

One Word for the New Year

Air Dates: January 3-7, 2022

Day One

Christmas and New Year's celebrations are over—I'm guessing that you survived nicely. We're in a New Year. So, you think I'm going to talk about New Year's resolutions, right?

Well, not really, because my experience is that those New Year's resolutions last about a week, if that long. But I do have an idea—maybe even a challenge—for you as you face this new year of 2022. I suggest you choose this one word to be your theme for the year—and that one word is *thankfulness*.

Instead of making resolutions, for the past few years I've been choosing one word to focus on for the year—one word to think about and pray about and remember. For example, one year my one word was wisdom. Last year my one word was transition. And I prayed about those throughout the year because I desperately needed wisdom and last year was truly a year of transition for me and for our ministry.

Well, this year I want to suggest that it could make a huge difference in our lives and the lives of those around us if our one word was *thankfulness*. You can never over-emphasize the importance of being always thankful. Paul wrote to the Colossians:

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7).

Overflowing with thankfulness—that's what we should be if we have received Christ Jesus as our Lord and are continuing to grow in our faith. In other words, thankfulness is supposed to be a trademark of a Christian.

Now, ask yourself this question: Would people who know you well—who are around you often and see you in real-life environments regularly—would they describe you as a thankful person? Do you overflow with thankfulness? If something is overflowing, people would notice, don't you think?

Are you up for this challenge—to make thankfulness your one word for 2022? If so, I want to send you a sign you can put where you'll see it often—a sign that says, "My one word for 2022: Thankfulness."

If it's going to be your one word this year, you're going to need reminders around you all the time. So, I want to help you start this new year with a very thankful heart.

Day Two

Have you thought about a New Year's resolution for 2022? I would suggest that you don't need a resolution, you just need a word. One word that you will focus on all year. One word that says what you want God to do for you this year. One word that indicates an attitude and a commitment you're willing to take on with God's help.

Actually, I would like to suggest one word that would work for you and anybody else you know—and that one word is *thankfulness*. Just suppose you determine to make thankfulness the theme of your life in this new year. Just suppose that you are willing to put away the negative thoughts and the complaining spirit, and overflow with thankfulness throughout the year? How would that make 2022 different from 2021?

This is a characteristic I've been trying to cultivate more and more in my life because I want to be thankful for all my many, many blessings. But also because being thankful is a major stress buster! I'm not kidding; one of the best things you can do to reduce your stress, lower your blood pressure, and lengthen your life is to practice thankfulness.

Notice I said "practice thankfulness." You see, it's really easy to get caught up in complaining because that's what we hear around us quite often. And we've all gone through—still going through—a worldwide pandemic that gave us lots to complain about, didn't it? Don't you hear a good bit of griping and complaining where you work? Well, you might have caught that complaining disease without realizing it. So, you need to practice thankfulness.

Here are some suggestions to help you do that.

1. Put a sign on your desk or your screen saver or your refrigerator that says: "My one word for 2022: Thankfulness." I think we just sometimes need simple reminders. It sure wouldn't hurt. In fact, we've prepared a reminder like this that you can use, if you like.
2. Put on thankfulness each morning before you leave home. While you're buttoning your shirt or putting on your shoes, just make a little ritual each day of saying, "And I'm also putting on thankfulness to wear all day today."

Very simple and easy things to do—but those little rituals and reminders could truly make a difference in your life in this new year.

Day Three

I'm sure I don't have to remind you that we're five days into a New Year. This is a good time for you and me to ask ourselves: What is my personal theme for 2022? What attitude or characteristic do I want God to create in me this year? David prayed, "Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). It's a good prayer for us in this New Year.

A really good word to focus on all year is *thankfulness*. If you look at the sacrifices that are a part of the Mosaic law given by God, you'll discover that there were many sacrifices of thanksgiving. This was a ritual God put in place to remind his people that they were to be thankful people. We're no longer under the law, but we still need to be reminded to be thankful.

Here are some more practical ways to become a thankful person—to learn to practice thanksgiving.

1. Do the thankful alphabet. Start with A and go through Z, naming something starting with each letter for which you are thankful. You can have some fun with this; it's a great game to play in the car with your kids and you'll be teaching them to practice thankfulness.
2. Make every Tuesday a "Thankful Tuesday" or each Thursday a "Thankful Thursday." You can share this with your family or your co-workers and have some fun with it, but it will teach the joy of practicing thankfulness.
3. Sing songs of thanksgiving. The Bible says to sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Go for it.

4. Begin every prayer time with thanksgiving. Psalm 100 tells us to enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and enter his courts with praise. Whenever you enter into the presence of God, always enter with thanksgiving. Make the first words out of your mouth words of thankfulness.

I have found that this changes my prayer time. If I begin with all my needs and requests, I am self-focused. If I begin with thanksgiving—reciting some of the many things I have to be thankful for—I am God-focused. What a difference that makes in my time spent with God, and that in turn makes a difference in my day.

Day Four

I wonder if you have ever thought about the power that is released when you become a thankful person. Let me tell you some of the great things that will happen:

- People will like you much better. Thankful people are nice to be around. Your relationships will improve. You'll have more friends.
- Your energy level will go up. It's true, because when you're thankful, you unleash a lot of good energy that is often wasted on complaining and negativism. You will do more work in less time. And that's going to make you a better employee, which will make your boss happy! I won't go so far as to say you'll get a raise, but then again—who knows?
- Your stress will go down. I'm not making this up. When you are being thankful, you are thinking about the good things in your life, and that keeps you from focusing on the negative things. It's like a release valve on a pressure cooker—you will see your stress go down.
- Your face will be prettier—or more handsome, whichever you prefer! Think about it—when you are thankful, you're not worried or fretting, and those things cause lines in our faces and age us! You'll look younger!
- Your posture will improve. When you're thankful, you stand up straighter. When you're negative, your shoulders tend to stoop and your back curves.

There's power in thankfulness. You have much to gain. But way above and beyond all of these, here's the most important reason to be thankful:

- You will honor and glorify Jesus Christ as he deserves. When you overflow with thankfulness, you tell the world what Jesus has done for you and you are a good ambassador for him. Not to mention, it pleases him to see your thankful heart.

That's why I'm urging you to adopt this one word as your word for 2022: Thankfulness. Focus on it all year; pray it into your life; remind yourself every day to be thankful.

Day Five

We've all heard and said a lot of "Happy New Years" lately right? Well, what do we mean when we wish someone happiness for the new year?

Often when someone says "Happy New Year," they mean "Good Luck," because they see happiness as a consequence of good things happening to you. If you have the good luck not to have health problems, or money problems, or emotional issues, then you will be happy—so they think—and therefore they are wishing you a year filled with good luck, nice circumstances.

Others think of a Happy New Year as one filled with prosperity—you have a good job earning good money. You are successful in your pursuit of financial stability and you have no money worries. To them that would constitute a happy new year. Still others think that a happy new year is one where your internal emotional state is good—you have good self-esteem and you are emotionally strong.

What would be your definition of a Happy New Year? If you could engineer the next 353 days of 2022, how would you design those days to make you happy?

Here's the truth—you cannot engineer the next 300 or so days. You don't know what the future holds. Perhaps you'll have very happy circumstances and life will prove easy and good. But as soon as tomorrow, life could take a drastic turn in the wrong direction and your circumstances could change overnight. We have all lived through that since early 2020, haven't we?

Your life—and mine—is in the hands of our God. As the old song says, "I know not what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." If you live in 2022 for the purpose of pleasing the Lord, abiding in Christ and trusting the God who loves you, then this new year will bring you joy and contentment and peace—and yes, some happiness.

So, whatever this year holds for you, I pray you will know Jesus better at the end of 2022 than you do now, and you will trust and love him more as you learn how much he loves you. That's the best year you could possibly have.