



FRESH

**START
2022**

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



FRESH START MINI SERIES PART 1 "How to Have a Fresh Start in 2022"

ICEBREAKER |

If you could have one do-over in your life, what would it be?

INTRODUCTION |

We would all love a do-over in our lives at some point. It would be great to go back a couple of years and try again. But the fact of the matter is, no matter how much we changed we're sure to get something wrong again. Making mistakes is just part of being human, unfortunately. But each year, as the calendar turns over, we get a chance to do it all over again in some areas. In this lesson, we're going to see just why we keep making bad mistakes and how to avoid them this year as we make a fresh start.

READ |

How would you like a fresh start? What would you do with it? How could this year be different than last year, or the year before it?

Even if we had a fresh start, would we know what to do? Would we use it the right way? Maybe not. Take a look at how the Apostle Paul describes his own problems when it comes to avoiding the mistakes of the past:

I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. *Romans 7:15 (NLT)*

Have you ever felt that way? You meant to do the right thing, but ended up doing the wrong thing. You never wanted to hurt the ones you loved, but you did it anyhow. We all want to do what's right, but here we are.

One of the truths we learned this week is that **“Desires don't determine who you become. Disciplines determine who you become.”** We might all have desires in our flesh that we would love to fulfill...but we know would be really bad for us. You are not controlled by those things, though. Instead, your disciplines can help you live freely.

Discipline can sound like a bad word. It's something we use to keep rowdy kids in line. But a discipline is simply choosing what you want most over what you want now. Instead of just doing whatever you desire in the moment, you pause and pray and let the Holy Spirit lead you into what really matters.

Why do you think what we want “now” is always more attractive than what we need “most?” Give an example of how someone might choose “most” over “now.”

READ |

How do we get stuck making the same mistakes over and over again? It's called the “Cycle of shame.” Take a look at these verses that describe it:

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. Oh, what a miserable person I am!

Romans 7:18-19, 24 (NLT)

The word for “sinful nature” is sarx, Greek for “flesh.” In other words, those ugly, nasty desires live right inside of us. We can't seem to shake them! Instead, they hound us. We determine that we're going to do the right thing. We try really hard ...but then get tired. We slip up and then we are filled with guilt and shame. We resolve to do better next time. So we try again – really hard this time! But then we get tired and slip up. It goes on and on. It's a cycle that leaves us feeling shame.

The reason we keep moving in this cycle is because we are relying on our own will power instead of in the Holy Spirit's energy. We think we have it in ourselves to keep from doing wrong...but we just don't. Will power by itself doesn't work.

The Bible tells us that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, it's something He does within us instead of a command He's given us to follow. How can you make sure your life is fruitful in the area of self-control? (Example, by daily praying and leaning on the Holy Spirit, by asking for His help throughout the day, having an accountability partner).

READ |

Let's take a closer look at this “sinful nature,” or flesh, that we are pretty much shackled with every day. Here is what the Bible says about it:

People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the Holy Spirit thinks about spiritual things.

Romans 8:5 (CEV)

All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.

Ephesians 2:3 (NLT)

We put no confidence in human effort.

Philippians 3:3 (NLT)

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 (NIV)

When you are dominated by a sinful nature, you are creating a habitual way of life that leads to death and destruction. But don't despair! When Paul asked at the end of Romans 7, "*Who will free me from this life dominated by sin?*" his answer was clear: Jesus Christ!

It's not something that we need, it's someone. When we find our identity in Him, we can create a new habit of walking in the Spirit. And when that happens, we can make a fresh start.

What does "walk in the Spirit" mean to you? (Example, living to please God by being kind to others, choosing to forgive those who hurt me, reading & praying God's word daily) How have you lived that out in your life in the past? What changes have you seen it make for you personally?

READ I

One way to walk in the Spirit is to become humble before God through a fast. When we fast, we voluntarily reduce or eliminate our food intake for a specific time and purpose. We put our immediate needs on hold while we seek God in prayer for what God wants to do in and through our lives as believers. It's a way to tell Him we are serious about our prayer request that we are willing to pay a personal price. It's also a way to break the chains that have held onto us. Read the following scripture:

Isn't this the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?

Isaiah 58:6 (CSB)

The Bible is filled with examples of major victories, miracles, and answered prayers that only happened when people fasted food and prayed. These next three days, we want to invite you to fast and pray with us as we begin a brand new year. *(Bible references - Exodus 34:28; 2 Chronicles 20:2-3; Daniel 9:3, Daniel 9:21-22; Nehemiah 1:4; Luke 4:2; Acts 13:2-3)*

During our 3 days of fasting and 7 days of prayer, what are you fasting from? And what are you fasting and praying for?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Want a fresh start? It can all begin this week! As you think about what you've learned, live it out by:

- Lean into your disciplines over your desires.
- Find your identity in Christ, not yourself.
- Learn to walk in the Spirit, not your own sin nature.

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Join us for the 3 Day Prayer & Fasting.

PRAYER & FASTING

NEW HOPE WINDWARD

3 DAY FAST
JANUARY 10 - 12
SUNDOWN SUNDAY TO SUNDOWN WEDNESDAY

LOW COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 1	<input type="checkbox"/> NO FOOD
—	<input type="checkbox"/> NO WHITE FOODS
MEDIUM COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 3	<input type="checkbox"/> NO CAFFEINE
—	<input type="checkbox"/> NO ALCOHOL
HIGH COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 8	<input type="checkbox"/> NO PROCESSED FOODS
—	<input type="checkbox"/> NO MEATS
—	<input type="checkbox"/> NO SUGARS
—	<input type="checkbox"/> NO MEDIA
—	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Prepare to pray the 7 Days of Prayer by downloading the YouVersion App and the prayer plan called **7 Ways To Pray**. Just simply scan the QR code provided here:



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, we know that You have set us free. We no longer have to fulfill the desires of our flesh. Instead, we can walk in Your Spirit. Help us each day to remember that, and to lean on Your promise of salvation. We are thankful for new beginnings. As we enter a brand new year, would You help us to establish the Spiritual disciplines that we need to live out our faith each and every day. Help us to learn how to walk in the Spirit by exercising self-control in the areas of our life that need to be submitted under Your Lordship. We love You Lord Jesus. In Your mighty and powerful name we humbly pray, amen!

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1: *Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding — It means you have turned from your own desires and want to obey God for the rest of your life.* 1 Peter 4:1-2 (CSB / CEV)

Day 2: *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* 1 John 2:16 (ESV)

Day 3: *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things.* Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

Day 4: *Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.* 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)

Day 5: *God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus He has created us for a life of good deeds, which He has already prepared for us to do.* Ephesians 2:10 (GNT)