

New Beginnings

Scripture used: [Lamentations 3:22-23 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Redwood City Campus Pastor Jesse Cottonham offered us a powerful message that explored the idea of new beginnings. He posed to us the challenging question “What’s preventing me from drawing closer to God?” Pastor Jesse identified the key moments in our lives when we face an obvious new beginning, such as having a first child or retiring after a long career. He also talked about the option that each day offers us as a new beginning, even if nothing major has changed. Jesus Himself talked about a lot of new beginnings, especially in the language of being reborn. Our Savior wanted us to understand that every moment is an opportunity to draw closer to God, to become more like Him, and to let His unconditional love surround us. God doesn’t expect us to be flawless. He only expects us to be faithful!

KEY POINTS

1. **There are many new beginnings in our lives.** We will go from being a child to an adult. We may go from being single to being married. We may become parents, and then grandparents. We may also change jobs and even careers, going from a novice to a professional. We all face challenges during these new beginnings. This is the learning curve, and it’s an expected part of any new beginning. Each new beginning can be scary. We are stepping out into the unknown. It can be frightening.
2. **Following Jesus is the most important new beginning of our lives.** Whatever it is that’s getting in between us and God, we need to remove it as soon as possible. Each of us brings our own baggage. We might feel like we need to be perfect before we draw closer to God. Or we might fear that a part of us will have to be taken away. Or we might worry about missing out on some of the fun things in life that others would get to experience.
3. **God is the maker of new beginnings.** In [John 3:1-6 \(NLT\)](#), Nicodemus approached Jesus about his own new beginning. This man was a Pharisee, already viewed by others as a religious scholar. He was worried what others would think about him going to see Jesus, so Nicodemus visited him in the middle of the night. Jesus told him that he needed to be born again with water and the spirit, which represented spiritual cleansing.
4. **We get better as we begin anew.** Pastor Jesse likes the movie *Edge of Tomorrow*, where Tom Cruise plays a soldier who has to learn to fight by reliving the same day over and over. Like Cruise’s character, we have to relive the same mistakes over and over, slowly being reborn and transformed to be more like God. This is what Jesus describes to Nicodemus in [John 1:12-13 \(NLT\)](#). As it says in one of Pastor Jesse’s favorite songs: “A saint is just a sinner who fell down and got back up.”
5. **We are already victorious through our new beginning.** We are reborn as a new person in Christ. This is the incredibly powerful truth of [1 Corinthians 5:17 \(NLT\)](#). And it’s not just us. God’s mercies begin afresh each morning as well! That is why Pastor Jesse chose the scripture [Lamentations 3:22-23 \(NLT\)](#) for this week’s sermon. God’s promises are true. He is faithful to us, and He only asks us to be faithful not to be flawless!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Pastor Jesse quoted directly from Rick Warren’s bestselling book [The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?](#): “Integrity is built by defeating the temptation to be dishonest; humility grows when we refuse to be prideful; and endurance develops every time you reject the temptation to give up.” Today is a new beginning, and we can choose today as the day we draw closer to Jesus. What is your most recent “new beginning”? Is there a “new beginning” coming up for you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Prayerfully consider these two major questions that Pastor Jesse asked: Is there anything between me and God? Do I need a spiritual new beginning? What keeps you from starting a new beginning with God to grow closer to Him? What would it take to remove that barrier?
- 3) **DO** - Ask a trusted friend whose faith you admire to help you identify obstacles in your path to a closer relationship with God. Pray that God will speak through others and His Word, and then for the strength and conviction to take action. Join us next Sunday!