

# The One Thing for 2015

2 Tim. 3:16-17

## Introduction

Well, it's hard to believe, but another new year is upon us. It's a natural time to assess where we are and the direction we are heading. And to quote Andy Stanley, "Direction Determines Destiny."

New Year's is therefore also a natural time to make changes in our lives. This lesson will present what I believe is the single greatest thing we can add to our lives that will definitely make a positive difference. It's simple and doable. And it is guaranteed to turn out well if you stick with it.

## But First, How Did We Get Here?

Are you who, what, and where you want to be today? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you headed in the direction toward who, what, and where you want to be?  
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Before getting to the One Thing for this year, I have to ask the question, "Why?" Why do we need resolutions? Why do we let important habits fade away? Why do we gain weight and lose our strength?

I believe it's simply our **lack of self-discipline**, or as it is often called in the New Testament, self-control. In Greek, the word used is σοφρον.

4998 σοφρον sophron {so'-frone} - adj

AV - sober 2, temperate 1, discreet 1; 4

1) of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses

2) curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate

This set of Greek words is usually translated "sober", "temperate", and "self-control."

The Greek word and its variants are used 12 times in the NT, and five of them are in this Titus passage. Paul instructs that every possible demographic be self-controlled, and then he ends the passage with an overall instruction (v 12) repeating the same thing.

Titus 2:11-14 – <sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live **sensibly**, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; <sup>14</sup>who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

The **definition** of self-discipline is: Doing what you ought to do, whether or not it is what you want to do.

We are where we are because we have been doing what we want, instead of what we should. **We need New Year's resolutions because we know we ought to do something different, but don't have the discipline to do it.**

That's interesting, because it doesn't agree with what God says about us.

Paul used the same root word is at the end of a verse we probably all know by memory:

2 Timothy 1:7 – For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of **self-discipline**. (NIV)

For those who have been around for a while, you will probably remember that verse as it's translated in the KJV:

2 Timothy 1:7 – For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a **sound mind**. (KJV)

And that's not a particularly bad translation, because the Greek word σοφρον is the combination of two other roots, one of which (φρεν) refers to your mind.

What does your mind have to do with self-discipline? Well, actually everything! I ran across this quote: **"If you don't control what you think, you can't control what you do."**

We are who, what, and where we are today because of our decisions, and we make decisions because of what we think. Andy Andrews says,

"I am where I am today—mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and financially—because of decisions I have made. My decisions have always been governed by my thinking. Therefore, I am where I am today—mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and financially—because of how I think. Today I will begin the process of changing where I am—mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and financially—by changing the way I think."

Many of us need to start thinking the right things so that we will start going in the direction we want.

## Background Passage:

How do you best set yourself up to think right? I love this verse:

Philippians 4:8 – Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

If you look at each of those eight adjectives that are supposed to filter what we think about, you'll realize that the one thing that best fits his list is Scripture.

If we want to think right, we need to spend time in God's Word.

Now finally to the key passage for today:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

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2315 θεοπνευστος theopneustos {theh-op'-nyoo-stos} - adj

AV - given by inspiration of God 1; 1

1) inspired by God

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1319 διδασκαλία didaskalia {did-as-kal-ee'-ah} - n f

AV - doctrine 19, teaching 1, learning 1; 21

1) teaching, instruction

2) teaching

2a) that which is taught, doctrine

2b) teachings, precepts

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1650 ελεγχος elegchos {el'-eng-khos} - n m

AV - reproof 1, evidence 1; 2

1) a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested

2) conviction

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1882 επανορθοσις epanorthosis {ep-an-or'-tho-sis} - n f

AV - correction 1; 1

1) restoration to an upright or right state

2) correction, improvement of life or character

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3809 παιδεία paideia {pahee-di'-ah} - n f

AV - chastening 3, nurture 1, instruction 1, chastisement 1; 6

1) the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment) It also includes the training and care of the body

2) whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions.

2a) instruction which aims at increasing virtue

2b) chastisement, chastening, (of the evils with which God visits men for their amendment)

Bottom line, God's Word tells us what to believe, tells us when we're going in the wrong direction, tells us how to correct our course, and nurtures us to become righteous.

1822 εξαρτιζο exartizo {ex-ar-tid'-zo} - v

AV - accomplish + 1096 1, thoroughly furnish 1; 2

1) to complete, finish

1a) to furnish perfectly

1b) to finish, accomplish, (as it were, to render the days complete)

And God's Word does it thoroughly. I love the KJV here: "thoroughly furnished" for good works. This reminds me of my first apartment after college. I rented a nice little "furnished" one bedroom apartment. It had a couch, chair, and table in the living room. It had a refrigerator and little dining room table in the kitchen. (I had my own bedroom stuff.) But the first time I went in there to eat a meal, I looked in the fridge and it was empty. And there wasn't anything in the pantry. And there weren't even any plates, glasses, or silverware in the cupboard. And, if you can believe it, I went into the bathroom and there was no toothbrush or toothpaste, no brush, and no toilet paper. I still had to supply more stuff to be able to live there.

That apartment may have been furnished, but it wasn't *thoroughly* furnished!

But God's Word tells us here that it thoroughly furnishes us to live and serve as a follower of Christ. Wow! It gives us *everything* we need, not just the basics.

## Application:

Josh Hunt says that it is extremely unlikely for anyone to be an effective disciple of Jesus if they do not spend time in God's Word nearly every day.

I'm not saying that reading the Bible is more important than praying. I believe that committing yourself to daily Bible reading will have the greatest positive impact of any single thing I could ask you to do. Look at these statistics:

There are significant differences in the moral behaviors and spiritual maturity of believers who read or listen to the Bible **at least four times a week compared to those who read or hear Scripture less often or never at all**. In fact, such engagement motivates service for God and impacts the world for Him (through helping in church, loving the unlovely, reaching out to the needy).

There are **no statistical differences** in the behaviors of those who read/listen to the Bible one to three times weekly and those who spend zero days doing so. That is, the lives of Christians who rarely read the Bible appear identical to those who don't follow Christ at all.

Arnie Cole and Michael Ross, *Unstuck: Your Life. God's Design. Real Change*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012).

Are you willing to commit to spending time in God's Word each day? How about five days a week? \_\_\_\_\_

How much time? I suggest at least five minutes. At least an honest reflection on a paragraph. Or maybe an entire chapter.

I am going to commit to it. And I would love for us to hold each other accountable for it.

How can we do that? \_\_\_\_\_

For some additional resources, go to my web site and read the posts that come up under the Bible Study tag: <http://ministry.jabingham.com/tag/bible-study/>

## Conclusion

We talked a few months ago about how our choices attribute relative value to what we choose, and relative lack of value to what we choose against.

Whether or not we choose to spend time in God's Word each day makes exactly the same type of statement. What value are you giving God and His Word in your life each day? \_\_\_\_\_

Is that the way you want it? \_\_\_\_\_