

A TRUE NEW BEGINNING

JANUARY 1, 2023

WORSHIP

Every Praise, Lord I Lift Your
Name on High, You Alone
Can Rescue, Goodness of
God

WELCOME

Looking back at 2022, what
situations or realities in your
life do you desire to be
different this new year
of 2023?

WORD

MARK 5:14-20
(READ THE ENTIRE CHAPTER
FOR CONTEXT)

¹⁴ Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened.

¹⁵ They *came to Jesus and *observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. ¹⁷ And they began to implore Him to leave their region.

¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He *said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

Google’s Year in Search Report for 2022 showed a “global search interest” in “how to change myself” and “how to be better”. As we step into the first day of 2023, perhaps there are certain habits you want to stop, or start. Though we may be capable of becoming a better version of ourselves somewhat, there is a deep-seated transformation that only a divine intervention can make possible. You and I are incapable of this inside-out, complete “engine change”. But as the angel Gabriel told Mary in the Christmas story, nothing is impossible with God and only Jesus Christ can make that change possible.

The desire to be new or to improve is not new—way before Google or many of you ever existed, people have wanted to “feel brand new”. But more than just feelings, that come and go, what we need is to become brand-new people. Jesus is the One who can give us a true new beginning that begins and persists throughout our lifetime and continues forever!

1. THE NEED FOR A NEW BEGINNING

A story told in Mark chapter 5 illustrates how this new beginning that we all need from Jesus. **Mark 5:1-2** begins by describing how Jesus and his disciples just came from ministry on the western side of the Sea of Galilee and arrived by boat on the other eastern side. They were immediately met by a “demonized” man who lived among the tombs. The reality of a spiritual battle that takes place all around us whether we are aware of it or not, is seen here. The spirit world is for real, but we also know that Jesus Christ has victory over this realm.

Why did this man, and all of us, need a new beginning? He was spiritually dead! He was even literally living among the tombs, tortured in spirit, exhibiting violent behavior (**v.3**). The Bible describes people as “dead in your trespasses and sins” (**Ephesians 2:1-2**). “Dead” here means, “unresponsive to the things of God”; trespass is “a falling away”, and “sins” refer to “loss because of missing the mark” (missing God’s perfect standard). This was our spiritual state before we became believers in Christ. And though we may not be literally “demonized”, we followed Satan’s ways – even in something as simple as lying, Satan’s native language. **Ephesians 2:3** even calls us “children of wrath”, but all in the past tense for believers in Christ, praise God! But where did this spiritual death originate from? It goes back to Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God (**Genesis 2:16-17**). When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, did they instantly die physically? They did not, but they died spiritually; they became spiritually separated from God. That’s why the need for this new beginning is so much more real, and deep and critical than most people realize! Remember that our Christmas message was “God’s greatest gift is good news that will bring great joy because it solves our greatest need for forgiveness”.

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Another reason why the man in Mark 5 needed a new beginning was because he was out of control (v.4). No one was strong enough to help him in his condition. There are those of us who may want to change but are not yet ready to change. We need help from others to help us change. We encourage everyone to be accountable to a Dgroup (discipleship group), a small group of people who help each other know Jesus as Savior and Lord and live out the new beginning that He gives to those who put their trust in Him to forgive their sins. For those who are already in a Dgroup, your next step in your journey of living out a new beginning is to start your own Dgroup of people you can help with their own new beginnings in Christ.

There may be those of us who are unable to keep our New Year's resolutions because of misplaced confidence in themselves. They think they can do it on their own. People need a much deeper change that only Jesus can make happen. Or perhaps, some of us need a new beginning like the man in our narrative because he was miserable and harming himself (v.5). Many people today harm themselves through drug abuse, pornography, suicide (a leading cause of death among the younger generation). Can you think of someone you know who needs a new beginning in life? Perhaps that person may even be yourself.

2. THE POWER FOR A NEW BEGINNING

No doubt, we all need or needed a new beginning and we need Jesus to empower us to experience that. Jesus has ultimate and absolute authority (i.e., moral authority; spiritual power) over all things including forces of nature (Mark 1:21-22; 4:37-41); this goes for supernatural forces too, that evil spirits know and recognize (Mark 5:6-8, 11-13, Luke 8:30-3). This is one reason why we pray and fast--- because of the reality of spiritual warfare, and the truth that Jesus is the Victor and the King. What are the things that are plaguing your life today? Jesus came to give us abundant life while the devil seeks to destroy us, but Jesus came to destroy the works of the evil one (John 10:10, 1 John 3:8). That's why we cannot separate Christmas, the Resurrection, and the Return of Jesus---it's a "package deal" that He accomplished to give us newness of life (2 Corinthians 5:17) and this new life is lived out through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 22-23). Not everyone though who have seen or heard about how Jesus transforms lives will respond positively to Christ, perhaps because they value other things over God (vv.14-17). Will you rather have Jesus than anything else in this world?

3. TELL OTHERS ABOUT THE NEW BEGINNING

The response of the man set free by Jesus reminds us of how the shepherds responded to the angel's message about Christ (Mark 5:18-20). This new year, tell those who need a new beginning, of Christ's power to give us a true new beginning! This is our mission and vision as a church family (Matthew 28:18-20). As we face 2023, let us put our hope not in the New Year, but in the One who makes all things new. Experience a true new beginning in Christ, and help others do the same!

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

Have you experienced a new beginning because of Jesus? How did it happen?

2. Setting It Right.

In what areas of your life do you need the power of the Holy Spirit to better obey Jesus?

3. Living It Out.

Who will you talk to this week about how they can have a new beginning with Jesus?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE
IN ACTION

As we begin the new year, pray more for those you meet at work, those who live with you, including family members, household help, roommates and friends who need a true new beginning. Take time to share how Jesus is the only One who has the power to forgive our sins, and to give us new life that will last beyond 2023 to eternity.

WEEKLY
PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's provision for families deeply affected by inflation.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; escalating tension in East Asian countries to stop.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

MARK 5:19

¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, 'Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.'

