Grace Baptist Church Youth Fellowship Dr. Rick Griffith

31 December 2000 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**Listening to the Trumpet**

***How to Make a New Start***

***Exodus 1–12***

**Topic:** New Year/Renewal

**Subject:** *How* do you start anew in an area of your life?

**Complement:** New starts are a combination of God using circumstances and us submitting to something new.

**Purpose:** The listeners will make at least one New Year’s resolution.

# Introduction

### Interest: [New year reminds us of our need to make a new start.]

#### Happy New Year! But why is it “Happy”?

#### The Italians have an interesting New Year’s custom… as midnight on New Year’s Eve approaches, the streets are clear. There is no traffic—there are no pedestrians—even the policemen take cover. Then, at the stroke of 12, the windows of the houses fly open. To the sound of laughter, music and fireworks, each member of the family pitches out old crockery, detested ornaments, hated furniture and other personal possessions that remind them of something in the past year that they want to forget” (adapted from Tan 6730).

#### For Italians, getting rid of actual *stuff* at New Year’s reminds them of their need to start over in any area of life.

#### New year reminds us of our need to make a new start

### Background: I wondered what the Bible says about new year.

#### So I did a search on my Bible software and discovered that the word “new year” is never used in the Bible! In fact, it is never observed in the OT as a celebration.

#### But New Year celebrations in Jewish life today occur in September or October and are attached to another feast where a unique-sounding trumpet (shofar) is blown—symbolizing both repentance and redemption [cf. Tzvi Sadan, “Listen to the Sound of the Trumpet,” *Sar-El Scroll* 6 (Oct. 2000)].

#### It’s called *Rosh Hashanah* and Jews are a bit unsure which mood properly celebrates it. A Dallas Jewish Society publication says, (NTB, 135a):

##### “On one hand, it is a Day of Judgment—a solemn time of reconciliation and confronting the past year.

##### “On the other hand, it is New Year’s Day and, although not as frivolous as January 1, it is still [Yom Harat Olam]—the Birthday of the World—a Joyous remembrance of our creation.”

### One thing all these have in common is the need to make a new start.

#### The calendar starts completely over.

#### You guys even start a brand new school year.

#### People make resolutions, which reminds me…

### Need: Do *you* need to make a new start?

#### How would you feel about 2001 being the same as 2000? Would you like to live the past year all over again?

#### What would you change if you could?

##### Do you feel your eating, sleeping, and exercise habits in 2000 could be improved for 2001?

##### Do you need a new start in your relationship with your brother or sister?

##### Wish you could have some new patterns with your parents?

##### Are you happy with how close you are to God right now?

### Subject: *How* do you start anew in an area of your life?

### Text: I’ll be sharing some thoughts from selected texts in Exodus 1–12.

### Transition: The first observation about making a new start is that…

# I. When life gets complacent we generally don’t know what to do.

## Israel had become self-satisfied in Egypt but didn’t know how to get out of it.

### They had gone down to Egypt due to a famine and God used it to save them, as Joseph said (Gen. 50:20).

### In Egypt they prospered a lot (Exod. 1:6-7).

### But it seems that no one ever asked the question, “So what are we doing here in Egypt? How is God going to fulfill His promise to give us the land of Israel?”

#### Remember that God had promised them a huge portion of land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates—that’s from modern Egypt to Iraq!

#### But up to this point no Jew had ever even built a house on it—just tents.

#### It seems that the Israelites’ prosperity had made them complacent so much so that they didn’t even know what they were supposed to do.

## Are you complacent but you don’t know what to do about it?

### We are the most aimless when we have a lot of time on our hands.

### The *Straits Times* holiday programme called “Spend Your School Holidays with the Straits Times” was a smashing success this month. [Share article]

### Why do you think this is such a winner?

#### Because everyone likes the *Straits Times* so much?

#### No—when life gets complacent we generally don’t know what to do.

(Another thing I learn from Exodus about how to make a new start is…)

# II. Things generally have to get worse before they get better.

## God used the plagues not only to motivate Pharaoh to get Israel out of Egypt—He wanted to get Egypt out of Israel!

### We already saw that Israel had become complacent in Egypt even though that’s not where God wanted them indefinitely.

### God wanted to motivate them to get out, so He allowed life to get hard (1:8-14).

### The plagues served to motivate both Israel and Egypt to change their thinking.

## Is God getting your attention through tough times?

### What do you think God wants to tell you through all the pressure to study hard?

### Has your relationship with your parents ever been better? Has it ever been worse? What is God saying to you through these rough waters?

(Another thing I learn from Exodus about how to make a new start is…)

# III. God uses difficulty to motivate us to change.

## The plagues moved Israel from apathy to yearning for a new land.

### At first the Jews had resigned themselves to slavery forever and resented Moses’ help (5:19-21).

### But nine plagues later God changed the hearts of both the Israelites and Egyptians.

#### Instead of apathy, Israelites plundered the Egyptians of gold and silver (11:1-3).

#### And by the tenth plague, God had used difficulty to get them to do something as “stupid” as smear lamb’s blood on their doors (12:7).

#### They even changed their calendar by moving New Years from around September to March (12:2)! The seventh month was changed to be the first month—like us changing July to January!

## What change is divine difficulty motivating *you* to make?

### When I think about changes I need to make in my life, I often use a sheet I designed many years ago when I was about 18 years old.

### [Pass out “Worksheet for Establishing Goals and Priorities”]

### Take 5-10 minutes right now and right down at least one but no more than four goals on this sheet.

(The last thing I learn from Exodus about how to make a new start is…)

# IV. God leads us into new dimensions when we submit to His will.

## Israel went from Egypt of her own free will and made it to the Promised Land.

### This event can’t be exaggerated—imagine 2 million people leaving one country for another! Imagine half of Singapore packing up in one night and moving to Malaysia!

### Even until today, Jews still look back on the Exodus as that time when God lead them into new dimensions as they submitted to his will.

## God generally won’t force you to change—but we generally make changes better when we are accountable.

### Jews were accountable to one another as they moved out together.

### [Review “Goals and Priorities” sheet.]

### Which one goal do you want someone to help you be accountable? Break into partners now—discuss this and pry together about it.

# Conclusion

### New starts are a combination of God using circumstances and us submitting to something new (MI).

#### God has motivated you to change an area of your life.

#### Now submit to a new pattern by asking your partner to ask you about your goal every week!

### Prayer

# Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the four areas on the worksheet is your greatest need?
2. What specific goal will you make for 2001? Make at least one and no more than four (one from each section).
3. Who is going to hold you accountable for your goal?

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Jacob and his family had been marvelously preserved from certain death by escaping to Egypt (Gen. 50).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### It reminds us that God miraculously brought about a new beginning for Israel.

### We can trust Him to do the same in our lives today.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Did Jews of biblical times celebrate the New Year? No one really knows.

#### Pagans certainly celebrated it.

##### Originally the new year probably began in the month of Tishri (September-October).

###### This date in the fall was the beginning of the Babylonian calendar with its first month called Tashritu.

###### It corresponds to the beginning of the new season of life in nature when the crops are prepared by plowing and early rains. Thus it is a harvest or secular (civil) calendar.

##### At the Exodus God mandated a new calendar for the Jews which began in Nisan, our March-April (Exod. 12:2). This now began the new (religious) Jewish new year as the Exodus is the most significant event in the history of the Jewish nation.

##### During the Exile, under the influence of the Babylonian calendar, New Year reverted back to September-October. Jews today still use this civil calendar beginning in the fall.

#### However, we have no evidence that Jews ever celebrated it.

##### The word “new year” is never mentioned in the OT as a feast or an observance.

##### Jews did celebrate other festivals in the seventh month.

###### Trumpets was on the first day—which later reverted to becoming the New Year in the civil calendar.

###### The Day of Atonement

###### “The festival in the month of Ethnanim, the seventh month” is noted during Solomon’s temple dedication (1 Kings 8:2)— probably the Feast of Tabernacles.

##### “But there is some evidence that it became a celebration shortly after the New Testament period” (Coleman, 225 in NTB, 130).

##### Nowadays, two Jewish festivals are the most celebrated: New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) with the Day of Atonement (called Days of Awe) and Passover (Nicholas de Lange, *Atlas of the Jewish World*, 89).

### So the Christian celebration of New Year actually has no biblical parallel.

# The Calendar

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sacred** | **Civil** | **Jewish** | **Babylonian** | **Julian** | Canaanite? |  |  |
| 1 | 7 | Nisan | Nisanu | March-April | Abib |  |  |
| 2 | 8 | Iyyar | Aiaru | April-May | Ziv |  |  |
| 3 | 9 | Sivan | Simanu | May-June |  |  |  |
| 4 | 10 | Tammuz | Duzu | June-July |  |  |  |
| 5 | 11 | Av/Ab | Abu | July-August |  |  |  |
| 6 | 12 | Elul | Ululu | August-September |  |  |  |
| 7 | 1 | Tishri | Tashritu | September-October | Ethanim |  |  |
| 8 | 2 | Heshvan  Marcheshvan | Arahsamnu | October-November | Bul |  |  |
| 9 | 3 | Kislev | Kislimu | November-December |  |  |  |
| 10 | 4 | Tevet/Tebet | Tebetu | December-January |  |  |  |
| 11 | 5 | Shevat/Shebat | Shabatu | January-February |  |  |  |
| 12 | 6 | Adar | Addaru | February-March |  |  |  |
|  |  | (Adar Sheni) |  |  |  |  |  |

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

**Title**

***Passage***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:***

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: New year reminds us of our need to make a new start.

### Need: Do *you* need to make a new start?

### Subject: *How* do you start anew in an area of your life?

### Background: New year celebrations in the Bible and Jewish life today.

### Text: Exodus 1–12

### Transition: The first observation about making a new start is that…

# I. When life gets complacent we generally don’t know what to do.

## Israel had become complacent in Egypt but didn’t know how to get out of it.

## Are you complacent but you don’t know what to do about it?

# II. Things generally have to get worse before they get better.

## God used the plagues not only to motivate Pharaoh to get Israel out of Egypt—He wanted to get Egypt out of Israel!

### Israel had become complacent in Egypt even though that’s not where God wanted them indefinitely.

### The plagues served to motivate both Israel and Egypt to change their thinking.

## Is God getting your attention through tough times?

# III. God uses difficulty to motivate us to change.

## The plagues moved Israel from apathy to yearning for a new land.

## What change is divine difficulty motivating *you* to make?

# IV. God leads us into new dimensions when we submit to His will.

## Israel went from Egypt of her own free will and made it to the Promised Land.

## God generally won’t force you to change—but how can you submit to it?

# Conclusion

### New starts are a combination of God using circumstances and us submitting to something new (MI).

### “Worksheet for Establishing Goals and Priorities”

# Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the four areas on the worksheet is your greatest need?
2. What specific goal will you make for 2001? Make at least one and no more than four (one from each section).
3. Who will hold you accountable for your goal?