

New Year, New Beginnings

It's a new year and that typically means new resolutions, new goals, and fresh starts. But, our mission remains the same. Today's teaching is titled *New Year, New Beginnings*.

Introduction

It is a new year and it is a wonderful time to close the door on the past and look forward to a bright future. New years are really just an arbitrary date on a calendar, but they are wonderful markers that we can use to establish a change. The dawning of a new year is a great time to decide to make changes in our lives for the better, set new goals, and make a fresh start.

It is important to understand we are not saying we should forget the past. The past is important. We would not be who we are today if it were not for the past. The experience and wisdom we have accumulated up to this point help us look forward with wisdom. However we cannot dwell on the past, nor can we live in the past.

The year 2021 was just as difficult as the year 2020. The COVID pandemic continues to be the main concern around the world. But there are other things about 2021 that will be good to put behind us. The ancient Israelites used to erect altars of remembrance when the Lord would do something great. These were reminders of the Lord's provision and protection. They did not build altars of remembrance for their failures and missteps. We should learn from this.

We face this new year by making resolutions, setting new goals, making fresh starts, and focusing on the mission that Jesus gave us, which has not changed in 2000 years.

New Year, New Resolutions

Many people do not like new years resolutions. Often they think they are a waste of time because many do not follow through. We believe there is nothing wrong with new year's resolutions. Sometimes a new year is just what is needed to mark that change someone needs to make in their life.

People make all sorts of resolutions. Some resolve to eat healthier or get more exercise. Others decide to spend more time doing charitable work and less time on things that waste time. Christians often resolve to read the Bible more or pray more. These are great things. The important part of making resolutions is letting someone else know your resolution so they can help you stick with it. They can also help you determine if your resolution is too difficult.

Look at what Jesus tells us about planning in Luke 14:28-32.

Luke 14:28-32

(28) "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? (29) For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, (30) saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' (31) "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (32) If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.



It is foolish to make resolutions that are not achievable so we must make resolutions and share them with others who can give us godly counsel. They can help us see what resolutions are worthwhile and help fulfill the mission God has given each one of us personally.

Setting resolutions is similar to setting goals.

New Year, New Goals

Setting goals is a very important part of every stage of your life. Without goals, we wander aimlessly like the children of Israel who wandered the desert for 40 years. We must look to the future, understanding what God has called you personally to do and then set achievable goals to fulfill that mission.

When you set goals you must, once again, share these goals with someone else who can help you keep them and work toward them. The important thing for the Christian is to understand that the goals we set should bring us closer to fulfilling our God-given mission, not just benefit ourselves. What is the mission God has given you? What do you need to fulfill that mission? Set achievable goals to better prepare you to carry out the mission God has given you.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 3:12-15:

Philippians 3:12-15

(12) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (13) Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (15) All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

Set your goals and then work toward them. This is how you fulfill the mission God has given you. The Lord will surround you with godly people who can counsel you and help motivate you to reach the goals you set and then further fulfill your mission.

Just as you need people to help you stay on track and achieve your goals, you must be ready and willing to help others achieve their goals to fulfill their God-given mission. At the start of this new year, set some new goals to help you fulfill your mission from God.

These new goals can lead to making a fresh start.

New Year, Fresh Starts

A new year is sometimes the best time to make a fresh start. Fresh starts are sometimes necessary to break you out of a rut you have gotten into. A fresh start is a change in direction, sometimes returning to a past direction that you ventured away from.

Forgiveness is a fresh start. When you ask for Jesus' forgiveness and make Him Lord of your life, you get a fresh start. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:



2 Corinthians 5:17

(17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

When you said yes to Jesus' call you became a new creation. You got a fresh start. Each time you are forgiven, you start fresh. A new year is a great time to close the door on past failures, past mistakes, and a worldly lifestyle and make a fresh start.

This fresh start must be a reflection of Christ. It must come from a heart that wants to be an example of Christ to this lost and dying world. You must let the light of Jesus Christ shine through you for others to see. To do that, you may need to make a fresh start. Let this new year be the fresh start you need to fulfill the mission God has for you. That may mean a new job, a new habit, a new home, or something else. Whatever it is, the fresh start should bring you closer to your God-given mission.

New Year, Same Mission

There is one thing that does not change with a new year. That is our mission. We have the same mission Jesus gave us 2000 years ago. It is an all-encompassing mission that takes every one of us doing our particular part.

Jesus gave us this mission and the authority to carry it out. Let's read Matthew 28:19-20.

Matthew 28:19-20

(19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

That is the mission of the Church and each one of us, including you, has a personal mission that helps fulfill this. This mission does not change. We are to go and make disciples. That means you are to be an example of Jesus and point to him in all that you do. When everyone does their part, the good news of Jesus Christ is spread and more people are reconciled to God and saved from eternity in Hell. That is the mission of the Church and you have a part in it. We all do.

Your part may be different than mine, but it is no less important. You must fulfill your mission, so the Church can fulfill its mission.

Conclusion

New years are a great time to set resolutions, make new goals, and make fresh starts. Make the most of this opportunity to draw closer to Jesus. Resolve to read the Bible more or pray more. Make a goal to help you be a better witness for Jesus Christ. Use a fresh start if you need to so you can get closer to Jesus and impact others positively in Jesus' name. Finally, focus on the mission Jesus gave us all and on your personal mission that supports the overall mission of the Church.

