



DATE	December 31, 2017
SPEAKER	Paul Clark
TITLE	Now What?
SERIES	The Advent season is filled with waiting, longing, looking. But then the Christ-child comes, is celebrated, and we're left staring at a New Year. Now What?

Introduction: The New Year is often a time of reflection and thinking about life going forward. And specifically asking—how will my life be different?

1. What are your thoughts about New Year Resolutions? What successes and failures have you had with making them? Did you make any this year?
2. Read *Matthew 22:34-40*: Pastor Paul described this as *longing for your heart to experience unwavering and joyful devotion to Jesus. Where your feelings, will, choices and affections, are consistently and joyfully aimed toward God*. Discuss your thoughts on this. What would you add or change to the statement?
3. Read *2 Chronicles 16:9*: As you consider moving forward into the New Year, what part does hope play? Can you share stories of the impact that was made when you did and did not have hope? What role does joyful devotion to Jesus play in a life with and without hope?
4. Read *Luke 6:45*: As you reflect on the things *stored up in your heart*, what is our part in making those things good? How might we better position ourselves to store up good rather than evil?
5. Pastor Paul described loving the Lord with all your soul as *experiencing a deep oneness with God. Where all the elements of your life are placed carefully around God, you've given Him center stage, and are allowing him to orchestrate all of the "sounds" of your life*.

He described an unhealthy soul...

- Mistakes itself for God and lives a life of self-importance
- Is enslaved to disordered desires and affections
- Is marked by internal and external conflict
- Is locked in performance to protect self-image

Rate yourself on the list above. Is God Center Stage or in the wings? Are the sounds of your life in harmony or out of tune?

6. Pastor Paul encouraged us to *practice the presence of God*. He described it as *a full awareness of God's presence as you go through each part of your day*. Obviously, there are jobs to perform, relationships to engage in, and tasks to manage. With that in mind, what do you think practicing the presence of God looks like during a regular day?

7. Pastor Paul described Loving the Lord with all our mind as longing for your mind to experience a constant renewal of virtuous thinking. It includes:

- God created our mind to love Him rightly.
- God wants us to see Him, our life, and the world around us through eyes of truth.
- God wants to graciously transform our thinking. (*Romans 12:2*)

How do you think the bullet points above contribute to virtuous thinking? What scripture passages and stories further illustrate your point? What other thoughts would you add?

Conclusion: As you reflect on going forward into the New Year, what spiritual adjustments might you need to make? Make this a focus of your small group prayer time.