

Giving the New Year a New Start

INTRODUCTION:

A. Lesson Texts:

1. **Isaiah 42:9** - “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”
2. **Isaiah 43:18-19** - “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

B. Here we are once again – at the beginning of a New Year – a time for re-evaluations and a season of new beginnings

1. How many times in life have we started a new year feeling we have not accomplished in the previous year all that we set out to accomplish?
 - a. We stand pleased at some things while disappointed at others.
 - b. We see things that were accomplished and things that were not.
 - c. We meant well but failed to do as well as we meant.
 - d. Some gave up while others kept going.
 - e. Some succeeded where others failed,
 - f. Some are continuing on with what was begun as a determined part of the old year. Transition it well!
2. We cannot live on yesterday’s blessings nor should we dwell on yesterday’s failures or disappointments. Yesterday’s blessings were for yesterday’s needs. More blessings will come to meet new needs.
 - a. Yesterday’s homerun will not win today’s ballgame.
 - b. This is a time to forget the past and move forward into the present and the future. Build on what was good and disregard what was not.
 - c. **Philippians 3:13-14** – “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
3. Many people all over the world are in the process of making New Year's resolutions, of which many of them will probably never come to pass. For us as Bible believing Christians this is an opportunity to look back over the past year to see if we were able to make all of the desired changes we set out to do.

C. Three Suggestions for Giving the New Year a New Start.

NEWNESS COMES BY LETTING GO OF THE PAST.

A. Think with me for just a moment . . .

1. Living in a new house does not come until you move out of the old one.

2. Entering a new school does not come until you leave the former one.
 3. Beginning a new job does not take place until you have left the previous one.
- B. One of life's greatest challenges is found in while trying to let go of the past, we realize the past is not willing to let go of us.
1. No matter how miserably we failed in life or in our Christianity, God's desire is for us to receive His forgiveness and move forward.
 2. **Psalm 103:12** - "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."
 3. Hanging on and dwelling on the past is like air moving through a dirty filter. Even though something new and fresh enters into the filter it comes out dirty and tainted because of the filth it must flow through.
- C. An old saying: "Old habits are hard to break." It is also true that "Bad habits are hard to break." Bad habits from last year will strive to be carried over to the new year.
- D. Our own ideas and desires get in the way and we totally miss what God is trying to say and do.
- E. One of God's principles concerning new things is to forget the past and not to walk in condemnation and guilt, but rather to walk in the freedom and the liberty of His forgiveness. **Romans 8:1** – "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."
- F. If He has forgotten about our past sins, failures, and defeats, we must also forget and get on with the new things He desires to do in our lives.

BUILD ON PAST SUCCESSES AND LEARN FROM PAST FAILURES.

- A. Great accomplishments are often attempted but only occasionally reached. Those who reach them are usually those who missed many times before. Failures are only temporary tests to prepare us for permanent triumphs.
1. **Philippians 3:16** - "Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind."
 2. We all have failures in our lives. It's what we do with them and how we respond to them that makes the difference.
 3. The way we deal with failure can determine how we sustain motivation.
 4. It has been said that a successful person fails two out of every five times, while the unsuccessful person fails three out of five times. Not a whole lot of difference.
- B. We need to look at how much we missed the mark and then make the necessary adjustments that will help us to make the mark more perfectly in the coming year.
- C. Someone said, "I would rather attempt to do something great for God and fail, than to do nothing and succeed."

D. ILLUSTRATION: After Eisenhower won the Republican nomination for President from Robert Taft in 1952, a reporter asked Taft about his goals. He said, "My great goal was to become President of the United States in 1953." The reporter smirked. "Well, you didn't make it, did you?" He said, "No, but I became senator from Ohio!"

SEEK NEWNESS OR RENEWAL.

- A. The beginning of a New Year can be a season of new beginnings for us.
1. It's a time to look ahead with a sense of anticipation and excitement towards the new things God wants to do in our lives.
 2. It is a season of setting new goals and putting into effect those things you have been putting off doing.
 3. It can be a day of new beginnings and new accomplishments for each one of us.
- B. In the Lord every day should be a day of new beginnings, but we can look to this season as a time to reflect and re-evaluate where we are and where we are going in God.
1. **2 Corinthians 4:16** – “Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”
 2. I believe God wants to create a sense of newness in each one of our lives.
 3. The beautiful thing about being a Christian and knowing the Lord is that we don't have to live our lives in guilt and condemnation for our failures and un-achieved goals.
 4. We get to wipe the slate clean and start over. God doesn't hold our past against us as long as we sincerely repent and continually press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. We are a new creation in Christ every day of our lives.
 5. **2 Corinthians 5:17** – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”
- C. **Isaiah 40:31** – “But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

CONCLUSION:

- A. Give the New Year a New Start
1. **NEWNESS COMES BY LETTING GO OF THE PAST.**
 2. **BUILD ON PAST SUCCESSES AND LEARN FROM PAST FAILURES.**
 3. **SEEK NEWNESS OR RENEWAL.**

B. Newness or Renewal

1. Newness = Being baptized into Christ.
2. Renewal = Being restored to faithfulness . . . Rededicating your life back to Christ . . . Giving yourself back to God . . . Beginning again.

C. God's Plan for Man's Salvation