

Small Group Material

My One Word (2012) Series

Week #3 "Gathering Stones"

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 #3

Remaining and remembering determines the success of your word.

Key Scripture

Philippians 1:3-11 (NIV)

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Genesis 22:14 (NIV)

14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 (NIV)

10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that

thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

Joshua 4:19-24 (NIV)

19 On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. 20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. 21 He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' 22 tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' 23 For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea[b] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

Insight, Reflection & Discussion Questions

In almost every arena of life there are ways and means which allow us to track the progress of our growth: family height chart, school report cards, business trends, etc. They enable you to see where you've been. Yet, markers or measurements are vague at best when it comes to our own spiritual growth. Christians set themselves up to be disappointed because they make no room for what a walk of faith actually looks like. Most of us fail to take the time to establish means of measurement and follow up with how we are doing.

Your One Word serves as a way to see contrasts in your character. We all want to move from Point A to Point Z in no time flat. What we fail to realize is there are numerous steps along the way which demand our attention. Setting short-term goals creates opportunities to celebrate the small successes which lay the groundwork for deeper change. *A step, no matter how small, is movement and movement is growth.* The truth is what gets measured gets done. When you write down these short-term goals and journal your progress, you begin to witness how far you've come from where you started.

The idea is that you keep your life heading into the promise of the future. The place where there is real hope for change instead of being motivated by regret and the fear of making the same mistakes. All of this merely places us in a posture for Christ to form our character. Your One Word provides a lens through which to see your progress.

However, we cannot stop there. We have to fight our natural tendency to forget. God will move as a result of your word, yet if you don't remember His faithfulness, the power of your word will be lost. The forgetfulness strain is part of our DNA. For most of us, there was a time in our lives when we thought we could never forget what God has done. The moment we accepted the cross, the redemption of past hurts, how God brought us through situations where all hope seemed lost. But, somehow we did forget. Okay, maybe "forget" is

not the right word. After the euphoria passes and life gets back to 'normal,' these moments are quickly forgotten. Then when our faith gets stale or we are faced with another challenging situation we find ourselves asking God, "Where are you? Are you going to come through? What have you done for me lately?"

All of humanity suffers from short-term memory loss. This is nothing new. It has always been this way and one only need to open up the Old Testament to see this is true. There is a reoccurring theme which threads itself throughout the story of God. It is one of God's faithfulness and pursuit followed almost instantaneously by our forgetfulness, fear and disobedience. Sadly, sometimes the stories seem like a sequel of disobedience because the events which unfold are almost identical to one another. God does something incredible and the Israelites rejoice in His faithfulness. Things return to normal and they forget. It sounds horrible. How could you forget God doing something miraculous in your life? The sad truth is that it happens all the time. We forget the miracle of salvation. We forget the miracle of redemption. We forget the miracle of provision. We forget the miracle of the moment. And if we are not careful and don't do something to counteract the normal pace of life, we will forget the miracle of the life change we hoped for and in fact, have experienced.

To counteract our tendency to forget, God commands us to grab a few stones. The erecting of altars is a practice seen throughout the pages of the Old Testament. From the Israelites constructing one after crossing the Red Sea to Abraham giving thanks to God for providing another sacrifice and sparing his son Isaac, people placed rocks on top of each other so they would remember that at this point and time they experienced firsthand God's faithfulness and provision. The altar served as a physical reminder of what God had done in their lives. The point of the rocks is simple. They are to take the rocks, stack them up and remember. By making an altar, they will never forget what has happened and what God did. The same holds true with you. You are going to where you have never been before and you need to take some drastic measures to remember your progress.

Over the past weeks, you've learned that God's work, the growth that He demands of you, will push you to extremes. . Your word must move from conflict to celebration. The struggle may never completely go away, but instead of focusing on the hard moments, this month we want you to acknowledge those times when you got things right and where you lived up to the image behind your word.

This is not just about patting yourself on the back. It's to make sure these moments don't disappear into thin air. If you fail to celebrate, it will be easy to fall into the trap of forgetfulness. Your moments of victory, growth and maturity will come and go and when they're gone they could be lost forever

ENGAGE

- **How will you define progress in the formation of your character going into the future?**

- **Read Philippians 1:3-11. When you look at the progress that has occurred through your One Word journey, do you focus on the places where you fall short or the areas where growth has taken place? Why does this tend to be your default perspective?**
- **Over the course of the upcoming week, pay attention to how you react in situations where living out your One Word is tested. In those areas where you fall short and fail to live out your One Word, begin to identify different ways you can respond to these circumstances. What would growth look like in these areas where you are tested?**
- **What do you believe is the next step you need to take in living out your One Word? What actions or changes do you need to put into place to make this change a reality?**
- **Read Genesis 22:14 and Joshua 4:19-24. Why are we as humans so prone to forget God's faithfulness to us?**
- **Read Deuteronomy 8:10-18. How is the art of remembrance critical for our walk with God?**
- **What is your One Word for 2012? Why did you pick this word? What type of growth are you hoping to see as a result of focusing on this word? What steps are you putting in place to remember your Word?**