

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 23rd, 2022

Sermon Series: Fresh Start

Sermon: We Belong Together

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- What's the FIRST thing you ate after the 21-Day Fast ended?

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I. The Church is Jesus' Plan (Matt. 16:18)

- Matthew 16:18 reads, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Knowing that Jesus is the One who ultimately builds the church, how does this truth shape your general outlook on life?
- Pastor Mike shared this powerful quote from Michael Carl:
 - *"As church attendance numbers fade across the nation and online services become very convenient, it's important to remember why church attendance for you and your family matters so much. You can't serve from your sofa. You can't have a community of faith on your sofa. You can't experience the power of a room full of believers worshipping together on your sofa. Christians aren't consumers. We are contributors. We don't watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We pray by laying hands on the hurting. We do life together. The Church needs you. And you need the Church."*
- Are you attending services and small groups in person, or have you slipped into the comfort of doing everything online? What can you do to get back together with your church family?

II. How We Belong Together (Hebrews 10:23-25)

- The church is compared to a family; what benefits have you experienced from being a part of God's family?
- Hebrews 10:23-25 says, " Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
- Imagine the church as a team getting ready to play the big game. How would you encourage your teammates (church family) and stir them up prior to the start of the game (doing good works)? What would be more effective; doing this from home while watching online, or doing so in-person (on Sundays, and in your small group)?

III. What We Do as a Church

- Pastor Mike shared the four principal ways that we, as a church, do life together:
 - a. **We Attend as a Church**
 - **Psalm 122:1 - "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"**
 - Do you prepare for church with the same enthusiasm and excitement, as you would for a concert, vacation, or party?
 - **Galatians 6:2 - "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."**
 - Who do you know in your neighborhood or small group who is having a hard time and might need a little help? How could you help bear their burdens?

b. We Pray as a Church

- **Acts 2:42 - “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”**
- Name 3 people you know that you could pray with on a weekly basis; what impact would regularly praying with them have on your prayer life?
- **1 John 5:13-15 - “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.”**
- Praying God's will gives us confidence that will hear and answer our prayers. How can you know God's will more effectively?

c. We Give as a Church

- **2 Cor. 9:6-7 - “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”**
- People who tithe see the hand of God on their finances when they obey. Take a moment to share how God has blessed you through tithing.

d. We Serve as a Church

- **Matthew 20:26-28** - “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- How can YOU serve and be part of God’s plan?
- **1 Peter 4:10** - “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”
- God wants YOU to serve in the unique way that only you can. You are an important part of God’s plan. What does YOUR service look like in God’s plan?

Act On It

Encourage: We Belong together. Better stated: We FIT together. In this SPIRITUAL FAMILY, we fit as many parts into ONE FAMILY. We contribute, we share life in our ATTENDING CHURCH and SMALL GROUPS, we seek God and rejoice in His Will as a PRAYING CHURCH, we move the Mission of God and this church forward through obedience in GIVING GENEROUSLY, and we make a HUGE DIFFERENCE in serving God through serving one another.

Ask: Ask God to reveal the new habits that have kept you from engaging with God’s family (your family), the church. Confess any fears/anxiety you have about gathering in-person, and ask God to give you the grace to engage again with the community of believers.

Challenge: Let’s have a FRESH START with the Lord’s Church. We BELONG TOGETHER! We FIT together. We GET TO DO LIFE together and GROW in Christ together! We SERVE together, we hear GOD’S WORD together. If God has put you at this church, PLANT YOURSELF HERE. Psalm 92 says, “The

righteous flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a CEDAR of Lebanon, planted in the HOUSE OF THE LORD! They will bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green!"

Be PLANTED! Grow DEEP here. Plant and Raise your family in Church! Do life with your spiritual family:

- Attend church every Sunday
- Get in a small group,
- Start tithing to God
- Hop on a Dream Team

Let God grow you, and build you, and strengthen you in HIS CHURCH... right here!

Prayer Request and Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the tremendous blessing of my spiritual family. Forgive me for neglecting the responsibility I have, to work alongside you, as a member of this family, to help others become fully devoted followers of Jesus. Remove any fear, anxiety, and hesitation I have about going "ALL IN" with the church. Thank you for helping me to realize that I am a gift to your church. Help me use the gifts you've given me, to make a difference in the lives of others. Help me to remember your wonderful promise that you are building your church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. In Jesus name, Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 16th, 2022

Sermon Series: Fresh Start

Sermon: What's In Your Heart? (Exodus 3-4)

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- Describe the last time you were asked to do something outside of your comfort zone.

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IV. The Heart of God (Exodus 3:7-10)

- Exodus 3:7 reads, "Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings," How does it make you feel knowing that God hears and sees people in need?
- Moses was the son-in-law of a priest of some other religion, a shepherd, fled from Egypt 40 years prior after murdering one of Pharaoh's soldiers, married with children, living a content life in a desert. Why do you think God chose him over anyone else? What does this show you about what God thinks of you?
- Where and how is God using you right now? Is He calling you to something different in the future? How do you know?

V. The Heart of Moses (Exodus 3:11-4:17)

Excuse #1 - "I'm Not Worthy!"

Excuse #2 - "I Don't Know God Well Enough!"

Excuse #3 - "No One Will Believe Me!"

Excuse #4 - "I'm Not Qualified, Not Good Enough!"

Excuse #5 - "Can You Just Use Someone Else?"

- Share a time where you knew God was calling you to do something, but you didn't feel qualified or equipped to do it? How was your

response similar or different from Moses?

- Pastor Mike shared the quote, “God’s not interested in your qualifications. God is interested in your availability.” What do you think about this statement?
- Which excuse from above does God get from you the most? What needs to change and how should you be responding instead?

VI. What’s In Your Heart?

- What keeps you from allowing God to use you to accomplish His purpose? What would it look like for you to respond with a heart of surrender?
- What truths from this passage encourage you to step out and do something new?

Act On It

Encourage: Moses, who would seem to be the most unqualified person to do anything for the Lord, was chosen specifically by the Lord to do something great. God was hearing the cries of suffering and afflicted people, and He wanted to do something about it. Moses didn’t have to prove his ability, all he had to do was be available, and God promised to be with him. The same is still true today: God hears the cries of His people and wants to handle it, and He will choose whoever is available to help. We don’t need certifications, experience, or knowledge, so be encouraged to leave those excuses behind. For every excuse we make, God has a promise. God knows exactly what He’s doing when He calls us to do something for Him. As Christians, we get to be a part of the Great Commission, of telling people about Jesus and inviting them into His family. So as a part of this Fresh Start, let’s stop asking to be excused and start responding to God with a heart of surrender when He calls us into the unknown.

Ask: Ask God to reveal where and how He wants to use you. Pray for a heart that reflects God’s desire to do something about the needs of people around you. Ask for encouragement and truth to fight against any excuses

that keep God from using you. Trust that God knows what He's doing through and in you. Pray for God to replace your questions with His truths. Ask for courage to step out on God's promises, knowing that He will equip and provide. Pray to be given a heart full of surrender as God starts calling you into new territory, that you respond to His call with faith, trust, and hope.

Challenge: Ask yourself, "What is the one step that I can take this week, big or small, to move forward in the things that God is calling me to do?" Write out what's keeping you from taking that next step and search for scripture(s) to see what God says about that, so you can meditate on them and hear what God specifically wants to say to you. Share it with someone that can provide you with accountability, encouragement, and prayer.

Prayer Request and Prayer

Heavenly Father, we're so thankful that You hear the cries of those who need You. You know our struggles, and You're an active God that moves. We thank You because we're a part of Your family, we get to serve You. We get to help Your Kingdom spread to those You want to reach. It's a blessing to be a part of Your purpose. Thank You for not requiring anything of us other than being available. Any excuses we've made in the past when You've called us out of our comfort zones, we apologize. Give us hearts of surrender. We commit to You, we trust that You will give us all that we need to do Your will. Give us boldness, give us strength, and step into the gaps and be our strength where we feel weak. Thank You for this Fresh Start, that we get to put an end to the life we've been living for You, and start a new chapter where we're committing to pursuing new ventures with You with an attitude of expectation and surrender. Use us as You need us. Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 9th, 2022

Sermon Series: Fresh Start

Sermon: Turn It Up a Notch

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- Finish the statement, “One fact about me that might surprise you is...”

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VII. God Wants to Be Close to You

- What makes you want to draw closer to God?
- What’s your view of God as your Father? Do you impose worldly views of your earthly father on God? How does this affect your relationship with God?
- Have you experienced drawing near to God and Him drawing back to you? Please share.

VIII. Let’s Celebrate Spiritual Habits

The Inward Disciplines:

- a. Meditation – The ability to silence the noise around us to hear God’s voice and obey his word.
- b. Prayer – Conversation with the Lord where we speak and listen to Jesus.
- c. Fasting – Saying no to our flesh so we can say yes to the things of God.
- d. Study – Studying God's word to allow our minds to be transformed.

The Outward Disciplines:

- a. Simplicity – A reality that life is more than possessions, endless activity, or complexity. Simplicity helps us seek one thing – Jesus and His way.
- b. Solitude – To be alone, to be still, to be quiet, to listen and to spend

time without distractions.

c. Submission – The ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our way.

d. Service – Loving and being present to the needs of others.

The Corporate Disciplines:

a. Confession – Reveals how greatly we need the love and forgiveness of God.

b. Worship – To experience, know and feel the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community of believers.

c. Guidance – God guides us individually but He also uses the people around us to help guide us as well.

d. Celebration – Choosing to celebrate all that the Lord has done in your life, even when you don't feel like it.

- How do you distinguish works from spiritual habits?
- Which area of discipline do you do best? What advice would you give to someone who struggles in that area?
- Which discipline area do you want to grow in? What's keeping you from growing in that area? (For example: lack of time or being self-conscious during worship.)

IX. Make Spiritual Habits Normal and Super Practical

1. Start where you are
 2. Get on a plan and write it down
 3. Tell someone else your plan to grow
 4. Keep showing up
 5. Grow closer to Jesus
- Pick one area from the above disciplines that you want to do better and turn it up a notch. Write out a commitment based on the steps above.
 - What's the difference between making a New Years Resolution and the Fresh Start being discussed in this series?

Act On It

Encourage: This year, we need to commit to a fresh start in our spiritual disciplines, the habits that we choose to do to grow our relationship with the Lord. God wants to know you, and He wants to draw close to you, but He can't do that until we draw near to Him. Don't think of the disciplines as rules or religious pathways, but as healthy habits that will help us grow. Whether it's inward, outward, or corporate, we all have a discipline that we could strengthen. Start with normal, practical steps so you don't get overwhelmed. Start where you are, come up with a plan and commit to it, tell someone else your plan for accountability, keep going and don't quit, and most importantly, expect to grow in your devotion and love of Christ.

Ask: Ask God to show you which spiritual disciplines you need to turn up a notch. Pray for a renewed desire to grow close to Christ. Pray that God shows you where you're doing a great job and where you need to improve. Ask God to help you see these disciplines as ways He's given you to allow you to seek Him, not as checklists or burdens.

Challenge: Once you have your commitment, share it with the group or at least one other person, and ask that they check in with you for the next three months.

Seek out a mentor if you need guidance on how to get started, and/or find an accountability partner for support, encouragement, and prayer.

Group HOSTs, for the rest of the time in the Fresh Start series, start your group meetings by checking in with group members and asking about their progress.

Prayer Request and Prayer

God, thank you for wanting to be close to us. We're so thankful to serve a God that loves us and desires us. Thank you for this opportunity to reset. As we commit to this fresh start with you in 2022, help us shift our focus to growing closer to you. Show us where we're doing great and where we can improve. Help us to be open and honest not just with You, but also with ourselves on how we can get closer to Christ. Give us perseverance as we develop these new disciplines. Help us to see them for what they are, healthy ways to grow our relationship with You. Give us boldness to take the first step toward making a change. Encourage us when we feel like we can't make it or like we messed up by reminding us that You don't call us to be perfect, but to just be willing. We thank you for the work you're going to do in and through us as we grow deeper with You. Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 2nd, 2022

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.