

FRESH START

A six-week Sermon Series to to kickstart your faith

Introduction

Welcome to “Fresh Start”, a six-week journey designed to breathe new life into spiritual growth. Whether just beginning a faith journey or walking with God for years, this series focuses on developing habits that sustain a vibrant and lasting faith. For those new to faith, it provides a foundation to build on, while for long-time believers, it offers a chance to rekindle passion and enthusiasm.

Let’s face it, staying “on fire” for God all the time can sometimes feel like a distant dream, and hitting a spiritual slump is not a question of *if* but *when*. During these seasons, adopting certain attitudes can make a significant difference. For instance, seeing life and circumstances through a fresh perspective, praying with greater expectation, or trusting more deeply in difficult circumstances can all help break us out of our spiritual slump.

So join along for the next six weeks, and explore how the truth of Scripture in combination with new spiritual habits can help us experience a “fresh start” in our spiritual lives.

How to use this guide:

For the best experience, use this study guide alongside the Bible app devotional available at the following link:

www.bible.com/reading-plans/60568-fresh-start

Each day, members can read the devotional and engage with others using the app’s “Talk It Over” feature to discuss reflections. These group study guides are closely connected to the daily content, so the more consistently members complete their devotions, the richer and more meaningful the group discussions will be.

Each week, the study guide provided to you will be broken down into five sections: (1) warm-up question; (2) sermon reflection; (3) scripture reading; (4) discussion questions; and (5) group challenge. Each section will be explained below.

Warm-up Question

This is a light, approachable question related to the week’s theme. It’s designed to get everyone talking and comfortable sharing. Usually, these questions are simple and best answered briefly to encourage participation from all group members.

Sermon Reflection

This will be the same question every week. “Did anything from last week’s sermon impact you or leave an impression?” This is just to get people reflecting on the sermon of the week. If you decide, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions which will be on the church website.

Scripture Reading

This section highlights the main passage for the discussion. The scripture will come from either one of the week’s devotionals or the Sunday sermon, providing a solid foundation for conversation.

Discussion Questions

Each week includes five questions, with the most important ones highlighted in bold. The first question will always be related to the scripture reading. If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.

Group Challenge

This part makes the study guide especially valuable. Throughout the week, members will be introduced to new habits via devotionals and sermons, but real change happens through community accountability. At the end of each session, review the challenge together and talk through how the group can support one another in putting it into practise.

FRESH START

Week One

Awaken

When spiritual life feels stagnant, the natural reaction is often to seek new supernatural experiences or dive into deeper Bible studies. However, more often than not, the real issue lies closer to home: forgetting how God has already been at work in our lives. Whether it's the distractions of stressful circumstances, the weariness that comes from life's struggles, or the competing "loves" vying for attention, these all contribute to losing sight of our first and greatest love, the love of God who graciously saved us from sin.

Warm-up Question

What is one thing you will always remember, no matter how much time has passed?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | Revelation 2:3-5

You have persevered and have endured hardships for My name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

- 1 / Bible: The passage above is a message Jesus gave to the Ephesian church. He criticises them for losing the love they had at first. What was your love for God like in the beginning? Describe the "things you did at first" when you initially became a Christian.**
- 2 /** What would your life be like if you had never decided to follow Jesus?
- 3 /** On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your current relationship with Christ? Share specifically why you rated yourself in this way.
- 4 / This week touched on several causes for our forgetfulness, which one characterises your forgetfulness the most? (groggy spirit, futility in life, loss of perspective, changing loves)**
- 5 /** What steps could you take to reinvigorate a tender affection for Him?

Group Challenge

You were challenged this past week to consider the benefits God had given you as a result of your faith in Him. You were also challenged to think beyond your salvation and consider the numerous blessings that have come your way due to your faith. Take a few moments as a group to invite everyone to list out the significant blessings they have received on a sheet of paper. Afterwards, go around the room and have each member read aloud their sheet of blessing.

FRESH START

Week Two

See Clearer

No matter if you grew up in a Christian family or not, we all carry some idea of what God is like. Often, this image is shaped by the media we consume and the stories we hear from others. Unfortunately, these outdated and worn-out perceptions can really influence how we relate to Him.

For instance, if we view God mainly as a punishing judge, we might focus excessively on following the rules. On the other hand, if we see Him as a distant Father, we might feel like our everyday struggles don't matter to Him at all. The way we perceive God significantly affects our responses to Him.

The truth is, no matter how much we try to remember what the Bible says about God, our understanding is most often clouded by our life experiences. Seeing God clearly is vital for a "fresh start" in our spiritual lives.

Warm-up Question

What is one topic you feel you see clearly and understand deeply? In other words, what is a topic that you are an expert on?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | Matthew 7:9-11

Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

- 1 / Bible: What does this passage reveal about the nature of God? How does it differ from your view of God?**
- 2 /** How has your family background, especially in relation to your father, shaped your view of God?
- 3 / How does your understanding of God shape the way you live your life and make decisions?**
- 4 /** What specific experiences or environments help you see God more clearly and accurately?
- 5 / On day 13 of the devotional it says, "if you want the clearest, most trustworthy understanding of who God is, look to Jesus Christ." What is your personal belief about the person of Jesus? What questions or concerns do you have about His uniqueness?**

Group Challenge

In one of our devotionals this week, we explored the grandeur of God as revealed in nature. The grand mountains and expansive oceans serve as powerful reminders of His might and care for us. This week presents a wonderful opportunity to take your group on a hike! Be intentional about pausing at the lookouts to marvel at God's creation together. For an extra challenge, consider praying together at the summit, celebrating the beauty around you and deepening your connection with each other and with God.

FRESH START

Week Three

Trust Deeper

Cultivating true trust can be a challenging journey. Often, our deepest trust in someone is revealed during tough times. The people we genuinely rely on are those who have stood by us and offered support when we needed it most.

However, building trust takes time, and it can shatter in an instant. Just one moment of betrayal can undo years of hard-earned trust.

Our relationship with God reflects this experience. When blessings flow and life is good, our trust in Him feels strong. Yet, in times of disappointment or unanswered prayers, that trust can waver. This week, we explored ways to strengthen our trust, regardless of our circumstances. It starts with taking action and making the first move, not just thinking about it.

It's crucial to place our trust not in our own abilities, but in the power, promises, and presence of God. Remember, deep trust isn't built on a single act; it's a continuous journey of faith.

There is also one final element for trust that we can't overlook, and that is community. Deep trust in God thrives within a supportive community that reminds us of His character and encourages us to draw closer to Him, especially in difficult times. This practice of cultivating trust truly flourishes when we lean on one another.

Warm-up Question

If you needed to share a confidential secret with someone, who would it be and why would you pick them?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | Matthew 14:25-33

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "tell me to come to You on the water." "Come," He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

1 / Bible: How does the passage illustrate the relationship between fear and faith? In what ways can we relate to Peter's experience of fear while trying to exercise faith?

2 / Bible: Peter begins to sink when he doubts. What are some doubts you have about God?

FRESH START

3 / How easy do you find it to trust God during difficult times? If you find it easy, what factors contribute to that trust? If you struggle with it, what makes trust difficult?

4 / In what areas of your life do you need to persevere in persistent trust?

5 / On Day 19, this was said, “Trust is fragile and temporary when it is tethered to a desired outcome. Whereas, trust is stable and long-lasting when centred on the nature of God, which is constant, everlasting, and unchanging regardless of circumstances.”

Do you find your trust tethered more to an outcome or to the nature of God? Please explain why.

Group Challenge

This past week, you explored the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who demonstrated unwavering trust in the face of certain death in the fiery furnace. They boldly declared, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:17-18). Today’s activity will focus on the powerful statement, “even if He does not.”

True trust in God is cultivated when we choose to rely on Him, even when the outcomes don’t align with our hopes. Take a moment for each member to reflect on how they might complete the following sentence: “I can trust in God, even if He does not ____.”

After everyone has had a moment to think, invite each person to share their sentence. This will foster accountability within the group, as members express their desired outcomes and surrender them to God. Conclude your time together by praying for one another to deepen your trust in God, regardless of the circumstances.

FRESH START

Week Four

Pray Bigger

What does it mean to pray bigger? Many people initially think that it involves asking for grand things, miraculous healings and abundant blessings, expressed with boldness and enthusiasm to demonstrate our faith in God's ability to answer those prayers.

However, what if the essence of bold prayer lies less in the specifics of what we ask for and more in the posture with which we pray? This past week, we explored powerful prayers from figures such as Paul, Solomon, Jabez, Nehemiah, and Jesus. From their examples, we learn that true prayer begins with a profound acknowledgment of the vastness of God's love for us. It's through experiencing this love that we find genuine boldness in our prayers. We also discovered that bold prayers seek to surrender to God's will and to bring glory to Him. These prayers should also extend beyond our personal needs to encompass the needs of the world around us.

Adopting these attitudes in prayer won't guarantee that our requests are answered. In fact, we may often encounter silence or unanswered prayers. Yet, regardless of the outcomes, the great benefit of our prayers is that they will transform our hearts and align our wills with God's. We begin to feel a deeper burden for the lost and greater compassion for those who suffer. Ultimately, we start to embody the character of Jesus Christ, which may be the most significant fruit of our "big" prayers.

Warm-up Question

If you could ask God one silly question, what would it be?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | Matthew 26:38-39; 42-44

Then He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me." Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will."

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done." When He came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

1 / Bible: Jesus knew He would have to "drink the cup" in the end, yet He still prayed three times. What does His posture teach us about wrestling with God through prayers? Is there something you have been wrestling with?

2 / If you were to examine what you seriously prayed about in the past week or month, what would they reveal about what you truly care about in life? What was your motivation and heart posture when you prayed for these things?

FRESH START

- 3 /** Have you ever found yourself holding back in prayer, perhaps by not asking for something fully, like complete healing, because you wanted to manage your expectations? What do you think motivated that choice, and how did it impact your faith and prayer life?
- 4 / Bible:** What is making it hard for you to pray “not as I will”? What small practical steps can you take to live out that prayer?
- 5 /** On day 27, the devotional read, “surrendering our will to God is, in fact, the greatest prayer one can make.”
What is one area in your life you need to surrender to God right now?

Group Challenge

One of the essential postures of prayer discussed this past week is the call to look outward, beyond individual needs and desires. In a community group, members often pray for each other, which is a valuable practice that fosters connection and support. However, this focus can sometimes be limited to the immediate community, overlooking the broader needs of the world.

Today, the challenge is to expand that vision and embrace a more global perspective in prayer. Encourage group members to identify prayer requests in three specific categories: (1) the needs of the city, which might include issues like homelessness, hunger, and social justice; (2) the needs of the global church, addressing challenges faced by believers around the world, such as persecution, lack of resources, or the spread of the gospel; and (3) the needs of the wider world, which encompasses pressing issues like poverty, conflict, and environmental concerns.

Use resources such as the internet, news articles, and reports from trusted organisations to gather these requests. Afterwards, have the community come together to pray for these important issues. Encourage open sharing and heartfelt prayers, allowing each member to express their concerns and hopes for the world.

FRESH START

Week Five

Give Easier

Perhaps one of the most challenging spiritual habits to embrace is giving. Much of this difficulty arises from a limited understanding of what giving truly means. For many, giving is often seen merely as a way to support and sustain the work of the church. This view can lead to several issues.

First, viewing giving solely as a transaction can foster a consumeristic mindset towards the local church. This may result in members evaluating the church's performance and only contributing when they believe it is being managed well. Second, it can lead to a withdrawal of support during financial hardships, treating giving like a subscription service that can be cancelled instead of a vital expression of faith.

Biblically, we learn that one role of giving is to sustain the spiritual community, but this is just one facet. Giving also serves to reaffirm our identity as stewards rather than owners of the resources God has entrusted to us. Furthermore, giving allows us to honour God with our best and is a powerful weapon to counter the pervasive desires for material wealth.

We should see giving as much more than simply a means of supporting the church, but rather an essential means by which we worship God. Embracing this broader understanding transforms giving into a profound expression of faith and devotion.

Warm-up Question

What is the greatest gift you have ever given someone?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

- 1 / Bible: The call of this verse is to give our entire lives as a sacrifice. What areas in your life are you holding back? Why?**
- 2 /** What does giving/tithing mean to you personally? How has it evolved over time?
- 3 /** What challenges do you face in embracing your role as a "manager" of your resources?
- 4 /** If you were to examine your spending in the past month, does your spending reflect a mindset of stewardship, where resources are used to further God's purposes? Or does it reveal a perspective of ownership, focused on personal pleasure and immediate gratification?

FRESH START

5 / What specific changes can you make in your spending habits to align them more closely with a mindset of stewardship?
Are there particular areas where you feel called to be more intentional in using your resources for God's purposes?

Group Challenge

On day 33 of the devotional, we explored the transformative power of sacrificial generosity as a means to free ourselves from the grips of materialism. It's important to remember that this form of giving goes beyond our regular tithes to the church.

Jonathan Edwards says, "if we are never obliged to relieve others' burdens except when we can do so without burdening ourselves, then how can we bear our neighbour's burdens while bearing no burden at all?" In essence, he is saying that giving should be burdensome and not just out of convenience.

This week, your challenge is to collectively pool your resources to support a charity of your choice. Begin by discussing as a group to identify a social cause or ministry that resonates with everyone.

Once you've reached a consensus, encourage each member to reflect and pray about how much they would like to contribute, emphasising the spirit of sacrificial generosity as they consider their donation. At your next meeting, gather the contributions, and designate one person to deliver the collective offering to the chosen charity.

FRESH START

Week Six

Live Bolder

Living boldly often evokes images of individuals answering God's grand call to become missionaries in distant lands or standing on street corners proclaiming the Gospel despite jeers and heckles. While bold faith certainly includes moments of courageous proclamation, it is not the only expression of a bold life.

You can embody boldness by living faithfully and thoughtfully behind the scenes. Consider Abigail, who quietly intervened to prevent King David from making a hasty decision. Boldness can also manifest in trying something new or persevering through challenges instead of opting for the easy way out. Serving and caring for those in need, especially when it is inconvenient, is another powerful way to live boldly.

Bold living looks different for everyone, but there is one commonality: it is rooted in Christ. If you want to live boldly, you must remain rooted in Christ. It is through that connection to Him that we see God's hand at work every day, and communing with Him through scripture and prayer helps us align ourselves with His will. When you know who He is, what His mission is, and how He works, you will have the confidence to live boldly.

Warm-up Question

What is the boldest thing you have ever done?

Sermon Reflection

Did anything from last week's sermon impact you or leave an impression? What was it?

(If you decide to do so, you can also refer to the sermon reflection questions that are available on the church website.)

Scripture Reading | 2 Timothy 1:7

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Discussion Questions

(If time is limited, focusing on the bolded questions ensures meaningful discussion without feeling rushed.)

- 1 / Bible: Reflecting on the three qualities mentioned: power, love, and self discipline; which one do you feel is most evident in your life right now? Conversely, which one do you find yourself lacking or struggling with?**
- 2 / Have you ever hesitated to speak up, take action, or make a decision because it felt risky? What was the situation and what were you afraid of?**
- 3 / Do you tend to associate boldness with dramatic actions? How can you practise boldness in both public and quiet ways?**
- 4 / Where is God calling you to boldness right now? Do you need courage to take a leap of faith or perseverance to keep going?**
- 5 / On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "not committed at all" and 10 being "very committed," how would you rate your commitment to the Great Commission? What influenced your rating, and can you share one specific step you might take to deepen that commitment?**

FRESH START

Group Challenge

As believers in Jesus Christ, the call to embrace the Great Commission and serve those in need is paramount. However, many individuals may go through life without ever sharing the gospel. For the final activity as a group, challenge everyone to share their faith with someone who doesn't believe in Jesus. This could be a family member, friend, colleague, or even a stranger. Allow one week to complete this challenge and keep each other accountable.

For group members who have never evangelised, it can be helpful to introduce a simple framework for sharing faith. Here's a useful tool:

15-Second Testimony

This approach enables individuals to share a snapshot of their faith in a way that invites interest without feeling overly aggressive. Here's how to structure it:

- **Introduction:** "There was a time when..."
- **Before Christ:** Choose two words to describe life prior to knowing Christ.
- **Transformation:** Choose two words that reflect what Christ has done.
- **After Christ:** Choose two words to describe life after accepting Christ.
- **Engagement:** End with the question, "Do you have a story like that?"

Example: "There was a time when I was really anxious and felt hopeless. Then I found love and forgiveness through Jesus, and it changed everything. Now, I have peace and joy and don't worry so much about what others think. Do you have a story like that?"

Encourage each member to share their 15-second testimony during the week. Updates can be shared in the group chat upon completion, followed by a planned time to reflect on the experiences in the next session. This is a valuable opportunity for growth and connection within the group!