succeeding generations in all ways.

“Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;  
his greatness no one can fathom.  
One generation will commend your works to another;  
they will tell of your mighty acts.  
They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.  
They will tell of the power of your awesome works,  
and I will proclaim your great deeds.  
They will celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”  
(Psalm 145:3-7)

*Amen!*— L. Donavon Owen

*A Personal Note from Larry Owen*

Ann and I came your way nearly 16 years ago (as of this coming March). Most of you know that I have for some time wanted to relinquish regular pulpit duties. I want to stay here and complete the writing that I have put aside too many years. Pulpit preaching is increasingly difficult for me. Your encouragement has kept me going longer than I intended! I will continue to teach classes as needed.

The time seems to be right to do this. Our transition team has done a great job of arranging for interim preaching until a permanent solution is found. I have been supported on a part-time basis for the past few years until this transition could be arranged. As of the end of 2011, I will no longer be employed by the church.

Thank you for your understanding and kind support over the years.