

PROMISE TO CHANGE

Nothing reminds us of our hope to be different like the New Year. Every morning show and social feed is filled with all the things we can do to make the changes we think we need to make.

New Year. New You. Right?

Each suggestion is something to do in order to achieve the results we want. It seems the way for this year to be different is to promise that we will do things differently. The process is obvious. We make a list of things that we should do (or stop doing) and then simply promise to do them or stop doing them.

Our promises run the gamut. We have one promise for our physical health, one for our emotional health, one for our professional life, one for our spiritual life, one for our financial world, one for our relational world, and on it goes.

We become exhausted as we try to connect the loose ends from all our different promises. Eventually, we run out of steam, or we just forget. The hope for change dissolves into "well, that's just the way I am."

The problem is that these promises only add to the pressure we already feel. The hope that we sensed when we made the promises and the potential to change is quickly destroyed by anything less than perfection on our part. Promises don't scale—they are all or nothing; they are kept or broken.

And broken promises confirm the worst things about us.

Our formation is not a matter of generating more willpower, but rather it requires a process that makes room for something other than perfectly kept promises. We need a way to pay attention to what is happening inside of us and embrace the process by which we are formed.

My One Word provides a way for us to see the process necessary for change. Picking a single word serves as a lens through which we can view our lives and our circumstances, rather than making more promises that can be broken.

FIRST THOUGHTS

- How has making promises to change worked for you in the past? Are there any promises you keep making over and over?

THE POWER OF A LENS

My One Word begins with a vision to pursue, not a promise to keep. What we see shapes our life more than our willpower ever could. We want our lives to flow out of **who** we are—not because we have an amped-up resolve to behave better. Our desire to change is rooted in our innate longing to become who God has created us to be. So, seeing our lives through the lens of our One Word over the course of the year will reframe our perspective, giving us a lens to see who we are and who we hope to become.

FOUNDATIONAL THOUGHT Proverbs 29:18 (NASB)

“Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained.”

- How do you respond when you don’t have vision for something?

We often think a lack of vision leaves us blind. But rather, a lack of vision leaves us scattered. The freedom of focus is that we actually tend to the things that are most important.

BEYOND REGRET

Often, we are driven by regret. We don't like who we are or the circumstances we find ourselves in, so we arrange our lives to avoid what we don't like. Regret can be a powerful motivator, but it is all about prevention.

Whether it is as benign as being more punctual (because you are perpetually late) or as life altering as no more alcohol (because you drink way too much), either way, we make promises to ensure that we will not be the way we have been. But these promises are insufficient for the depth of life we long to experience.

Vision-fueled action is more powerful than regret-based restraint.

Let's become the kind of people for whom those old patterns are simply unthinkable. Let's choose to live with the hope of who we could become rather than the fear of who we have been.

PRAYER

Lord, I need to be reminded that I am defined by who You say I am and not simply who I have been. I ask for vision that goes beyond the regret I feel and towards the kind of person You have intended me to be. Let me live in the hope of Your promise and intention for my life. Amen.

REFLECTION

- What are some areas of your life where you are driven by regret?

- How can you reframe those toward vision-fueled action?

SHARED EXPERIENCE

- Share how My One Word is different from making New Year’s Resolutions. In other words, how is a lens different from a promise?

- Consider how and why “vision-fueled action is more powerful than regret-based restraint.”

What’s next: Watch Session Two on myoneword.org, read Session Two content and jot down your responses.