

How to Start a New Start

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Aim

- ✠ To get the children to gain a wider perspective on the past year.
- ✠ To help them establish a better relationship with God for the New Year.

Key verse

<i>“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” (Isaiah 40:31)</i>
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Lesson

- Reflection is an important part of our growth... by reflecting on our weaknesses we can learn from our mistakes and improve ourselves; by reflecting on our strengths we can realise our talents and new ways to help others in our everyday lives. A reflection is a lot more than what you see when you look in the mirror, it's an honest account of all the events and actions that took place in our lives and the world around us and how they have affected us. Let's reflect on 2007...
- Reflection on World Events in 2007 – Horse flu, Pasha Bulker, Delta released 3rd album, APEC, Chaser Stunt, lunar eclipse, the Sudanese 'Mohammed' teddy incident, Kevin Rudd elected Prime Minister
- Reflection on Church events in 2007 – new drain pipes, renewal of library, court-case bonanza, welcoming over 100 youth students from Egypt, Mina Wahba
- Reflection on our lives – did you get a new haircut, excel in a subject in school, overcome a certain obstacle, make new friends, lose touch with an old friend/family member, did you travel somewhere new, did you learn a new skill?
- The words, "Happy New Year!" bring a lot of different images to mind. Some people think of parties, others sit down to make long lists of resolutions.
- A resolution is a promise you make to yourself. Some resolutions are spiritual such as reading through the Bible, and others could be more physical such as exercising three times a week.
- Resolutions can be physical, social, academic, emotional or spiritual. It's great to have resolutions to cover all aspects of our lives. However, which resolutions are most important? Which ones are the hardest to make? Which ones are the easiest to keep? We must realise that although it's important to want to succeed in all aspects of your life, if God isn't there with you, you won't achieve much.
- How far can we get without God? The answer is pretty obvious when we look at the AMAZING things that God does with the little things we offer Him... Could the disciples have fed 5000 people with a few loaves and a few fish? Could Gideon have defeated an army of over 100,000 men with only 300 soldiers? Could the young shepherd David have defeated the giant Goliath?
- All these stories have something very important in common. That is that God uses the small things that are offered to him WITH FAITH to work wonders! We can learn 2 very important things from this: (1) we must involve god in our lives and faithfully depend on him. (2) We should offer God the best we can, no matter how little it is, and He will bless it with abundance!

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- So this means that our goals and resolutions in our spiritual lives shouldn't be these impossibly huge ones such as reading the whole Bible once a month and praying all the hours from the Agbia every day and going to 4 Masses a week and confessing every second day. With goals like that, we will only become discouraged and give up very quickly!
- Pick something you really want to change and start small, very small.
 - If you don't pray in the morning, maybe you could AIM to pray the Our Father
 - If you swear a lot, maybe you could pick one word that you'll try to stop saying
- The trick is to set a goal you can achieve, and not to give up when you fall or slip up, but instead to keep trying, keep struggling, and the Lord will see your effort. That's all it takes, just like the prodigal son when he decided to turn back and return to his father, once he made the first few steps his father ran all the way to him and took care of everything else! Our beloved God knows the effort we put into trying to improve ourselves and to get closer to Him, and even though we might be convinced that we're getting nowhere, we're actually closer than we think

READ ISAIAH 40: 31

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."

Lucky for us, every time we go to Confession and have Holy Communion we get a chance to make a new start!

Activity One:

We're going to hand you a piece of paper now. On this paper, we're going to ask you to write down the concerns you have right now, your reflections on the past year and your hopes for the future. Nobody is going to read these papers but yourself so be as honest as you can. At the end of the exercise, we're going to give you an envelope. Write down your name and address on this envelope and seal it. We will send it to you next year so that you can follow the progress you've made in 2008.

(Hand out the paper & envelopes)

Activity Two:

At the beginning of the lesson, one of the servants passed around a piece of paper for the children to record their names and phone numbers. During the lesson, the servant copied this sheet, and cut out the sheet into rows which included the children's names and phone numbers. The children were asked to decide on one very minor change to make throughout the week. At the end of the lesson, each child was given the name/number of another student. They were instructed to call the person before Thursday of that week and to see whether or not they managed to maintain the minor change. The servants were going to call everyone on Friday to make sure all of this was done. The aim of this activity was to encourage fellowship in the spiritual journey, and they were introduced to the concept of being accountable / responsible for someone else.

Conclusion

Conclude this by thanking God for His forgiveness, His provision in the past, and His plans for your future.

Glory is to God, forever. Amen.

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1. A Time of Laying Down Concerns

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7).

If you have a lot of concerns, start by listing them. Jot down everything that concerns you, no matter how small. One by one, go through your list. If you can't do anything about the concern, bring it before the Lord in prayer. If you can do something about it, spend time praying about it, and then write down the action you need to take on a "do list." Conclude this by leaving all your concerns to the Lord.

CONCERNS

'DO LIST'

2. A Time of Reflection

"I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old" (Psalm 77:11).

Think over the events of the past year. On one side, make a list of struggles and failures in the past year. One by one, go through each item on the list. Ask for His forgiveness, and thank Him for an opportunity to start fresh. On the other side, list your blessings, achievements and accomplishments over the past year. Thank God and praise Him for His hand in your success and His goodness in your life.

STRUGGLES

BLESSINGS

3. A Time of Looking Forward

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Ask God what He would like to accomplish in and through you in the coming year. You might want to consider the following areas: spiritual life, family life, Church, service, school, friends, other. Take one area at a time and wait on God, asking Him to reveal His plans for your life. Jot down your thoughts as they come to you. Spend time praying about each area.

Spiritual Life: _____

Family Life: _____

Church: _____

Service: _____

School: _____

Friends: _____

Other: _____