

# Life Group Lesson

How to Have a Bad Year • Week of January 1

## Introduction

New beginnings are fun and exciting. Think about a new school year, new clothes, new job, new assignments; maybe a new move, new home. Here we are in a new year making new year resolutions. There is something fresh and hopeful about a new start – new juncture, clean slate, an opportunity for improvement. Think about how beginnings have been meaningful for you.

I believe God is also excited about new beginnings. In the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless, meaningless, void. Yet lifelessness gave way to life when God's Spirit began moving over the deep. Something stirs in us when the Holy Spirit begins to move. Darkness gives way to light when God speaks and separates light from darkness. The sky begins to appear as the Lord separates the waters from the heavens from the waters of the earth. Land appears and sprouts seed-bearing vegetation. Fish begin to swim the seas, birds fill the skies – animals begin to roam the earth. All at the Lord's word.

## Read Genesis 1:1-25

Notice each time you read or hear the word 'good' (perhaps circle with a pencil, or lift a finger)

New is good, until the new wears off. Like man after the fall in Genesis 3, sin enters our world when we make undisciplined (selfish) choices that lead to unhealthy habits. Indifferent to good (God), we begin to bow to regrets and worries over God, and the good purpose He intended. Overtime, we lose hope for resolutions we might have made. While we don't have to stay here, many of us will in this new year if changes are not made.

What will cause us to have a *bad* year?

- (1) Blend In. I will do what everyone else is doing. I'll follow the flow of a culture: 'Life is all about me. It's ok to cheat, lie, and over-indulge at every level... everybody else does it. I'll just go with the flow.'
- (2) Have No Plan. I will aim at nothing, and hit it every time.
- (3) I Will Do Nothing. Like so many other people, I'll work harder at *avoiding* work (harder than I would if I actually did my job). I can choose to live this way and experience a bad year. **OR...** You can have a good year!

## Reflection

In order for there to be a birth of a *new you* this new year, there has to be the death of the old you. For things to be different, new habits must be formed. Some things in your life (old grid, mindset, go-to-habits) will have to change. Genesis 1 says God separated light from darkness, day from night, the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth. The first thing for *you* to do in order for *your year* to be better –

(1) Separate. You must separate yourself (your mind and thoughts) from the way this world thinks. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (Romans 12:2). The apostle Paul writes in his second letter to the church in Corinth –

*"Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: 'I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them,' says the LORD"*  
(2 Corinthians 6:14-17a).

(2) Organize. You must organize and have a plan. God spoke and gave order into His creation. The Lord can help you also. Ask Him. Ask others you know, who are skilled at organizing, to help you. Get on a budget. Make a plan for your family, your faith, your finances. Resolve to honor the Lord at every level of your life. Invite Him into the chaos; and with the strength and boldness of the Holy Spirit, begin to speak order into your life this year. What goals do you want to accomplish? Write them down. Live into them. What will it take for me to complete this goal and move on to the next one? How will you be faithful to your church family and your Life Group? Will you roll up your sleeves and work – serving others in Jesus' Name? Being a disciple of Christ means we are yoked to Christ and allow the Lord to teach us, to 'discipline' us.

(3) Produce. God ordered the land to produce vegetation, and animals to reproduce offspring. The Lord calls us to produce and bear fruit. Jesus said, "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce ever more" (John 15:1-2). In John, chapter four, Jesus says that fruit is also "people brought to eternal life" (John 4:36). Do you share the heart of Christ when it comes to bringing other people back to God? As we live by the Spirit, we will desire the things of God (see Romans 8:5). Paul writes to the

churches in Galatia –

*“So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires... the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things?”*  
(Galatians 5:16-17a, 22-23).

### In Closing—

Spend some time in prayer. Even a few quiet moments speaking to the Lord sincerely from the heart, will make a huge difference in your day. There are 365 days in the year. As you pray—

- Surrender to Jesus. Today is a good day to give your life to Jesus all over again, or perhaps for the first time. He has come to make all things new (Revelations 21:5). New life, **a new you**, begins *today* in Jesus’ name.
- Follow the Spirit’s guidance. Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13a).
- You will have to die. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me” (John 12:24-26).

### One Year Bible Readings

**January 1:** Genesis 1:1-2:25, Matthew 1:1-2:12, Psalm 1:1-6, Proverbs 1:1-6  
**January 2:** Genesis 3:1-4:26, Matthew 2:13-3:6, Psalm 2:1-12, Proverbs 1:7-9  
**January 3:** Genesis 5:1-7:24, Matthew 3:7-4:11, Psalm 3:1-8, Proverbs 1:10-19  
**January 4:** Genesis 8:1-10:32, Matthew 4:12-25, Psalm 4:1-8, Proverbs 1:20-23  
**January 5:** Genesis 11:1-13:4, Matthew 5:1-26, Psalm 5:1-12, Proverbs 1:24-28  
**January 6:** Genesis 13:5-15:21, Matthew 5:27-48, Psalm 6:1-10, Proverbs 1:29-33  
**January 7:** Genesis 16:1-18:15, Matthew 6:1-24, Psalm 7:1-17, Proverbs 2:1-5

# NEW YEAR 2023

**Text:** Genesis 1:1-24

### Here is a prescription for a “Bad Year”

1. \_\_\_\_\_ in
2. Have No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do \_\_\_\_\_

### Prescription for a “Great Life”

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Produce

## Plain Truth:

The \_\_\_\_\_ Life: If you \_\_\_\_\_ it you  
\_\_\_\_\_ it, the only way to \_\_\_\_\_ it is to  
\_\_\_\_\_ it away.

### Let’s unpack this Truth...

1. We have to \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus.
2. We have to \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit’s \_\_\_\_\_.
3. We have to \_\_\_\_\_.

**January 1, 2023**