



THE LORD'S FLOCK

GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

STARTING FRESH WITH GOD

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Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother's blessing and birthright. Consequently, he had to flee for his life because of his brother's anger (Gen. 27: 1-45). Hence, Jacob needed a fresh start. Also, the prodigal son needed a fresh start after he squandered his inheritance (Lk.15:11-31). In the same way, we may have experienced pitfalls in life, and would like to have a fresh start with God. However, this process may not be easy and quite painful because we have to change our ways. We need to be "pruned" by God. Only then can we bear the fruit of righteousness that our Father has designed and yearned for us.

1. How to Start Fresh with God:

1.1 Before we can get a fresh start, we must know that we are broken. We need to admit our failures and sins. Fresh start must begin with repentance because everyone has sinned and has gone astray (Isa. 53:6). We need to analyze and learn from our mistakes.

1.2 We need to understand that a fresh start is not easy, but it is necessary. No matter how damaged, desperate or helpless we feel, we have the hope that not all is lost. No one is beyond repair in the hands of God.

1.3 We need to let go and leave everything behind, our old life (Eph. 4:22-24). Jesus tells us, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk.9:62). He wants total dedication from us since we are now a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Truly, God is in the business of fresh start(s) to make things anew.

1.4 We need to change our ways. Changing our ways does not necessarily mean distancing ourselves from family, friends, and acquaintances, or ending bad relationships. Instead, we can analyze our relationship with them, keep them and just re-work

on them. On our end, when we change our ways, we should make a clean break: a tough decision indeed. A fresh start seems challenging at first, but Jesus reminds us that God prunes the branches so that these will bear more fruit (Jn.15:1-2).

2. Pruning may be painful, but it is good and necessary for the following reasons:

2.1 It gets rid of dead weight to enable us to flourish and grow. The Lord will remove whatever is holding us back.

2.2 It allows for freshness to blossom.

2.3 It frees us.

2.4 It removes the branches that do not bear fruit or a bad fruit.

God prunes us through discipline. No discipline seems pleasant at any given time, but rather painful. The process of discipline hurts; however, it will produce the fruit of righteousness and peace (Heb. 12: 11). God disciplines us because He treats us as His children (Heb. 12:7). He disciplines us for our own benefit, so that we may share in His holiness (Heb. 12: 10).

CONCLUSION: No matter how many times we stumble and fail, God's grace gives us a fresh start. So, let us not lose heart or grow weary when going through the discipline of the Lord. God has a purpose and a plan for whatever is happening to us. He wants to give us a fresh start in our journey to the path of righteousness.

REFLECTIONS:

1. Are you content with just getting by? What is holding you back in serving God?
2. What needs to be changed or to let go in your life?

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