

Seven Practical Ways to Begin 2019 With a Biblical Focus

It is here. 2019 is a fresh start. It provides a clean slate for your students to write their story. Here are some tips for helping them start second semester and a new calendar year with a biblical focus. Of highest importance is helping your students know for sure they have a real, vital relationship with Jesus Christ through the simple plan of the Gospel.

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(Note: A downloadable PDF is included for use as a handout in Bible class or chapel.)

1. Begin With an Overall Renewed Commitment to the Priority of God in Your Life

Some things to think about as you consider the place of priority God has held in your life and how you might improve:

- *What do I spend my time doing each week?* Remember, time is life and life is time. How you spend your time is how you are spending your life. (Sure, there is time to relax, watch the game.)
- *What do I look forward to doing most in a week?* Does your answer have much to do with God or your service to Him?

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” (Matt. 6:33)

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:1-2)

- Create and pray for opportunities to serve in ways you enjoy. The way you serve the Lord will be according to the spiritual gifts and opportunities He has given you.

2. Begin with a Renewed Commitment to the Priority of Prayer

“It is interesting how large a portion of Sacred Writ is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, ‘Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,’ and just as we are about to close the volume, the ‘Amen’ of an earnest supplication meets our ear. Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who, with all his heart, called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elias; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but

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the sacred importance and necessity of prayer?” Charles Spurgeon

“God’s acquaintance is not made hurriedly. He does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comer and goer. To be MUCH alone with God is the secret of knowing Him and of having influence with Him.” E. M. Bounds

“We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results. The power of God is lacking in our lives and in our work. We have not because we ask not. It was a master stroke of the Devil when he got the church and the ministry so generally to lay aside the mighty weapon of prayer. The Devil is not afraid of machinery, he is only afraid of God, and machinery without prayer is machinery without God. When due to lack of teaching or spiritual insight, we trust in our own diligence and effort to influence the world and the flesh, and work more than pray, the presence and power of God are not seen in our work as we wish.” R. A. Torrey

3. Begin with A Renewed Commitment to the Word of God, the Bible

- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col. 3:16)

“Sanctify them through thy word: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

“Whatsoever things are TRUE . . . THINK on these things.” (Phil. 4:8, *emphasis added*)

We ARE what we THINK on a regular basis. Meditate on the Bible every day.

- Read the Word—don’t get discouraged if you miss a day or a week or a month.
- Listen to the Word preached and take notes—MP3 recordings, online sermons (i.e., www.sermonaudio.com).
- Memorize the Word.
- Consider it in daily actions—remember that as a Christian God’s Word is “written on your heart.” What does that mean to you?
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4. Begin Without the Nagging, Paralyzing Effect of Fear, Dread, and Worry

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isa. 41:10)

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:13)

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:5)

Remember:

“Great Faith is not an irrational leap. It is a reasonable trust in the revealed truth about God. It is a process of thinking.” John MacArthur

“Faith is primarily thinking. The trouble with a man of 'little faith' is that he doesn't think. He allows circumstances to beat him up. Faith is not purely mystical. Christian faith is essentially thinking (by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit) on the truths of God's Word. Look at the bird, the grass, the lilies,—consider them . . . think about it and draw your deductions based on logic. Faith is a man determined to think on truth when circumstances tell him not to.” Lloyd-Jones

“The essence of 'little faith' is that a man's thoughts are controlled by circumstance and not by the man girding up the loins of his mind and bringing them captive to the truth. The man of 'little faith' is the man who is not allowing the Spirit to fill him with the truth of the Word of God, but is being filled with his own thoughts of fear, worry and suspicion based on circumstances. He then does not think, but goes round and round in circles. Worry is not 'thinking too much,' it is not thinking enough about the Biblical truth that you know. It is not letting the Word of Christ 'dwell in you richly' and being 'filled with the Word of God by the Holy Spirit.' Faith is not optimism, wishful thinking, or dreaming. It is a reasoned response to the revealed truth of the Bible with or without emotion.” Lloyd-Jones

5. Begin Without Conviction from Sins of the Past Which You Have Confessed and Forsaken

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Prov. 28:13)

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If you haven't confessed and forsaken your sin, do so today. Would you rather have a year of failure or a year of mercy?

6. Begin with a Renewed Commitment to Spiritual Disciplines in the Pursuit of Godliness.

What spiritual disciplines can you add to your life this year? Remember:

Discipline brings freedom to reach your goals.

Discipline is based on principle and commitment—not feeling.

“Discipline without direction is drudgery.” - Donald Whitney

Examples of areas to develop disciplined routines for godliness:

- Bible intake
- Service
- Confession to God
- Prayer
- Searching/solitude
- Praise
- Devotions
- Accountability
- Evangelism

A great resource for ideas can be found in the book *Spiritual Discipline* by Donald Whitney.

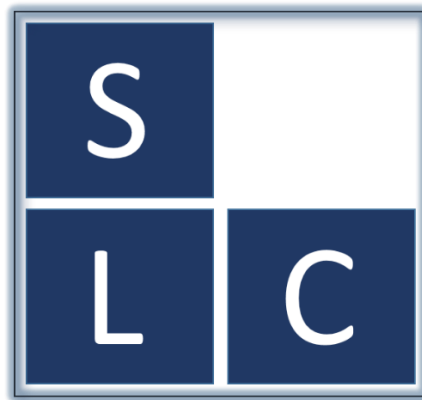
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7. Begin with the End in Mind

What do you want the end of 2019 to be like? What do you want to have accomplished? How do you want to be better? Different? You'll need to set and accomplish goals. Here are some ideas on how to do so.

- **Review your roles**—what roles do you play? Son, Daughter, Employee, Christian, Student, Athlete . . .?
- **Realistic reflection** in each area of how you can and should improve.
- **Righteous reach forward** (God ordained Goals). Set goals for each role.
- **Reinvented routine**. Determine to change your life's routines in order to reach your goals.
- **Revitalized rigor**. Get excited and motivated by envisioning how your life and the lives of those around you will improve as you reach your goals.

Let's make 2019 our best year yet. Plan the work and work the plan.



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