

chapter 1

the
story
of

One Word

Every New Year, 87 percent of adults—more than 206 million people—create new goals and resolutions, only to experience the same frustrating results: false starts and failure. In fact, 50 percent of resolution makers will fail by the end of January! You read that right. Only half of us stick to our convictions for even 30 days. Most resolutions are long forgotten by summer. We derail and give up. That’s why an endless number of books and articles are written each year promising a “new you” and “your best life now.”

87 percent of us make
New Year’s resolutions
every year!

While these resolutions are meant to be good and well-intentioned solutions, unfortunately they are built on a flawed foundation of more effort, willpower, and goal setting. We set “to do” goals instead of “to be” goals. Success is measured by what we accomplish instead of who we become. Making resolutions convinces us that all we have to do is roll up our sleeves again and

get to work. The practice encourages us to put the power of life change in our *heads and hands* with a game plan to change *our habits* and then turns us loose. This approach ignores the most important part of life change—*the heart*.

We have also done our fair share of goal setting and resolution making at the start of each New Year, only to experience the same frustrating outcome. You know the routine. Try and fail; move forward and fall backward. Our hope was to get better by setting goals and making resolutions, but we always came up short.

The most important part of life change is a change of the heart.

We felt the sting of failure, followed by frustration and guilt. Whether we wanted to effect change in our marriage, our health, our workplace, or our finances, we agreed that we wanted things to be different. Yet we were also living the definition of *insanity*: doing the same things over and over again and expecting different results. We've all

heard the saying, “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you always got.” Time and time again, our best intentions crashed and burned.

Something Needed to Change

In 1999 we discovered the solution to failed resolutions and unrealized goals. Instead of trying to develop more willpower, we found a simple way to live more powerfully. Instead of creating goals and resolutions, we found a single word that would be our driving force for the year. No goals. No resolutions. Just *One Word!* We simply developed a *One Word* theme for the year. It became a *One Word* vision for everything, and it changed our lives.

We decided to try a radical new approach to the New Year!

By simplifying our approach, we discovered the secret to life change. Our formula is not rooted in our strength and resolve, but in surrender

and simplicity. It is not based on temporary inspiration or on the latest pep talk. It's found in narrowing our focus, because we believe less is best. For us, simplicity created clarity, power, and passion.

Some of you are probably thinking, "*One Word?*" That's right, *just a single word*. Not a phrase, not a statement, not a list—just a single word.

Our initial desire was to create a well-crafted mission statement or cool slogan, because something inside us always wants to make things more complicated than they need to be. But the truth is, people do not remember paragraphs or even sentences. Such complexity leads to procrastination and even paralysis. *One Word* is sticky and memorable. We've never forgotten our word!

We've learned firsthand that the secret to a simplified life is *One Word*. Words like *Serving*, *Purpose*, *Grace*, *Surrender*, *Power*, and *Discipline* have shaped and molded us in amazing ways. By embracing, owning, and living a single word for 365 days, our lives changed. Instead of being

weighed down with unrealistic resolutions and unmet goals, *One Word* provides a whole new perspective on how we approach our year. It frees us up. *One Word* gives us renewed purpose and meaning.

One Word creates
laserlike focus
that lasts.

For us, this *One Word* process has created laserlike focus throughout the year. It has become a driving force and stretches us in all six dimensions of life—spiritually, physically, mentally, relationally, emotionally, and financially. We've been transformed in many ways through this process, and we promise you'll experience transformation, too.

Our Stories

Everyone has his or her own story of experiencing the *One Word* process and the impact it makes. We'd like to share our stories with you.

Dan's Story

In 1999, my friend Steve Fitzhugh and I were traveling to Ocean City, Maryland, to speak at a large youth conference. On this cold December drive, Steve asked me what my theme would be for the upcoming year. After taking several minutes to think about all that I wanted to accomplish, I responded with all my hopes and dreams for the New Year. He listened patiently as I shared an inspiring speech of all the significant changes that would take place.

Steve responded, "That's great, Dan, but I asked for one word, not a sermon."

After considerably more contemplation, I responded with my slogan: "Live it out."

Steve challenged me again, saying, "Dan, that's still not one word."

I grew aggravated with my own inability to sum it up in a single word. It was too difficult to summarize in a single word all of my lofty goals, my massive game plan for the year, and those soon-to-be dramatic life changes.

I told Steve I needed more time to pray and think about it. Several weeks later, I called Steve and told him my word for the year was *Intimacy*, because I desired to have greater intimacy in all areas of my life, including my relationships with my wife, my family, my friends, and God. As a father, husband, friend, leader, and athlete, I was transformed and went to a deeper level in all my relationships. It was the year of *Intimacy*.

Jimmy's Story

From our earliest days as friends, Dan and I pushed each other to be our very best. So when Dan described the idea of narrowing the focus for greater life change, I was all in. I was craving simplicity, but drowning in my endless list of things to improve. Year after year, every single word—from *Go* to *Surrender* to *Power*—has changed me and the direction of my life in remarkable ways.

But the *One Word* that packed the biggest punch came in 2011—*Life*. For such a small word, it had a huge impact!

Personally, I thought it was going to be an easy year, but I couldn't have been more wrong. I quickly discovered that some of the words I spoke to those I loved most were not bringing life, but were critical and demanding. As an encourager, I saw this as an opportunity to get it right. I then discovered that, even though I'm a health nut, some of the food I ate was not bringing me life at all. And when I started to listen to my thoughts, I realized I had some negative, self-defeating patterns of thinking that were preventing me from attempting great things and from living life to the fullest. I then took a look at my relationships and realized I had plenty of opportunities to be giving life to those around me, but that I was missing some. At work, the same was true. It was difficult to face the facts, but it was exhilarating to experience progress in all areas of my life.

Jon's Story

Dan and Jimmy shared the *One Word* concept with me, and I thought it was a brilliant idea.

I passed it on to my wife and kids, and they all came up with their own *One Word* vision.

My word was *Purpose*. I was going to be traveling a ton that year to deliver keynotes around the country, and, over time, airplanes, airports, and grueling schedules can wear me down. However, by focusing on my purpose to make a difference, I knew it would fuel me, replenish me, and keep me going on the road and at home. I knew that if I kept my purpose bigger than my challenges, I would be as energized all year long.

My wife's word was *Intentional*. She realized she wanted to do more things with intention and to be intentional about her life, her decisions, and her health.

My 12-year-old daughter's word was *Drive*. I joked that my wife came up with the word for her, because she needs to spend more time studying than texting friends.

My 10-year-old son came up with the word *Focus*. As soon as I asked him about his word, he said *Focus* without hesitation. He wanted to focus more at school and on the tennis court.

Our *One Words* became a driving force in our lives and family; even my daughter was more motivated than ever. I saw the power *One Word* can have and had to share it with others.

Since that time, I have shared Dan and Jimmy's *One Word* process with countless audiences, companies, schools, and even NFL teams. The feedback has been incredible. And I know first-hand the power *One Word* can have on the lives of all who discover, live, and share their word.

Tap into the Power

Every time we share the *One Word* process, it strikes a chord in our audiences. It's a catalyst for immediate focus and life change . . . one so powerful that we wanted to share it with as many people as possible.

That's why we wrote this book.