

## Start the Year Off Right GFC – 12-29-19

This is the **last Sunday of 2019** and as we go into the year 2020 I felt led to preach a message called **Start the Year Off Right!**

I understand what is meant when people say, “It’s **not how you begin**; it’s **how you finish** that matters.”

But I also understand that the way you begin anything greatly affects the way you end.

Starting off right is so important.

**You’ve heard of things getting off to a rocky start.**

**Though it is possible to have a good ending when you start off on the wrong foot, it does certainly make things more difficult.**

**So this morning, I want to help you START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT.**

**In our Catch the Vision class, we teach that the way you leave a church is the way you will enter a new church.**

**If you leave with love, you will enter with love.**

**If you leave with discontent, you will enter with discontent.**

**If you leave with hurt, you will enter with hurt.**

**If you leave offended, you will enter offended.**

**It’s the same way when you transition from one year to the next.**

**We all want the new year to be different than the old – but if we don’t deal with the hurts and wounds and wrong attitudes we had last year – we’re going to enter the new year with the same old issues.**

**By the way, how many of you make New Year’s resolutions?**

**How many keep them?**

**Do you know what the most common New Year’s resolutions are?**

- 1) Spend More Time with Family & Friends**
- 2) Get in shape by exercising more and losing weight**
- 3) Quit Smoking**
- 4) Quit Drinking**
- 5) Reduce Stress and Enjoy Life More**
- 6) Get Out of Debt and Save Money**
- 7) Learn Something New or Get a Better Education**

**8) Take a Trip**

**9) Help Others**

**10) Get Organized**

The interesting thing is that **80% of people break** their New Year's resolutions by the second week of February.

Why? Part of it is a **lack of commitment.**

What we call New Year's resolutions are usually just New Year's **wishes.**

**I wish I could lose weight**

**I wish I would eat right and exercise**

**I wish I would pray more and read my Bible**

But a resolution is much **more than a wish.** What's the difference?

A wish says, "**I hope** this happens."

A resolution is saying, "**I'm committed** to making this happen."

You see, most of us want to **be in shape,** but we are more committed to eating and entertainment than we are to exercise and eating right.

Most of us want to **tithe and give** offerings, but we're more committed to spending the money on ourselves.

Most of us want to **get out of debt,** but we are more committed to getting what we want now rather than saving up to buy something.

Where we are **right now** in life shows what we are committed to.

The **decisions** we have made in the past have worked perfectly to get us to where we are today.

All us of have areas where we need to **change or grow.**

But that change or growth will not happen **automatically.**

It starts with the **choice to change** and it happens when we are **committed** to change.

That takes **resolution.** Resolution is a **firm decision** to do something.

We need **resolution,** we need **commitment** and we need **determination,** but I believe we need something **even more** than that.

All of us have tried to change through **sheer willpower** and have **failed** miserably.

We all **can relate** to the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:15-19

**I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing.**

**Do you ever feel this way?**

**The things you know you should do, you don't do.**

**The things you shouldn't do, you do.**

**Paul is saying this: willpower is not enough. We need something more. That something more is the power of God.**

**How do we tap into the supernatural power of God?**

**There are many ways, but the 2 main sources of the power of God are the Spirit of God and the Word of God.**

**Both are needed.**

**Matthew 22:29 says:**

**You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.**

**All Word without the Spirit of God leads to error.**

**All Spirit without the Word of God leads to error.**

**We need both.**

**The supernatural power of transformation requires the spirit and truth.**

**And transformation is a process. It takes time.**

**Even so, growing to spiritual maturity is not an automatic process – you can be old and immature.**

**I don't want us to be that way.**

**I want us to tap into the supernatural power of transformation through the Spirit of God and the Word of God.**

**We access the power of the Spirit through prayer and faith.**

**And without the power of the Spirit, we will never receive the power of the Word.**

**1 Corinthians 2:14 says - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

**It takes the Spirit of God to understand the things of God.**

**It takes the Spirit of God to understand the Word of God.**

**It takes the Spirit of God to gain the wisdom of God.**

So – we need the power of **the Spirit** and the power of **the Word** to be transformed.

**Romans 12:1-2**

**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Life transformation comes through **renewing your mind**.

The Greek word translated here for **renewal** does not mean a little change. It means a **complete renovation**.

Renovation has **3 stages**: tearing down, cleaning up and rebuilding.

So the **first stage** of renewing your mind is tearing down misbeliefs and wrong thinking.

Otherwise, you are building on a **faulty foundation**.

God wants to **rebuild us** from the inside out.

He wants to **take out the old** way of thinking that will not hold up under pressure.

He wants to **get rid of misbeliefs** that keep us stuck.

He wants to **tear down strongholds** that keep us bound.

He will tear all that out and clean us up **before** He starts to rebuild.

**Don't be surprised** when God's work begins in you with tearing things down and cleaning things out.

You'll probably feel **empty and unstable** at first.

But when God tears down the old, He will rebuild and restore.

And when God restores, the **new is better** than the old.

The new is **stronger** than the old.

The new is **more stable** than the old.

The new has **more life** than the old.

That's because there's life in the **Spirit** and life in the **Word**.

The Bible is the **only book** ever written that is alive!

Hebrews 4:12 says:

**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul & spirit, and of joints & marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**AMP – says God’s word is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective].**

**As long as we are led by our wisdom rather than God’s wisdom, we will be easily deceived.**

**As long as we go our way rather than God’s way, we will go the wrong way.**

**God’s answer is His Word.**

**It will divide soul from spirit so we can change from living in our own willpower to living in the freedom of His Spirit.**

**That’s why I encourage you every year to get on a daily Bible reading plan.**

**As I was praying about this message, God have me 6 questions we all need to answer to start this year off right.**

**1- What did you learn from last year?**

**So many people go through life doing the same things over and over expecting different results.**

**As a result, over that last 10 years they don’t have 10 years of life experience – they have 1 year of experience 10 times.**

**How do we change that?**

**By changing ourselves.**

**And we won’t change if we don’t learn life lessons from our successes and failures. So ask yourself:**

- **What went well for me last year?**
- **What accomplishments did I have?**
- **How did I improve my life?**
- **What do I still need to improve?**

**2- What do you need to let go of from the past?**

**There are some things you need to let go of in order to start the year off right.**

**Two of the main things to let go of are unforgiveness and offense.**

**God commands us in Colossians 3:13 to**

**Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**Unforgiveness keeps you stuck in the past.  
 Unforgiveness steals your joy and peace.  
 Unforgiveness destroys marriages, families and friendships.  
 Unforgiveness can hurt you physically and hold you back in life!**

**If we don't forgive, we end up in a prison of pain and resentment.  
 If we don't forgive, we are continuing to give power to the person who hurt us.**

**People are way too easily offended these days – even Christians.  
 If the spirit of offense takes over your life – you will have a miserable existence where you are constantly in pain and constantly leaving one relationship for another, one job for another, one church for another.**

**You cannot start the new year off right if you take your offenses and unforgiveness with you into the new year!**

**3- Who do you need to love better?**

**I'm sure all of us could do a better job of loving our families and friends.  
 But God even commands us to love our enemies!  
 That takes dying to self!**

**4- Who do you need to leave?**

**I'm not talking about your spouse here – I'm talking about people who are a bad influence on you.  
 People who draw you away from God rather than toward God.**

**5- What do you look forward to?**

**Philippians 3:13-14 says:**

**Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

**There are 2 parts to this one thing: focus on the future and forget the past.**

Please understand that you **can't move** forward by looking backwards. **What's in front** of you is more important than what's behind you. **That's why your car has a huge windshield and a small rear-view mirror.** It's the **same way** in life.

What's in **front of you** is more important than **what's behind you.** If you're going to **advance** in life, you must spend **much more time** looking through the windshield **at your future** than through the small mirror **at your past.**

Yes, there are things in our past we must **deal with and overcome.** But to move forward you must concentrate **more on your future** than your past.

We must not allow any **excuse**, any **person**, any **circumstance** or any **devil in hell** to hold us back from our destiny.

Focus on the future and forget the past.

There are **different Greek** words in the Bible that are translated "**forget.**"

One means to **put something totally** out of your mind.

That's **not the word** used here.

And I'm glad for that because you cannot just hit a "**delete**" key in your mind and have **every memory erased.**

This word "**forget**" means "**to neglect; to be unconcerned about; to stop recalling information; to no longer care for.**"

Now – the Bible says there are some things we need **to remember.**

Remember the **goodness**, the **blessings**, and the promise of God.

But there are some things we **need to forget.**

Some of you are remembering the **wrong things** – there are wounds, wrongs, failures and sins that you **keep alive** by constantly recalling and caring for. You are constantly **nursing wounds** and recounting wrongs.

That will keep you **stuck!**

Yes, we should **learn from our past**, but we should not be **limited by** our past.

So, **forget the things** that cause you guilt and despair and condemnation.

Forget the **failure** that paralyzes you.

Forget the **wounds** from other people – forgive them and let it go.

I challenge you to resolve to **put the past** behind you.

God does not want you to live your life **imprisoned** by your past.

So, don't **allow anything** from your past to hold you back from your God-given destiny.

**6- Who are you living for?**

**Are you living for yourself or for God?**

**Are you living in your power or His?**

Here's a **big key** to starting the year off right with the power of God:

**We provide the willingness; God provides the power.**

**I believe that our part is to provide the willingness to change and God's part is to provide the power to change.**

**Remember – I said willingness and willpower are different.**

**Willpower is trying to change ourselves through our own strength.**

**Willingness is allowing God to change us.**

**Too many Christians are trying to live their lives in their own strength.**

**They give it their best but their hard work never pays off.**

**Self-sufficiency will not get you very far.**

**Trying harder in your own strength will not get you very far.**

**What a tragedy to rely on our own strength when we can turn it over to the Father and learn to live in the power of God.**

**Sometimes change is a process – but God can change us in a moment – from the inside out.**

**Most of the time, God is waiting for us to come to the end of ourselves – for us to hit bottom – for us to stop trusting in ourselves and start trusting in Him.**

**When we do – change can happen fast!**

**Zaccheaus** was a tax collector who **cheated people** out of money for years. He had one lunch with Jesus and came away saying, "I'm giving back **money** to everyone I've ever cheated."

**What happened? He was changed from the inside out by the power of God!**

**Gideon** was hiding from his enemies, but after an encounter with God he went **from hiding** from his enemies to defeating his enemies.



What happened? He was **changed** from the inside out by the power of God!

**Moses hid** in the desert in fear for 40 years.

He had an encounter with God in a **burning bush** and went from **leading sheep** to **leading the whole nation** of Israel.

What happened? He was changed from the inside out by the power of God!

After Jesus died the **disciples were hiding out in fear**.

On the Day of Pentecost, they were **filled with the Holy Spirit** and ran out of their hiding place into the street **boldly proclaiming Jesus** as Lord.

What happened? They were **changed** from the inside out by the power of God!

And God can do the **same thing** with you!

God is the **author and the finisher** of your salvation!

He will never **leave you**, forsake you, or give up on you!

So, choose to put God first and live every day for Him.

That's **how you start** the year off right!

You may have been raised **dirt poor**, but that should not hold you back.

**Gideon** was poor, but he had a destiny to lead the people of God.

People may have **wronged you** or turned against you, but that should not hold you back.

**Joseph** was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused and thrown into prison.

Yet he resolutely **held onto his promise** from God and God elevated him from the prison to the palace.

Yes, you have **sinned in life** – but that should not hold you back.

What you've done in the past is **over and done and under the blood!**

Your past **is forgiven!** Your future is **bright!**

God has **plans for you** that are good and not evil!

Plans to give you a **future and a hope!**

God is working all things out for **your good!**

Even what the enemy means **for your harm** God will turn to good!