

A NEW BEGINNING! Week 1

Scripture used: [Genesis 41:51-52 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon began 2021 with a powerful opening sermon in our series “A New Beginning.” All of us gratefully entered the new year. 2020 is one of those years that we all want to put behind us, even though there are still many challenges ahead. Yes, this is a time for new beginnings. But we have to be careful. Some beginnings are not sustainable; they explode with energy but lack a solid foundation and burn themselves out. Some beginnings start off great but do not actually take us where we want to go. We must be prayerful and intentional about our new beginnings. God wants us to begin inside ourselves first, and radiate outward. The new beginning starts in us, not just through us. But what does it mean in practice? One man in particular understood new beginnings: Joseph. He was abandoned by his family, given up for dead, wrongly imprisoned, and yet somehow emerged triumphant. Through the naming of his two sons, Joseph explained how he kept having new beginnings. Thanks to his example of strategic forgetting and fruitful suffering, we can begin to understand how best to connect ourselves to God’s vision for us in 2021.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **We must learn to strategically forget.** The name of Joseph’s first son was Manasseh. In [Genesis 41:51 \(NIV\)](#), Joseph explained how “God made me forget all my trouble.” Despite everything his brothers had done to him, Joseph did not sit around blaming them. Instead he moved on, to an incredible destiny that God had laid out for him. This required him to let go of many difficult things in the past, even though it wasn’t easy.
- 2) **We can be fruitful even in our suffering.** The name of Joseph’s second son was Ephraim. In [Genesis 41:52 \(NIV\)](#), Joseph explained how “God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” Years after being abandoned, Joseph had become one of the richest men in Egypt, the most powerful kingdom in the world. He was still a part of God’s plan, even in an unfamiliar land. Sometimes we are tempted to despair in exile, like the Israelites in [Psalm 137:1-4 \(NIV\)](#). They wanted to know “How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?” They had to remind themselves that God is always with us; nothing can separate us from His love.
- 3) **A healthy hello requires a courageous goodbye.** In [Isaiah 43:16-19 \(NIV\)](#), God says “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” God knows that we tend to fixate on the past. We worry about what was, and what we are afraid to lose. But He intends us to have so much more. God is trying to coax us toward a bright future, and show each of us the role we play in helping to build that future.
- 4) **Hold onto what matters.** There are three things that are worth holding on to from the past. The first thing is the lessons we’ve learned. Store all those hard-won lessons for future use. The second thing is memories. No one can take away the great experiences and great people in our lives. The third thing is faith. God is always at work, no matter what. We must follow Him, especially when we feel like we’re in exile.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - We have all been in exile this past year. The various challenges — from COVID-19 to systemic racism — forced us to live in an unfamiliar land. The Israelites also experienced exile in many forms, but God never failed to keep them connected to their destiny of triumph. God is faithful! Where do you feel “at home” in your current circumstances? Where do you feel “in exile”? How have you seen God work through both feelings?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Isaiah 43:16-19 \(NIV\)](#). There are many kinds of new beginnings, but many will not get us what we want. To claim God’s new beginning, each of us must let go of certain things from the past. What do you need to let go of? How else can we position ourselves to walk with God into the new beginning that He intends for us?
- 3) **DO** - Pastor Hurmon highlighted the importance of the process, not just the result. God offers us a process of becoming. We need to embrace that process, turning away from the past and toward the future. Commit to this by affirming “I will enter God’s process!” See you next Sunday!