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Prioritizing The Sand?

Dr. T. D. Worthington

The story is told of a philosophy professor who once stood before his class with some items on the table in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up an empty Mason jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, about 2 inches in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was. Next, the professor then picked up a container of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was. Finally, the professor picked up a container of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, as he shook the jar the sand filled up everything else. He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous “Yes.”

*“Now,” said the professor, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the **very important things** – your relationship with God, your mate, your family – things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.*

*The pebbles are the **important things that matter – not very important like the larger stones** –but still important -- like your health, your job, your house, and your finances. The sand is everything else, the small stuff.”*

The professor continued, *“If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued “there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important.*

*Even if you put the **important pebbles** in first, you will still have to leave out at least one of the **very important rocks**. There is only one order in which they all will fit. Take care of the rocks first – the things that really matter –the very important stuff. Then prioritize the important pebbles next. After all, in the end, everything else is nothing more than sand.”*

There are a lot of things that might be considered sand? Personally, I would say that bitterness, vanity, wealth, and most television and sports programs might be described as sand. All of these things may not be necessarily bad, but they can easily rob you of the time you need to do the more important stuff.

So, now that we have all the sand out of the way, let’s address the large

stones; the things that should be most important in your life. Remember, these are the things that “*must*” find room in the jar if we are to have a rich and fulfilling life.

Your Personal Relationship With God

Many people have no relationship with God at all, and sometimes even Christians place their relationship with the Lord far down their list of daily priorities. It has been reduced to pebble status; in others it has been reduced to nothing more than sand. The problems with this are numerous. Our relationship with God is not just about going to heaven. Our faith inspires, leads, directs, and moves us to do, to overcome, to believe, and to accomplish. A healthy relationship with God is crucial in living life anywhere near its potential.

For the Christian, faithlessness is life at the edge of hopelessness. It is a life untethered from an assurance beyond the obvious, the seen and the tangible. It is our daily walk with God that takes us by the hand when the next step is

obscured and uncertain. An active faith in God is a bedrock of assurance upon which we can build. We will accomplish little of lasting value without this large stone in our life.

Your Personal Relationship With Others

After placing the rock of your relationship with God into the jar, next would come the relationship with your family, starting with your spouse; if married. How we treat those closest to us is more significant as a measure of our character than how we treat the stranger or the person we want something from.

I’ve seen families where parents treat their children worse than their friends and their spouses worse than strangers. Sometimes they treat their family worse than their pets. This ought not to be.

The quality of our relationships is a predictor of the quality of our lives because most of life’s meaning lies within the context of other people. That’s what our spiritual gifts are for.

Most of our gifts are designed to equip us to minister to others. It is in our relationships with others we find our ministry and fulfilment. When we lift up others, we are lifted in the process.

Your Relationship With Yourself

Self-government, dignity, and respect for yourself is important. I must respect the guy I face in the mirror every morning. I am not sure people know what self-respect is anymore. Wearing your britches down to the knees and women wearing tights as outside clothing just doesn’t make sense to me. This is a strange age we live in when individuals and families go on national television and display their family’s dirtiest secrets. Celebrities write tell-all autobiographies that open doors far too wide for dignity to have place.

The ability to like yourself and have a deep respect for who you are can revolutionize your life. People with dignity and character simply live differently than those without. They don’t do the same things. They don’t think the same way. They don’t need





the same things to make their life full. Research from Stanford found that 85% of our success is attitude, while the other 15% is ability. Attitude is about what you expect from yourself. Expect the best, and you'll get the best. Expect less, and that is likely what you will get.

Your Relationship With The World

My relationship with the world identifies what's important to me and how I prioritize my time, energy, and attention. The values we hold define the outer limit of what we're willing to tolerate and what we're not. They determine the context of what we're willing to pursue and what we won't. Our values, as they relate to the world, will act as anchors in storms which will keep us from drifting aimlessly to nowhere.

Well those are four rocks that certainly must be in your jar. Interestingly, they all involve relationships. I am sure you could think of others. When we live

lives disconnected from those things that truly matter, our lives start to ring hollow and empty. When, on the other hand, we live our lives dedicated to those things that matter most, a greater sense of happiness accompanies our earthly pilgrimage.

Travis, my younger son, was a bit of a prankster at Christmas. Sometimes, he would place a small gift inside 5-6 progressively larger boxes. Someone would inevitably tear into the wrapping, excited about the prospects waiting inside. But all they would initially find was an empty shell of a gift. All ribbon and wrapping; no substance. That's what life is like when we spend it in the pursuit of things that don't matter. The packaging may glitter and sparkle, but there's nothing inside but emptiness.

So, as we enter this New Year, look closely at the things that have filled the empty slots of your life. Take stock. Evaluate. We must learn to love and appreciate the weightier things of life. Find them. Recognize them. Embrace

them. And let them take you to a life that is deeply and richly rewarding, meaningful, and happy.

So, what matters most to you? What are the most important stones in your life, what might be represented by the smaller pebbles, and how much sand fills in the voids? Or, perhaps you have been guilty of putting the sand in first? Are things out of order? Are the rocks crying out for attention?

It has been said that, *"Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."*

Happy New Year!



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry over forty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries.

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No Assembly Required

For those of you with a child to buy for this past Christmas, you may have bought a toy for them with the box labeled “Assembly Required”. No doubt we have all seen this at one time or another, whether putting toys together under the Christmas tree or simply buying a small piece of “furniture in a box” for your home. We take the items out of the box and spread them out on the floor with the

instructions and list of needed tools. We line up the nuts and bolts in order of smallest to largest. We think we have it all together and assembly will be a breeze... then, we notice a part is missing or the pre-drilled holes don't measure up as easily as claimed. A ten minute project has now turned into a four hour hassle with an extra trip back to the store. We've all been there. Feelings of aggravation and disappointment soon follow.

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to put together the best mix we could think of for our listeners. As we begin a New Year and you face new tasks, tune-in your radio to *GoMix* for the encouragement you need to get things done and start the year off right!



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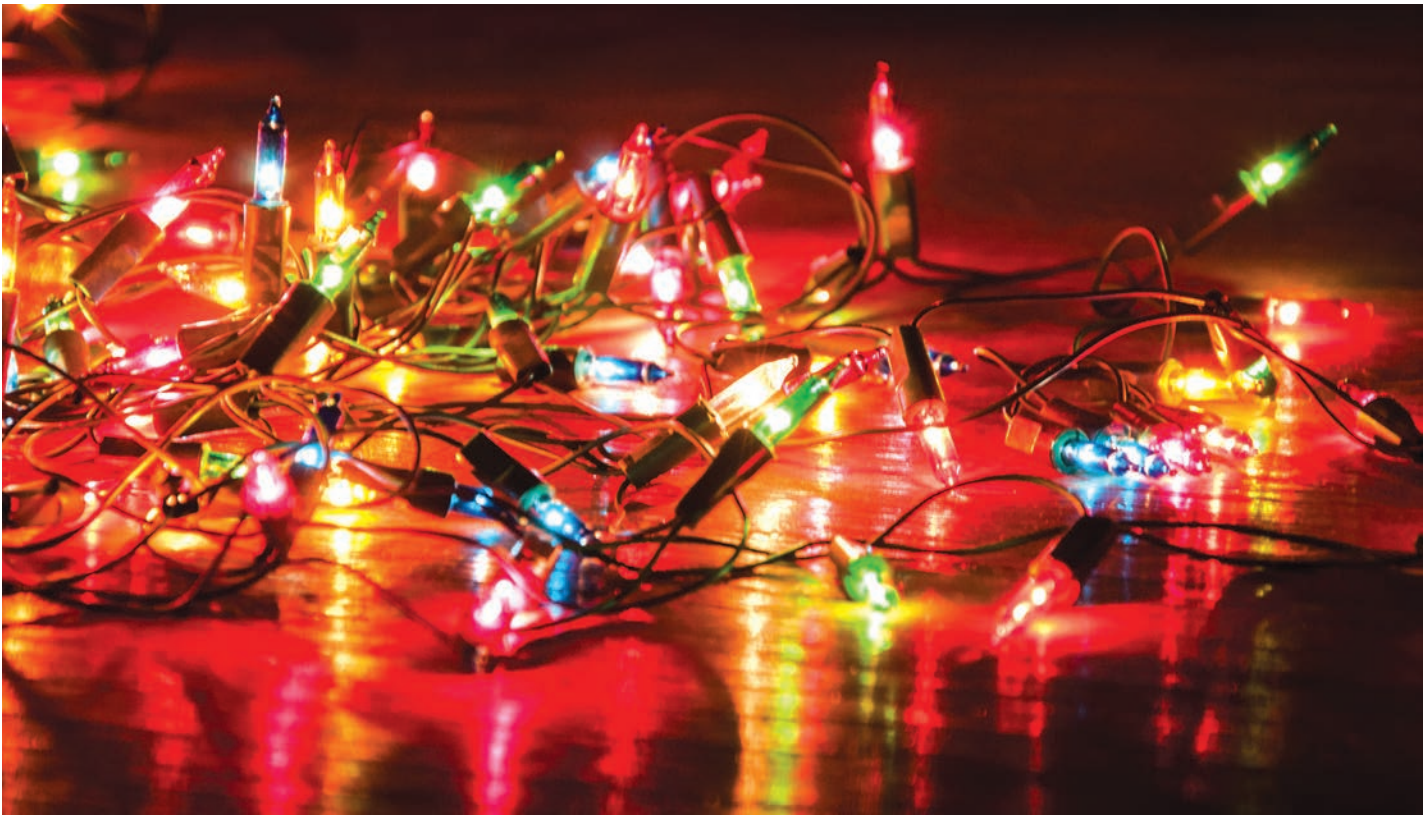
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How Bright Is Your Light?

As a new year begins, the Christmas decorations are now being taken down. Ornaments are back in the box, strands of lights are being rolled up, and the Christmas tree is out by the road. Now, let's rewind back in time to a month or so ago... The tree was fresh and new, we were reminiscing over ornaments made by our children and grandchildren, and we had that one strand of lights we couldn't get to work unless it was being held in just the right position. It was just one single bulb out of one hundred causing a problem... was it burnt out or did it have a bad connection with the power source? Either way, it interfered with the rest of the strand working properly.

As Christians, we are to be a light burning bright for Christ that all the world may see Him through us and bring Him glory. If we are like a burnt out lightbulb, we can also cause others to miss out on shining for Him. Just like that one bulb at the front of the strand, our actions can impact those around us, including generations to come. What if you really knew how many other lives you were influencing for (*or even against*) Christ? Maybe it is someone as close to you as your spouse or child, or maybe it's someone you have never even realized was watching you, like the cashier at

the gas station or person sitting across the waiting room from you at the doctor's office. Men and women in the Bible such as David, Daniel, Rahab, Esther, and Peter probably never imagined their choices (*good and bad*) would still be having an impact on others thousands of years after their deaths.

Likewise, maybe you are not burnt out, but you just don't have a good connection with the power source. God is our source of power. His Word tells us we can do all things through Him, to not be afraid of our enemies, to trust Him because He will provide for His own, and that He will work out all things together for our good and the good of His Kingdom. Once again, just as the one light on the Christmas tree has an impact on those around it, if we do not have a good connection (*relationship*) with our power source (*God*), all the different areas of our life will suffer as a result; our relationships with others, our finances, our careers, etc.

For the coming year, let's all check to see that our "lights" are working properly so we can shine bright for Him!



As I look back over the holidays, I realize there are many memories that are forever etched in my mind. This Christmas has been different than any Christmas I have ever experienced. I will never forget it.

The holiday season has always been enjoyable for me even though it is extremely busy. My husband and I always look forward to Christmas. This year, things were a little different. Because of the flood after hurricane Matthew, some of our usual Christmas traditions were put off or postponed until next year. We normally decorate during early November. Our home and the academy are always decked

out for Christmas. We reopened at the academy three weeks before Christmas break this year. There were so many things that needed to be done. A beautiful bulletin board about our Savior's birth, one gorgeous Christmas tree, and some small decorations would have to suffice. We had Christmas music playing in the halls, and the students and staff were all still excited about Christmas. It just wasn't quite the same. Sometimes the comfort and joy is a little more difficult to find.

On the home front, things were different, too. It was the second week in December, and our children were wondering if their father was

sick. It was so unlike him not to have his Christmas decorations up early. On Thanksgiving Day, he is usually putting up the finishing touches outside while we are making dinner on the inside. It just didn't happen this year. We had spent every minute working to repair the damage at the academy so we could get our students back into our building.

So what should we do about the house? Well, we debated about whether we should just put up a small tree in the den. Our neighbors were even asking, "When are the Worthingtons putting up their tree?" We always have a beautiful tree in our picture window.

We put lots of lights on it so it sparkles against the ornaments. People usually slow down to see our tree.

We thought briefly about not decorating at all this year. It was briefly, mind you. For us to consider not decorating at Christmas, we must have been exhausted. This was not like us at all.

Of course, we snapped out of it and realized that just as people were counting on us after Hurricane Matthew from the station and the academy, our family and friends were counting on us, too. We needed to decorate our home for the holidays because of the joy it brings our neighbors, but most of all because of the joy it brings our family. If the truth be told, decorating at Christmas brings my husband and me a lot of joy, too.

So we got busy and decorated as much as possible. I got to work making candy and trying to work out as many of our family traditions as we could in the time we had. No, we didn't work them all in, but we did have a wonderful Christmas.

Thankfully, one thing we never forgot, Jesus Christ's birthday was and is the most important part of Christmas. I wonder if people watch us at Christmas to see how Christians are going to celebrate the season. I wonder if we let them down at this time of year. I hope not! I wanted to be sure. Do we keep Christ in Christmas? Yes, I believe we did.

One way the academy kept Christ in Christmas was visiting the nursing

home. Many people asked, "Is the academy still going to bring gifts to the nursing home?" Of course we are! We can't let those dear people down! They look forward to our visit every year! We had to scale it down a bit to make things happen faster, but the residents at the nursing home were still excited. Their faces lit up as the children sang the Christmas carols about our Savior's birth. They grinned as we handed them gifts and told them Jesus loved them. I could see a smile on our Savior's face.



As you would expect, our church kept Christ in Christmas. We sang Christmas carols all through the month of December. We had wonderful sermons from our pulpit about our Savior, and we collected shoe boxes for the children overseas. Our members remembered the ones in our church who are less fortunate with small gifts which made the season more joyous for them. Our young people earned

money for the needy and for overseas missions. We also had a fellowship and people brought all kinds of goodies and a birthday cake for Jesus. We had gifts around the tree for the children to show them love at Christmas. To top it all off, we sang Happy Birthday to Jesus as we do every year. I think our Savior was pleased.

In our home, I believe we kept Christ in Christmas. The love our family has for each other cannot be explained except by Jesus. The Lord has blessed us so much. We gave each other a small token of our love. We enjoyed a bowl of chili and different goodies from the table. The light of the tree reminded us of the light that Jesus gives our home. No matter what comes our way, He is ever present.

To be honest, it has been a tough year. We have had a lot of challenges to face in our family and ministry. The comforting thing is the Lord has seen us through it all. If we had no gifts or lights, if we had no candy or treats, and if we had no traditions, one thing stands on its own! It would still be Christmas! We have Jesus, and we have each other. That is all that matters!

We can't wait to see what the New Year brings!

Happy New Year!



Mrs. Worthington has five children and ten grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



Mrs. Amber Sherman

You know, life can be odd sometimes. Being the daughter of the preacher, principal, and head teacher was odd, too. Being a daughter of God can be odd, as well. There are standards placed upon you which are not placed upon others. Some are rightfully placed on you by your parents or God because you do have a responsibility and accountability by being in such a position. Other standards and demands are placed upon you by others, and are often unjustified. I want to focus on the peculiar standards my parents and God have put upon me over the years, because they can have an uncanny similarity.

Did you know that as the preacher's kids you were supposed to behave? Wow! That's a new one for today. Now, Dad and Mom expected you to behave because you were their kid, not because of the position they held. They did explain, however, that our behavior reflected upon them. The choices we made did not just influence us. It would often come back on them. For instance, if we misbehaved, in church or elsewhere, it impacted the influence our dad had upon teaching others how children should be raised. That's why the Bible has strict standards upon the pastors and deacons who are to be allowed in the church (**1 Timothy**

3). If a man cannot maintain order in his own home, how is he supposed to take care of the church of God? He cannot. Our misconduct could have many ramifications upon the impact of his preaching.

It was the same being the principal and head teacher's kids. If they could not make us behave, how in the world were they going to bring order to the chaos a school could have? No, it was not an option for us to be uncontrollable or prone to temper tantrums. I recall only one flare of temper in our family from one of the kids. The result was enough to teach all five of us that

that was not a smart thing to do. I never even saw it, being one of the younger ones. But the legend of it passed down. Children learn a lot from observation, not dictation, as many parents choose today. Us adults learn the same way. Seeing someone pulled over with flashing lights causes us to heed the speed limit signs a little better from then on out. This was also why God required stoning for rebellious children in the Bible (**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**). God knew that rebellion in the whole nation could be started or ended by one child or person. When the kids in that day saw a rare example of a rebellious child stoned, it tended to straighten their “chemicals” and “hormones” out real quick.

Now, I said being a child of God can be odd sometimes. It can be odd in the same ways I mentioned above with my parents. My misbehavior reflects upon God, though He is not the one behaving badly. Others look to Christians to see if they can believe what God says. Just like others looked to us kids to see if my parents knew what they were talking about. You see, once you get saved, asking Jesus Christ to forgive you and save you from your sins, you become a part of God’s family. He adopts you and becomes your Heavenly Father. It is an awesome place of belonging, love, and permanency. It does come with new standards which will set you apart. The Bible gives us a balance of the benefits and responsibilities which come with being God’s child.

I like being God’s child. God is a wonderful God, and an even better Father. He has a sense of humor with me, yet He has standards He



expects me to uphold. God loves and comforts me, as well as guiding or chastening me when I stray. He forgives me when I fail, and He helps me up after I stumble. Yet, God expects me to try to get up and not look to be carried. He expects me to focus on the good in life and not have pity parties. He expects me to talk like a child of His should talk. That doesn’t just mean cutting out the cuss words. God has a level of living He expects from His children. There are certain attitudes and words He will call you on, or at least He does me. He also has boundaries He doesn’t like His children to cross. Can I tell you an attitude and two words He really, really does not like to hear from me?

God doesn’t like for me to say “*I can’t*.” Now, my parents did not like these words either, and if you ever said it, you could get in big trouble. I thought I had learned that lesson. My life has often had to be defined by a determined spirit of “*I can*.”

I obeyed Him and claimed, “*I can do all things through Christ*,” when I was put on bed rest. I claimed it when I had two infant babies and we all three cried all day some days. I claimed it when I collapsed by the changing table in tears over the demands of these little ones. I had a great family, but they had to work. I had a wonderful husband, but he had to work. Many nights he got little sleep, too. I was on my own for most hours of most days, other than when my husband could help. But he needed sleep to function at work, so even the night hours often fell on me. When three days only provided three hours of sleep, I claimed “*I can do all things through Christ*.” I began to be thankful for any minute of sleep I could get rather than to be angry over only getting two minutes before it was time to help another hungry infant. God was my strength and shield, and He sent help just when I couldn’t



make it any longer. Other times, when no help could come, He gave me strength when none should have been found.

I think God was pleased during these times with my choosing of “I can.” But this article is not about those times. It is about a period when I chose “I can’t.” And HE was very displeased with me.

You see, I had a third baby when our twins were nineteen and one-half months old. The whole time I was pregnant we were trying to sell our house. At first, I kept saying we had to move when I was in the four to six month range or wait until the baby was six months old. I would say I could not handle moving when being big and pregnant or with having a newborn. I originally said it simply because I was overwhelmed with the thought. Then it progressed to a determined attitude of when we “would not” move. I began to be absolute and unyielding, all supported with “I can’t.”

Well, God doesn’t like me to say “I can’t.” The very day we brought our newborn son home, we got two

calls to show the house in a couple of days. When our son was one week old, my husband showed our home to a lovely lady. Once it was done, I asked him how it had gone and he said, “*It went good, I think. There’s just one problem. We need to find a place to live.*” He turned to me with a smile and a paper of agreement. My jaw dropped. We went to our knees, after the shock wore off, and thanked the Lord for His goodness and provision. The very time we had said we couldn’t sell the house was when God said yes.

I was appropriately rebuked, and now I knew better than to say “I can’t” to moving. I was afraid of what He would do next if I said it anymore. I talked to the Lord and said, “*Ok, Lord. If this is to be so, I need Your help. I cannot do this without you. I have three children under the age of two, and one is a newborn.*” It’s what He wanted all along. I rested for three weeks after having a baby, then got busy packing for the next five weeks to move. When my husband wasn’t at work, he was busy with the details and work needed on our new home. We moved the day our youngest

son turned eight weeks old. I was asked later how I had done it. They weren’t sure they could have packed and moved with a newborn. With a smile I said, “*I don’t know either. It’s only through God that I was able.*”

God loves me too much to let me succumb to the attitude of “I can’t.” He knew if I gave in to it then, it would begin to take over much of my life. He also knows the plans He has for me, plans that cannot happen if I face challenges with “I can’t.” My Heavenly Father saw an attitude that needed adjusting, and He adjusted it. I could have fought it and been determined to fail, and God would not have controlled me to act differently. I had to choose to accept His rebuke and adjust my life and attitude accordingly. We must remember that is what having a God is about. Adjusting ourselves to His demands, not making Him fit our mold. God is God. It is His universe, and if you do not like it, go make your own. Until then, acknowledge His Lordship over this earth and over your life. That is when true peace will enter your life.

Life is not always easy. My days are almost always challenging. I am very careful now not to say “I can’t.” God doesn’t like me to say “I can’t” because He has made it so I can always say “I can” with Him.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Philippians 4:13



Mrs. Amber Sherman is a homemaker and mother of three. She and her husband reside in Snow Hill, NC.

And Finally...



A New Year...

This may sound funny, but I am going to try to remember people's first names better in 2017. I come in contact with a lot of people in my career, and to be quite honest, I usually don't even pay attention to their name unless I have had interactions with them several times. I noticed in December this was something I needed to do better, and I have already started working on it. I would also like to read at least 12 books this year and learn how to play chess.

R. A.

I have a small side business I started last year that I have not really made a priority. As a result, it has not been very successful. This year, I am going to develop an overall goal and a monthly breakdown plan for what I need to do to reach that goal. Obviously, much work will then follow. It's time to stop dreaming and start doing!

P. D.

I recently realized just how much time I spend watching television, looking at Facebook and Pinterest, and being generally unproductive. Although I do work hard for the most part, and everyone takes breaks sometimes, those 1 to 2 or even 3 hours of television and other electronics every night add up to a lot of wasted hours on mindless entertainment. If I saved 3 hours every day, that's over 20 hours a week of time to invest on things like family, work, self-improvement, and my relationship with God. 20 hours is pretty close to a full day! Over 1 year, 3 hours a day is 45.5 out of 365 days. Talk about putting things in perspective!

W. B.

As 2016 comes to an end, I often stop and reminisce on all the blessings I've had. Not just this year, but in my lifetime. Sometimes we get so fixed on our current situation that we fail to praise God for all He has already done for us. 2016 may not have been an easy year for you. You may have lost things, but don't let it diminish your faith. Remain faithful. God will surely see you through and turn it around for your good! He always does. I try to avoid making New Year resolutions, because I'll be honest, I never keep them! However, this year I'm going to make a daily effort to work on spending more time with my family, eating healthier, volunteering and donating more, and cutting soda out of my diet.

P. W.

“Make Up Your Own Holiday”

We'd like your help for an upcoming edition of “And Finally...”

March 26, 2017, is Make Up Your Own Holiday Day!

Write to us in 150 words or less and tell us about a holiday you would like to invent. The deadline for submission is January 15th, 2017.

You can send an email to: Attn: PathPointe
wago@gomixradio.org

Or write to: Pathway Ministries

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