Get a spiritual connection

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As Christmas is over and the New Year will soon begin, we all know that it is time to start planning for our New Year's resolutions. Some of the most popular resolutions of the past years have been: quitting smoking, losing weight, getting in shape, and quitting drinking.

Isn't it interesting that the focus of these resolutions is pretty much the physical body? This isn't necessarily bad. Looking better, feeling better, and being healthier are good things.

But why is it that we seem to care so much about outward transformation, and so little about inward transformation?

Christians should understand that our inward, spiritual life is more important than what happens with our physical bodies. "For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Timothy 4: 8, ESV).

And while New Year's resolutions usually have to do with us exerting our will to accomplish some goal (which is probably why they usually fail), spiritual transformation comes not from our effort to change, but by connecting with the Spirit of God.

In our spiritual life, we have a choice. We can make a commitment to connect to what the Bible calls 'the flesh' or 'the sinful nature'. In Galatians chapter 5 Paul gives a long list of 'the works of the flesh' – the kinds of things we should expect to see in our lives if we live connected to our sinful nature. We're even warned that if we live this way, we will "not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5: 21, ESV).

The other choice we are given is to live connected to the Spirit. Then we find that what our life produces is good. Paul's list of the 'fruit of the Spirit' includes such virtues as love, peace, patience, and joy.

New Year's plans to get in shape or loose weight are good. Make them (and keep them) if you need to. But don't neglect the spiritual. Resolve this year to connect, and stay connected, to the Spirit.