

A Fresh Start with Church

Lesson 02 of the series, "Fresh Start"

I. Many people need a fresh start with church.

a. Some people are disappointed with God.

"When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.' ...Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, 'See how much he loved him!' But some said, 'This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?'" John 11:32-37 (NLT)

Life Application: God asks us to trust him even when we don't understand him.

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)

b. Some people are disappointed with church people.

"Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger... You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?" 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NLT)

Note: The church is God's family on earth. "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

- Family members are at different levels of maturity, with differing personalities and views.
- Family members fight, act rudely, do stupid things, say mean things, lose their temper, blow it.
- Families invite friends and neighbors over who aren't part of the family.

Life Application: We must apologize, forgive and help each other.

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

c. Some people don't believe they are good enough.

"Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:10-14 (NLT)

Life Application: We must never forget that we are all saved by God's grace.

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

II. In order to have a fresh start with church we need to get rid of some excuses.

"I don't have time." / "I am too busy."

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed them into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these

details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:38-42 (NLT)

“I don’t get anything out of it.”

“...they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” Matthew 2:9-11 (NIV)

“I can be a Christian all by myself.”

“Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble... A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12 (NLT)

III. In order to have a fresh start with church we need to make some important contributions.

a. Authentic friendship in a connect group.

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.” Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)

b. Surrender in worship.

“...let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.” Hebrews 13:15 (NLT)

“I will not present burnt offerings to the LORD my God that have cost me nothing.” 2 Samuel 24:24 (NLT)

c. Spiritual gifts in service.

“If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it... All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:17,18,27 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions.

To prepare for this week’s meeting, take some time to focus on the following questions and write out a few brief answers. Be prepared to share them with your group.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching on “A Fresh Start with Church” was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. In what areas of your life would you like a fresh start in 2016? Why?
3. What is the best church experience you’ve ever had? What is the worst?
4. Discuss how the following passages help us deal with some excuses that people give for giving up on church (i.e. “I am too busy”, “I’m not good enough” or “I can be a Christian all by myself.”)?
 - Hebrews 10:24-25
 - Luke 10:38-42
 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
 - Ephesians 2:8-9
 - 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

What excuses have you used in the past for not getting involved in a church? How did you overcome them?

5. Read Ephesians 1:5 & Romans 8:15? What does it mean to be adopted into God’s family? Then discuss the following statements regarding the nature of families:

- Family members are at different levels of maturity, with differing personalities and views.
- Family members fight, act rudely, do stupid things, say mean things, lose their temper, blow it.
- Families invite friends and neighbors over who aren't part of the family.

Are these statements true about God's family as well as our biological families? If not, why not? If so, why do we act surprised when people act like family members in a church?

What do the following passages teach us about how members of God's family should treat each other?

- Colossians 3:13
- Ephesians 4:2,25
- Philippians 2:2-4
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Galatians 6:2

6. Spend some time as group praying for our church and our relationships with each other.