

Small Group Material

My One Word (2012) Series

Week #1 “Looking Backwards”

Overview Of The My One Word Series

Americans celebrate the New Year by dropping a ball at midnight in New York City. A million people gather for the event and billions more watch on TV. Most of us wake up the next day and make a list of the things we want to change about ourselves this year. Changes like losing weight, quitting smoking and getting out of debt. A new year means a new start. It's the perfect chance to get serious about our desire to change. But almost no one commits to these changes and most have given up on them completely within a month. We just keep dropping the ball. What if you don't need a list of sweeping promises? What if your hope to change is just one word away? What if you actually did something about one thing instead of nothing about everything?

Bottom Line Week #1

It is better to do something about one thing than nothing about everything.

Key Scripture

Psalm 90:9-17 (NIV)

9 All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. **10** Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. **11** If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. **12** Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

13 Relent, LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. **14** Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. **15** Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.

17 May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us - yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalm 119:1-8 (NIV)

1 Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. **2** Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart— **3** they do no wrong but follow his ways. **4** You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. **5** Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! **6** Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. **7** I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. **8** I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

Insight, Reflection & Discussion Questions

Happy New Year! There is something about a new year that gives us hope and makes us believe that we can actually be a better person tomorrow than we are today. As the calendar changes, we hope we can too. With all the gusto in the world, we make resolutions to improve our ways by tackling our bad habits, destructive behaviors and negative thoughts. These vows sound good, and look perfect on paper, but there is a problem; they seldom work.

With such a predictable cycle playing out year after year, one has no choice but to wonder if transformation can truly occur. We want to reassure you that change is indeed possible. There is a better way and it comes in the form of a single word. The key is to get rid of the list of things you hate about yourself and replace it with a vision. Welcome to the My One Word journey. Since 2007, this project has helped individuals move beyond broken promises of the past towards a brighter hope of who God intends them to be. The challenge is simple: lose the long list of resolutions you want to make this year and instead pick ONE WORD. This process provides clarity by taking all of your big plans for life change and narrowing them down into a single thing.

For those who have been part of this experiment before, we hope God continues to form your character through your new word as He has done in years past. To those who are hearing about this project for the very first time, we invite you to join us and pick one word for 2012. Don't worry if a word doesn't come to mind right away. The journey doesn't begin until February. We encourage you to use the month of January to reflect and pray about the areas where growth needs to take place in your character. We are really excited about what 2012 holds for you and your One Word.

The heart behind this project is helping you plot a course for growth by narrowing your focus to a single word that will define you in the upcoming year. Now be honest for a moment...does that last sentence intimidate you and leave you feeling defeated already? After all, in your mind there are numerous bad habits, character flaws and struggles that demand your attention. However, do not be overwhelmed and simply give up. It is better to do something about one thing than nothing about everything.

With these apprehensions in mind, we want you to spend the first week by calming your nerves and helping you choose your word for 2012. The first step towards growth is to take inventory on the past year and see where God has moved in your life. Before moving forward, one must look backwards.

ENGAGE

- **If you could sum up 2011 with one word, what word would you choose? What makes you pick the word that you do?**
- **For those who picked a word for 2011, what was your word? How did God shape, form and stretch you through this word? In what ways did God use this experience to shape you in ways you weren't expecting?**

- **Do you feel that in the past year you have progressed or regressed in your relationship with Christ? What shortcomings have you observed in your character over the past year?**
- **What emotions and baggage are you bringing into the New Year?**
- **Read Psalm 119:5. How does this passage speak to the person who is wondering why it feels like God hasn't done anything in their life?**
- **Read Psalm 90:9-17. What does it mean for one to 'number their days?' What effect does this type of mentality have on developing spiritual focus?**
- **If someone were to ask what God had taught you this past year, how would you answer them? If you were honest, would your response be just lip service?**
- **What are your fears about picking a single word to define you in 2012?**
- **How would you describe the person you want to be at the end of 2012? What are some characteristics that would define this person?**
- **Which word(s) that you are considering seem to propel you forward towards the hope of future change?**