



FRESH START MINI SERIES PART 2

"Why Can't I Change?"

ICEBREAKER |

What's the longest you've been able to keep a New Year's resolution?

INTRODUCTION |

They say that 80% of us who make a New Year's resolution will fail within the first two weeks! Those odds don't sound too great. Surely, it's better to set a goal and keep it. When it comes to life, Jesus wants us to live our best life. That may mean changing some things for the better. So why do we keep on slipping back into old habits? In this lesson, we'll look at some of the reasons why we can't change, and how to go about making lasting changes in our lives.

READ I

Why aren't we seeing lasting change in our lives? If we all agree that some changes need to take place, why is it so hard to eat better, exercise more, cut down on our screen time, and increase the amount of time we spend with family?

Take a look at the Apostle Paul's diagnosis about change:

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NLT)

Notice that he tells us we should "run to win!" Not just try, but actually do it. One of the reasons you and I haven't seen real, lasting change in our lives is that we've been trying for too long. It's time to start training.

Think about a goal you successfully met in the past. Did you try for that goal, or train for it? What was your experience like?

READ |

Training is a wholehearted commitment to achieve a specific result. But there are a lot of reasons why we steer clear of training and rely on simply trying. Take a look again at this verse:

All athletes are disciplined in their training. 1 Corinthians 9:25 (NLT)

The word for “disciplined” is agonizomai – that’s a Greek word that means “to contend for victory by straining every nerve toward a goal.” It sounds a lot like “agonize,” and that’s because it’s where we get the same word from. Agony!

Have you ever heard the phrase “No pain, no gain?” That’s because every athlete knows that with training comes some amount of agony. And one reason we give up so soon is that **The Work is Too Hard.**

We want it to be quick and easy, but it can be really tough. You will get sore if you start working out. You will get anxious if you don’t reach for your phone every few minutes. You will be tired if you wake up earlier. At least in the short term, you will have some pain. But there is gain in the long run.

Have you ever quit something because it was too hard? Or maybe you kept at it despite the difficulty? Which one of those resulted in a better outcome? How have you been able to look past the pain and focus on the gain of a goal you wanted to achieve?

READ |

Another reason we give up on our goals so soon is that **The Goal is Too Vague.** We think we know what we want to accomplish, but we just have a rough idea. In order to be successful, we need to have clear goals.

So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete...
1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NLT)

In everything you do, there can be purpose. If you have a goal in mind, and know what you're striving for, then you are going to be more willing to push through the difficulties and see it through to the end.

We do this by keeping Jesus in our sights. He is the one who has gone ahead of us and cleared the way. He is the one who did what no other could and pay the price for our sins. When we consider all He did for us, then we can be motivated to do all things for Him.

How can keeping our eyes on Jesus make it easier for us to stick to our goals? What is it about doing work for God that makes it more enjoyable?

READ I

Finally, we may give up too soon because **The Results are Too Slow**. We want quick answers and quick results. We live in the age of the microwave oven and instant gratification. But many times, our goals are further off than we want them to be.

One lie of the enemy that many of us believe is "I should be further along than I am." We put so much pressure on ourselves to be perfect that we don't realize it is God who is perfecting us. It is a process, and we will never reach it until we cross the line into eternity.

Consider Paul, who once said, *"I don't consider myself to have reached the goal yet. I press on to reach the end of the race"* (Philippians 3:13-14, NLT). But then, later in life when he was facing death, he told his good friend Timothy, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful"* (2 Timothy 4:7, NLT). He realized that the process meant more than just getting to the end.

Think about a time when you achieved a goal, but you learned something along the way. Were those lessons you learned in the process important?

READ I

The Bible is filled with examples of major victories, miracles, and answered prayers. 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?
See the different level of commitment and check below:**

PRAYER & FASTING



3 DAY FAST JANUARY 10 - 12

SUNDOWN SUNDAY TO SUNDOWN WEDNESDAY

<p style="text-align: center;">LOW COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 1 —</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MEDIUM COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 3 —</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HIGH COMMITMENT ✓ CHECK 8 —</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> NO FOOD<input type="checkbox"/> NO WHITE FOODS<input type="checkbox"/> NO CAFFEINE<input type="checkbox"/> NO ALCOHOL<input type="checkbox"/> NO PROCESSED FOODS<input type="checkbox"/> NO MEATS<input type="checkbox"/> NO SUGARS<input type="checkbox"/> NO MEDIA<input type="checkbox"/> _____
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WHAT WILL YOU DO?

We are all in a race, so why not run like you're going to win? That means we have to think about the glory at the end and not focus on the current difficulties. We might feel like it's too hard, and the results are too slow. But Jesus will help us through to the end.

- Complete the 3 day fast and prayer
- Read the 7 Ways to Pray devotions and prayers
- Just simply scan the QR CODE provided here:



ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do at least one (1) SOAP Devotions this week on the next page
- Invite a friend to join our small group next week.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, please give us strength in our race. You have called us to run like winners. Victory is secure in You. But it's still up to us to run. Help us to stop trying and start training so that we can be worthy of the reward at the end of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1: *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.*
Philippians 3:12 (NLT)

Day 2: *So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.*
Hebrews 12:1 (GNT)

Day 3: *I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*
Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)

Day 4: *We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because He knew later on He would be glad He did. Now He is seated at the right side of God's throne!*
Hebrews 12:2 (CEV)

Day 5: *But those who trust in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.*
Isaiah 40:31 (GNT)