

A Fresh Start with God

Lesson 01 of the series, "Fresh Start"

I. The Bible is filled with stories of people who needed a fresh start with God.

King David: "Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you." Psalm 51:7-12 (NLT)

The Apostle Paul (a.k.a. "Saul of Tarsus"): Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord!" he replied. The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again." "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name." But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake." So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!" All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?" Acts 9:10-21 (NLT)

Peter: "Later, out by the gate, another servant girl noticed him and said to those standing around, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath. "I don't even know the man," he said. A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent." Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!" And immediately the rooster crowed. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he went away, weeping bitterly."

Matthew 26:71-75 (NLT)

Life Application: God is in the business of fresh starts.

"...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

II. In order to have a fresh start with God we need to get rid of some misconceptions about God.

a. "God is getting even with me!" / "God wants to punish me!"

"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?" Ezekiel 33:11 (NLT)

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

John 3:17 (NIV)

b. "God doesn't care about me!" / "God has forgotten me!"

"The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us." "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!"

Isaiah 49:14-15 (NLT)

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)

c. "God only helps those who help themselves." / "I need to get my life straight before I ask for help."

"This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.'" 1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NLT)

III. In order to have a fresh start with God we need a right relationship with God.

- a. Healthy relationships require honest, open communication.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

- b. Healthy relationships take priority time.

“Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.”

Mark 1:35 (NLT)

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

- c. Healthy relationships are built on trust.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (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 God was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. At Centerpoint we often say that in order to love God more we need to:
 - Surrender
 - Listen
 - Pray
 - Obey

How would these four steps contribute to a fresh start with God? Why are some people reluctant to surrender control of their lives to God? What does it look like to listen to God?

3. Read Ezekiel 33:11 & John 3:16-17. What would you say to a friend who believes that God is trying to get even with him for sins that he committed years ago?
4. Read Mark 1:35, Hebrews 10:24-25, & Acts 2:42-47. What does it look like to give God priority time? Do you have time dedicated to growing your relationship with God reserved on your calendar (i.e. daily devotions, connect group, weekly worship)? Why? Why not?
5. How do the following passages refute the misconception that God only helps those who help themselves?
 - 1 Timothy 1:15-16
 - Matthew 11: 28-30
 - Matthew 9:9-13
 - Romans 5:6-8

Why do many people think they need to get their lives straight before asking God for help?

6. Look up the following devotional resources online:

www.bible.com

<http://www.marketplaceleaders.org/tgif/>

<http://www.jesuscalling.com>

<http://utmost.org>

Share what you will be doing in your devotional times in 2016.