

Talks – New Beginning – myfishbites.com

New Beginning

Whenever I hear the phrase 'New Beginnings' I always think of a village in the Lake District called Newbiggin! When someone says 'new beginning' what does it mean to you?

At the start of every new year, people make promises and commitments. Most of these they never do, or start well but fade away as the year goes on. Whatever you decide to do this year, stick at it and keep going, unless God tells you to do something else!

Maybe just play a worship track (or a bit of the track) and just get people to be quiet before God and ask God to speak.

Exodus 16.1-12 – lessons from the Israelites

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

The LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

What can we learn?

The people of God had been miraculously delivered out of Egypt. Egypt was a place of great slavery and misery for all of Israel. They were under the control of the Egyptians who worked them harder and harder. Eventually the time came for God to bring deliverance to his people and God used Moses to do several miracles before the Pharaoh (the big man) in Egypt let them go. Then Moses under God's power did an awesome miracle as the Red Sea parted in two, all of Israel got across and the Egyptians following them were distracted by God with fire and were then destroyed in the sea. But... more than once, the people complained. This was one of the times they complained! They even wanted to go back to Egypt to slavery – or that's what they said!!

Sometimes, things change in life. It could be a new year, a new school, a new place to live. If we're Christians following God then the Bible tells us in Romans 8.28 that God works all things for good. It can be really tough having to move on. I remember leaving my school in Birmingham, then leaving another school in another city, then moving to another 2 schools after that. It was quite hard.

What God wants us to do is not to forget friends and good memories, but to also grow into the new memories and friendships that God gives us. We shouldn't complain and get angry or bitter. Philippians 2.14 says, *"Do everything without grumbling or arguing (or complaining)."* Don't be like the Israelites! The Bible tells us in Exodus 16 that Moses spoke to the people saying, *"You're not grumbling against us, but against God."* So let's be careful! But also remember that God is incredibly loving. Even though the Israelites were whining, God heard their grumbling and answered them! (Later on God would tire of their constant mumbling). But despite their complaining, God provided them with both meat and bread to eat. Jesus said that he was the bread of life – and God gave his people food and life in the desert, despite their bad attitude.

Maybe you're like the people of Israel and something new has happened. It may be painful, like the break up of a relationship. Or it may be exciting like going to college or a new place. 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18 says, *"Rejoice always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* Basically always give thanks to God. Hebrews talks about offering God a *"sacrifice of praise"* (Hebrews 13.15). Even if things are tough, if we thank God even when we don't feel like it, God will show up for you. In 2 Chronicles 20, God's people found themselves with loads of enemies attacking them (sometimes we feel like lots of things are going wrong in life). But God spoke and said that the battle was God's (verse 15) and that the people should praise and thank God.

And sure enough, we read the people sung, *"Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever."* (Reminds me of a Chris Tomlin song...)

(Verse 22) – *"As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated."*

Praising and thanking God is a powerful weapon that you have – speak out Bible verses, thank God and as you do this new thing, believe and know that God is working for you, the battle is his, you just show up and God will do what you can't and work all things for good in your life. Good means God's good, not always what we think of as 'good' LOL!

John 8.2-11 – lessons from Jesus

At dawn Jesus appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Before I became a Christian, my life was in a mess. I had got involved with gangs and soccer hooligans. But when I met God he changed my life around and he's been doing that ever since! The day I met God, my life became new. 2 Corinthians 5.17 says this, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

If you are a Christian, then did you know you are a new creation – God has 'made you new.' Now, we know that we still mess up and do wrong stuff, but that's because we still have the 'old' part of us called the 'soul' or the 'self' part! Being 'selfish' means putting the self bit of us first, not the new 'God' bit of us first. We all do this but God gradually works to change us and renew us more and more so that every day we become more like him and can shine for him – just as the Matt Redman and Fee songs say. It's the 'spirit' part of us that God makes new and makes like him, because it's our spirits that will go on forever – in heaven we'll have new and perfect bodies!

YouTube Link – Matt Redman 'Shine' – <https://youtu.be/BD0EMbiXZAs>

Imagine being this woman in John 8. She'd been dragged into the temple courts. This would be like someone being brought into a court today, except it was the religious leaders in charge not judges, and they made up the rules! The pharisees were basically stupid. In their prideful state they thought that they could trap Jesus. Funnily enough they didn't succeed. The woman stood there, expecting to be stoned (with stones and rocks, not weed or any other drugs...) She would have been really terrified. (Sadly in many Islamic

countries, this kind of stoning is still practiced, with women usually on made up charges). But Jesus didn't speak. Instead he started writing on the ground as he said, "If anyone hasn't sinned then go for it, throw the first stone." No-one threw a stone, but they gradually walked away until only the woman was left. She must have been amazed and in state of shock. Then Jesus stood up, asked where everyone had gone and if anyone had condemned her. "None" she replied. *"Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin (sin no more)."*

The truth about Jesus and Christianity is so simple and so incredible that people miss it. Sometimes they don't care, sometimes they're too full of pride or arrogance to accept it and other times no-one's really told them! The message from Jesus is this. "I am not here to condemn you, knock you down. I'm here to say turn from doing wrong, accept me in your life and you get into God' kingdom." On the Cross, one of the thieves said to Jesus, "remember me" and Jesus said, *"Today you'll be with me in paradise."*

John 3.16-18 says this: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Here's the good news for you. If you are not a Christian, then God gives you two choices. Believe in him or reject him. The choice is yours. But here's the deal. God promises to give you life in abundance (John 10.10) and that you will be with him in heaven for ever, and it's free. If you reject God, you will live a far less meaningful life, will die and will one day be in hell. It's such an easy choice. God wants you to live, the devil (God's enemy) wants you to die. But you have to say 'yes Jesus, I want you in my life, I turn from all the wrong and want you to be number one in my life.'" Jesus has open arms for you today. He loves you, has a great plan for you and will help you in everything in life!

If you are a Christian and struggle with guilt or feeling you're not worthy, there's great news for you too! You're not worthy, but God lives on the inside of you by the Holy Spirit and because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you have been made worthy and made right with God by him! 2 Corinthians 5.21 says, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* So you should say every day, *"I am made right with God because of Jesus."* You can also say, *"I can do all things in Christ Jesus who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4.13). I also like to say Micah 3.8, *"But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might."*

New things

Isaiah 43.18-19 says this, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

God is always doing a new thing! Our part is to see and hear what God is doing and go with him. The new things God does are always exciting. If you feel a bit stale or mouldy, it's time to ask God what he's saying and go for it. Or you may need to get a new perspective on what God's already doing. One thing is true – God's timing and all his ways are perfect. If you draw close to God, he will draw close to you (James 4.8). And remember Proverbs 3.5-6. Pray this over your life – *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."*

A Prayer

Lord, I thank you that you love me completely. I thank you that through the sacrifice of Jesus I have been made right with you. Lord, come into my life completely and fill me with your Holy Spirit. I declare that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Through Jesus I have been made a new creation and the old has gone. I am filled with power, with the Spirit of God, with justice and might. I trust in you with all of my heart, I submit all I do, think and say to you – all my hopes, dreams and desires. Lord, I believe that the battle belongs to you. I enter your courts with praise and come close to you into your gates through the sacrifice of praise. Lord, thank you for all you've done for me, all you're doing and all you will do. I thank you that you have plans for me, to give me hope and a future. I call on you in prayer, give you praise all the time and pray with thanks in all circumstances. Thank you that as I delight myself in you, seek you, your kingdom and being right with you, you will give me the desires of my heart and life in abundance on this earth and then eternal life with you. Thank you. Amen!