

All's Well That Starts Well!

Big Idea: Some people refrain from making new year's resolutions for fear of failure, but we can learn from the life of Jesus (the source of "fresh starts") that to finish well, at some point we have to start well.

Jesus had little control over the start of His life on earth, but those who influenced His life early on (Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna) modeled the importance of obeying God's Word, walking in God's Spirit, and remaining faithful to what God says - not a bad start to a new life or a new year!

1. Obeying God's Word

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Luke 2:21-24

Jesus was born into a Hebrew family and so He was raised according to Jewish laws and customs: after 8 days He was named and circumcised, and after the 40 days of Mary's purification (Leviticus 12), He was brought to the Temple for the Redemption of the Firstborn (Exodus 13:2,11-16; Numbers 18:15-16).

The best way to start or restart your life is by careful obedience to God's Word. The same is true for the start of a new year. Find a Bible reading plan that works for you. Then persevere, until you are reading and applying God's Word at the start of every day, not just at the start of every year!

2. Walking In God's Spirit

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God. Luke 2:25-28

It was no coincidence that the next two people to meet Jesus, Simeon and Anna, were led of the Spirit. Obedience to the general commandments of God from His Word and the personal directives of His Spirit would characterize the life of Christ from beginning to end. It should also characterize His followers – that's us!

3. Remaining Faithful To What God Says

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:36-38

Anna had remained faithful to her husband and her God for 84 years. God rewarded her faithfulness with the ultimate blessing: the opportunity to see a child being redeemed at the Temple who would one day become the Redeemer of mankind. If we start well and remain faithful, we will finish well! If we fail, the Redeemer, the God of fresh starts, will help us start again!

THE CALL

As a person who has entered into salvation by repentance and faith through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and answered a call to minister in His name...

I CHOOSE

- to dedicate myself by the grace of God to a life characterized by the pursuit of true excellence in every area and relationship;
- to develop a devotion to Jesus characterized by a life committed to the Word of God and the discipline of prayer on a consistent basis;
- to honor God with my body realizing I am not my own - I have been bought with a price;
- to seek the Lord's direction in the decisions of my life, earnestly desiring to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit, that I might fulfill His calling on my life; and
- to be a life-time learner always realizing that Christian maturity is an on-going and exciting walk of faith.

REALIZING that I do not live my life as an island unto myself

I CHOOSE

- to respect and love those who live in close proximity to me, my family, considering others before myself;
- to encourage others in the body of Christ toward love and good deeds;
- to speak words of edification and refuse to be involved in idle talk, backbiting and gossip;
- to go in love to that other member in the body of Christ who has wronged or offended me, or whom I have offended, in order to gain a brother or a sister;
- to be a responsible steward of all that I have been given, through the faithful giving of talents, time, tithes and offerings;
- to maintain a lifestyle of personal moral purity, to preserve my body from sexual impurity by the power of God and self-discipline; and
- to honor God in submitting myself to the wisdom of those whom the Lord has placed over me, choosing not to be involved in any relationship that will hinder my walk with the Lord.

BECAUSE I have been called to be "in the world but not of it"

I CHOOSE

- to respect and obey the authorities God has established, knowing they are placed there for my benefit;
- to practice the priority of being "salt" and "light" that I may win others to Christ, proclaiming that Jesus is my Savior, Healer, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and Coming King;
- to desire that God be glorified in all areas of my life in answering the call to Christ's likeness; and
- to allow the shed blood of Jesus to cleanse and set me free from sin when I fall short, knowing that I have been called to get up and press on toward the high calling in Christ Jesus.

To ***THE CALL*** I dedicate myself, for the glory of God!

Signature

Date