

Course: Spiritual Exercises

Lesson #5

Title: “My One-Word Resolution” or “My One Word”

## **“MY ONE-WORD RESOLUTION” or “MY ONE WORD”**

### **Part 1: The Spiritual Exercise of Making Holy Resolutions & Introduction to “My One-Word Resolution”**

#### **“Spiritual Exercises”**

This is Lesson 5 of a series we are calling “Spiritual Exercises.” So, let’s take just a moment here to remind ourselves again of what a ‘spiritual exercise’ is. We’ve been in this study for several weeks now, and we’ve had some interruptions, so it will do us good just to remind ourselves again what a “spiritual exercise” is to help keep us on point and in focus.

**What is a “spiritual exercise”?** A ‘spiritual exercise’ is any one of those activities or exercises that we do to exercise our obedience to God and discipleship after Jesus Christ. A ‘spiritual exercise’ is an activity that we practice and perform to follow Jesus Christ, obey Jesus Christ, serve Jesus Christ, and become more like Jesus Christ – which is always our ultimate purpose and aim.

A ‘spiritual exercise’ is any one of those activities that we practice that express and live out the lifestyle of truly being a Christian, a born-again child of God, and a transformed believer in Christ.

‘Spiritual exercises’ are those same activities and exercises that are sometimes also called ‘spiritual disciplines,’ ‘holy habits,’ or ‘habits of grace.’

And so, let’s be clear here: we’re not just talking about rote rituals or legalistic rules you make for yourself or for someone else – we are talking about the activities that express

and exercise the real-alive, born-again, living, loving, and longing relationship of eternal life that we have with Jesus Christ. **It is the expression and exercise of the spiritual life and fellowship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, that the apostle John wrote about in his opening of 1 John, chapter 1.1-4:**

What was from the beginning,  
what we have heard,  
what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have observed  
and have touched with our hands,  
concerning the Word of life—  
<sup>2</sup> that life was revealed,  
and we have seen it  
and we testify and declare to you  
the eternal life that was with the Father  
and was revealed to us—  
<sup>3</sup> what we have seen and heard  
we also declare to you,  
*so that you may have fellowship along with us;  
and indeed our fellowship is with the Father  
and with His Son Jesus Christ.*  
<sup>4</sup> We are writing these things  
so that our joy may be complete.

THAT is what spiritual exercises are: *“...so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

**Some “spiritual exercises” we have previously discussed...**

And so, since the beginning of this course:

- ▶ we have studied lessons on reading the Scriptures daily, regularly, and comprehensively
- ▶ we have studied lessons on adopting and following Bible-reading plans and schedules
- ▶ we have studied lessons on how to read the Word of God for the doctrinal and practical truths and lessons God means for us to learn, take away from our reading, and apply to the ways we live our lives
- ▶ we have studied lessons on prayer and proposed prayer prompters that we must pray for every day taken from Jesus' Disciples' Model Prayer [usually called the Lord's Prayer].

### **Another “spiritual exercise” – “MY ONE WORD”**

What I want to do now is turn our attention and interest to another spiritual exercise. I pray and hope this lesson will encourage you to begin practicing it. I have personally practiced this spiritual exercise consistently for the past seven years and have found it to be one of the most beneficial and enriching spiritual exercises I have practiced over the course of my Christian life and my walk with the Lord.

I am calling this spiritual exercise, “MY ONE-WORD RESOLUTION,” or to shorten it up by one word, “MY ONE WORD.” I’ll be using both names as we go through this spiritual exercise. So, just by the first title that I have given you, you have deduced that it has something to do with resolutions, **making holy resolutions**. And you are right about that.

### **But, it is more than just a usual “New Year’s Resolution”**

However, please don’t think that this applies just to what we usually call “New Year’s Resolutions,” although the turn and beginning of a new year is a good time to think about

it and begin exercising it. The turning of a new year gives us a built-in opportunity and makes it more conducive to consider this spiritual exercise of **making holy resolutions**.

There is just something about the turning of a new year, the beginning of a new season of time that makes us stop and take stock and evaluate the year that has past and how we did in it.

- Did we grow ... or not?
- Did we make spiritual progress ... or backslide?
- Did we “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD” [Hosea 6.3] ... or did we lapse into indifference?

There is something about a new beginning of time that sparks our interest in making new beginnings and gives us inspiration and hope that we can.

### **But not just at ‘New Year’s’ – it’s a lifestyle**

But, the beginning of a new year certainly should not be the only time of our lives when we think about making holy resolutions to be better than we have been – and better than we are in the present moment – and more and more like Jesus Christ!

**Making holy resolutions is a spiritual exercise and a holy lifestyle. In fact, making holy resolutions is just another word for another word that may be more common to us: the word ‘repentance.’** Making holy resolutions is practicing the spiritual exercise of repentance: reflecting on the ways we are, and the ways we are living, and having the holy desire and resolution to change the ways we are for a life that is more like Christ and more pleasing to God ... **more expressive of the life of Christ living in us [Galatians 2.20]!**

And so, before I even begin the story of how I discovered this practice of making “One-Word Resolutions,” let’s address this practice of **making holy resolutions** and why it is an essential spiritual exercise.

### **Do you ‘do resolutions’?**

Believe it or not, I actually had a brother come up to me after I preached this spiritual exercise and was leading my church to adopt it and practice it, and he just kind of smirked at me and said, “I don’t do resolutions.” Like he was kind of above the need to make resolutions or some such attitude. To be honest with you, I was so stunned and taken aback by that statement that I didn’t even know how to respond. However, I thought about it later, and given the history of this brother, he actually may have thought he was quite OK the way he was, and that he didn’t need to improve on anything he was or was doing. He may have actually thought that he didn’t know anything he was doing that he could do better. I knew him well, and I knew better, but he may have had that impression of himself.

### **We’re not talking about merely getting caught up in the impulse of a season...**

Now, if he was saying that he didn’t get caught up in the emotion and impulse of making New Year’s Resolutions, then that may have been understandable. I’m sure there is a LOT of impulsive, insincere, superficial New Year’s Resolution-making that goes on in the wave and emotion of the moment ... resolutions that are not serious and the resolution-makers never really intend and are not convicted and intentional about making a life-changing commitment to follow through and keep them.

But, what he said is, “I don’t do resolutions.”

So, let me ask you: “Do you do resolutions ... do you make resolutions?” Or another way to present the challenge is: “Do you repent?” Do you ever examine yourself, consider

your ways, evaluate and take stock of your life, and say, “I need to repent of this, change my ways, and resolve and commit to obeying God in the ways that He commands and that please Him”? Do you ever change your ways – by turning away from something that is sin, and evil, and displeasing to God, and turn to commit to a righteous way of living?

So, we may condense and distill what a holy resolution is by simply saying: **A holy resolution is your spiritual conviction and holy commitment to change your ways to become more like Christ.**

When I think of making holy resolutions, my mind invariably goes to Psalm 119.59-60 HCSB:

I thought about my ways and turned my steps back to Your decrees [or ‘testimonies’]. <sup>60</sup> I hurried, not hesitating to keep Your commands.

What David is describing here is the spiritual exercise of thinking on, evaluating, every facet of his life from God’s viewpoint and pleasure, and when he sees things that are wrong and amiss, he immediately resolves to correct it according to what he reads in God’s Word.

Pastor Charles Spurgeon wrote this excellent and pointed brief commentary on this verse in his splendid work The Treasury of David:

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” While studying the Word, he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the Word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his Father.

Consideration is the commencement of conversion: first we think and then we turn. When the mind repents of ill ways the feet are soon led into good ways; but there will be no repenting until there is deep, earnest thought.

Many men are averse to thought of any kind, and as to thought upon their ways, they cannot endure it, for their ways will not bear thinking of. David's ways had not been all that he could have wished them to be, and so his thoughts were sobered over with the pale cast of regret; but he did not end with idle lamentations, he set about a practical amendment; he turned and returned, he sought the testimonies of the LORD, and hastened to enjoy once more the conscious favor of his heavenly Friend.

Action without thought is folly, and thought without action is sloth: to think carefully and then to act promptly is a happy combination. He had entreated for renewed fellowship, and now he proved the genuineness of his desire by renewed obedience.

If we are in the dark, and mourn an absent God, our wisest method will be not so much to think upon our sorrows as upon our ways: though we cannot turn the course of Providence, we can turn the way of our walking, and this will soon mend matters.

If we can get our feet right as to holy walking, we shall soon get our hearts right as to happy living. God will turn to His saints when they turn to Him; yea, He has already favored them with the light of His face when they begin to think and turn.”

So, that is what I'm calling us to do when I talk about the spiritual exercise of **making holy resolutions**: I'm talking about the Scriptural practice of repentance from our sins

and turning back to live and walk in ways of holy obedience to God and His Word. I'm talking about the lifestyle of examining our ways before God by the standard and rule of His Word, and then conforming our lives more to Christ in swift obedience and holy resolution.

Again, Psalm 119.59-60:

I thought about my ways and turned my steps back to Your decrees. <sup>60</sup> I hurried, not hesitating to keep Your commands.

By the way, before we leave Psalm 119 and return to the spiritual exercise of "One-Word Resolution" or "My One Word," if you want to know how to **make holy resolutions** in keeping with the Word of God, then read Psalm 119. Mark all the times David makes holy resolutions with the words "I will..." or any of the numerous resolutions he makes just in Psalm 119 by declaring his intentions and then doing them. Psalm 119 is filled with scores of holy resolution prompts.

Let me just give you a brief sampler. If you want to know what a holy resolution looks like and sounds like, listen to this [...and I'm just going to start at the beginning of Psalm 119 and go a few verses to show you how you, too, can make holy resolutions just by allowing David here to inspire you].

From Psalm 119:

verse 5: Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

verse 7: I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules!

verse 8: I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

verse 10: With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

verse 11: I have stored up your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

verse 14: In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

verse 15: I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

verse 16: I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

There are 176 verses in Psalm 119, and every single one can be viewed as a holy resolution in one form or another. No statement in these 176 verses about The Word of God can be viewed as FYI only. Every expression is not just an indicative ... every expression is also an imperative.

All of these resolutions are not only good holy resolutions, but they are also holy resolutions that should be the normal spiritual exercises of every believer

**Now, let me return to my personal story of how I discovered this spiritual exercise of “My One Word” and began to practice it as a resolution-making lifestyle...**

**How I discovered and began practicing the “My One Word” spiritual exercise**

I first got started with this spiritual exercise of making “My One-Word Resolutions” when I came across a book by the title of My One Word: Change Your Life With Just One Word. It was written in 2012 by Mike Ashcraft. Mike is a Baptist pastor in Wilmington NC.

Here is the address for the website where the book is featured: <http://myoneword.org/>

Here’s how they tease the book on their website:

LOSE THE LONG LIST OF RESOLUTIONS. If you’re like most people, each January goes something like this: You choose a problematic behavior that has plagued you for years and vow to reverse it. In fact, you can probably think of two or three undesirable habits—make that four or five.

Thus begins the litany of imperfections to be perfected commonly known as “New Year’s Resolutions.” All of which are typically off your radar by February.

“My One Word” is an experiment designed to move you beyond this cycle. The challenge is simple: lose the long list of changes you want to make this year and instead pick ONE WORD.

This process provides clarity by taking all your big plans for life change and narrowing them down into a single focus. Just one word that centers on your character and creates a vision for your future. So, we invite you to join us and pick one word for the next twelve months.

So, that’s what intrigued me when I first saw the book. This was around October 2014. 2015 was coming up. And, as usual, I was preparing for New Year’s Resolutions like I have done for as long as I can remember.

### **I have always been making resolutions...**

Let me give you just a brief personal aside here: I have always been one to be making resolutions. And not just around New Year’s. For pretty much all of my life, I have been one to be making resolutions all the time.

I have never been content with myself the way I was at any point. I have always been a perfectionist – and when I say that, I’m not commending myself – I’m telling you that being a ‘perfectionist’ is not a good characteristic ... not a good character trait. It’s one thing to want to be better than you are and strive for growth in grace and improvement in your character and conduct. That is a good thing. That’s what we should be doing all the time.

### **Perfection-ism is a sin**

But perfection-ism is a sin. Perfection-ism is expecting perfection from yourself because ... well, because you think you are perfect and can be perfect. And, of course, none of us is. But, in our pride, and arrogance, and self-righteousness, we strive to be perfect – or at least appear to be perfect. Except that when you are a perfectionist, all of our striving is in the energy of our own fleshly human will and nature which is fallen, flawed, and doomed to failure because “those who are in the flesh cannot please God” [Romans 8.8]. Paul had earlier confessed and lamented in Romans 7.18, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” But, a perfectionist is always striving to prove Paul wrong on that indictment: “there IS something good that dwells in my flesh, and I’m going to show you!”

And so much of what goes into being a perfectionist is wanting to appear to be perfect for your own self-esteem and for the praise of other people. When all of this pride in ourselves and seeking the praises of others works itself in our resolutions and efforts to be better, that is what makes perfectionism such an abominable sin to God. It is a self-help effort to produce the righteousness of Christ – the righteousness that only God gives through faith in Jesus Christ and the life of the new birth. This is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

But, I’m getting way ahead of my story here...

### **Not self-perfection-ism, but going on to perfection in Christ**

I said all that to illustrate my statement that I have always been one to be making resolutions. But instead of making our resolutions from the motivation of a self-effort perfectionism, we must be making our resolutions – as a lifestyle – from the incentive and motivation of wanting to be ‘perfect’ in the sense of growing up and being grown-up in the grace of God, ‘perfect’ in the sense of being mature in Christ, and ‘perfect’ in the

sense of wanting to be complete in our character and conduct – complete as in becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

This is the sense that the Hebrews writer is pressing on us when he says in Hebrews 6.1, “Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity...”, or as we are used to reading and hearing it in the Authorized KJV, “let us go on to perfection.” Or when James writes about our persevering through our adversities and trials of faith, he challenges us in James 1.4, “And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

### **To be perfect, whole, complete in Christ**

So, that’s what we are striving for; that’s why we make resolutions – so we can be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing we are supposed to be and do. The aim of all our resolutions-making is not just to appear to be better people, or become “a better you,” or even to actually be better people for our own self-satisfaction, or to boost our self-esteem, or to win the praises of others. But rather we make resolutions to be more and more like Jesus Christ in our character and conduct – more complete, more mature, more perfectly conformed to His image and likeness ... lacking nothing.

And, to put it another way: **we make our resolutions for change and growth and improvement, not to seek to please other people or to please ourselves – but to please God!**

Here is the link to the YouTube video for Part 1: <https://youtu.be/wr1O2nrS1Vs>

Here is the link to my DaveParksBlog with these same Lesson Notes:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/01/31/my-one-word-resolution-or-my-one-word-part-1/>

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## **Part 2: My Seven-Year Story Making “My One-Word Resolutions” and Living by “My One Word” – and What They Have Been**

### **So ... now back to my story...**

So, now that I’ve given you a little personal background about my long-standing exercise of making resolutions, and especially New Year’s resolutions, let me pick up the story of how I came across the book My One Word, and how it changed the way I make my resolutions.

It was late in the year of 2014. I was thinking ahead and praying about 2015. And, like Mike Ashcraft says in the teaser about his book, I was one of those who made lists of resolutions. They were all good resolutions. They were all resolutions that I thought I should make to serve the Lord more faithfully and walk more closely with Him.

But, I would think, pray, and meditate during the closing weeks of the year. And you know how that, even though the last 6-8 weeks of the year are busy with holiday events, and get-togethers, and activities, we usually still have some break from the normal pressures and focus of our regular work schedule. So, there may be some extra time in there to give a little more attention to other things ... like preparing and making resolutions for the new year. And I would. And the lists of resolutions would be numerous, detailed, comprehensive, and oftentimes maybe overly-ambitious.

And I meant well ... I was very conscientious about it.

But then, when the new year comes, your normal activities and responsibilities resume, and you get back to your usual demanding workload, and your attention becomes absorbed and preoccupied again just to live your normal life in many of the usual ways.

And what happens to your resolutions? I would often lose track of what I had resolved to do and what I had resolved to change and do differently. Sometimes I would even lose my lists of resolutions! It's like I wouldn't have the attention and time to fulfill my regularly-scheduled ministry activities and also give attention to and focus on making the extensive changes like I had resolved I would do.

And so very often, I would just revert back to some of my old imperfect ways just by default. Or, maybe I would become distracted, then discouraged, then defeated – and finally just give it up in frustration. And then, to make matters much worse, I would get depressed over my perceived failure to keep my resolutions.

### **Then, I discovered My One Word**

Then, I discovered this book My One Word and read it. It changed everything for me. I began making “My One Word” Resolution beginning in January 2015, and I have continued that practice to the present.

I prayed about one major resolution that I should make to change my ways before God, and when I focused on that “One Word,” I discovered that other changes I need to make would also be included in “My One Word” and they, too, began to fall in line with “My One Word,” and I was actually pursuing several paths of growing in grace while I was focusing on “My One Word.”

### **How it has worked for me...**

I think that maybe the best way to illustrate how “My One Word” works, and how it may prove to be a beneficial spiritual exercise for you, is to give you a personal testimony about how I have worked it in my life and experience.

So, let me give you a year-by-year testimony of what “My One Word” resolutions have been and how the Lord impressed each one on my life – and especially as I have prayed about what changes the Holy Spirit needed to make in my life as those changes were inspired and energized by the Word of God.

### **2015 – “REST”**

So, as I say, 2015 was coming up. I knew there were changes that were going to take place in my life and ministry. Changes were going to take place in the church I was pastoring. I didn’t know how they were going to go or what the outcome of all these changes would be. I would find out later – but I didn’t know in 2014 going into 2015.

So, I was praying and seeking the mind and will of God for how I should lead in these changes. And, I was anxious about it all. I was anxious because of the uncertainty. I was anxious because I knew it was going to be an eventful and impactful year ... I just didn’t know how the events would go or what impact it would all have on all of us.

As I prayed about it all, the Holy Spirit reminded me that I must have faith in God, trust Him, faithfully obey what I knew that I must obey – and **REST!**

And, always, as you seek a “My One Word,” your word to live by will come from God’s Word. He will give you the “One Word” He wants you to adopt and practice, and He will give you that word from His Word, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible.

So, the words of Matthew 11.28 were impressed on my soul:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **REST.**”

There it was – **“REST”!**

There were many others, like Psalm 37.7 KJV, “**REST** in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him...” To “**REST**” in the LORD means to give up my own worry and anxieties and trust Him implicitly ... have confidence in His good intentions and purposes for me.

So, I went into 2015 resolved that I would not worry, or be anxious, or try to take matters into my own hands, but rather “**REST**” in the LORD, trust Him, and wait patiently for Him to work out His sovereign will and gracious pleasure in my life and ministry.

### **2016 – “DELIGHT”**

As 2015 turned into 2016, the circumstances of my life and ministry began to be more complicated and difficult. But God was always there, working His sovereign pleasure and will in everything that was happening and developing. And I could sense that some of those circumstances were not headed in ways that were going to be particularly to my personal liking or pleasurable to enjoy. In other words, things were shaping up that had all the prospects that it would be personally painful and bitter to my personal tastes.

But, God was becoming more and more personal to me at the same time. I was enjoying more of His Presence and the joy, peace, and comfort of His personal company. I was “resting” in Him more. I was learning to trust Him more and just enjoy being with Him regardless of how things turned out for me personally.

So, as I continued with the LORD in 2016, He taught me that it isn’t enough for me just to “REST” in the LORD – as in just resigning myself to accept whatever He had planned for me – but I must “**DELIGHT**” in Him! I must not be content with just a passive and stoic acceptance of His will, but I must enjoy Him! I must treasure Him above my every other possession and personal experience!

And so “My One Word” was “**DELIGHT.**”

Again, “My One Word” for 2016 came from The Word of God.

- Psalm 37.4, “**DELIGHT** yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
- Psalm 1.2, “...but his **DELIGHT** is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.”
- Psalm 40.8, “I **DELIGHT** to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” [quoted again by our Lord in Hebrews 10.7]
- Romans 7.22, “For I **DELIGHT** in the law of God, in my inner being...”

And so the LORD began to draw my heart to seek Him for the sake of the **DELIGHT** of His company and His pleasure.

And not only did I learn more to “**DELIGHT**” myself in knowing Him, but I also reveled more in His “**DELIGHT**” in me! Proverbs 8.30-31 speaks of Christ in the work of creation, “...then I was beside Him, like a master workman, and I was daily His **DELIGHT**, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world and **DELIGHTING** in the children of man.” And Proverbs 15.8 KJV, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His **DELIGHT**.”

There are so many other delightful Scriptures that call on us to **DELIGHT** ourselves in God just for the pure pleasure of knowing and enjoying Him! And many others that assure us of God’s own personal **DELIGHT** in us as His children and treasured possessions! The **DELIGHT** becomes mutual and reciprocal between God and you!

And so I resolved to more and more “**DELIGHT**” in God just for the pleasure of knowing Him and enjoying His company and His pleasure in me!

**2017 – “FOLLOW”**

As 2017 opened up, I could sense early on that there were going to be major changes in my ministry and in our lives as we had lived and known them up to that point. I didn't know when these major, seismic changes and transitions would shift, but I knew they were coming. Nor did I have any idea where the direction or the course of our lives would take during the upcoming year.

So, going into 2017, "My One Word" was "**FOLLOW,**" and I resolved to the LORD that I would "**follow**" Him wherever His will would lead us. I got "My One Word" "**follow**" from John 12.25-26:

"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must **follow** Me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

So, there I had it. Jesus Himself was following the Father's will even to the Cross. I resolved that I would "**follow**" Jesus wherever He chose to lead us, take us, and go with us. I also knew that wherever He leads us, and wherever we follow Him to, that's where He wants us to be for Him to be working through us. That's all that any of us is ever called to do anyway: "**follow**" Christ.

So, on May 28 of 2017, I resigned the pastorate where we had served for the previous 35 years because I believed that Jesus was calling us to '**follow**' Him ... we just didn't know where. As it turned out, we pretty immediately '**followed**' His leadership to come here where we are now. "**Follow**" was a good word for 2017 – and for every day of every other year also, of course!

## **2018 – "ABIDE"**

As we went into 2018, we had been here at Buck Run for six months; so this new course and direction for our lives was still very new to us. I was suffering from a bad case of disorientation because the whole structure and order of my life and ministry had suddenly

changed, and I hadn't prepared for it. For the previous 45 years, I had been pastor of a church in some role or another – most of those years as a lead pastor. Now, for the first time in almost half a century and for all of my adult life, I was not a pastor of a church.

I'm not saying it was a bad place to be in, just different. I was not depressed or disheartened by the changes in my function and roles, but I was very disoriented, and somewhat confused and casting about for what I was supposed to do.

That's when the Holy Spirit began to impress the word “**ABIDE**” upon my spirit – as in “**Abide** in Christ.” Or, Paul uses the same original word in 1 Corinthians 7.27, “So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him **remain** [or, ‘**abide**’] with God.” The word ‘**abide**’ simply means ‘to dwell, remain, stay, live there.’

God began to reassure me that I was not in a bad place at all! I had not lost my identity. My identity was still “in Christ.” I was still the same child of God. I was still the same servant of the Most High God. I was still a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. I was still loved by God and by my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. All that had changed was my practical activities and ministry roles.

So, during that time, God began impressing me that He had brought all these changes into my life and ministry because He wanted me more for Himself. He wanted me to spend more undistracted time and attention in seeking Him and delighting in Him. He wanted me to focus on and cultivate more my relationship with Him. If I was going to ‘follow’ Him, He would lead me to more ‘**abide**’ in Him wherever I had followed Him to.

John 15 began to reverberate in my soul:

<sup>4</sup>*Abide* in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it *abides* in the vine, neither can you, unless you *abide* in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are

the branches. Whoever *abides* in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not *abide* in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you *abide* in me, and my words *abide* in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. *Abide* in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will *abide* in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and *abide* in his love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

And so, “My One Word” for 2018 was “**ABIDE**” as in “*abide* in Christ,” “*abide* in His love,” “*abide* in the fullness of His joy.” I began to explore, express, and enjoy more my intimacy and my relationship with Christ and what it means to “**ABIDE**” in Him.

## **2019 – “CONQUER”**

The more I focused on abiding in Christ, the more conscious I became of my indwelling sin. And especially all the sins of “self”: like self-will, self-love, self-ish, self-seeking, self-pleasing.

The struggles of temptation to have my own will and way and to have what I wanted to have for myself were vicious and fierce and unrelenting. The more I wanted to abide in Christ, the more my indwelling sin nature seemed to revive, rear its ugly head, and rage with desire for what it wanted. It was war. It was an internal civil war that renewed its intensity and ferocity. It was a constant battle and fight for mastery over my will. It was like I was constantly and daily living in the raging war that Paul describes in Romans 7.21-23:

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law **waging war** against the law of my mind and **making me captive** to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Peter describes this battle, this conflict, this war with this call to spiritual arms: “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which **wage war** against your soul” [1 Peter 2.11].

And Paul describes his personal battle plan to **CONQUER** his indwelling sin in the language of destroying fortresses and strongholds and taking his every thought, feeling, and activity captive to serving Christ:

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not **waging war** according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the **weapons of our warfare** are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive to obey Christ...** [2 Corinthians 10.3-5]

I was far too often and too much being defeated, conquered, and being taken captive by my own indwelling sin. So, I resolved to “**CONQUER**” my indwelling sinful desires for my own glory, my own getting, my own gratification. I didn’t want to just struggle with my indwelling sin, which all believers do – I wanted to **CONQUER** my indwelling sin by the grace of God.

In Romans, chapter 6, leading up to the inner struggles and warfare against indwelling sin that he describes in chapter 7, Paul makes this victory proclamation in Romans 6.12-14:

<sup>12</sup> *Let not sin therefore reign* in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,

but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> ***For sin will have no dominion over you***, since you are not under law but under grace. [my emphases added]

When Paul says, “***Let not sin therefore reign*** in your mortal body,” he is saying ‘**CONQUER** your sin, don’t let it **CONQUER** you.’ When he says, “***For sin will have no dominion over you***, since you are not under law but under grace,” he is saying ‘**CONQUER** your sin through the life and power of God’s saving grace because God’s grace will not allow your sin to **CONQUER** or have dominion over you.’

Now, the way I came up with “My One Word” **CONQUER** is actually by creating an acrostic. You can say I cheated on “My One Word” if you want to, but I also adopted seven other key words for every letter of the one-word **CONQUER**.

So, here’s how I resolved to **CONQUER** my indwelling sin:

- **C**ommit to loving God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength – make God Himself the supreme and chief love and desire of my life
- **O**wn personal responsibility for my response to this temptation
- **N**avigate my desires away from the temptation and seek the Face and pleasure of God
- **Q**uestion the source and nature of every desire and temptation – where is it coming from? from the Father? or from the flesh?
- **U**nite all the strength and desires of my love and will to seek God and His pleasure [Psalm 86.11]
- **E**mploy all the means of grace God has made available to me: the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, obedience, fellowship with the saints, accountability – and most of all, confession of my sins

- **R**eceive and **R**ejoice in the promised resolve, life, strength, and desire of the Holy Spirit to choose to love Christ ... and Receive and Rejoice in His forgiveness when I do fail

## 2020 – “Conquer / LOVE”

Some years – or however long a season you choose to live by your “My One Word” – you may choose to adopt and live by the same “One Word.” Just carry it over and carry it on until you believe it has worked its intended grace and growth in your life.

I did that in 2020, last year. I retained the “My One Word” “CONQUER,” but I added a companion “My One Word” to give it a sharper, more intensified focus and application: “**LOVE**” ... just the simple, bottom-line, first-commandment, root-of-all-things “**LOVE.**”

Actually, “**LOVE**” is the keyword to the “C” in “CONQUER.” The “C” in “CONQUER” is “I **C**ommit to **loving** God with ALL MY HEART AND DESIRES ... I **C**ommit to purity and holiness and pleasing Christ...” That, of course, comes from the First and Greatest Commandment of all in Deuteronomy 6.4-5:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall **love** the LORD your God with ALL your heart and with ALL your soul and with ALL your might” [my emphases added].

And Jesus repeatedly confirmed the primacy and first priority of **LOVE** in His teaching and preaching.

When I adopted ‘CONQUER’ as “My One Word” in 2019, I knew that **LOVE** is at the root of all my sin, and so it will also be at the root of all my conquering my sin. You say: “How can love be at the root of all sin?” Well, it’s because all my sin traces its root and

origin and birth back to what I choose to love. All of my sin and all my temptations to sin are born in the womb of my desires and what I want. And I want and desire what I love.

All of my temptations to sin are just solicitations and opportunities that are presented to me by the Tempter to indulge in some illicit and fleshly desire that my indwelling sin nature loves and wants.

In my struggles and fight to CONQUER my indwelling sin, I repeatedly traced it back to what I was wanting, what I was loving. James does his spiritual forensics on our temptations and sin when he diagnoses it this way:

“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desire*. Then *desire* when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” ~James 1.14-15, my emphases added

When Paul describes his own personal inner spiritual struggles and warfare with his indwelling sin in Romans, chapter 7, he repeatedly describes it in terms of “what I want” and “I have the desire.” It’s our dueling desires, the constantly raging war of opposing loves. He even says that the cardinal sin that woke him up to his wretchedness and extreme sinfulness before God and “slew” him was the sin of covetousness! What is covetousness? And what makes covetousness so bad? Covetousness is our love, desires, and lusts which are perverted, and mis-guided toward and mis-placed upon the wrong objects of desire. We love what we’re not supposed to love. We don’t love what we are commanded to love.

So I find it to be a law that *when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand*.<sup>22</sup> For *I delight in the law of God, in my inner being*,<sup>23</sup> but *I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members*.<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So

then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. ~Romans 7.21-25, my emphases added

Do you see the war of competing loves, conflicting loves, adversarial loves fighting against each other in our inner souls and desires?

The apostle John starts off 1 John, chapter 2 with “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” So, what instructions does he give us when he teaches us how we may not sin? He commands us to regulate our lives and conquer our sins by choosing Whom we love:

“***Do not love*** the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone ***loves*** the world, the ***love of the Father*** is not in him. For all that is the world – the ***desires*** of the flesh and the ***desires*** of the eyes and ***pride [self-love]*** of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its ***desires***, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” ~1 John 2.15-17, my emphases added

By the way, again, it was from this Scripture that I framed the “Q” in “CONQUER” as “**Q**uestion the source and the nature of every desire and temptation – whether it is from The Father or from the world...”

So, that’s why, in 2020, I carried over the “My One Word” “CONQUER,” but then added the more focused “My One Word” “**LOVE.**” I adopted Deuteronomy 6.4-5 to memorize as my key Scripture to keep me focused on “My One Word”: to CONQUER my indwelling sin by LOVING the LORD my God with ALL my heart, soul, mind, and desires.

**2021 – “Conquer / FIGHT”**

So, that brings me to where we are today – the beginning of 2021. Again, I’m retaining my 2019 “One Word” ‘CONQUER’ for 2021, except that again, I’m extending it with another intensifier “My One Word” ... the word **“FIGHT.”**

I’m still battling and waging the ‘CONQUER’ war against my indwelling sins of ‘self’ – I’m waging that war by emphasizing and focusing on ‘LOVE’ as the primary weapon of my warfare. When I adopt and commit to practicing the “My One Word” **‘FIGHT’** for 2021, I am acknowledging that I am responsible to engage this war with all the weaponry and armor that God has given me by His saving grace and put at my disposal to **FIGHT** with.

In fact, this resolution **“FIGHT”** is actually already built into the “My One Word” I adopted for 2019: CONQUER. Remember that I told you that CONQUER is actually an acrostic with every letter being another resolution. So, the “O” in CONQUER is for “OWN” – “I Own personal responsibility for my response to this temptation...”

When I adopt the “My One Word” **‘FIGHT,’** I am acknowledging that if I CONQUER my indwelling sin with all of its illicit loves and desires, it will not happen on its own. My indwelling sin will not be conquered automatically just because I’m saved. I cannot be naïve, inattentive, lackadaisical, or passive about this inner war. Romans 7.22-23 is always raging in my members:

<sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law *waging war* against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

I must FIGHT!

My indwelling sin will not be conquered without putting up its own fierce, vicious, and passionate **FIGHT** against me – even from within me; and I must **FIGHT** it back just as fiercely, just as viciously, and just as passionately in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

I want to take the time here to tell you just how serious this **FIGHT** is. When Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6.12 that we do not “wrestle” [or fight] against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness that are committed to eliminating us, the word that he uses for “wrestle” is used only this one time in the New Testament. It was a Greek contest [or ‘exercise,’ if you will] in which the fighters fought with one another until the victor, the conqueror, not only threw his opponent down, but pinned him and rendered him immobile with his own hand on his neck. In other words, the conquered opponent was rendered so weak, that his conqueror actually had his hand on his jugular vein and esophagus – he had the power of life and death in his hands over his opponent.

**THAT IS THE FIGHT WE ARE IN!**

Paul charges Timothy in 1 Timothy 6.11-12:

“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. <sup>12</sup>**FIGHT** the good **FIGHT** of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

For Paul himself, that **FIGHT** was a **FIGHT** that lasted right up until the end of his life and ministry – it was one of the last testimonies that he gave before his own martyrdom:

“I have **FOUGHT** the good **FIGHT**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” ~ 2 Timothy 4.7.

However, let me be perfectly clear about one truth – and this has everything to do with how we make our holy resolutions: I am in no way suggesting or teaching that our **FIGHT** against our indwelling sin can be waged and won by any power or strength that is inherent in us. In all of these discussions and teachings about **CONQUERING** our indwelling sins and **FIGHTING** against it in our struggles for holiness and godliness, I have tried to always emphasize that we don't **FIGHT** sin and temptation to sin with our own will-power or resolve or by making resolutions with our own wills. In fact, if there's one lesson I have learned from a life-long war against my indwelling sin, it is that ***IT IS MY OWN WILL THAT I'M FIGHTING AGAINST!*** The only power and strength that we have to **FIGHT** and **CONQUER** our indwelling sin is by the strength and power that is given to us by the grace of God.

You will never will-power yourself to holiness. What we are talking about is becoming more and more like Jesus Christ in every way: in our values, in our attitudes, in our character, and in our conduct. And you can't do that with any and all the energies and strengths that you possess in yourself. God will have to work in you and through you to **CONQUER** your sin. You can **FIGHT** victoriously against your sin **only in the strength that God gives you by His grace through the Holy Spirit.**

In that all-equipping passage in Ephesians 6 where Paul trains us in spiritual warfare, he begins his training by reminding us that the only strength and weaponry we have for our **FIGHT** against sin is “in the Lord”:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the

whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ~Ephesians 6.10-13

And so, I am resolving to assume my personal responsibility to **FIGHT**, even while I'm trusting in and relying upon the strength and power of God to make my **FIGHT** victorious and **CONQUER** my indwelling sin. The way I commit to **FIGHT** is by **LOVING** God with all my heart and obeying every word He gives me in the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit.

By the way, I have also adopted Caleb in Joshua 14 as my model, exemplar, and my encouragement to engage this on-going **FIGHT**. In Joshua 14, they are taking possession of the Promised Land that God is giving them as their inheritance. That in itself is a prequel of the life we are now living in Jesus Christ as you will discover in Hebrews 3-4. God promised them the land. God is giving it to them by driving out their enemies from before them. But they must **FIGHT** to take possession of what God promised and is giving them. God Himself is **FIGHTING** with them and for them as they **FIGHT** at his command.

So, Caleb comes to Joshua, his long-time comrade and compatriot during all their years of wandering in the wilderness, and he reminds Joshua how Moses promised them that they could have the territories that they believed God would give them if only they would trust Him and obey Him as they went to **FIGHT** and take it. That was 45 years ago, but now they are in.

So Caleb asks Joshua to give him an additional 'mountain' or hill country territory that still had giant warrior inhabitants still living in it, the Anakim. He knew it would be a **FIGHT**, but he was prepared to take on that **FIGHT** because he knew that God would **FIGHT** for him and with him.

And, get this – Caleb was an 85-year-old man by this time. He was no spring chicken any longer. He was no merely ambitious young whippersnapper. He was an old, seasoned, experienced saint who wasn't just out itching for a **FIGHT**, but was still willing to continue to **FIGHT** for what God had given him to have:

<sup>10</sup> And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. <sup>11</sup> I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. <sup>12</sup> So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said. ~Joshua 14.10-12

So, that's where I am this year. Still warring against my flesh and my indwelling sin, but still committed to CONQUER it by living by the supreme law of LOVE and being willing to engage the **FIGHT** as God gives me the resolve, strength, armor, and weaponry to **FIGHT** with.

I have been mightily helped and encouraged over the years in my struggles against sin and my aspirations for holiness by the ministry and writings of Jerry Bridges. He has written extensively on this subject especially in his books The Pursuit of Holiness, The Practice of Godliness, Holiness Day by Day [among others also...], but he wrote this little paragraph in one of his books that struck me years ago and has stuck with me as a constant motivation and inspiration to **FIGHT** against my indwelling sin:

“We Christians greatly enjoy talking about the provision of God, how Christ defeated sin on the Cross and gave us His Holy Spirit to empower us to victory over sin. But we do not as readily talk about our own responsibility to walk in

holiness...We pray for victory when we should be acting in obedience.” ~Jerry Bridges [Pursuit of Holiness]

My act of obedience is to responsibly engage the FIGHT against the sin that dwells in me and CONQUER it in the strength and power of the grace of God.

Here is the YouTube to this Part 2 lesson segment:

[https://youtu.be/WrvSAI\\_QKiA](https://youtu.be/WrvSAI_QKiA) | Length 54:28

Here is the link to my DaveParksBlog where these Lesson Notes are posted:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/02/06/my-one-word-part-2/>

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### **Part 3: Scriptural Authority and Precedent for and Examples of a “My One Word” Resolution**

I am on my way to offering some personal, practical exercises that you can take to choose, adopt, commit to, and implement your own personal “One-Word Resolution” for yourself. I promise: I’m going to get to that...

But, before I do that, you may be wondering or asking: “Is this ‘My One Word’ a Scriptural thing? Is it in the Bible? Is it coming from The Word of God? Or is this just a novel, trendy, self-help, feel-good gimmick?” Well, thank you for asking because you really ought to be serious and conscientious about your spiritual exercises.

We’re not interested in practicing legalistic rituals and routines, nor do we want to be taken in by empty, useless, and superficial religious fads.

So, is there any Scriptural authority, precedent, mandate for focusing on a “one thing” and concentrating your attention on that “one thing” to grow into maturity and the likeness of Jesus Christ? Remember: that’s the goal we are seeking and reaching for. Growing up into the fullness of Christ-likeness is the *‘until we all reach’*-goal that Paul sets forth for the church and the members of the church in his classic passage in Ephesians 4 ... listen to this goal:

Ephesians 4.13-15 HCSB: <sup>13</sup>*until we all reach* unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, **growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.** <sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, **let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.** [my emphases added]

**“...make every effort to supplement your faith...”**

Also, the apostle Peter exhorts and challenges us to keep on making holy resolutions and keep on growing by adding one grace after another, upon another, in progressive succession, supplementing each other ... all in sync with one another:

2 Peter 1.5-8 HCSB: <sup>5</sup>For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** with goodness, goodness with knowledge, <sup>6</sup>knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup>godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, nobody can eat the whole elephant in one bite or in one sitting. You eat the whole elephant how? ... one bite at a time. Likewise, we don’t grow up into the mature stature and likeness of Christ in one explosive growth spurt. It would be nice and easy and much

more convenient if we could grow in grace that way. But, we grow up into Christ ... one grace at a time.

### **In labor ... ‘until Christ is formed in you’**

If you want to keep on progressively growing up into the full measure of the stature of Christ, you need to have an immediate ‘focal point.’ I’ve always been challenged by Paul’s heartfelt plea to the churches in Galatia. They were being lured away from making Jesus Christ the focal point of their faith and discipleship. They were drifting away into self-help, self-effort legalism to grow in their sanctification. I guess you could say they were making resolutions, but they were relying on their flesh to give them birth and deliver them. He compares himself to a mother in labor, in travail to deliver her child. Paul says that the ‘child’ he is laboring to deliver in them is none other than Christ Himself – Christ-likeness. Listen to him in labor: *“My children, I am again suffering labor pains for you until Christ is formed in you.” ~Galatians 4.19*

### **“Focal point”**

Do you feel this same travail and labor pains in your own soul? Are you agonizing to ‘deliver’ more of Christ-likeness in your own life? It will help you to have a focal point. In truth, you *must* have a ‘focal point.’

And, of course, when I say ‘focal point,’ my mind is going back to the days of Lamaze preparation for childbirth. Back in 1978 when our first child, Joy, was due to be born, Debbie and I participated in Lamaze preparation. Lamaze preparation was relatively new back in those days, best as I can remember, at least it was for us where we were. But the purpose of Lamaze preparation was to avoid putting the mother to sleep for her delivery. It was a move toward a more ‘natural’ childbirth. So, through exercises involving concentration, relaxation, and controlled breathing, the mother could participate and assist in her own delivery. Of course, it was uncomfortable and painful as all childbirth is.

But, to get the mother's attention and focus off of her pain and discomfort, every delivering mother had a 'focal point,' some personal object that was meaningful and significant to her that she would bring with her and have with her to focus on during contractions. Having her 'focal point' would help her maintain her focus on relaxation, controlled breathing, and helping with the delivery.

If you want to 'deliver' a fuller measure of Christ-likeness in your discipleship, your "One Word" becomes your immediate 'focal point' in your delivery process.

**And the best place to begin your 'delivery' and your growing up into the fullness of Christ is at that point where you are most deficient, most delinquent, most disobedient.**

The 'focal point' of your greatest need becomes the 'focal point' of your "One Word" resolution. However, we will also discover that God's graces are all so inextricably related to one another in Christ, that when we resolve and commit to growing up in 'one' grace, we will also grow in many other graces also. They all support, supplement, complement, and grow out from one another. Jesus doesn't come to us and live in us in pieces; when you receive Christ, you get the whole Christ...the fullness of Christ. [see Colossians 1.19; 2.6-7, 9-10]

But even Jesus didn't grow up during the days of His flesh all at one time. Here's how Jesus Himself grew up as a child...

Luke 2.40 HCSB: The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on Him.

Luke 2.52 HCSB: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

That's how we, too, want to keep on growing up into His fullness, stature, and maturity.

### Scriptural precedents for “My One Word”

But, you will find plenty of Scriptural precedent for focusing on “My One Word” and concentrating on implementing that one word.

#### Deuteronomy 6.4-5

For example: What is the “one word” that God has given us to serve as the ‘focal point’ of all our obedience to Him? If I asked you to sum up the whole duty of a human being – could you sum up that whole duty in one word? Yes, you could. That ‘one word’ would be ‘**love.**’ We have referred to this before, but when God summed up all of His commandments, and mandates, and human responsibilities in one word, that word is ‘**love.**’

Deuteronomy 6.4-5: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

<sup>5</sup> You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Yes, there are many other words that follow and flow out of **love** – that are born and delivered out of the womb of **love** – but every other responsibility and duty begins with and is summed up in this one word **love**. This is God’s first and greatest commandment.

The same thing is true of our duties and responsibilities toward all our other fellow human beings, image-bearers of God. How do you sum up and fulfill every responsibility you have toward every other human being? It is one word: **love!**

#### Romans 13.8-10

Listen to Paul sum up all of our mutual responsibilities to one another in Romans 13.8-10:

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to **love** each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, **are summed up in this word**: “You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>**Love** does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love** is the fulfilling of the law. HCSB

So, how’s that for a “My One Word”! And please keep on noting that when you adopt and live by any “My One Word,” you’re going to be sprouting out and branching out – laboring, travailing, delivering, giving spiritual birth to – many other words and graces in the doing of it.

### **A couple New Testament personal examples**

But I want to highlight a couple New Testament examples and testimonies of fellow saints who practiced “One Word” resolutions, and did so with Jesus’ blessing and approval.

### **Philippians 3.12-16**

Paul testified that he had narrowed down his life’s goals and aspirations to “*this one thing I do*” in Philippians 3.12-16. Now, I realize that his “one thing” was a comprehensive, all-inclusive goal that he was reaching for, a goal that was all the way at the end of his life. But I just want you to listen to his laser-like ‘focal point’ on that ‘one thing’:

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, **but I make every effort to take hold of it** because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do**: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about

anything, God will reveal this also to you. <sup>16</sup>In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. HCSB

We would all do well to reach forward to that next grace of spiritual growth that God has promised and given us in Jesus Christ to fulfill and attain with this same focus and passion: **“But one thing I do...!”**

### **Luke 10.38-42**

I am sure, though, that my favorite example by far is that of Mary who sat at Jesus’ feet so she could hear, and treasure, and keep His words. Jesus just gushed with His pleasure and blessing on her attention, focus, undistracted concentration, and commitment. I want you to pay careful attention to her ‘focal point’ and make this your ‘focal point’ as well!

<sup>38</sup> While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord’s feet and was listening to what He said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand.” <sup>41</sup> The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> **but one thing is necessary**. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.” HCSB

Now, I want you to keep this story as fresh in your mind as you can because I want to draw from it as we go now into laying out some specific practical steps you can take to implement the spiritual exercise of choosing and living out your “One Word Resolution.”

Here is the Youtube link to this Part 3 segment:

<https://youtu.be/x7hDj6y4lLE> | Length 18:09

Here is the DaveParksBlog post of these same Lesson Notes:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/02/13/my-one-word-resolution-or-my-one-word-part-3/>

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## **Part 4: Some Practical Steps for Choosing and Adopting Your “My One Word”**

I want to lay out some specific practical steps you can take as you proceed to implement the spiritual exercise of choosing and adopting your “My One Word Resolution.”

In deference to Pastor Mike Ashcraft who wrote the book “My One Word” that got me started on this spiritual exercise, I want to quote again from the “My One Word” website how they suggest you get started – then I want to give you some practical exercises I have used over the years to discover and settle on my own “My One Word.”

This is from the website: [www.myoneword.org](http://www.myoneword.org)

“LOSE THE LONG LIST OF RESOLUTIONS! If you’re like most people, each January goes something like this: You choose a problematic behavior that has plagued you for years and vow to reverse it. In fact, you can probably think of two or three undesirable habits—make that four or five.

Thus begins the litany of imperfections to be perfected commonly known as “New Year’s Resolutions.” All of which are typically off your radar by February.

“My One Word” is an experiment designed to move you beyond this cycle. The challenge is simple: lose the long list of changes you want to make this year and instead pick ONE WORD.

This process provides clarity by taking all your big plans for life change and narrowing them down into a single focus. Just one word that centers on your character and creates a vision for your future. So, we invite you to join us and pick one word for the next twelve months.

Let's get started: **PICK YOUR WORD**. Choose just one word that represents what you most hope God will do in you, and focus on it for an entire year.

**STEP 1: DETERMINE THE KIND OF PERSON YOU WANT TO BECOME.**

The first step is to simply take some time and decide what kind of person you want to be at the end of this year. This goes beyond simply being healthier and wealthier, but it must drive deep into your soul. What about the condition of your heart? What about the person that God Himself has created you to be?

**STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT PERSON.** Get a picture of that person and then simply identify their major characteristics. Is that person gentle? Is that person generous? What are the qualities of the person you want to become?

**STEP 3: PICK A WORD.** Once you have a list of the characteristics, simply pick a word. There might be fifteen things that you want to change, but you must resist the temptation to promise you will do them all. Instead, simply commit to **ONE WORD.**"

Alright – so that's what Pastor Mike Ashcraft who authored the book [My One Word](#) suggests you do to begin implementing this spiritual exercise we've been proposing to you.

What I want to do now is to draw from all the background teaching I've been giving you to propose **these seven practical steps for you to do.**

And I especially want to draw from the example and story of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet to hear His words, which prompted Him to express His pleasure in her by saying,

**"...but one thing is necessary.**

**Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."**

[Luke 10.38-42]

So, I say again, keep in mind all the groundwork we've laid to get us to where we are now, and do these exercises:

### **Step 1: PRAY OVER IT**

Have a "Jesus meeting" like Mary did in Luke 10.39. Begin this exercise by going to Jesus and "sit at His feet" [the disciple's learning posture] to talk with Him and learn from Him what He wants you to become and what **He** wants you to do. After all, the supreme purpose and primary aim for your "My One Word Resolution" is to become more like Him and grow more into His likeness and conform more into His image. And He promises that if you take His yoke upon you, and get into the yoke with Him, that He will teach you and you will learn from Him [Matthew 11.29]. So, ask **Him** what **HE** wants your "My One Word Resolution" to be in that area in which you most need to grow. That's the Voice of Jesus speaking to you: ***"Grow in THIS grace!" "Become more like Me in THIS!" "Change THIS!" "Add THIS!"***

### **Step 2: READ THE WORD**

This is not just beneficial – it is essential, it is indispensable. Mary **"sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word,"** and we must do the same thing. If you want to hear from Jesus

about what He wants your life-resolution to be, **then you must be listening where He speaks – and that is, in His Word!**

You will get your “My One Word” from the words God has commanded us to do. **The “My One Word” you need is already in The Word of God.** You need to be in His Word, hearing His Word! Jesus has repeatedly called out to us, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” [Matthew 13.9 et. al.]

I quoted from **Psalm 119.59-60** back in Part 1 of this lesson. Here it is again:

**“When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to Your testimonies. I hasten and do not delay to keep Your commandments.”**

God’s testimonies are with Him the same thing they are with us: *what He Himself says about Himself*. What is it that gets us thinking on our ways to begin with? We read His testimonies, and we find out we are not in step and in sync with Him. So, we turn our feet toward His testimonies to get in step with Him. Remember the familiar **Psalm 119.105**, **“Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.”** So, if you want to know what “My One Word” to need to begin living by, then you will find it where He speaks it: **in His Word.**

By the way, if you haven’t already begun to establish and practice the previous two steps: praying and reading the Word of God, then you need to backtrack there and resolve to begin there. Maybe your “One Word” needs to be “HEAR” or “LISTEN” or “TIME WITH GOD” [OK, I know that’s three words – but it’s one resolution] to get you started and established in Spiritual Exercises.

### **Step 3: BUY A CHEAP NOTEBOOK**

You can buy a cheap notebook at Dollar Tree or Kroger or order it from Amazon – but it doesn’t have to be expensive or even pretty. It just needs to have blank pages in it so you

can do some of your “My One Word” thinking on paper so you can see it and go back to it. You will keep your notebook all year long to track how the Lord “renews your mind” with thoughts and continuing resolutions all throughout the year. If this is from Jesus Christ, it will grow in your thoughts, meditations, convictions, resolutions, and activities.

#### **Step 4: MAKE AN INITIAL LIST OF WORDS**

The first thing you will do with your cheap notebook is to start writing down words that come to your mind as you do steps 1 and 2: pray about it and read the Word. As prospective words come to your mind, write them down. Write down every word that comes to your mind, even if it just pops into and passes through your mind. These words will be just virtues, or spiritual desires and hungers, or convictions, or ‘starter words’ that come to your mind. Then use those words to cull, eliminate, and narrow it down to your most-needed “My One Word.”

Just recognize that when the Holy Spirit “speaks” to us through the Truth of the Word of God, He will “speak” to us through the medium of our own thoughts. He will put thoughts into our minds. **Psalm 119.59** yet again: **“When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies.”** Where are those thoughts coming from when you *‘think on your ways’*? They are coming from the Holy Spirit! So, when He, the Holy Spirit, begins to prompt and jog your mind with words for resolutions, then start writing them down in your notebook!

#### **Step 5: ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO IMPRESS YOU WITH YOUR “ONE WORD RESOLUTION”**

One of the Holy Spirit’s roles and ministries is to point us to Christ, guide us into all truth [especially truth for living], and to sanctify us into Christ’s image and likeness. Jesus specifically promised that He would send and give us the Holy Spirit to bear witness with

our spirit through the Word of God and guide us and lead us into all the truth. He advocates for Christ. Here's what Jesus promised:

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” ~John 16.13-15

So, ask the Holy Spirit to ‘guide you into...the truth’ you most need to begin immediately implementing in your life in your “One Word.”

### **Step 6: COMMIT TO JESUS CHRIST THAT YOU WILL PURSUE THIS GOAL AT LEAST FOR THE WHOLE YEAR AHEAD OF YOU**

If your “My One Word” is from Christ, then **He** will lead you through many varied learning and training exercises and experiences. He is the One who is calling and inviting us into His yoke to learn and serve with Him: “...take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me...” Commit to persevere and follow through with Him.

Here again is what Paul said even in his advance years and maturity: he was still resolved to faithfully persevere to follow Christ into the next steps of growth and maturity:

Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, **but I make every effort to take hold of it** because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead,** <sup>14</sup> I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. <sup>16</sup> In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. ~Philippians 3.12-16 HCSB

**Step 7: EXPECT AND WATCH FROM JESUS CHRIST TO MAKE HIS OWN GRACE AND GLORY GROW IN YOUR LIFE THROUGH YOUR “ONE WORD” RESOLUTION!**

Jesus promised about Mary’s “**one necessary thing**” resolution that “...*it will not be taken away from her...*” – meaning that she would find her resolution to be a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Jesus Christ would give her what she was desiring, longing for, resolving and making effort to receive: to hear Christ’s words and enjoy His company and pleasure! She would discover God’s dynamic grace adding this desired virtue – and many more besides – to her life.

The apostle Peter challenges all of us to keep on growing! When we are hungering for growing up into the fullness of Christ [and that’s what “My One Word” is all about], we will find that there is unlimited room for us to keep growing! And not only will Christ be nourishing to you, but He will be enjoyable as you delight yourself in Him!

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— <sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ~1 Peter 2.2-3

What you will discover as you resolve and commit to living by “My One Word” is that other graces will follow also. Many other graces will grow from your “My One Word” and be added to it, built upon it.

Your “My One Word” will be like a grain of yeast that you knead into the bread of your life, and it will grow and multiply and fill your life with many other Christ-likenesses also!

Jesus promised Mary that “...it will not be taken away from her.”

And it will not be taken away from you either! He makes the same promise to you!

So, **WHAT IS YOUR ‘MY ONE-WORD’ RESOLUTION?**

Here is the YouTube link to this Part 4 segment of this lesson:

<https://youtu.be/YrHnvOCOP9o> | Length 21:56

Here is the DaveParksBlog post with these same Lesson Notes:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/02/16/my-one-word-resolution-or-my-one-word-part-4/>



Here is the DaveParksBlog post with this full-text Lesson Notes:

<https://daveparksblog.com/2021/02/18/my-one-word-resolution-or-my-one-word-full-text/>