

WAVFTY-AB

A Beneficial Life Practice

Dr. Ramesh Richard

WAVFTY-AB. *What's that?*

A new machine or medication for reducing abdominal excess?

I recently saw an ad for targeting abs, to sculpt the exterior. I recommend in its place a prayerful and thoughtful means to target the interior—a beneficial practice for your next season and the rest of your days.

Every year, I select one word for personal or ministry focus. One meaningful word—based on Scripture and relevant to current perspective, need, or emotion—energizes the heart, soul and mind. A powerful keyword can also lend strength to an organization. At RREACH, we affectionately dub this practice WAVFTY: word and verse(s) for the year.





Regardless of your life season, whether foundational, definitional, implementational or concluding—these periods average about 20 years each—I suggest you pick a WAVFTY. Since biblical truth and God’s character once applied should never then be abandoned, I’ve lengthened my neologism to WAVFTY-AB: word and verse(s) for the year and beyond.

Channeling our annual focus and energy through one biblical word, one theological term or one practical theme gifts us several benefits:

Simplicity. We often ignore truth if it is too complicated to know and obey. Simplicity preserves our sanity with a measure of cohesion within the complexity.

Priority. We can neglect what’s most important and effective. Prioritization helps us pursue whatever causes the most good among competing expectations and responsibilities.

Clarity. We can become lost in ambiguity and indecision, creating confusion, stress and relational strain. Clarity increases motivation and productivity.

Intensity. We can lose focus and momentum. Memorable single concepts concentrate the mind to overcome the scatter of “popcorn brain.”

Activity. We can turn into talkers and not workers. Planners, not laborers. We must go on from speech to effort. A well-chosen word clears a path for doing, and this doing itself moves our being into activity.

Tenacity. We are frequently overwhelmed and listless. We can easily quit and become apathetic. With chaos at many levels of thought, we may tend toward discouragement and withdraw from roles and responsibilities, even relationships.

Remembering one meaningful word fortifies the heart, enlivens the mind and brightens the soul toward cohesive and renewed thinking, feeling, living and working. With WAVFTY-AB, we can restart every day!

Choosing WAVFTY-AB

A core life focus is not entirely an unbiblical practice. Although the lawyer of Matthew 22:36 was (con)testing Jesus, his need for simplicity, priority and clarity for intensity, activity and tenacity may have driven his honest query. His question, paraphrased as “Yes, the foundational ten commandments summarize the 613 commandments of the Old Testament, but what teacher is the foremost among all?” essentially asks, “What is crucial to affect, even effect, all the rest?” We also see the apostle Paul speak about his central focus, “this one thing . . .” (Phil. 3:13b NLT).

Here is a suggested annual selection process to saturate in prayerful thought and thoughtful decision as you move toward choosing your WAVFTY-AB.

- In your devotional feeding, what biblical-theological-spiritual truth comes “alive”? Comforts you? Confronts you? Devotional times regularly pulsate with recurring, related themes as God’s Spirit meets me in his Word.

“ Remembering one meaningful word fortifies the heart, enlivens the mind and brightens the soul toward cohesive and renewed thinking, feeling, living and working. ”

- Turn any repeated themes into one word associated with that biblical passage. Be careful about the context and theology of each text verse, since one can use Scripture for anything one wants to prove!
- Display that word and verse in every visible place for constant reminder: phone screen, sticky notes, 3x5 cards, the mirror, wherever. Share it with a spouse, family, colleagues— whoever will benefit, and benefit you, too, by knowing.

A caution: do not compare this important activity to “fortune cookie” superstition. Occasional meals at our local Asian restaurant end with breaking open vanilla-flavored cookies filled with unhealth! We share a smile over slips of paper embedded with generic prediction (“An exciting opportunity lies ahead of you”), an inspirational reminder (“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm”), or even humor (“Help! I’m being held prisoner in a fortune cookie factory!”).

A passage of Scripture becomes quite significant because you providentially (not by chance) fell upon it and have immersed yourself in it. The verse has become vital for your spiritual life, relationships, and work.

For example, a couple of years ago, Multiplying (Acts 12:24) was our organizational WAVFTY. My personal word and theme verse last year was Presence (Deut. 31:8), a WAVFTY-AB. I sent that verse as my birthday greeting verse (VFTY!) to many a friend last year. Those words and verses now characterize my entire life, not just one year. For after choosing a word, I get to live it.

“ Do not compare this important activity to ‘fortune cookie’ superstition. ”



So now we come to my word and verse for this year and beyond. I wish for this disclosure to not only open my heart to you but also invite you to open your heart to God.

For most of last year, in terms of RREACH's future, I had been studying the leadership transition passages of Scripture. I noticed how well King David prepared everything for his successor (1 Chron. 28–29) and was amazed by David’s awesome prayer. Further, at the waning days of the year, when our church small group was rehearsing favorite Bible verses, one friend cited 1 Chronicles 29:11! That sealed my choice of the text. What seemed an accidental mention was a providential confirmation toward my WAVFTY-AB decision.

The ethos of the rich passage reflects David's dialogue with God—his character and works, his covenant and his purposes. Calling God by his covenantal name, indicated by LORD, David declares:

Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. –1 Chron. 29:11 NIV

The recurrence of the second-person pronoun "Yours" gets my attention. The surrounding verses feature "your" and "you." I would be negligent and ignorant not to pick up on the obvious repetition in the poetic portion of David's prayer (vv. 10–13), especially in verses 11–12: "Yours." I chose that word.

“After choosing our words, how do we move toward living them? My solution this year is a two-tier template for life-and-ministry application.”

Much can be extracted from this powerful, beautiful verse through exposition. At this latter part of my article, however, I wish to simply share edifying observations and applications for my WAVFTY-AB method that you can follow in your spiritual practice as well.

After choosing our words, how do we move toward living them? My solution this year is a two-tier template for life-and-ministry application.

Yours is an acknowledgment of the LORD—a declaration.

I notice that David admits LORD Yahweh's importance in personal and national life. He accepts the truth of the LORD's legitimacy and worth for everyone. I also sense that he appreciates the One who has supported and nurtured him and his people. Acknowledgment here is not mere greeting; it is deep gratitude.

This verse also begins with the "who." Yours declares a certain and actual "who" as the basis and anchor of all being. He is the first in chronology (eternal existence before all other reality) and, by implication, the source and means of all knowledge and wisdom: yours!

Much like an author honorably and correctly acknowledges indebtedness to sources, editors and helpers, Yours forces me beyond a courtesy nod to the LORD. Yours declares reflective acknowledgment of the One valued greater than any competition. Yours comes with an unmatched list of superlatives without exaggeration as the author runs out of space, time, truth and emotion to fully describe the One to whom he is indebted.

Till recently I hadn't made much of notary publics. Now they seem needed everywhere to acknowledge some document. They play an impartial service role to ensure the integrity of documentation and the identity of the signer. They request my verbalization and countersign my willingness to sign that acknowledgment. They acknowledge my acknowledgment! In my verse for the year, David similarly acknowledges the integrity and identity of his signer—the LORD God himself. In this case, David is willing to countersign that acknowledgment, a human acknowledgment of divine acknowledgment of deity himself. Beyond the declaration, David, the countersigner, goes on to a dedication to him: Yours!

Yours is an abandonment to the LORD —a dedication.

Similarly to David and the people of Israel, I acknowledge the identity of the referent, the magnificent and munificent Yours. I am willing to countersign the public acknowledgment of the LORD as a personal abandonment to him.

Abandonment communicates “relinquishment,” a separation from something or someone to a new, total and more enduring relationship with something or someone else.

We must be careful as to whom/what we abandon. Is our new owner capable and available to receive such abandonment? Is he anxious that we might not be faithful to him? Will he keep away from us if we momentarily turn away from him? And will he turn away from us? Will he force himself on us?

We do not need to wonder about this Yours. When I am abandoned to the LORD God, my new owner welcomes, blesses, leads and uses me. We are never rejected or unloved by him. Never lonely nor afraid. This owner loves and never loses those who belong to him.

How do I apply Yours? I start each day with a quiet declarative acknowledgment of “Yours,” often before I roll out of bed as the last part of my sleep cycle or the first part of my wake cycle. I simply rehearse 1 Chronicles 29:11 and the pregnant paragraph in whisper. And I often usually sign off my daily notebook entries with “Yours” or “Lord Jesus, your life, your work, your day”:

“When I am abandoned to the LORD God, my new owner welcomes, blesses, leads and uses me. We are never rejected or unloved by him. Never lonely nor afraid. This owner loves and never loses those who belong to him.”

1. Your Life. All of me and everything I am is yours. The apostle Paul notes that I am not my own, that I have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19–20). The apostle Peter talks about my being redeemed with the precious blood (1 Peter 1:18–19), and that while suffering, Jesus “kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23 NASB). I remember visiting the garden of Gethsemane—at the cusp of a major decision with daunting demands—struggling with and then submitting to the prayer prayed by the Lord: “Yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42 NIV). Yours is my Life—my life belongs to you, all of me and my loves, including my family and friends.

2. Your Work. My work is, first of all, your work first. My work is about you; yours is *your* work through me. And I am willing for your work to be done through me. I will not hold any part of it tightly or lightly. I will hold it rightly as God’s work.

3. Your Day. Yours is this day—this 24-hour day. I have made some plans, and I don’t know how the day will develop, the interruptions and changes it will bring, the



people I will meet, the opportunities that will arise, the challenges I will face. And so, Lord, this day's schedule, meetings, decisions, and talks are all yours.

Sometimes, I list the foreseeable features, advantages, benefits and consequences of my word choice—what the concept reveals and generates. For example, "Yours reveals love, comfort, confidence, grace, security, trust, peace, belonging, totality, devotion, surrender, preciousness, value, intimacy, access, availability, obedience, oneness" and so on.

If "everything in heaven and earth is yours," as the verse notes, I shall abandon any identity-markers and sources, private ownership of anything, and all my objects of trust to the Lord alone. Such is the way to exalt the supreme sovereign as head above all. Indeed, a dear colleague includes a wonderfully assuring thought underneath his email signature, a thought I leave with you: "Those who joyfully leave EVERYTHING in GOD's HAND will eventually see GOD's HAND in EVERYTHING" (emphasis his).

Everything is yours, God, so I leave it all in your hands. And you are working in and working out everything.

For the last several years, I've concluded pastors conferences and seminary classes by inviting hearers to read aloud a Yours prayer. The powerful prayer of abandonment was

sent to me. I made biblical and theological adjustments to the original verbiage and have distributed it to thousands.

This deep prayer cannot be read carelessly. Often, I have to slow the audience down so it does not sound or feel perfunctory. If there is time, I also ask them what lines were most difficult to pray. We then talk about the depths of what it means to be "Yours."

Would you consider reading this prayer below slowly and deliberately? And if you wish, I'd like to send you a soft-copy bookmark with this prayer as a gift and invitation to join me in your own WAVFTY-AB exercises hence.

“ Everything is yours, God, so I leave it all in your hands. And you are working in and working out everything. ”

YOURS Prayer

Lord, I give myself to fully follow You , whatever it may mean. Take every aspect of my life and use me for Your purposes to glorify Your name. I'm not here on earth to do my own thing, to seek my own fulfillment or my own glory. I'm not here to indulge my flesh, to increase my possessions, to impress people, to be popular, to prove I'm somebody important, or to promote myself. I'm not here even to be relevant or successful by human standards. I'm here to please You.



I'll do anything You want me to do as long as You lead me; go anywhere You want me to go since You will go with me; and say anything that You want me to say as long as You will fill me. Teach me, guide me, empower me as I run the ministry race.

Father, there isn't any gift You have for me I don't want. If You want me to wait to accomplish Your work, I will. If You want to use me in a way that I'm not used to, I yield myself to that. I trust You, Lord, to do that which I cannot do for myself. Today I affirm my love for You, my God, and I choose to live and minister in Your way for the rest of my life. To the glory of the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the health of the church, and the very best of many everywhere, I ask these things. Amen.

(Ruth Myers, Cindy Jacobs, Dale Schlafer, Ramesh Richard)

To fulfill the teaching responsibilities of this article, I assign some homework for our mutual benefit. Would you at your next birthday or season change, choose a word and verse to shape your interior?

At the opening of this year, I challenged a select group of world leaders in pastoral training to prayerfully think about and come up with their "one word, theme, thing or thrust." A friend picked "courage." I once asked the heads of 99 organizations to capture their work with one word. I was the last to go, and nobody had picked "proclamation," which now, of course, is our ministry identity as a "global proclamation ministry."

As you engage in this beneficial life practice, share your word and verse with me. We will send you a hard copy of the Yours prayer bookmark—the other side has my father's daily 30-year prayer for his family. Feel free to add "Yours" (1 Chron. 29:11) to your life.



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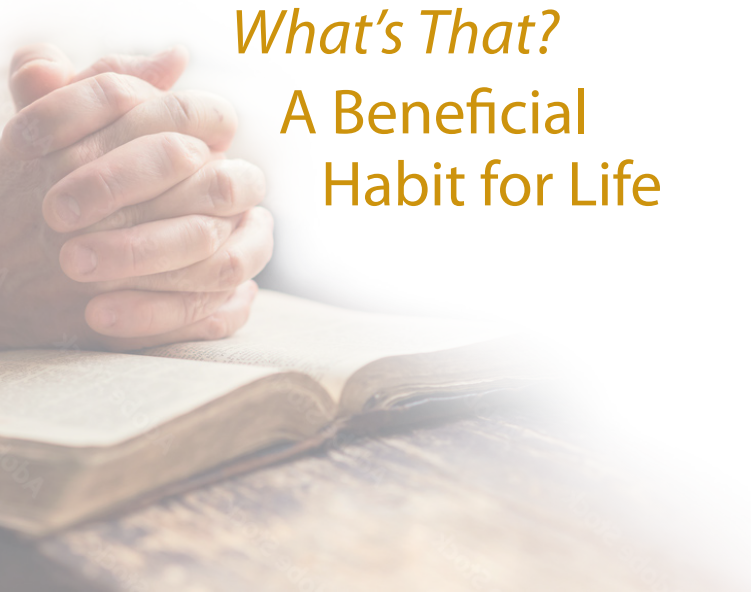
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WAVFTY-AB:

What's That?

A Beneficial
Habit for Life



YOURS, O LORD, IS THE
GREATNESS AND THE POWER
AND THE GLORY AND THE VICTORY
AND THE MAJESTY,
FOR ALL THAT IS IN THE HEAVENS
AND IN THE EARTH IS YOURS,
YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, O LORD,
AND YOU ARE EXALTED AS HEAD
ABOVE ALL.
1 CHRONICLES 29:11 ESV