

BATTLE PREP

Series: Battlefield
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Beginnings ,
Genesis 1:1-2, 22-26

Happy New Year. New beginnings are great. A chance to start again. New Year's resolutions and all. New decisions, renewed hope, renewed vision. But things do not just change because you willed them to at the beginning of the year. It takes persistent commitment.

Because without commitment then resolutions becomes exactly as described in this meme. Just to do lists for the first week of 2020.

Why are people unable to keep these commitments and carry them through the year or at least the first 2 months of the year all of them called January. I mean Kenyans we can be excused when we bail out on the gym because of how hot January usually is. Plus we did all our extreme sports during the fight for independence. It is hard to keep going.

But could it be that people fight the right battles but in the wrong battlefield? Your battle to get to good weight is great but maybe the gym is not the right battlefield. You battle against addiction is great, but maybe you need to choose the right battlefield? Or at least the first battlefield in which that fight needs to be won.

As you think in your heart so you really are. It is not about what you say or even do. It really about where your mind is going because the rest of you will follow. It is not a question of the pushups you end up doing this year or how much you say you will make better financial decisions and drink less. I mean all those are good but you really are who you think you are.

Now there is a caveat. There is an extent to which this statement is not true. If you wake up thinking you are the president of Kenya, you really are not who you think you are. There are movements of the world that are training people to think of themselves as God. That is not true either.

This is about how much our thought processes affect our patterns of behaviour and therefore who we end up being. And if it is this important, how would disciples of Jesus be instructed to think? Does God even care about what we think about or how we think about those things. Could there be a worldview that better reflects the Kingdom of God that we are invited to even as we approach this new beginning?

So we will spend some time in that battlefield called the mind. Because if you can win it there, the battle in other battlefield may yet be easier and maybe even won. If you can win it or fight better in your mind, then maybe the battle for your sexuality, your spirituality, your weight, your health choices can be easier and maybe even won.

Battle Prep intro, Iran and leaders

But like with every battle, no one goes to the field without a bit of prep.

So today we will do some battle prep. What do we do before we start the battles that we must in our mind? Where is the actual starting point? What God says in the beginning.

Let's Pray

In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below. Here's what happened: At first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. Then there was the voice of God.

God saw that His new creation was beautiful and good. And God paused.

God: Now let Us conceive a new creation—humanity—made in Our image, fashioned according to Our likeness. And let Us grant them authority over all the earth—the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, the domesticated animals and the small creeping creatures on the earth.

So God did just that. He created humanity in His image, created them male and female. Then God blessed them and gave them this directive: "Be fruitful and multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of My estate, so care for My creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth."

Gen 1:1-2, 26-28

And so how I will do today's talk is just outlining somethings to think about from the account of beginning given in the book of Genesis. What are some of the implications of the story of beginnings if we let it shape our worldview into the new year? I really believe that some of these fundamental truths are so important to anyone at any beginning point.

1. God of New Beginnings

In the beginning. God brings new starts. God brings New beginnings. Beginnings come about because God steps into time. There are so many theories about the interpretation of this passage in genesis. Whether it's the very beginning or the beginning of this revelation. Either way, it is the act of God stepping into the story that creates new beginnings.

There is something about every New year and the beginning of a new season that says things could get better. There is something about New beginnings that breathe hope and new life.

Every new beginning always comes with the freshness of a second chance. If you have ever believed that God gives new chances or that His Grace is anew every morning, nothing communicates that to the soul better than new beginnings.

What if we begin the rewiring of our minds by accepting that a new beginning is a reminder that God is stepping into our story, your story, the story of this city and this nation.

Even if somethings follows you into this year as they spill over from the last, there is something about New beginnings that says, "it could get better!" New Beginnings are a gift from God.

So question to ponder on, before we turn our entire focus on ourselves and how much weight we want to lose or gain, how many books we want to read, maybe start with where is God? What is God calling your attention to? What is God leading you into? Start with God.

2. Nowhere he won't go

The earth was formless and void and darkness covered the earth and the Spirit of God was hovering over the emptiness.

Even in the darkest of places, the Spirit of God, the spirit of New creation is always moving. Sometimes we come from the previous period broken wounded and feeling unable. Sometimes it is just the practice of reviewing the past season that shines light in areas of darkness that we were unaware of or unwilling to face.

But there is no place in your life too dark that God's spirit is not present and working to bring new life. There is no sin or experience in your life too shameful that the spirit of God is not present and working to bring to life. There is no fear in your life to gripping that the spirit of God is not working to free you from.

I have noticed that often we sing these words but we actually do not let our hearts and minds believe them and so we carry desperation with us into new beginnings. We walk around with shame thinking God is ashamed of us.

We boldly proclaim that he makes everything work for good to those who trust him but we think he is limited when that is in regard to darkness and shame and fear and nothingness. Actually, that is where he starts.

Even in those dark places the Holy Spirit is always moving, hovering to bring our New life. Do not be afraid this year to go to the dark areas of your soul.

Do not be afraid to go to the dark places of your soul. Do not be afraid to hit rock bottom. Whether it is addiction, character flaws. Whether it is fear, hopelessness. Do not be afraid at the beginning to actually confess them.

In those dark places, when you hit rock bottom, guess what you may find, that the spirit of God beat you to it. That the spirit of God was not afraid to face those issues with you looking forward to breathe new life to those areas.

There is not a place in your heart too dark that God will not be willing to go with you. The places of shame and disappointment and death. The Spirit of God brings new life to those places.

3. The Word of God

Then God starts to speak. With his word and his breathe bringing order to disorder. Bringing into being things that were not. The word of God is life.

Do not spend this season outside of God's word. Listen to what God is saying. Speak what God is saying over your life, family, finances.

Crossover services are usually very full as people make the confession that that year will be their year just like they did last year and the one before that. Bringing before God our lists of resolutions. Which often end up being a to do list for the first week of January.

But no one making a commitment to actually have a new mind which would then allow them to step into all the shalom of God in the year or beginning they are stepping into.

Psalms 119:9-11 - The King David says

How can a young person remain pure?

Only by living according to Your word.

I have pursued You with my whole heart;

do not let me stray from Your commands.

Deep within me I have hidden Your word

so that I will never sin against You.

You are blessed, O Eternal One;

instruct me in what You require.

Psalm 119:9-11

You do not just step into the blessings of God because you shouted the loudest at the New Year's Watch service, it takes learning to instruct our hearts in God's ways. It takes learning the ways of the eternal one.

Otherwise, everything he has commanded our way will be right before us and we will barely be aware of it. And in worst cases we will go so far away in ways that not only wound our souls but also of those of others.

All of creation responds to God's word. As God began to speak light sprung into being and has not stopped shining since then. Vegetation, the atmosphere, everything we are busy trying to figure out in science sprung into being in obedience to God's word.

What if we dared speak God's word over our body, our lives, our families, our nation? And better still, what if we dared obey?

How could you both individually and in community grow in God's word?

4. Human Identity

Now let Us conceive a new creation—humanity—made in Our image, fashioned according to Our likeness.

Always remember who you are. The apple of God's eye. You were created out of love and for love. No matter how bad last year was and no matter how far you may have fallen, you are loved, way beyond measure.

For me, this right there has always held that God created out of love. Before there was a bunch of laws.

Before there was religion and the question of what God likes and does not like.

Before there is the question of how much tithe to Give in church and who to invite and not invite. Before any of the questions that often put people aside from God and church, there was simply man created and fully trusted.

Before the question of who is good for Kenya and who is not. Whether the BBI is something for us or not. Whether the church should be politically conservative or not. Before all those things that people often choose to let divide us, there is the truth that we are all conceived in God's love.

If this year you are journeying towards faith, this is where to start. Do not start at what things you will have to stop and what laws you will have to keep, start at love. You are loved. Is there a way to live life? Yes. But never because God is petty and hurt and insists on ways to please him like a narcissist. Rather because God knows and loves you and cares about you and knows what is better for your soul.

No parent has ever thought to themselves, "we need to have some kids to keep all our brilliant house rules"

In healthy families, they start here. Kind of like where God starts, "We need to have some kids that look like us. Imagine a child with your nose and your mouth and your life. Imagine a child that we can both love on and bring up."

Then when the kids do come, they realise, oh for the safety of our child, for the wellbeing of our child we may need to place some ground rules for them. It is never the rules then the child. And it is never rules for rules sake.

Start here, God loves you so much. He looks at you and sees himself. He sees his child. He sees everything you could be. And he trusts you fully. Maybe God has more faith that you are capable of everything you have been called to than you do.

5. Fully Trusted: Priests and Kings

And let Us grant them authority over all the earth

And you only fully trust what you fully love. Love always trust. When God said to men I make you trustees of all my creation he was saying he fully trusts them, by fully trusting them, he was saying he has loved them fully.

And because he loved them fully and trusted them with his finest work he was asking man to represent him to all creation. To take care of it and see it flourish. The feeling animals should get when we deal with them is that there is God's careful steward. Is that someone bearing God's image is dealing with them.

I think that is why the conversation of how responsive we are being with the environment matters. Whether or not you think climate change is real, as believers we cannot ignore the question, "Are you being a good steward of the environment?" Are you representing God it' creator.

let Us grant them authority over all ...Then God blessed them

Then God chose human beings to be Kings. Not only are they called to serve and take care of the creation as priests do, but they are given freedom to enjoy it. It is a call to be a blessing as you are being blessed.

Every opportunity God provides this year is for you to carefully steward everything He places under you. Your marriage, your kids, your workmates, our dates, your work, your money, the environment.

After a day's work God looked at everything he had done and was pleased. He said, "it is good." It was good enough for him to stop there and start something new the next morning.

Could you genuinely go to bed saying, "It is good." As the CEO of a company, as a poet, as a musician or a photographer or maybe you are in the service industry or just a stay at home spouse. Could you genuinely end the day saying, "It is good!"

Not necessarily better than peter's or Janes's but surely good to you.

But is not all work and no play. They were asked to use everything that they are stewards of. Do you find joy in your marriage? Do you find joy in your children? Do you find Joy in your work?

6. Rest

Start with rest in God. After the creation of man, he does not get into work. The first experience of man was the Sabbath. And the Sabbath is bigger than we often make it to be. It was to cease completely to enjoy fellowship with God.

Jesus practiced the Sabbath. How would life look like for you if one day of every week is marked with a total ceasing of work to just enjoy good fellowship with both family and God.

To cease from the worry and the pressure to make everything work and spend it in worship. And what better way to make that how our begins start.

The last two years, Trinity has always started the year with rest.

The Jewish worldview was quite unlike interesting. They counted days from evening. It was evening and it was day and that was the first day. It was evening and it was day and that was the second day. It was evening and it was day and that was the third day. It was evening and it was day and that was the fourth day. It was evening and it was day and that was the fifth day. It was evening and it was day and that was the sixth day. It was evening and it was day and that was the seventh day. The day always started with rest.

What this causes us to do is to have a worldview that really, we can only start from a place of trusting God, a place of relationship with God. As we rest and are most vulnerable, we are believing in God for protection and provision and life for the morning.

7. **May we never loose our wonder**

Do not loose the wonder of God. God would finish each day and stand in awe of it all. Finish each day and draw yourself to a place of seeing where God was, who God was in that day and what God did.

Why don't we stand and read this psalm together

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory

in the heavens.

Through the praise of children and infants

you have established a stronghold against your enemies,

to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you have set in place,

what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

human beings that you care for them?[c]

You have made them[d] a little lower than the angels[e]

and crowned them[f] with glory and honor.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands;

you put everything under their[g] feet:

all flocks and herds,

and the animals of the wild,

the birds in the sky,

and the fish in the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 8

Let's pray