

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

January 8, 2023 "Fresh Start: Just start."

I Intro.

IT'S 2023!! We're excited about what the new year will bring to NCC. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. 2023 will bring some new and innovative ideas in all areas of our church life. We have seen an increased activity in our children's ministry, and we're working on new ideas for both our children and our students. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all that through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can also revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

A new year, a new series. What better way to start the new year than by asking what it would take for us to enter this new year as an opportunity for a **fresh start**. I Googled "*fresh start*" just to see what kind of info was out there, and I found literally hundreds of businesses and organizations labeled "*Fresh Start*". They ran the gamut from legal and financial advice, to chemical addiction rehab places, to driving school, and even restaurants and medical devices for kids. Apparently the idea of a **fresh start** can be found in every area of life. So, let's start with that conversation.

How would you define a 'fresh start'?

Have you ever started over in some area of your life? What did you have to do to make it happen?

Do you need a *fresh start* as you enter a new year?

The scripture was a wandering passage found in Isaiah that highlights some truths about starting fresh. Read **Isaiah 43:1-3, 15-19, 25**, and we'll pull out some specifics.

What jumped out to you from these passages?

What truths or promises spoke to you about the process of a 'fresh start'?

What might you need to address in your own life about starting 2023 with a new vision?

You have to want a '**fresh start**', but there are some practical truths that can help us get motivated, and do the real work of making 2023 THE year for each of us.

1. Fresh Start begins with renewing our relationship and understanding of God. Isaiah normalizes the feelings the Israelites were dealing with. Letting them know, in a dramatic time of upheaval and change, what feels like a loss of their promised future, some things are still true. A **fresh start** acknowledges and deals with what scares us. To honestly name those things that may be holding us back. Understanding this movement to something new and different will be disorienting.

But the Israelites were reassured God was bringing them back to him. Calling them into this work, and they didn't have to be afraid. Framing all of that work in a real understanding of who God is. In order to have a real **fresh start** we have to ask; **What grows your knowledge about, understanding of, relationship with God?** This is the first place to start.

2. Fresh Start begins with seeing God's faithfulness in your past. The Israelites were reminded of God's goodness and care for them. His faithfulness in the past can be an anchor and promise of God's faithfulness in our future. So, in order for us to have a **fresh start**, we also HAVE TO be reminded of God's faithfulness in our past. **Where in the past can you point to God's goodness and care for you?** A real **fresh start** is born out of the assurance that the same God who was there for you in the past will be with you as you step out into an unknown future. **How can seeing and trusting in God's faithfulness in our past lead and encourage us to start fresh?**

A **fresh start** comes from recognizing and celebrating the past. Good and bad. Then forgetting ALL OF THAT as you do the work to move into a new future. That seems to be a part of a **fresh start**.

3. Fresh Start begins with a renewal of yourself ... on the inside. And this includes your private and inner life. This is an essential part of a **fresh start**. **Fresh start** is not just some hustle thing to get you to work harder. It's, whatever has happened in your past, whether it's your fault or you were a victim, is erased. This is a great and timely chance to start anew. If God can forget our sins and shortcomings forever, he **will never think of them again**, then I think we all can also. If God needs to, for his own sake, then we can say the same about us. Because it's in cleaning out and throwing away old things that create barriers and walls, that we can do like God...and get a **fresh start**. **What hurts, wrongs, sins, mistakes, disappointments from your past can you name, and hand them over to God, never to be considered again?**

III Challenge.

Again, it's 2023...a brand new year. The perfect time for a **fresh start**. God promised the nation of Israel that even in the midst of really difficult and trying times, he was doing a new thing. Not only was the old passing away, God would even "*blot out their sins and never think of them again.*" FOR HIS OWN SAKE. Which is a really interesting phrase, and worth digging into on its own.

So, as we enter into this new year we want to wrestle with some big and important questions.

What do you want 2023 to be?

What do you need 2023 to be?

What would grow your knowledge about, understanding of, relationship with God?

How can seeing and trusting in God's faithfulness in our past lead and encourage us to start fresh?

What old things do you need to blot out and never think of them again?

Don't let this opportunity slip past you. Embrace it! Jump into it! Make the best use of a God who wants to do a new thing, give you a **fresh start**, and make this new year the best it can be.

So, what are you waiting for?

GO FOR IT!!