

THE ABCD's FOR A BETTER YEAR IN 2022
New Year Sermon
Next Steps Devotional Guide
December 26, 2021
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1. Think back over previous years. What New Year's resolutions or goals did you make? Did you reach them? If so, which ones and how did you feel? Which ones did you not reach and why? How did you feel?
2. In what ways would you like 2022 to be better or different from 2021 and why?
3. Read Proverbs 17:24 in your sermon notes. For 2022, what specific steps or decisions should you make to do what this verse emphasizes?
4. We live in an age where people no longer want accountability or to be responsible for the decisions and choices they make. Read Galatians 6:5 in your sermon notes in point #1-(a). How could you do what Galatians 6:5 says?
 - (a) We live in an age where people want to blame others for the choices they make or others make. Politicians blame business owners and vendors for the looting and increase in crime and murder in their cities. Others blame those because of the color of their skin or ethnicity. It is easy to point the finger and use excuses to accuse someone else or others and even blame God for one's own choices. Read Genesis 3:11-12 in your sermon notes. When have you done this and what happened? What did you learn from this?
 - (b) Read Proverbs 22:13a in your sermon notes in point #1-(b). When you encounter someone who makes excuses for their bad choices, how do you feel and react? Why?
 - (c) Read 2 Samuel 12:13 in your sermon notes in point #1-(c). David accepted full responsibility for his sin and coverup before Nathan the prophet. Do you consistently accept full responsibility or are there times you pass the blame? Why?
5. Read Hebrews 11:1, 6 from your Bible. What does this tell you about applying faith in your own life?
 - (a) Read Philippians 4:13 in your sermon notes under point #2. This verse is almost as famous and popular as John 3:16 among Christians. We buy Christians cards and coffee mugs and T-shirts with this very on it as a means to encourage others and witness. Yet, so few Christians really ever believe it when their own world falls apart or they get bad news. On a scale of 0-100, what "score" would you give yourself that demonstrates truthfully your belief, practice and application of this verse? Why this score?
 - (b) God used a lot of people in the Bible who took God at His word. Moses was 80-years-old when God told Moses He was going to use him to free around 2 million Hebrews in slavery in Egypt. God called Abraham at the age of 100 to be the father of the Jewish nation. God called Jeremiah, a teenager who battle depression, to be His prophet. God called "foot-in-the-mouth" Peter to be head of the church in Jerusalem. What does this tell you about God using you with all your bad habits, hang-ups and hurts?
 - (c) To be used by God and to have a better years in 2022, two things are required: you must accept responsibility for your own life and two, believe that God will give you power to change. Does this describe you? Why or why not?
6. We live in an age with so many choices that it is overwhelming. In the old days we only had 3 TV networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC) and they signed off at midnight. Now we have hundreds of 24 hour TV channels. In the old days, we only had Coca-Cola. Now we have diet Coke, Cherry Coke, Decaffeinated Coke, Decaffeinated DietCoke and etc. Therefore, many people experience what is called "the paralysis of analysis." They over think something and have difficulty make a choice as to what they want.
 - (a) Read Genesis 1:26a in your sermon notes under point #3. What does it mean to you "to be created in God's image" and why?
 - (b) Read Job 34:3-4 in your sermon notes. This verse tells us to "define what is good." Meaning — define what is important to you. Most people never write down what is important to them. You can't do what's important until you clarify what's important. Have you ever done this? If so, how did it benefit? If not, why?
 - (c) There is a difference between what is urgent and what is important. Charles Hummel, in his book, *The Tyranny of the Urgent* encourages us not to let the urgent take the place of the important in our lives. He writes this: *"Oh the urgent will really fight, claw, and scream for attention. It will plead for our time and even make us think we've done the right thing by calming its nerves. But the tragedy of it all is this: While we were putting out the fires of the urgent, the important was again left in a holding pattern . . . the important is neither noisy nor demanding. Unlike the urgent, it patiently and quietly waits for us to realize its significance. There is something tyrannical about the deadlines of demands and the shouts of the urgent. They have a way of eclipsing the important."*¹
 - (d) Read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:26 in your sermon notes under point #3-(a). The "important" is your values because they determine vision. Once you decided your values, then you have vision to see your roles and that helps you decide your goals. If you aim at nothing you're going to hit it. Write down 2-3 things you value. Values help you separate the important from the urgent. Ask yourself, *"What do I really value?"*
 - (e) Read James 4:2 in your sermon notes in point #3-(b). Spend some time asking God in prayer what is it you should really valued. What did God tell you?

¹Charles E. Hummel, *The Tyranny of the Urgent*, p. 4.

- (f) Read 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:23 in your sermon notes under point #3. The question is going to be between good, better and best. Some things aren't necessarily wrong; they're just not necessary. To make 2022 a better year than 2021, you need to ask yourself this question, "*What is going to last?*" A lot of things are not going to last because they are urgent, not important. Now, review your list of values you made in the previous points above. Which of these are going to last?
7. Read Ecclesiastes 11:4 in your sermon notes under point #4. The phrase people use more than any to not start on changing is, "*When things settled down I will . . .*" The truth is — the only time life is going to settle down is when they settle you down in the grave. Life must be enjoyed under imperfect circumstances. Whatever you're going to do that you want to do, get on with it now!
- (a) Everyone is vulnerable to procrastination. Even people who are called "drivers" — people who push themselves as well as everyone else to get things done regardless of the cost to a relationship — even "drivers" procrastinate on some things — mainly relationships. There are many reasons people procrastinate, but the three top ones are: perfectionism, fear of failure and false belief of having more time in the future.. Do either one of these describe you? Which ones and how have they kept you from fulfilling goals?
- (b) Each of these 3 (i.e., perfectionism, fear of failure, and false belief of having more time in the future) and especially perfectionism, produces paralysis. Meaning — we wait until that perfect moment comes to do that goal. But the truth is, that perfect moment never comes. People say, "*I have always wanted to do _____ and when I have more time, I will.*" Studies show that only 3% of Americans have written down goals and those 3% are in the top wage earners in our culture. What does this tell you?
- (c) You were given an acrostic on the word smart — S.M.A.R.T — to help you set goals. Look at this in your sermon notes in point #4.
- (i) S = Nothing become dynamic until it becomes specific. Don't say, "*I want to lose weight.*" Say, "*I want to lose 15 pounds.*" You cannot measure what is not specific. Do not set goals for other people. You cannot set a goal you have no control over. Don't say, "*My goal is to get my spouse to lose 25 pounds.*"
- (ii) M = If you are excited, thrilled and motivated to do a goal, it dies.
- (iii) A = One reason people fail in achieving their goals is they set them too high. Don't say, "*My goal is to pray 3 hours/day.*" Probably not going to happen. If you can't reach or attain to a goal, you get discouraged and you give ups.
- (iv) R = Goals must be based on values and priorities. This makes them appropriate, pertinent, reasonable, and relevant.
- (v) T = you have to be able to track you progress otherwise you will never know you reached that goal.
- (d) So, let's look at the life of Jesus with these SMART goals. Read Luke 2:52 in your sermon notes in point #4. We are told four goals Jesus reached. As you look at these, what is one SMART goal you could do in each of these four areas like Jesus below:
- (i) Jesus grew in wisdom Luke 2:52 says. That means He grew intellectually. All leaders are learners. The moment you stop learning, you stop leading. Read Proverbs 19:8 in point #4-(a) under the heading, "*Based On Luke 2:52, Here Are Some Suggestions.*" In 2022, what is something you want to learn?
- (ii) Jesus grew in statue Luke 2:52 says. That means Jesus grew physically. Read both translations of Proverbs 17:22 in your sermon notes in point #4-(b) under the heading, "*Based On Luke 2:52, Here Are Some Suggestions.*" In 2022, what can you do to improve your health?
- (iii) Jesus grew in favor with God Luke 2:52 says. Jesus grew spiritually and deeper in His relationship with God the Father. Read 2 Peter 3:18 in your sermon notes in point #4-(c) under the heading, "*Based On Luke 2:52, Here Are Some Suggestions.*" In 2022, what can you do to deepen your relationship with God? What one thing would make the biggest difference in your relationship with God in 2022? Maybe it is to take Class 101 or Class 201, or Class 301 or Class 401 at Southside. Maybe it is to have a consistent quiet time with God. What is it for you?
- (iv) Jesus grew in favor with people Luke 2:52 says. Read 1 Peter 4:10 in your sermon notes in point #4-(d) under the heading, "*Based On Luke 2:52, Here Are Some Suggestions.*" God did not save you for you to sit, soak and saturate. He saved you for you to serve others as well. In 2022, ask yourself, "Where in my church can I serve God by serving others?"
- (e) Read Romans 7:18-20 and Ephesians 6:10. You cannot reach these SMART goals on your own. You need the power of God in your life. Readied purposes without real power rapidly perishes over time. In each of your SMART goals, how do you need to depend on God's power to do these?
8. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid for three things. Read these in your sermon notes along with the verses that go with each point. How do these 3 biblical truths help you fulfill your SMART goals?
9. Most people never reach their potential because they give up too soon for all kinds of reasons. Most people do not like change. It was Mark Twain who said, "*The only one who likes change is a wet baby.*"² To reach your SMART goals, what is going to have to change for you and why?
10. Read Proverbs 27:23-24 and Ephesians 5:16 in your sermon notes in point #4. Entropy is a term in physics from the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. It means that energy eventually runs out. We let the urgent overtake the important and we run out of energy to do our SMART goals. What will you need to do to prohibit this from happening in your own life in 2022?

²Charles R. Swindoll, *The Finishing Touch*, pp. 10-11.