

Prepare Your Heart: Look In

Take a little time to:

1. *Unplug from the noise.*
2. *Ask a few essential questions.*

Get away from the noise and distractions of life, and create an environment to look inward, quiet your mind, and really listen to your heart. Reflect and write about these questions:

What are some things you would like to change about yourself?

Think about your past attempts to change. Have you made resolutions or sweeping promises to change? How well did it work?

Often our desire to change is fueled by regret — does regret generally propel you forward or hold you back? Be specific as to why you answered how you did.

In areas of your life or character that you know you need to change, are resistant to God's grace?

What is the message about spiritual formation in these scriptures?

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12–13

For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:9–10

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? 4 Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God[a] supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? Galatians 3:1–5

Create a simple but clear statement that summarizes what “spiritual formation” is in your own words. Include thoughts on who does what in the changing of your heart and character.

What distracts you from focusing on the change or the spiritual formation you desire?

How can we know when to relax and trust God, and when we need to exert more effort?

Now, quickly make a list of words that come to mind as POSSIBILITIES for your word in 2022 ... don't worry, you'll be fine tuning these words and narrowing them down, but let your mind flow freely now and write as *many* words as come to mind. You'll narrow these down in the next few weeks.

The **WHY** is **ALWAYS** more important than the **WHAT!!!**

My One Word. Ashcraft, Mike; Olsen, Rachel. Zondervan.

One Word That Will Change Your Life. Dan Britton, Jimmy Page, and Jon Gordon. Wiley.

Discover Your Word: Look Up

Spend some time with God to:

1. Unplug from the noise.
2. Ask yourself a few essential questions.

You probably don't have any idea what your word is going to be this New Year and please don't rush! Instead of randomly picking a word, allow God to let *His* word choose you. Your word will come! If you are open, the word always comes, a word that is meant for you to help you become all God wants you to be! If you believe it, if you ask Him for it, you will receive it. With that said, there are some questions you can ask yourself to have a receptive heart.

What areas of your life do you struggle with? Anxiety? Finances? Loneliness? Control? Addiction? Boredom? Jot down those words now:

How does these texts speak to you?

God's righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him. There's no distinction. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, but all are treated as righteous freely by his grace because of a ransom that was paid by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:23

Therefore, once you have your minds ready for action and you are thinking clearly, place your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Don't be conformed to your former desires, those that shaped you when you were ignorant. But, as obedient children, you must be holy in every aspect of your lives, just as the one who called you is holy. It is written, You will be holy, because I am holy. 1 Peter 1:16

What Bible verse speaks to your heart? Once you identify what your struggles are, consider Bible verses that address that particular thing. Some Bible indexes will help, but Google any word + SCRIPTURE and you'll find lists of text. Once you read through scripture that address your primary identified struggle, choose 1 or 2 scriptures that speak to you.

What areas in your life have you NOT surrendered? Our goal is for God would mold us more and more into His image & this means we must be willing to allow Him into every part of our hearts. "*But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.*" (Isaiah 64:8) Consider those things you have not been able/willing to turn over to God.

What are you passionate about? The things you *love* the most may be the key to your word of the year. Jot down things that are important to you, ways you like to spend your time, etc. *1 Corinthians 10:31 says: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Which Fruit of the Spirit most resonates with your heart? We should display these characteristics at *all* times but is there a SPECIFIC word that God is leading YOU toward? If so, explore that word more deeply. *Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control. Galatians 5:22-23*

What is God telling you in prayer? With intentional, quiet, one-on-one time with God, He *will* give us the wisdom you seek. Jot down the words that come to your mind after reading these texts. *But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask. James 1:5*

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. Ephesians 1:17

I will bless the Lord who advises me; even at night I am instructed in the depths of my mind. I always put the Lord in front of me; I will not stumble because he is on my right side. Psalm 16:7-8

Now, make a list of any words that have been swirling in your head.

Have you ever played word games on a road trip? There are so many of them but *The Categories* word game starts with a person selecting a particular category of items and each player must take turns naming items in that category until no one can think of any more items to add. Like ... things to bring to the beach? (towel, sunscreen, shovel, etc.) or items found in a kitchen? (plates, oven, mixer, etc.) or names of candy bars? (Snickers, Milky Way, Butterfinger, etc.). Pick of to 5 of the words you just listed and add other words that would fit in its category. i.e. if your word is THANKFUL, let all the words associated with thankful to flow onto the paper. (Grateful, happy, glad, humble, appreciate, etc.) ASK GOD TO GUIDE YOU! If one word leads to another write that down as well.

NEXT WEEK we'll begin narrowing down words ... again, be patient ... let God do His part!

“Your word of the year is shorthand for the person you want to become ... it’s something that will help remind you why it is important to make good choices in life and how doing so can make your life more rewarding each day and your relationships, with God and others, even STRONGER. *Victoria Riollano*”