

**Sunday Sermon Review:** Week of January 2nd, 2021

**Sermon Series:** Fresh Start

**Sermon:** Reach Up, Reach Out

**Speaker:** Pastor Mike Burnette

## **Icebreaker**

- What are you looking forward to the most in 2022 and why?

## **Conversation Starters and Sermon Review**

### **Introduction**

- What kind of heaviness have you been experiencing? How have you been responding to it? How has that affected your daily life?
- Jesus said in Matthew 11:30, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." What do you think makes Jesus' yoke easy and light?
- Why do we choose to hold on to our burdens instead of letting Jesus carry it for us?

### **I. Reach UP!**

- Share a time when you finally let go and lifted a burden up to God. Compare the feelings you had before you made the decision and after you chose to let go of control.
- What tends to stop you from praising God in your heaviness?
- What in your life do you need to cover with the garment of praise? How can you start?

### **II. Reach OUT!**

- Who do you reach out to in difficult times? How do they (or he/she) care for you?
- Have someone read 2 Corinthians 8:1-3 out loud. Have you ever thought of serving others as a way to deal with affliction or pressure? Why or why not?

- Which opportunities to reach out and make a difference do you want to be involved in this year? See the list below or share another opportunity that you have in mind. How can our small group help you with accountability?
  - Serve Days: 3/26, 7/16, 11/5
  - Join or rejoin the Dream Team
  - Give generously and help provide people with clean drinking water
  - Join one of the Serve Teams that are still out helping tornado victims
  - Serve with a local outreach
  - Participate in a short-term mission trip
  - Lead a Small Group this year and invest in the next generation

## **Act On It**

**Encourage:** Pastor Mike chose the word “heavy” to describe how our lives have been for the past two years. We’ve faced things that we never would have imagined experiencing, and it’s negatively impacted how we do life in this world and also, sadly, how we interact with God. God wants us to see and be light, He doesn’t want us carrying a spirit of heaviness into this new year, which is why we need to commit to a fresh start with God in 2022. He wants us to trust Him, lean into Him, and to resist the urge to make poor decisions based on temporary emotions. The best way to fight the enemy and his spirit of heaviness is to praise and glorify God for any and everything, even when we don’t want to do it. Living a life of worship will deliver us from the hold of heaviness. Worship God not only by your praise, but also renewing your commitment to serve others. Turn your affliction into something that will make a difference in the lives of others, just like Jesus did for you.

**Ask:** Invite God into your heart to help prepare for a fresh start. Pray for freedom from the spirit of heaviness that’s been following you. Pray for a new heart and mindset. Ask God for a new love for people. Pray for renewed and passionate spiritual disciplines. Ask to be led by your love for

God and not to be led by your feelings. Ask God to show you where you can make a difference in the lives of others.

**Challenge:** Challenge yourself to give compliments and prayer instead of complaints this week. Take a break from news channels and replace that time with scripture reading or worship music. Ask God to show you something to give up and replace with prayer for our 21 Days of Fasting for Hope. Choose one of the seven ways, or come up with your own, to make a difference and get involved!

## **Prayer Request and Prayer**

God, we thank you for this opportunity for a fresh start with you. The last few years have been tough. We've gotten out of rhythm with you, but we're ready for this fresh start. Lord, we want to be reintroduced to you all over again. Help reignite our passion to be close to you. Lift this spirit of heaviness from us. We know that you don't want us to feel this way, and we're trusting that you can help make things better. Help us choose to extend grace to others instead of being offended. Soften our hearts where they've been hardened. Give us wisdom to make good decisions. We pray that moving forward, we'll be led by your love and not by temporary emotions. God, help us take up our garment of praise all day every day, especially in the times where we don't want to wear it. Help us turn heavy circumstances into opportunities to reach out to others and how to turn times of pressure into blessings and answered prayers for others. Show us where we can make a difference. Thank you for helping us make this year different and better. Amen.