

The City Life Church

January 18, 2020

Title: Direction; not Perfection

Introduction:

A resolution is nothing more than a spoken desire. It's communicating an area of our life that we wish was better.

Recent studies show just 8 percent of people keep their resolutions.

If people are giving up in seventeen days on eating better, saving money, or spending more time with family, what are they going to do when Jesus says in Matthew 5:48: **“Be perfect as I am perfect?”**

Because it can seem, at times, in today's world, that perfection is expected.

- I need to be a perfect husband
- I must be a perfect wife
- I have to be a perfect parent who keeps a perfect home
- And I better be a perfect Christian and a perfect leader
- I mean, fill in the blank: *I must be a perfect*_____.

Going into 2020, I'd like to challenge us tonight to change our mindset from the cultural and the self-imposed pressure of perfection and focus instead on a “direction.”

Our focus should be on him and our actions motivated by a greater desire *to think, speak, and act more like him* this year than last.

Based on your current direction, what would you say is your destination?

Core Verse: Proverbs 4:25-27. “Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”

In *Louder than Words*, Andy Stanley said, “If we aren’t intentionally cautious, we may end up unintentionally corralled by the very vices we’ve always condemned.”

The Apostle Paul said, “**Wake up, O sleeper.** Be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools but live like those who are wise” (Eph 5:14-17).

Vacation clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhIR3vidvp0>

I read about these distractions in Pastor Carey Nieuwhof’s book, *Didn’t See it Coming*.

The first detour that draws us away from our destination of Jesus is COMPROMISE.

The tension is highlighted in Galatians 5:17, “The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is the opposite of what the Spirit wants. These two forces are constantly fighting each other.”

Compromise is our sinful nature’s way to give space for sin to release some of the tension within.

In Matthew Syed’s book, *Black Box Thinking*, he said, “Self-justification is insidious. Lying to oneself destroys the very possibility of learning.”

We have a tendency to place more emphasis on **competency** (what we do) than on **character** (who we are).

So how do we measure character?

Question we can ask ourselves to get insight on our character:

1. Is there a growing gap between my public life and my private life?

2. Am I hiding things?

3. Do I follow through on what I've said?

4. Lastly, is life all about me?

In *The Best Question Ever*, Andy Stanley said, “There are rarely any immediate consequences for neglecting single installments of time in any arena of life.”

But, “neglect has a cumulative effect.”

So how do we get back on the track this year?

I believe the way back to our destination; our on-ramp to developing stronger character is:

STEADFAST FAITH.

All the little compromises we make are internally bartered and negotiated.

Compromise means we've decided in the moment to choose something other than what Jesus offers because we believe this is “better” than that.

In Jordan Peterson's *12 Rules for Life*, he said, “Faith is being willing to learn from what you don't know yet. That kind of faith will sacrifice the current self for the self that could be.”

The second exit is CYNICISM.

Cynicism strikes directly at our hearts and changes our perceptions of others.

In Ecclesiastes 1:8, Solomon said, “The more knowledge, the more grief.”

My point is this: When we close our heart to people, we close our heart to God.

Howard Hendricks said, “Discouragement (or cynicism) is the anesthetic the devil uses on people just before he reaches in and carves out their heart.”

But there is a way back. Just like those caught in compromise, there is a way back.

This is an on-ramp for the brave.

It’s an on-ramp of SUPERNATURAL HOPE.

I define hope as “forward-facing confidence in the sovereignty of God”.

That confidence is seen in Hebrews 6:9, “Hope is an anchor for the soul.”

The last detour we must avoid is DISCONNECTION.

We’re in an interesting time as we face a twenty-first century paradox: We’ve never been more connected as a culture (thanks to technology) and yet we’ve never felt more disconnected.

In one study of Americans ages 19 to 32, the top 25 percent of social media users were twice as likely to report feeling lonely as the people using it the least.

Listen to this fact: Nearly half of Americans today say they are lonely and in the UK the problem was so severe that the PM appointed Tracey Couch as the first “Minister for Loneliness.”

Vivek Murthy, the previous US Surgeon General called loneliness a “growing health epidemic” that said social isolation is “associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day.”

Because of the disconnection and the reliance on emails, text messaging, and social media, we have lost our ability to have *Genuine Conversations*.

I read an article the other day called, “*Texting: A brilliant way to miscommunicate how you feel and misinterpret what other people mean.*”

It’s interesting that every conversation about relationships talks about communication.

“If you want a healthy relationship or a healthy marriage, you must communicate.”

And yet, very few people ever read and study communication.

And why?

Because people think they are already great communicators!

And ALL communication and connections begin and ends with a CONVERSATION!

Brian Grazer, Oscar-winning producer of *A Beautiful Mind* and *Apollo 13* wrote in his book, *A Curious Mind*, that he practices what he calls “**curiosity conversations**” where he seeks to learn about something or someone.

Grazer said, “What changed the direction of my relationships and increased my ability to connect with someone, was to look them in the eye and signal to them that I genuinely wanted to learn about them and from them. Once I started doing that, everything changed.”

If you really could care less about what other people think, feel, and want...then you need to look for our last on-ramp to GET BACK heading in the direction toward Jesus.

The on-ramp is SELFLESS LOVE.

We learn selfless love by focusing on others.

As you have probably picked up, the three ways back from compromise, cynicism, and disconnection to looking more and more like Jesus are FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE.

If you want *Steadfast Faith, Supernatural Hope, and Selfless Love*, then make your way up for prayer!

1% BETTER EVERY DAY

1% worse every day for one year. $0.99^{365} = 00.03$

1% better every day for one year. $1.01^{365} = 37.78$

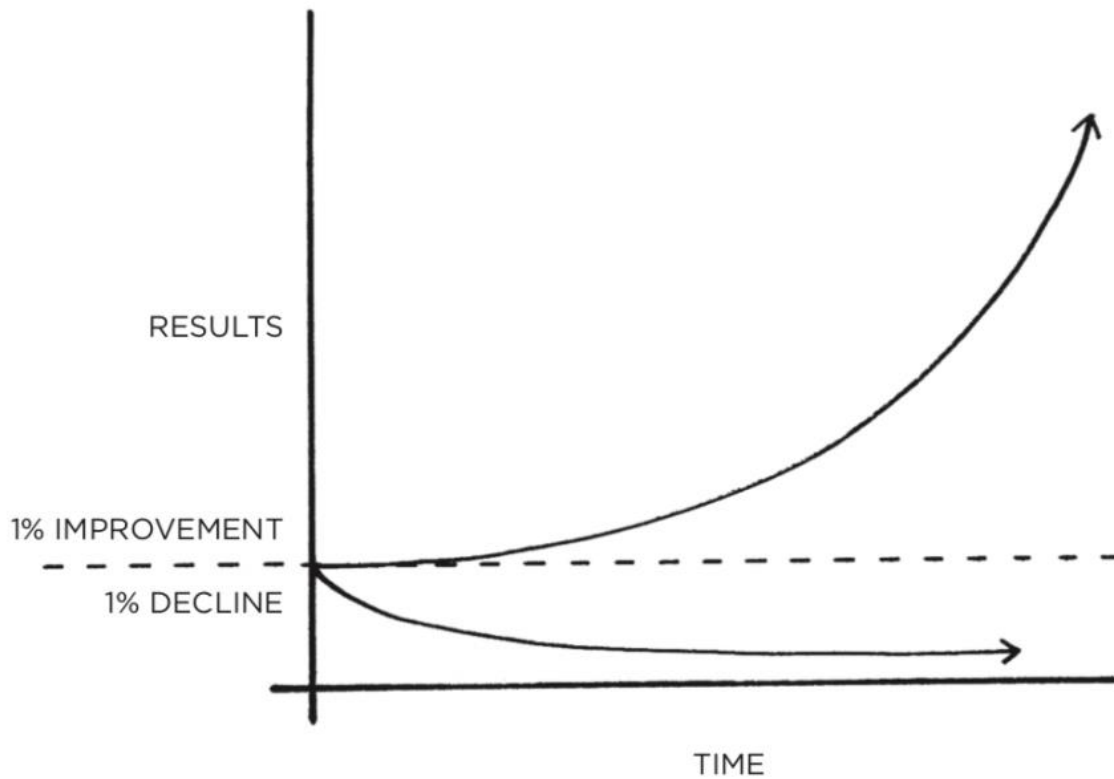


FIGURE 1: The effects of small habits compound over time. For example, if you can get just 1 percent better each day, you'll end up with results that are nearly 37 times better after one year.