

TITLE SLIDE

Brothers ... it's a brand new year.

And with that new year comes opportunities: for new starts, better performance, new goals and a chance to achieve more than we did this past year.

In preparing for this short segment, the Holy Spirit gave me not just one word, but 4
Reset, Review, Remind and Recommit

- Reset ... The concept of Holiness
- Review ... Why we are here AND why we pursue holiness
- Remind ... Us all on why holiness is needed in our broken world
- Recommit ... To the passionate pursuit of that same holiness

You know, I first met the owner of the Cleveland Browns in 1994 soon after I began working for Pilot Travel Centers. At the time, he was the CEO of our company and 25+ years away from owning an NFL team. He was the hardest working man I've ever met and he is also a fantastic leader. He had a saying he used to tell us all the time. Pay attention because there are 4 parts to it - "Work hard, Think like an owner, Play as a Team and Do it with passion"

These words apply to Men of Covenant as well by just adding a few words of our own:

1. Work hard - at being a Holier man: Study God's Word, Pray, Worship & Fellowship
 - At Pilot there was no substitute for doing vs talking, **doing** is what changed things, produced value and grew the company. The same is true for a Man of Covenant – you've got to show up/work hard. To paraphrase James ... Do what the Word says.
2. Think like an owner - Live your life like the One who you've given your life to: think like Jesus
 - At Pilot every single person was bonused based on profit goals. When the company won, we all won. When you think like an owner, you just make better decisions for the organization, you are simply less selfish. The more you think like Jesus, the smaller YOU become and the more His kingdom benefits. Think like YOUR owner!
3. Play as a Team - Don't go it alone but pursue holiness with other Christian brothers
 - At Pilot lone wolves did not do well. We coached, led and paid people based on common goals and the ONLY great work we accomplished took many hands all working toward the same outcome. If you're not already, get plugged into a Band of Brothers and you'll experience the blessing of holy growth thru a team of brothers in Christ.
4. Do it with Passion - Take this pursuit of Holiness on with a burning passion to grow it over time
 - At Pilot you had to be "all-in" to be part of the team. It was almost impossible to get hired if you were not in love with our mission. You had to care about the outcomes more than the paychecks. God wants that same kind of passion directed toward Him. He want's us to be "all-in" for His Kingdom purposes.

This **NEW YEAR** I am asking God to give me strength to work hard at holiness by doing the things it takes to actually BE more holy, **and** to think more like Jesus would think **and** to stay close to my Band of Brothers **and**, finally to keep my passions focused on Christ and not on the worldly things around me.

RESET SLIDE

Why do I and why do we seek holiness?

- Because we must
- Why must we?
- In order to see the Lord!

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” – Hebrews 12:14

Now this verse is not saying that if you don't pursue holiness, you won't be saved ... its about our walk here on earth. Every man in this room wants to be closer to God. Every man in this room wants to walk in intimate fellowship with Him.

The message we read in Hebrews is simple ... want that intimacy?
Pursue holiness

And a **NEW YEAR** is a perfect moment to **RESET** ourselves to that very mission

Will you be holier this **NEW YEAR** than last? Will you work hard at it?

Is your heart burning with passion for the lord to live a life that reflects His character?

How will YOU change today, tomorrow and this coming year to better align with your title of “Christian” and “Child of God?”

Do you look like, walk like and talk like a child of the most holy God?

JC Ryle said in his book “Holiness” that “your life is an argument that none can escape” and what he meant by that is the things do, your actual behaviors, are what indicates the spiritual changes within a man.

To add a bit of context to these words, let's read the rest of that section of his book:

A man's life, he says, is "the silent sermon, which all can read. Your sermon is either for the Devils or Gods cause. You may talk to persons about the doctrines of the gospels, and few will listen, and still fewer will understand. But your life is an argument that none can escape."

In other words, the life you live is your testimony to the world around you of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that lives in you and proof of your love for Jesus.

He goes on to clarify what he means by “your life” ... and he minces no words:

“I do not ask whether you attend church regularly – whether you have been baptized , and received the Lord's supper – whether you have the name of Christian – I ask something more than all this: Are you holy or are you not?” I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others – whether you like to read the lives of holy people, and to talk of holy things, and to have on your table holy books – whether you mean to be holy, and hope you will be holy someday – I ask something further: Are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?”

Ryles words stung as I read them for the first time. Why? Because I'm no where near where I want to be, but his challenge sparks a new life in this **NEW YEAR** of my pursuit of holiness.

Sometimes it takes words like Ryle's to remind us that we ALL need to be pulled back from the earthly focus that dominates our daily lives in order to complete a **RESET** and live a more spiritual and fruitful life that honors and glorifies our Creator.

REVIEW SLIDE

When a **NEW YEAR** clicks by, the word "resolution" gets used a lot

A New Years Resolution is to make a promise, usually to yourself, that you will take action to improve something about yourself. It may be starting a behavior you wish you were already doing or stopping a habit you wish you never had begun.

A Forbes survey found the following resolutions to be the most common, and NONE of them will surprise you

- Improve my mental health, raise my fitness level, improve my diet, lose some weight

The biggest problem with New Years resolutions is that they depend on you alone to fulfill them – they are essentially a contract or a promise to yourself. So how good are we at fulfilling those contracts we make every December 31st? Not good at all. Just 11% of New Years resolutions last at least six months, with almost a third of them flaming out in under 2. In fact failing at New Year's resolutions is so common that January 17 has been designated as "Ditch New Year's Resolutions Day"

Listen, if you want to commit to losing some weight, learning a new skill or eating healthier – by all means, go for it! Just know that we are NOT very good at keeping promises to ourselves.

There are many reasons, but at the start is a lack of true commitment to the effort that's required to produce the desired result. Add to this that many times there is NO accountability, NO roadmap and rarely any support, in other words ... you're on your own.

BUT let's **REVIEW** why the Christian resolution is different!

- We are NOT alone – we have the God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help us
- We have accountability – The Holy Spirit convicts us when we stray
- We have support – The Holy Spirit encourages us to push forward
- We have a perfect instruction manual – God's holy word in the bible

In other words, the Christian resolution is different. It's chances of success are 100% to the believer that wants to succeed. Because WE have help! We have God as our accountability partner and GOD NEVER LOSES! His Holy Spirit gives us the power to obey the challenge Jesus sets before us in Matthew 16:24:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple **MUST deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'**"

Jesus says that we MUST “take up” our crosses if we are to follow him. When we resolve to FOLLOW Jesus, and to turn our backs on the world, we die to ourselves and want what GOD WANTS, not what we want. We shift our priorities to things that GOD wants us to do, not JUST what we want to do

That process of taking up our cross, dying to ourselves, becoming a NEW man and FOLLOWING Jesus, is NOT a hidden act. It’s visible. We change. Things in our lives change. What we care about changes – because of all that the world around us is changed for the better.

Why does THAT matter, well let’s REMIND ourselves ...

REMIND SLIDE

As Christian men pursuing holiness in this NEW YEAR, we need a REMINDER of why our Christian walk is so important to the world we are going to and critically important to the one we already live in

Our pursuit of holiness matters ... because we want to be the kind of Christian that is “obvious.” We want OUR LIVES to be OUR SERMONS.

- The passionate pursuit of holiness produces this “OBVIOUSNESS” in a Christian
- We want it to be OBVIOUS to all and anyone who we belong to, who we call “Lord”
- AND, when our resolution moves us to ACTION, we end up changing the world for Christ
- When the world has the light of Christ in it – it’s simply a BETTER world

Let me REMIND us why we need a better world AND why MEN must make it so ...

Because men cause most of the trouble in the world:

- Men commit nearly 80% of all violent crime in the US
- Men commit the majority of property crimes in US (62%)
- Almost 40% of inmates are from homes with an absent father
- Over 95% of rapes are committed by men

AND Because even with God, we have a sin nature:

- Over 50% of evangelical Christian men are in some sort of sexual sin
- And ALL of us STILL SIN – though as Christians, we despise that we do

AND because all men struggle at times:

- Men are 3x more likely to develop alcoholism than women
- 77% of men suffer from anxiety, stress or depression
- BUT 40% of men won’t talk to anyone about mental health
- Men are 4x more likely to commit suicide than women

Satan loves these statistics and he wants them as a legacy for all men

BUT ... The Men of Covenant, this very organization, this Saturday breakfast, each and every one of you represent a “push back” against these numbers. Each of you has made a commitment to a different path. Each of you sees the ugliness, the sin and the pain in our world and as a representative of Christ Himself, has chosen to shine God’s light into our world and to pursue holiness.

So, just how do we do this?

How exactly do we BE more holy? Not talk about holy, not study the concept of holy, not just read about holy but as JC Ryle said actually BE HOLY?

RECOMMIT SLIDE

The answer is that we recommit in the **NEW YEAR** to the bible inspired, holy spirit driven Men of Covenant process.

What does that look like? Well ...

We **RECOMMIT** to our mission – a mission describes WHY WE EXIST

- Our mission is: Pursuing holiness

We **RECOMMIT** to living out our 5 pledges– our pledges tell WHAT WE EXIST FOR

- Our commitment is: To God, Family, Church, Brother and Country

We **RECOMMIT** to engage in our MOC process – a process lays out HOW WE PURSUE HOLINESS

- Ours is a 2 step process:
 - MOC Saturday prayer breakfast
 - BOB monthly small group meetings (if you're not in one, you're missing out on THE most powerful part of the holiness growth process)

We **RECOMMIT** to fight our battle plan – a plan describes WHERE WE GROW IN HOLINESS

1. We: Study the Word and apply these lessons to our lives
 - We ask: What did the scripture say, what does it mean and how can I apply it to my life and my pursuit of Holiness?
2. We: Practice prayer and worship
 - Pray and worship daily, we pray for our brothers and we worship WITH believers in church
3. We: Exercise Christian fellowship and discipleship with other men
 - Confess our sins, we pray for each other, we are accountable and we share God's love

We **RECOMMIT** to walk our roadmap – a roadmap helps us TO STAY ON TRACK

- Our roadmap is: The MOC Member Guide

We **RECOMMIT** to using our tools – tools help us toward our goals - TO GET BETTER EVERY DAY

- How to share your sins and needs
- How to study the bible
- How to pray and worship

Lastly, BUT, MOST IMPORTANTLY **RESUBMIT** to God

- We have God on our side – and He created us for this very purpose, to be holy
- Jesus died so that we could even have the opportunity to pursue holiness
- and, the Holy Spirit powers our commitment and passion to achieve it

CLOSING

As attending members of “Men of Covenant” we pledge to behave in a certain manner. Our first pledge is a great way to close my message as we prepare for a brand **NEW YEAR**

The pledge we took is titled “God” and it’s a great way to reset, review, realign and recommit to our pursuit of holiness in the **NEW YEAR**.

I’ll read what it says ...

We will be Men of Covenant with God through faith in Christ. We will live out our faith with loyalty, commitment and passion. We will faithfully worship, preach the gospel, pray, read and obey the word and win the fight for sexual purity.

When I see the words in the pledge: “with loyalty, commitment and passion”, I’m reminded of the phrase I shared with you just a few minutes ago from the CEO of my company. “Work hard, Think like an owner, Play as a Team and Do it with passion” These are words that when taken as a whole mean you are living your life as an example of being “all in” – it’s a life focused on a mission with no reservations, no holding back and no regrets.

Jesus asks the same of us. He asks that we faithfully and fully embrace the LIVING OUT part of being a Christian Man. In fact it’s Jesus who says that whosoever will follow Him MUST take up his cross – an alliteration to the death of the old man and by inference the birth of a brand new one. Jesus himself is calling us to BE that new man, with no reservations, no holding back, no regrets.

AND ... Men of Covenant ABSOLUTELY MUST live our faith as that “ALL-IN” new man . . . Why??

Because the 2nd covenant pledge is about leading your family in the WISDOM OF GODS WAYS
After that we pledge to support the church with PRAYER AND SERVITUDE
Then we promise to disciple and PURSUE HOLINESS with other men
And, lastly, we pledge to STAND AGAINST the spirit of the age in our country

How can we do ANY OF THESE THINGS if we don’t first change ourselves by letting the Holy Spirit change us?

- Simply put, “WE” in the flesh - can’t
- BUT a NEW MAN filled with the Holy Spirit – he can

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the NEW creation has come: The old has gone, the NEW is here!” - 2 Corinthians 5:17

NEW INDEED!

- Because of Christ the “NEW” is here and the world is changed forever
- And this week, The NEW YEAR is here for each of us
- Let’s make it a year for a RENEWED man as well
- A NEW man, a passionate, all-in for God holier man an OBVIOUSLY Christian man
- A man who’s very life is his sermon

Amen

Kevin Palombi:

Before I leave the podium, let me share some background on our speaker for the day.

Kevin Palombi has always lived his life as if obstacles are things to quickly conquer and move on. In the 3rd grade, it was discovered that he had significant hearing loss and at just 8 or 9 years old he was fitted with hearing aids and has been wearing them ever since. I've spent time with Kevin through my friendship with his dad Dean, and I can tell you that Kevin does not let hearing his hearing disability define him.

He is an accomplished self-taught musician that can both sing and play guitar. If you want insight into Kevin's personality. Replay in your mind what I just said. The guy that has a hearing disability is an accomplished musician. When people speak with him or hear him play music they have no idea that he is hearing impaired until they see his hearing aids.

A few years ago, yet another challenge appeared in Kevin's life in the form of Leukemia known as CML. His symptoms began with night sweats and migraine headaches and by the prompting of his beautiful wife Lora, he decided to get checked out by a doctor.

The exam revealed that Kevin had an extremely high white blood cell count. Once diagnosed with CML he took oral cancer drugs for the next year in the hopes that he would go into full mission and could possibly be cured because he was so young.

God had a different plan. We look forward to Kevin sharing his story with you guys today.