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Try This For One Year

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I'm a fan of New Year's resolutions. I realize most resolutions are made only to be broken. You could prove the point by visiting any gym anywhere in the world during the first week of January. And then visit that gym a month later.

They'll Be Gone in a Few Weeks

I discovered this truth decades ago when I first started working out on a regular basis. I was stunned the first week of January when I had to stand in line to get a dumbbell or sit on the leg curl bench or step on the treadmill. The place was jammed with people I had never seen.

As I shook my head in disbelief, a buddy approached and said, "Don't worry. They'll be gone in a in a few weeks." Sure enough, on February 1st, most of the new faces were gone and the regulars remained.

But notice I said, "Most." Every year a few people got tired of being fat and flabby and easily fatigued.

The Law of Human Gravity

I reached that point at 33. I had abused my body growing up and by the time I reached thirty I could hardly bend over without hurting my back. And so the proverbial law of human gravity—a person will continue down a destructive path until the pain of continuing exceeds the pain of changing—drove me to get in shape.

Over the years, whenever I get lazy or busy and quit working out, the pain returns and so I return to the gym.

When I'm Really Old — Like Forty

My commitment to the spiritual disciplines came about differently. While in seminary I once asked myself, "What would I have to do every day to become a man of God when I'm really old—like 40?"

The answer came quickly—I need to read the Word and pray daily. I knew then, as I know now, that spiritual disciplines aren't a secret formula for godliness. It was Richard J. Foster who noted that while a man can't put life in a seed and make it grow, he can place that seed in an environment where the life it possesses will grow. Similarly, the spiritual disciplines can't make a man or woman grow spiritually. However, they are the environment where the seed of God's grace will grow, producing maturity.

So I decided to make prayer and reading/meditating on Scripture a daily practice.

The Gospels Every Month

In April of 2012 I realized I had read many books about Jesus, and even written two about him, but I didn't know him very well. So I decided to read through the four Gospels every month for the rest of the year. The change in my life prompted me to continue the practice through all of 2013 and 2014. And now I'm going to keep following Jesus through the Gospels every month in the year ahead.

You might think reading the same story 33 times would get boring. It hasn't. You might think by now I would have answered any possible questions about the story. I haven't. In fact every week I gain new insights and formulate fresh questions. I feel I'm just getting to know Jesus. The result has transformed my life and ministry.