

Preparation for S139 — At the Year's End

"I once listed all the good things I did over the past year, and then turned them into resolution form and backdated them. That was a good feeling."

The Rev. Robert Fulghum

We're about to enter a new year and this is the time when many people make resolutions.* Before doing that—or instead of doing that—we invite you to spend time looking back over the past year and focus on what has been positive in your life in 2004.

1. What are you proud of? Which accomplishments stand out?
2. What challenges did you overcome?
3. What positive changes did you make in your life? In the lives of others?
4. What were some valuable lessons you learned?
5. Who helped you make changes or overcome obstacles? Were you able to express your gratitude?
6. Could these changes or events of 2004 have good implications for your life in 2005? (Note: We aren't asking you to make resolutions, just to reflect on how things might be different going forward.)

* The Babylonians are usually credited with inventing the New Year's resolution about 4,000 years ago. For them, the New Year was a time to throw off, not gather, indulgences. It offered them a clean slate on which to declare—openly, in front of their fellow citizens—their pledge to perform a good deed during the upcoming year. "When you think about it, the Babylonian way was ingenious for its sheer simplicity," says John C. Norcross, a Pennsylvania psychologist and professor at the University of Scranton. "You do something to help society and at the same time help yourself. No fuss, no fear of failure. Just help your neighbor carry some straw or clear a ditch and feel good about yourself."