

CCC HOW TO MAKE A FRESH START PART 1
Preparing for the New Year
Isaiah 43:18-19 (NCV)
Calvary Vision 2009:

Let me start off by asking you a Question? If you had the year 2008 to live over again, how many of you here would probably do something differently? I know I would and the reason is because we failed, we came up short, we made mistakes in 2008. Sometimes you give life your best shot and guess what... you still come up short, don't you.

For example sometimes you study for the test and you still fail, you work hard and you don't the promotion or you work hard on making a strong marriage and it just doesn't make any progress. The fact really is, you're

going to fail quite often in life aren't you. It's not a matter of if you will fail -- you will fail and why is that, because nobody's perfect. We all make mistakes. You're going to have setbacks. You're going to have problems.

As we begin this New Year, 2009, I want us to look at How Do You Make A Fresh Start? What is God's way of making a fresh start in 2009? Regardless of what happened in '08, how do I get a fresh start for 2009?

God's word, the Bible says that God is very interested in your future. *"The Lord says, 'Forget about what has happened before. Do not think about the past. Instead, look at the new things I'm going to do.'" Circle "forget about".* Isaiah 3:18-19 Forget about what's happened before. He says don't think about the past. It's over. Learn from it and move on...

If you don't get anything else out of what I say today, I want you to get this: God is far more interested in your future than He is in your past. Some of you think God is fixated on your past. In other words all He wants to do is remind you of the things you've done wrong. But friends, you're wrong! God isn't interested in your past. He's interested in your future. He's interested in the purpose He has for your life. God says, "Forget about your past. Forget about the former things. Don't think about it, don't let it hold you back, hold you down. Why? Because God says, I have new thing I'm going to do with you." Today I want us to look at "How Do You Make a Fresh Start in 2009?" I want to give you a formula for starting over. It's going to be a 3 part series talking about **S.T.A.R.T.** I hope you'll remember this

and pass it along to friends when they have failures also in 2009. Regardless of what kind of failure you had in 2008. You may have had in 2008 a financial failure, relational failure, moral failure. Regardless of the failure you've had in your life, here's how you **S.T.A.R.T.** over.
S – Stop making excuses.

If I want to start over, If I want to start fresh, I have to stop making excuses for my failures. I've got to stop blaming other people; I've got to stop using rationalizations. I've got to stop seeing myself as the victim of my circumstances. Let me be really clear on this: Other people can hurt you, without a doubt. Other people can harm you, without a doubt. Other people can scar you even, without a doubt. But, nobody can ruin your life except one person... and that person is **you.**

Nobody can ruin your life without your permission.

You have a choice and that is you can choose how you're going to respond to those situation, to those hurts. You don't know what's going to happen in '2009. You have no idea. But you can choose how you choose to respond to what's going to happen in '2009.

The Bible says that the starting point is to just be honest and accept responsibility for your part... Proverbs 28:13 *"A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them he gets another chance."* He gets a fresh start. God says the starting point to starting over is to be honest and face up to the problems, the situation, that most of the problems in my life; most of the failures are my fault. Did you know, that's pretty hard for most people in

today's society to accept and that's because we like to pass the buck. We live in a society; we live in a culture, which loves to shift the blame. We are living in a time that says to you and I, "Hey you don't have to take responsibility for anything you do... You don't have to take responsibility for any of your choices and actions you make, it's always someone else's fault. We blame every thing these days. We blame the environment, the economy, the government, our parents, our spouse, our schools, our friends, the devil made me do it. It's always somebody else's fault. Everything is attributed to something else. But the truth is, most of your failures... you caused.

We could talk for several weeks about what causes failure in people's life. Let me give you three of the

most common reasons. I want you to get these down so you can avoid them in 2009.

1. The number one reason we fail in life is we don't plan ahead. We go about doing things, making decisions and don't ever look at the consequences of those decisions. The Bible says (Proverbs 27:12) "*A sensible man watches for problems and prepares to meet them but the fool never looks ahead and suffers the consequences.*" Jesus often talked about the importance of planning. In the Bible He said, there was a guy who goes out and starts to build a tower but he can't finish it because he doesn't have enough money because he forgot to plan.

Another one Jesus told.../ He tells the story about the king who went out to battle but he lost because he

didn't count his soldiers; he didn't plan ahead. He really had no plan and really didn't do anything to form a plan. He just procrastinated and then finally when it became an emergency he found out he didn't have enough troops and was defeated. What's Jesus telling you here... It's the old cliché, but the truth.../ "If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail." (REPEAT) The number two reason of why people fail is:

2) Because we don't listen to others. We don't listen to good advice, we don't seek good advice we think we have all the answers. The Bible says in Proverbs 15:22 "*Plans fail without good advice.*" You need to get all the advice you can. You need to get good advice.

Let me ask you a question? Why don't we listen to

the advice of other people? Mostly because we think we don't need it we think we know it all... you know what God calls that, "pride, or maybe ego." It's when you think you know more than God and you push Him out of your life, you're on an ego trip and that's a trip that leads to a dead end. The Bible says, "*Pride always leads to destruction.*" Proverbs 16:18. An arrogant attitude leads to a fall. When I think I know it all and I can figure it all out myself, I'm setting myself up for failure, if I don't seek and listen to the advice of others, if I don't listen to the advice from my wife/ boss/ husband/ children other brothers and sisters in Christ, people around me, if I think I'll just do it my way. You're never going to get anywhere if you think you've already arrived.

We fail as a result of not planning ahead, we fail

because we don't listen or take advice: The third reason we fail is:

3) We **give up too soon**. Proverbs 24:10 "*If you give up when troubles come, it just shows that you are weak.*" Failure is the path of least persistence. The problem is that often during trying times, we stop trying. We give up, we change course...

Let me clue you in on something.../ If at first you don't succeed, welcome to the human race. If at first you don't succeed, it just says you're normal. God's Word says, You're never a failure until you give up. We often just give up too soon.

The Bible says we need to stop making excuses, admit when it's our fault and get on with life. I've discovered that people who are very good at making

excuses are rarely good at anything else, but making excuses. They spend all their time and energy thinking up reasons why they can't do...

The "T" stand for - **Take stock**

I need to take stock of my life. That means I need to evaluate all my experiences. I need to look at what I have left after the failure. If I've had a financial failure, I need to take stock of what finances do I have left. If I've had a relational failure, I need to take stock of what relationships do I have left. If I've had a moral failure, I need to look and say, What is God still doing in my life? What are the options? What are my talents? What are my assets? What are my connections? If you want to make a fresh start in 2009, you need to set down and do an evaluation in your life and take stock of your

experiences. Regardless of what's happened in 2008, one of the things you still have – in fact, one of the things you have in 2009 that you didn't have last year, is more experience. Think about it.../ You are more experienced today and God wants you to use those experiences, the good, the bad and the ugly. He doesn't want you to waste them. He wants you to learn from them and capitalize on them. Galatians 3:4 *"You have experienced many things. Were all those experiences wasted? I hope not*

God uses your personal experiences. The family that you grew up in, the people you relate to. He uses personal experiences to shape you. He uses vocational and educational experiences to shape you. He uses spiritual experiences to shape you, like coming to

church, going on a retreat or reading your Bible, having a quiet time with God, being involved in a weekly small group here at Calvary. And most important of all, He uses painful experiences to shape you.

As you take stock of your life in starting over, you need to ask yourself three questions.

1. What have I learned? What did you learn from last year? If you don't set down and think it through, you'll probably end up making the same mistake this year as you did last year because you didn't learn from it.

2. What are my assets? What have I got going for me? Have I got my health? Have I got my freedom? Am I still mentally sound somewhat? Have I got some true friends? Have I got the Lord? Have I got a church family? What have I got that I can count on?

3. Who can help me? When you need a fresh start, you need somebody by your side – a friend, an accountability partner, a support person, a support group. Get in a small group. You need other people because you don't start over by yourself after a failure. You need somebody else to walk along with you.

When you're making a fresh start, taking stock of your life, you need to realize that some of your experiences have faults. They have faulty information. They are maybe even lies. Bad information. Not everything you've seen, heard and experienced are true. You can have false memories. You can believe false things. Do people ever tell you things that aren't true? Yes. And you store them. Have people ever said things about you that weren't true? Yes, and you've stored them.

When we're young and very impressionable, we tend to accept what other people say about us as true. "They said it, it must be true!" Someone says, "You're dumb!" you think you're dumb. "You're lazy!" and you think you're lazy. "You're never going to amount to much!" and you think, yes, you're never going to amount to much. All it takes is one coach in the third grade to say, "You're totally uncoordinated" and guess what, for the rest of your life to think, "I'm uncoordinated."

Impressionable young people allow other people to influence their self-image.

You may be 30, 40, 50 years or older and some of you are still operating on tapes made in the first grade. It wasn't true then and it's certainly not true now but you're still acting like it. Some of you are still watching

movies of an experience you had on a playground or from your parents, when they were angry and said something off the top of their head, but it stuck in your mind and you're still living your life based on faulty information. Garbage in, garbage out. You need to challenge your experiences sometimes, challenge what you have believed. You need to hold it up against the truth of God's word and say, "What does God say is true? What does God say about me, not what do other people say?"

Just because you experience something does not make it true. You can have a false experience. That's why you have to build your life not on experience but on God's word because that is true. It is unchanging. Experiences lie all the time. But you need to take stock

of your experiences.

So "S" in START stands for Stop making excuses, the "T" stand for - Take stock the

A - Act in faith

This is the third step in getting a fresh start. Act in faith.

You have to launch out into new territory in 2009. I'm just briefly going to talk about this today and next week will get deeper into Act in faith.../ The Bible says that the key to changing anything is faith. If you want to change your circumstance, it takes faith. If you want to change your personality, it takes faith. If you want to change anything in your life, you have to have some faith. Jesus says this in Matthew 9. *"According to your faith it will be done to you."* That is a very simple statement but it's very powerful. *"According to your*

faith it will be done to you." That means we tend to get out of life what we expect. *"According to your faith it will be done to you."*

What are you expecting in 2009? If your thinking, "I think it's going to be another tough year, depressing, rigorous year. Guess what your year is going to be in 2009? A real bummer!

This year, 2009, let's together as a church family and as individuals ask Christ to help us make a fresh start.

Next week we will continue the S.T.A.R.T.

Let us Prayer:

Pray this prayer: "Dear God, only You can fully know the hurt in my heart. You've seen me stumble. You've watched me fall. You've watched me fail. You know where I've hurt others. Father, You also know how I've

been hurt by other people. Today, as I begin to go into this New Year of 2009. I ask You to give me a fresh start. First I accept responsibility for my part of the problems in my life. I'm going to stop making excuses. Forgive me for not listening to You. Forgive me for thinking that I knew better. Help me to take stock of the good that You've brought into my life. Help me to learn from my experiences. Today I want to act in faith. That's why I am talking to You right now. In this simple prayer, I open up my life to You. I ask You, Jesus Christ, to be my savior. I ask You to forgive me and to guide me from here on out. Help me to focus on You and Your word. I want to trust You to give me the power to start over and to do the right thing from here on. Come into my life and be in charge. In Your name,

I pray. Amen.”