

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

### **January 15, 2023 "Fresh Start: Examine."**

#### **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 hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

#### **II Recap.**

This was our second in the Series "**Fresh Start**". Basically this series is a deep dive into what it would look like to start over well. *Fresh start* in any organizational or institutional name acknowledges that sometimes we find ourselves on a path in life we never intended to go down. We just ended up there. And sometimes we need some help, guidance, first steps to get our life back on track. The first Sunday we hit three basic truths.

- 1.** To do a real *Fresh Start* we have to re-recognize who God is, and what he wants to do for us. He wants us to know he is redeeming us, and calling us to him as we move forward.
- 2.** We have to remember God's faithfulness in our past, he was with us during all we went through. Then let that go, forget it, and allow God to do new things.
- 3.** God is compelled to blot out, erase, delete our sins and remember them no more. God does this because sin divides. And God needs to never remember, and it moves us to do the same. And now we look at the importance of honest and courageous examination of ourselves.

#### **III Sunday.**

Sunday we explored the work of examination. To inspect closely, with guidelines, as it relates to a fresh start. So, some opening questions. And we'll start light and get heavier.

**How important is it to you that the things you use are regularly examined and inspected?**

**Why is it important to you that the things you use are regularly examined and inspected?**

**Do you place yourself under the same level of self-reflection? Why or why not?**

I think we would agree we want the things we use in our life, or the things we eat, undergo a regular thorough inspection. We want to know that we can trust the integrity and quality of the products we consume and use. However...and you knew this was coming. We're not so inclined to put ourselves through the same rigorous level of inspection. We want the people in our lives to do that. We're just not so inspired to do it ourselves. And that's the foundation for this specific aspect of a **fresh start**.

Our scripture is one we use for our Ash Wednesday service. It's Paul's persistent (we'll get to that) admonition to do the hard inner work of making sure our lives look like God, and others around us, desire them to. Read **2 Corinthians 13:5-9**, and we'll pull out some important teachings from Paul.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**What elements spoke to you about examination, personal self-reflection and inspection?**

**Was there anything in this passage that was particularly difficult for you?**

There are some key important words in this first part of the passage.

**1. EXAMINE-** to objectively look closely for flaws, and weak spots to determine an object's ability to function well. This requires no distractions, and concentrated attention. Mindfulness is all the rage today. Being in the moment, living in the present. Basic bottom line truth is PAY ATTENTION. Find a way to remove all the distractions, and allow yourself to focus on the work of finding what you aren't aware of. Start with two questions;

1. **"What is the biggest struggle I'm facing today?"**

2. **"What have I opened the door for, allowing, to enter into my life that isn't growing me?"**

A *fresh start* requires us to build in regular times of close examination.

**2. TEST-** use under rigorous conditions to see if something holds up as it should or promised.

**This establishes the quality, performance, and reliability.** This element is super interesting. How will I know the things I'm trying to implement or do, will actually work like they're supposed to? We have to regularly test them. And testing is not being able to rattle off the answers. If I'm in charge, I don't want to know if you have memorized the playbook, can play scales, know your lines. What do I want to see? I want to see if you can use that knowledge in the real world. So, know who you want to be. How you want to be in the world and around others. Put yourself in situations where you can test to see if your knowledge has moved from your head to your heart. You already have your principles, **can you practice them with kindness around others?**

A *fresh start* requires us to not hide from tough situations. Put yourself in them, with your awareness of how you are fully engaged, to see if they work.

**3. GENUINE-** what is real. Sincerely authentic. Bottom line truth is, in order to be able to honestly and accurately examine and test, you have to have a template, baseline comparison of what examination and testing should reveal. And values to emulate. You should have a scripturally sound, well thought through, and constantly examined and tested of your understanding of what is real...authentic. **What are your guiding values and principles?** Not your opinions, on issues, but what underlying beliefs guide them

#### **IV Challenge.**

This is one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of making a *fresh start* real and effective. Two more truths we have to wrestle with.

1. **Be willing to do the hard work. This is roll up your sleeves and get at it work.**

2. **This will take a lifetime, so be dedicated and patient.** Paul wrote at least four letters to the church at Corinth, and visited there several times along with several other disciples.

But this is difficult, but still such a valuable and worthwhile endeavor. To identify and have the Holy Spirit help you remove those barriers to growth is huge. The results are worth the effort.

**So, how could you work your life to be able to do a real work of examination?**