

New Beginnings

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. Can you believe we start a brand new year this year? I mean, I can hardly believe it myself.

Isn't there something special, though, about a brand new year? I know it's just another day on the calendar, but it's kind of like a blank canvas.

We think of our previous year, and we think of maybe where we failed, maybe where we didn't accomplish what we feel we should have accomplished. And a brand new year rolls along, and we look forward maybe to new beginnings, a fresh start of sorts.

And then, you know, there's those resolutions. You know, many of us don't get past February, right? You know, life happens, and all of our best-laid plans sometimes just fall by the wayside.

[1 : 11] We've all been there. With our best intentions, we see that we don't always reach the level that maybe we want. We don't accomplish what we think we should.

But there's good news. With God, every single day is a brand new day, and it's a fresh start, a chance for a new beginning.

Today, we're going to talk about how we can embrace new beginnings with Christ at the center of our brand new year, 2025. We'll dig into setting spiritual goals, trusting God's plan, and living life with a purpose.

How God can transform our lives in ways that we never even imagined. Do you realize that God is able to accomplish more than we could even think about, more than we can even begin to imagine?

God is all-powerful, and He wants what is best for our lives. And He can make today, tomorrow, and every day until Jesus comes back as a brand new start in our life.

[2 : 17] So whether you're feeling hopeful or whether you're feeling hesitant about the brand new year ahead, let's get started and see how we can look forward to this new beginning.

So as we stand with this blank canvas before us, let's take a look and see how these new beginnings through Christ can transform our lives and set the stage for a year that's filled with hope and a year that's filled with renewal.

And here's the thing. If you know Jesus, if you're following the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe you're familiar with new beginnings. Let's take a look in our Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5 and verse number 17.

2 Corinthians 5 and verse number 17. In verse 17, we read, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation.

All things have passed away, and behold, all things have become new. Or as it reads in the Greek, all things are becoming new. So it's a process as you and I are going through life.

[3 : 33] We are already a brand new creation. God has already given us a brand new clean slate. And every day that we have the process of that continual renewal made possible through God's Holy Spirit in our lives.

Now what Paul is saying here, I believe, is super powerful in that we are a new creation. And every day with this present tense verb here, things are becoming new as God is rebuilding us, as God is creating within us what He wants to be there.

And when we choose to follow Jesus, we aren't just making small changes or maybe adding a new habit to our lives. We have become brand new creations.

And God is literally giving us a brand new start. He's given us a clean slate. And He's saying, let's begin again.

So this year, let's embrace new beginnings. If you're following along in your notes, let's start this year by embracing new beginnings.

[4 : 43] Think about it for a moment. All of our sins, all of our regrets, all of our failures of the past, God lets them go. God is giving us a brand new way to move forward every single day.

Do you realize all of our sins are covered in the blood of Jesus Christ? When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, all of our sin was covered, was taken care of by the blood of Jesus Christ.

And God says, He's promised that He would take our sins, He would cast them out, and He would remember them no more. And so every single day, we can start with that clean slate.

Don't worry about the past. Yesterday's past. As a matter of fact, tomorrow has enough problems on its own. So let's think about today. And let's begin afresh and anew and allow God's Holy Spirit to work within us what He wants to work within us.

Because He will help us to move forward through this life. You know, it's like erasing a blackboard or a whiteboard. But even better. It's like washing it with clean water and scrubbing everything away so that you cannot see what was written there before.

[6 : 01] In the same way, God washes us clean when we trust Jesus Christ. And He gives us a brand new beginning. And in the same way, when we completely surrender our lives to Him, every single day can be a brand new beginning, a fresh start.

But by embracing this new beginning, it requires us to let go of the past. What did Paul say? Forgetting those things which are behind, he says, I'm looking forward to those things that are yet to come.

Paul didn't worry about what happened yesterday. Paul wasn't concerned about any ways that he failed or any ways that maybe he didn't meet what he felt was God's will for his life that day.

He started brand new and he kept moving on, moving forward, and allowing God to lead him and guide him. So it's about trusting that God's grace is enough to cover our regrets, to cover our failures, our false starts.

So as we get ready to start this brand new year, this Wednesday, I believe it is, let's ask ourselves, what do we need to let go of? What do you need to let go of this year to allow God to provide that fresh start, that new beginning, maybe that God is inviting you to embrace?

[7 : 27] Remember, with Christ, every single day. God's mercies are new every morning. God provides enough grace for us to get through today. I don't think He provides tomorrow's grace today.

I think He provides today's grace. And He gives us everything that we need to make it through the day, to honor Him, glorify Him, and live a life that counts for eternity. So it's great to have a clean slate before us.

But what's next? I mean, having a do-over is fine. But what is it without a goal? You see, a goal without a focus on Jesus is ill-advised at best and catastrophic at worst.

So what do we do with a clean slate? We have plans. We have maybe some of our best laid plans that we think about. But a plan or a goal without Jesus Christ at the center is not the best life that we can live.

It needs to be focused on Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3, verses 13 and 14, the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3, starting with verse 13, he says, Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended or grabbed a hold of what he knows God has for him.

[8 : 47] But one thing I do, he says next, what's that word? Forgetting. Forgetting. Forgetting those things which are behind. Goes right along with what we've been saying just a moment ago.

Forget about yesterday. Yesterday's past. You can't do yesterday over again. All we have is today. And so Paul says, I know that I don't count myself to have reached my goal.

I'm not there yet. But he says, what I'm doing, I forget yesterday. I forget what, I forget my regrets and failures in the past. Forgetting that which is behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

That fresh start. It's like that looking forward to what is coming next. He's reaching forward to those things which are ahead. In verse 14, he says, I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling or the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul's talking about having a clear focus. He's talking about having a determination with a specific goal in mind. Being on the mission that God has called them to be on.

[10 : 03] And living for Jesus Christ every single day. So just like athletes train for a specific goal. They have a specific goal in mind. Whether they're an Olympic skater.

Whether they're a skier. Whether they are a runner. Whatever it is, they train toward that goal that they have. If they are an Olympic weightlifter, they're going to spend a whole lot of time in the gym.

If they are an Olympic sprinter, they're going to do a whole lot of practicing sprinting. If they're a long distance runner, they're going to practice and train with that goal in mind.

And so as we start each brand new day and as we look into this fresh year, we too should, I believe, be setting spiritual goals. Setting goals for where God would want us to be so that we can grow closer to God and that God would allow us to help us in spreading His mission and spreading the gospel to those who need to hear it.

So this year, number two, let's set some spiritual goals. Think about this. What is life without a goal? You know, we're just flowing down the river of life.

[11 : 18] Well, that's not what God intended. God intended us to prepare. God intended for us to plan. And also God intended for us to submit to Him. So set some spiritual goals.

Setting spiritual goals is more than just checking off a list. You know, if you've set maybe one of your goals is to read through God's Word this year. All through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, starting in January, ending in December, it's more than just when you read a chapter or two that you check off that box and say, Oh, I did it!

Setting spiritual goals is more than checking off boxes. It's about deepening our relationship with God and becoming more like Jesus Christ. That's the goal. The goal is not checking off a list.

The goal is to become more like Christ and to be more actively engaged and involved in His mission, His plan for our lives. Maybe it's committing to more Bible study.

Maybe it is committing to reading God's Word through this year. Have you read through God's Word? Have you read it from cover to cover?

[12 : 25] You know, maybe you, some of you like reading. I like reading. And sometimes it's nonfiction. Sometimes it's fiction. But what good is a book unless we read it all the way through?

We don't get the whole story. So to grasp the story of God's Word all the way from the Garden of Eden in perfect creation when man fell, all the way to the revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of the New Testament, we can see that thread of the blood of Jesus Christ all the way through from cover to cover.

So maybe it's reading God's Word through this year. Maybe it's spending more time in prayer. Maybe this year it's figuring out new ways that you can reach and make an impact in your community.

Whatever that spiritual goal might be, it should be rooted in a desire to know more about God and to live out His love in our daily lives.

But here's the key. We need to seek God's guidance in setting these goals. Too often what we do is we take that blank sheet of paper and we write out our own goals and we turn it around and say, God bless my goals, rather than saying, God, here is my fresh start.

[13 : 51] What do you want of me? What is your plan for my life? How have you gifted me? What are my spiritual gifts? How can I use them this year, Father? And we need to seek God's guidance in setting our goals.

You know, it's easy to get caught up in thinking what we should do and wanting to do what we want to do. But true spiritual growth comes from setting our goals based upon God's will for our lives.

So as we set our spiritual goals this year, let's take time and pray and ask God to lead us and guide us as we set those goals.

Let's be open to His direction. It might be a brand new direction this year for you. It might be a brand new goal that you've never thought that you could live up to. But God's calling you.

God's wooing you. And He is pulling you in that direction. And He's giving you that sense of calling to go into a certain area. You know, He will guide us on that path.

[14 : 51] And He will lead us into that deeper, more fulfilling relationship with Him if only we will allow Him to. And you know that we can trust in God's guidance? Because He has a perfect plan for our life, even when it seems that our future is uncertain.

Now this next verse that we're going to read, I realize, is in the Old Testament. And I understand that it was written to a different audience, a different group of people. It was written to God's chosen people, the Jews in the Old Testament.

But while it wasn't written directly to us as New Testament followers of Jesus, I believe that the application in this verse holds especially true.

Jeremiah 29.11. Look in our Bibles, the Old Testament. Jeremiah 29.11. Where God says, For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord.

Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. God gave His people a promise. And today we are also His people if we know Jesus as our Savior.

[16 : 07] And this verse reminds us that God is not only aware of our future, but He has a plan for our future as well. A plan that is best for us and a plan that is filled with hope for eternity.

Because what we know on this earth is not the end. What we know on planet earth is not all that there is. There is a heaven and there is a hell to miss.

And we know that what Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary paid an eternal debt for your sin and mine. And as a follower of Jesus Christ, as a new creation, as part of His family, God has a plan for your life and He has a plan for mine.

So it's a plan that is filled with hope for eternity. So the bottom line is, we can trust God's plan. We can trust God's plan.

We can embrace new beginnings. We can know that God is in control and we can know that we can trust God's plan. It means believing that He's in control.

[17 : 14] Even when life's chaotic. Even when life feels like it's falling apart. We can know that God's in control. It may not feel like it.

See, that's the thing about being human. Often we go on our feelings and our emotions. We may be sad. We may feel rejected.

We may feel lonely. Or we may feel happy or elated. The thing about it is, it doesn't last. It's constantly changing. The only thing in our life that is unchanging is God and Jesus Christ and His plan for our life.

Now we may go through different seasons. We may go through different chapters in our life. And God may have a different direction for us to go. But the one unchanging thing is, He's still in control. And He's still Lord of our life.

And He's still God of the universe. And His Holy Spirit is still in our life, empowering us to accomplish what we could never accomplish on our own. And we know that God has that plan for us.

[18 : 15] And we can trust that plan. And it's about having trust and faith that His timing is perfect. You know, very often we pray. We pray for God to accomplish something. And He doesn't do it in the next five minutes.

We think, well, God, where are you? Why didn't you answer my prayer? God has His own timing. Just like a parent, when you tell your child that you're going to be doing something, or that you're going to take care of something, it's not always today.

It might be next week. But to a child, what is next week? It's an eternity, right? And so for us to wait on God's perfect timing is just like being that child that is so impatient that we think that if it didn't happen in the next five minutes, that it's not going to happen, or it's not happening.

God has a plan. We can trust that plan for us, even if it doesn't match our own. You know, think about this. You're on a road trip. You trust the GPS to guide you to your destination, right?

Even if you don't know every turn along the way, you know that it'll give you the next turn. But here's the thing. God's guidance is never wrong. God will never lead us down a false path.

[19 : 31] God will never lead us to a place where He doesn't want us. In the same way, we can trust God to guide us through life's journey, knowing that He sees the bigger picture.

But trusting in God's plan requires that we let go of our fears, that we let go of what we feel is our anxiety about the future.

It means surrendering our own plans. It means surrendering our desires to Him and saying, God, it's yours. I surrender my life to you. It's just about a daily prayer of mine.

God, I surrender my life today afresh and anew. I'm submitting myself again. I've taken my life back a number of times and tried to control it.

God, I just give it back to you this morning afresh and anew. So as we step into this new year, let's commit to trusting God with our future. So God, I'm not going to wrestle.

[20 : 30] I'm not going to wrangle. I'm not going to try to force it. I'm going to let you guide. I'm going to let you lead and control. So let's lean on His promises and find peace in knowing that He is working all things together for our good.

To them who love God and who are called according to His purpose. And in doing so, we can live a life on purpose. So how can we make every moment of our life count for God's honor and God's glory?

You know, living with a purpose is more than just going through the motions of daily life. Living life with a purpose is more than just being religious. More than just checking off a box and saying, I went to church this Sunday.

Or I did this. Or I did that. I put a dollar in the offering plate. It's about intentionally looking for ways to serve God in everything that we do.

Even the smallest things of life. It's about seeking to glorify and honor God. As we bring our time to a close this morning, let's look at Colossians. Colossians chapter 3, verses 23 and 24.

[21 : 40] Colossians 3, starting with verse number 23. Colossians 3, verses 23 and 24.

It means that in everything that we do, no matter how small, it can be an act of worship when done with the right heart.

Whether you're cutting grass, doing the dishes, or taking care of that task at work. If you do it heartily as to the Lord, as if you're doing it for Him, not so you would please people, but to please Him alone.

That is the key to honoring, serving God, and living life with a purpose. So, think of your life as a story that God's writing.

Each day is a brand new page. Every choice that you make. And when we make new choices, it can begin to show God's love and God's purpose for our life.

[23 : 09] As He writes that brand new page in the story of our life. Whether it's helping a neighbor, whether it's simply doing your best in school or at work, even the small things can be part of living a life with purpose.

Or living a life on purpose. It's about seeing every opportunity in our life as an opportunity to shine the light of Christ's love, and also to share the gospel with someone who may need to hear about what Jesus Christ has done for you and for me.

But living life with a purpose means being intentional about how we spend our time. It means being intentional about how we spend our resources.

It's about asking ourselves, how can I use the gifts that God has given me? How can I use my spiritual gifts? How can I use my talents to better serve God and to better build up and encourage one another?

So as we move into this new year, let's challenge ourselves to look at ways to how we can make a difference. How we can make a difference in our community. How we can make a difference in our family.

[24 : 17] How we can make a difference at school. How we can make a difference at work. How we can be the hands and the feet and the mouth of Jesus in our communities. And I believe that by living with purpose, we not only fulfill God's calling for our lives, but we also experience a joy and we experience a fulfillment that comes from serving Him wholeheartedly.

So this year, let's commit to living out these truths. Let's embrace new beginnings. Set our sights on spiritual growth this year as God will grow us.

Trust in God's plan and live a life with intentional purpose. And as we do, we'll not only experience the fullness, I believe that God promises, but we'll also be able to shine God's light and bring hope to others around us.

Because know this, there are people around you that are hurting. There are people around you that are hopeless. There are people around you that feel lonely, even in a crowd. And that kind gesture, that loving deed, or that word could even potentially save another person's life.

By taking the time to listen and taking the time to be the hands and the feet of Jesus for them. Remember, with Christ, every single day is a chance for a fresh start to live out the incredible story that He is writing for each of us.

[25 : 43] So let's step into this new year this week with faith, with hope, and a renewed commitment to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Let's pray. Our dear Heavenly Father, as we stand with this brand new year before us, I pray that You would help us to embrace what is coming ahead.

Because we know that You have a plan for our lives, that we can trust that plan, and that You want us to live each day on purpose, with a purpose. that we would set spiritual goals this year, that we may draw closer to You, become more like Jesus in all that we do, and say and think.

Father, today, we ask that You would accomplish Your will in our lives, and may we glorify You in all that we do. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week. If you'd like to learn more about Faith Bible Church or connect with us, visit our website at meetfaith.org.

We'd love to hear from you. Have a great week, and we'll see you next time. .