

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 9th, 2021

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...”

Conversation Starters and Sermon Review

I. 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.

II. 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.)

III. 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, 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.