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## *"How To Have A Fresh Start"*

**Intro:** Have you ever wished you could just "start over"? Illustrate: (Remember playing games as kids – "Start over! Re-do! Do-over!" Computer – my favorite button is the "Delete" button. Gives me a sense of power. Wipes it clean and start over.)

- Too bad life doesn't work that way. Life doesn't let you just "start over". In fact, it can be pretty cruel when we make mistakes. (IRS doesn't – Police officer – Your boss – Relationships – spouse / kids / ) But, God's not like this at all.
- Easter is all about experiencing a fresh start. Jesus was all about giving people a fresh start...allowing them the opportunity to start over.

**Summarize John 8:1-11** (A fresh start story – Summarize)

This story illustrates how we can have a fresh start no matter how much we feel we've messed up / no matter how many bad choices we've made / no matter how hopeless we may feel / God's desire is to give you and I another chance. HOW?

3 simple steps to experiencing a fresh start from God.

### **I. Recognize You Need A Fresh Start**

*John 8:3 "As He was speaking, the teachers of religious law and Pharisees brought a woman they had caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd."  
(NLT)*

A. God uses pain to give us a wake up call

1. We don't know much about this woman's life, but I'm sure this was a very painful event. It was embarrassing / public humiliation / public shame and condemnation - traumatic! Her life was on a path that was a dead end!
2. So, Jesus uses this extremely painful event as an opportunity to give her a "life wake up call". Spiritual wake up call. (He used it on those seeking to condemn her as well!)
3. Have you ever had a painful experience do that to you? You see sometimes we can lie to ourselves. We make excuses for our destructive behavior / we justify wounding others / we think that our actions don't affect others / we just continue to live this fantasy until something happens.
4. THEN, our world is rocked by some type of painful event (sickness / job loss

/ divorce / financial crisis / exposure of some secret life – (Gov. of New York) Your affair was discovered / drug use / your alcohol - PAIN

5. Jesus didn't create the pain the woman was experiencing in the story, but now it's here, He's going to use it. He will do the same thing in our lives.
  - Sometimes these painful events are not large and traumatic. Sometimes they're subtle, at least to start with – God wanted my attention about how I was treating my family. - Rachael at 5 following me out the door – Painful! Would have gotten worse if ignored.
6. If you're going through some painful events in your life right now, please know God did not create them, but He does want to use them. He wants your attention right now! Will you give it to Him?

#### B. God uses pain to help us see His mirror of reality

*Haggai 1:5-6* “This is what the Lord Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you? (NLT) “It's not working very well is it? That's reality!!!

1. Sometimes we need pain to rock us out of our denial. Until we embrace reality, our lives can't change. Pain allows us to see reality...the reality about ourselves / our actions / our relationships / our values / situation
2. It's tough to embrace reality because often it's painful and ugly. BUT, Jesus can't give us a fresh start until we are convinced we need one. As long as we are convinced we can change our own lives, we don't seek help from God. We continue to live the fantasy.
3. Please understand that God does not hold up the mirror of reality to condemn us. “Just look how terrible you are!” He wants us to see reality so He can heal us. He wants us to see that the way we are living is actually damaging to us / others / and robbing us of a future He wants to give us.
  - It's like going to the doctor. Sometimes we don't like to listen to what they have to say either, but they represent reality in the physical realm.
4. If you're in the middle of some painful circumstances, is God trying to get your attention? Is He wanting you to see some reality? Is He trying to show you things about yourself you don't want to see? YES!
5. Maybe you're starting to think, “OK, so things aren't going very well. Maybe I have made choices that have contributed to the pain. Now what?” What...does God want me to grovel or something?” NO!

## II. Realize There Is Only One Who Can Give You A Fresh Start

*John 8:4-5* “Teacher...this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. The Law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”(NLT) Allowing this woman to experience a fresh start was the last thing anybody thought would happen. She's guilty! It's obvious that only condemnation waited for her. What's obvious...

### A. You can't get a fresh start from others

1. What we experience in this life is that people are always quick to judge and condemn. (How many of you have been judged by others? – hands) People are quick to point out your faults / flaws. People are great at remembering your failures and throwing them back in your face. (Feel self-righteous)
2. We are quick to see the failures of others and yet tend to be in denial of our own issues and weaknesses. This is why Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy by saying, “You who are without sin throw the first stone.”
3. We can all be great at stone throwing...not so good at mercy and grace.

B. You can't give a fresh start to yourself

1. The problem with this is that if we were able to give ourselves a fresh start, we would have already done it. If we could have changed our life, we would have done so by now. (If we're being honest. – woman in the story didn't)
  - I can't even maintain my New Years resolutions!
2. We look for substitutes to a genuine fresh start. Like what? We think a new job / new relationship / some type of new possession - house –car - boat- 60” flat screen / new church / some form of new pleasure –
3. The problem is these are all external things that don't have any power to change who you are. They simply delay the inevitable. The realization that the change I desperately need is so deep that I can't do it myself.
4. The inevitable despair we feel when nothing fills the void I pack around everyday. The discouragement we feel from multiple failed attempts at change.

C. Only Jesus has the power to give you a fresh start

1. This is what Easter is all about. Jesus came to provide a way for us to experience a fresh start. One that is real / powerful and life altering. One that really let's you start over.
2. God knew that it is not condemnation and judgment that changes people. It is forgiveness! Jesus did not come to condemn people for their mistakes and failures. He came to give them a fresh start and deliver them from their mistakes and failures through forgiveness.

*John 3:17 “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.”*  
 (NLT) We cannot experience a fresh start in life without forgiveness being provided for and offered.

3. In my marriage, if I've wronged my wife (intentionally or not), and ignore the issue, this is going to negatively impact our marriage. Until I go back and acknowledge my wrong and she grants me forgiveness, the relationship is stuck. Forgiveness is the only way to start over and move ahead.

5. Our relationship with God works much in the same way. Jesus came to provide forgiveness so that we can start over. This is why the Cross and the Resurrection are so significant life altering events.
6. Jesus' death on the cross, paid the price required for our forgiveness. Why was there a price required? Because anytime we wrong someone, there is a debt. Anytime we break the law, there is a penalty / debt / a price that justice requires. For justice to be served a payment is required. (Example)
7. Since we've all sinned against God (C'mon, you know you're not perfect), we all have a debt before God. Jesus paid the debt that God's justice required. He took our place and paid our debt! Since He's the only one who paid for it, He's the only one who can offer it. Purpose of the cross!

*Rom. 3:25 "For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins..." (NLT)*

8. The resurrection that we are celebrating today, is the proof / the stamp of authenticity that Jesus was really who He said He was and really can offer forgiveness and a fresh start to all. (The debt is paid in full! – Delete!!!)
  - So much like in horizontal relationships, when someone offers you forgiveness, we have to be willing to receive it.

### **III. Receive Your Fresh Start From Jesus**

*John 8:9-11 "When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one...only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up and said to her, 'Where are your accuser? Didn't even one of them condemn you? 'No Lord', she said. And Jesus said, 'Neither do I. Go and sin no more.'" (NLT)* Go experience a fresh start! Start your life over from this point on! The amazing thing about Jesus is...

A. Jesus is more willing to offer than we are willing to receive.

*John 5:40 "...you are unwilling to come to Me that you may have life." (NASB)*

1. Have you ever tried to offer someone help who desperately needed it yet they constantly refuse it?
  - Sometimes it's refused because of pride
  - Sometimes it's refused because of fear (story of sheep)

I wonder if God gets frustrated with us at times. He offers us complete forgiveness and a fresh start, only to have us refuse the offer. "I'm just trying to help you!

2. A fresh start means that all your sin is completely and eternally forgiven. The slate of your past is wiped clean, never to be remembered. Some of you are already thinking..."You don't know what I've done...I've done things that are unforgivable. I've gone too far for God." Not True!
3. You can't experience a fresh start as long as you are packing around guilt and shame about your behavior. Some of you are carrying enormous burdens of guilt, shame and regret today.

4. You can't experience a fresh start by continually beating yourself up. You say that you're unworthy of such a gift. Of course you are...but so am I! We're all unworthy of it. Yet, Jesus offers it! That's why we have to be willing to simply receive it.
5. But, before you do...

B. Experiencing a fresh start is about receiving a person

*John 1:12-13 "But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth...this rebirth comes from God."* (You see...Fresh start!)

1. People get so confused. They think a fresh start is about more effort / or about being more religious / or about believing the right doctrine
2. In fact, you can actually believe the right information and yet not experience transformation – a fresh start. WHY? Because this fresh start that is offered is about a person, not some religious system. (Miss it all by 18" – explain)
3. You can even be more religious and actually make your life worse! (explain) Because it's all about your efforts again!
4. There is a spiritual transformation that ONLY comes through a person. By receiving the person you automatically receive a fresh start. There is a choice we must make about entering into a relationship with Jesus.
  - This year elk hunting we had a lost hunter stumble into camp (share).
  - I can't imagine if he would have said, "I want to go back to camp but I don't want you to take me!" I want the benefit, but I don't want to go through you! You're thinking...that's stupid, you're lost! Especially since I've already chosen to help you.
  - We do the same thing with Jesus. We stumble through life lost and He offers help and we refuse. We want the benefit, but not the person. The help we desperately need happens relationally.
5. He's already made His choice about you. He wants a relationship with you. Now you have to make a choice. How do I do this? Tell Him! Tell Him you want a relationship / you will receive His forgiveness / that you desperately want a fresh start. His answer will always be YES!

*II Cor. 5:17-18 "Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with Christ gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life begins! Look at it! (Message)*

- Testimony: I want you to listen to someone who has experienced a fresh start and is embracing a new future...Michelle
- God offers to each of us a fresh start through His Son. Can you recognize you need one? / Will you realize He's the only one who can give you the fresh start you need? / Will you make a choice to receive Him this morning? If you are...then let's tell Him!