

Begin Again

A FRESH START IN CHRIST

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Breakthrough

1. All through the month of January we've been talking about new beginnings and fresh starts. One of the sub-themes of our study is to examine how people change. The beginning of the year is a great time to evaluate our lives and find places where we need to change. However, there are issues in life that demand more. Some of the problems we encounter need more than change, they need a breakthrough. We need a breakthrough for the problems in our lives that seem so big that only God can provide the solution. Do you feel that you understand the difference between making a change and needing a breakthrough?

Could you share the story of a time when you experienced a breakthrough?

2. In the sermon, I shared that sometimes the breakthrough we need involves self-control. We pray for a breakthrough in the area of self-control after years of struggling to control our urges and desires. Breakthroughs involving self-control come as we sense God's unlimited power joining our limited willpower, giving us strength to say, "No," to unhealthy or sinful things and say, "Yes," to the things that we know are best for us. Could you give an example from your own life of a time when you felt God's strength allowing you a breakthrough of self-control?

One of the two words for self-control used in the Bible has an interesting origin. In **Titus 2:2**, Paul instructs Titus to teach older men to be self-controlled. The Greek word that Paul uses is a compound word. The direct translation of that word is not self-control, it's *strong minded*. Clearly Paul is teaching that our ability to control our actions, to have self-control, begins in our mind. AND Paul indicates that this takes steadfastness/endurance to accomplish! You must keep working at it. Do you agree that controlling your actions begins in your mind?

Do you know of another scripture that would validate this?

3. Another kind of breakthrough, is a breakthrough in our *emotions*. The Bible consistently describes the emotional life of those who follow as peaceful, and joyful. However, many who follow Christ find themselves struggling with anxiety and discouragement. Having an emotional breakthrough means breaking into the peace and joy Jesus offers. Have you ever experienced an anxious moment when you were able to have a breakthrough into the peace of Christ?

How do you think people who follow Christ begin to experience the inner emotional life that He offers?

4. The Bible contains many accounts of people receiving a breakthrough from God. Systematically studying these stories reveals a number of key elements that seem to create the right conditions for the breakthrough that we need. One key element of breakthroughs is learning to *rely fully on God*. As we struggle in our own strength, breakthroughs can seem elusive and far away. But as we learn to trust God and rely fully on Him, breakthroughs become possible. Meditate on this scripture for a moment.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 ⁸We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely on God, who raises the dead. What stands out to you from this scripture?

Do you find yourself easily and naturally relying on God for breakthroughs in your life or do you tend to rely on yourself?

How do you think someone begins relying on God? AND are breakthroughs really possible without Him accomplishing them in us?

5. Another element that is consistently correlated with Biblical breakthroughs is to approach God, *boldly asking Him* for the breakthrough that you need. One example is Jonah, after being thrown overboard and before being swallowed by a great big fish, he approached God. **Jonah 2:7** *As my life was slipping away, I remembered the Lord. And my earnest prayer went out ...* The author of Hebrews instructs us to ... **approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)** As you think back over biblical accounts of breakthroughs, do you agree that one key element is approaching God asking for His assistance?

Sometimes, but rarely, a breakthrough comes after a single session of prayer. Often breakthroughs come as we consistently ask God to intervene in our situation. Is it difficult for you to maintain faith as you consistently cry out to God for the breakthrough that you need?

What is one area of your life right now where you would honestly say you need a breakthrough?