

“A New Beginning”  
Hebrews 12:1-2

7/4/10

9 & 10:45 am

Series, “*What’s in a Name?*”

## **INTRODUCTION**

New names often signify new beginnings:

When Abram’s name was changed to Abraham: it signified the beginning a new nation.

When Simon’s name was changed to Peter: signified a new beginning through a change in character: from weakness to strength; from moving whichever way the wind blew to a rock of faith in the Lord.

When Saul’s name was changed to Paul: it was because of his new life’s work, to reach the Gentiles w/ the *Message* about Jesus.

Each of these men experienced a new beginning. They were the same person, but they had a new beginning that lead to a new kind of life. Their lives were changed by God and the trajectory of their lives was changed.

As we change the name of First Baptist Church, we are still the same people, with the same Savior, who believe the same truths from the Bible, and share in the same heritage.

We meet in the same location, under the same roofs, with the same leaders and friends and ministries. Really, we’re the same people.

And at the same time, this is a call to a new beginning; a fresh beginning.

**OPEN** to Hebrews 12:1 (**PAGE** )

**READ** Hebrews 12:1-2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

**2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

*To have a new beginning ...*

A. Be encouraged and inspired by the witnesses in Heaven

We don’t focus on the heavenly witnesses, but we do draw a sense of encouragement and

inspiration and maybe even a sense of accountability.

The witnesses are the people spoken of in Hebrews 11.

The focus of Hebrews 11 is the faithfulness of those who walked with God before us, and a challenge for us to trust God with whatever comes our way.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses' parents, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel. Individuals and leaders.

There are also less familiar names: Jephthah, Barak

And there are "**the people**," the unnamed faithful people who followed the leading of God through difficult times:

Hebrews 11:29-30 **"By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.**  
**30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days."**

Faithful people following God's leadership through Moses and Joshua.

Listen to how everyone's faith is described, the various ways in which they trusted God with what He called them to do:

**READ Hebrews 11:32-40 "And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets,**  
**33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,**  
**34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.**  
**35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. [refused to deny Christ]**  
**36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.**  
**37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated -**  
**38a the world was not worthy of them."**

Hebrews 12:1 **"... we are surrounded by *this* great cloud of witnesses ..."**

The **witnesses** are those who proclaim from their own experience that God can take ordinary people who will believe His words and follow ... and turn them into leaders, into faithful followers, into those who are marked by faith in God regardless of the circumstances they encounter.

These kinds of people inspire us and encourage us and, even give us a holy sense of accountability.

*Also in that cloud of witnesses* are those who went before us in this church. Those marked by a focus on seeking and saving lost people ... expanding God's Kingdom, and perseverance through difficult and challenging times, all an expression of their faith.

They are encouraging us, cheering us onward ... to bold faith, bold ventures, all that comes from what our new name calls us to ... the cross ... taking up our crosses, dying to ourselves, dying to our desires, dying to grabbing everything this world has to offer... taking up our crosses daily ... so that we can find our lives fulfilled in Jesus.

A. Be encouraged and inspired by the witnesses in Heaven

*To have a new beginning ...*

B. Fix your eyes on Jesus

**READ** Hebrews 12:2a: ***“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”***

We must always ***fix our eyes on Jesus!***

1. Why do we fix our eyes on Jesus?

Because Jesus is the **“Author and Perfecter of our faith.”**

**Author of our faith**: originator, founder.

cf: Hebrews 2:10: ***“the Author of our salvation”***

Jesus wrote the book on the kind of faith we are called to; He founded the salvation we enter into; *He is the One God has chosen to make us like.*

*We fix our eyes on Jesus because He ...*

**Perfectes our faith**: Just as Jesus saves us by faith, He perfects our faith. He matures our faith. He lives within us and encourages us to trust Him, to trust God, to trust God's Word, to believe in God's plan for our lives.

*We fix our eyes on Jesus because ...*

**He Endured:** He took up His cross and endured the pain, and sorrow and sin that was thrust upon Him for our forgiveness, paying the penalty for our sins.

Because He trusted God, He endured suffering for our sakes, just like we are called to die to our desires and endure suffering for the sake of those who don't yet know Jesus.

We fix our eyes on Jesus because the purpose of our lives is to become like Jesus.

## **ILLUSTRATION**

Boy: Superman; Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone. Comic books, biographies. Admired, honored, desired to emulate. their lives inspired me and called to me. I wanted to be like them!

That was fine for a boy, but like God says in 1 Corinthians 13:11 **“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man [mature], I put childish ways behind me.”**

The manhood, the maturity we're called to is to become like Jesus.

He is the One I admire and emulate:

- His faithfulness to always keep His Word,
- His perseverance in doing His Father's will even when it was so hard and so difficult and so painful,
- His compassion in helping those in need,
- His strength in defending the weak who were being bullied by religious leaders who were only concerned with their own positions and power,
- His boldness in declaring truth that was not politically correct,
- His courage in facing excruciating torture for the salvation of the people of all time,
- His love that was expressed in every word and action and attitude; that defined everything about Him; love that was honest, compassionate, firm, tender, truthful and gracious,
- His endurance for the sake of faithful obedience to His Father.

*So, we fix our eyes on Jesus ...*

## 2. How do we fix our eyes on Jesus?

We “**throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles**” and we “**run with perseverance the race marked out for us.**” (Hebrews 12:1b)

He’s using the illustration of a race ...

### **ILLUSTRATION**

Have you been to a track meet or seen one on TV?

When the competitors are ready to step onto the track, they take off their warm-ups, their sweat suits. Why? Because it won’t allow them to run freely; it will bind them. They throw them off because it will hinder and entangle them.

As they step into the starting blocks or toe the starting line, they set their minds to run the race before them with perseverance, no quit in them, they’re running the whole race with all the skill and energy they can bring.

They also run with focus. They know where they start and they know where the finish line is and they are not going to stop until they hit that finish line. They don’t let their minds get entangled or hindered by thinking about anything else.

*How do we run our race? We put aside **whatever** is in the way of **fixing our eyes on Jesus.***

We strip off every sin, every thing that is tripping us up; we don’t tolerate it; we figure out how to get rid of it; we get coaching to find out how to get rid of it!

We devote ourselves to His Word; *devote*,  
We *pray* for enlightenment and insight as we read and meditate and memorize His Word,

We *discard lies* that say this race isn’t worth running or isn’t as important as other things I’m pursuing in life.

*We confess* that we really haven’t devoted our lives to be like Jesus ...

... maybe that we really don’t want to be like Him,

that we really have different goals and things we consider more important,

*We confess* that we’d really rather have the acceptance of friends and family than risk alienation or rejection by devoting ourselves to being like Jesus and walking in His steps.

*I have had to repent* of several of these things and *I am learning* more of how to fix my

eyes on Jesus and look up to Him, emulate Him, and desire to become like Him.

## CONCLUSION

*To have a new beginning,*

God encourages us to realize that we are surrounded by many witnesses, looking down upon us from Heaven, those who have completed their races and fully understanding the race we're in. They are pulling for us ...

... maybe even providing a sense of accountability for us ...

So, as we step on the track and fix our eyes on Jesus, we set our minds and hearts to run the race Jesus has marked out for us. We get rid of everything that could and does hinder our race.

... and we fix our eyes on Jesus ... Jesus the finish line, Jesus the goal of our race... and we run with skill and endurance.

*A new beginning* ... do you want a new beginning? Do you need one?

*Brothers and sisters, our church needs a new beginning* in reaching people for Jesus ... people we know and love, acquaintances and friends and neighbors and fellow students, and strangers ...

And that is why we are removing a known obstacle to reaching those people ...

*CrossPoint Community Church* speaks about the cross of Jesus, becoming like Him by taking up our own crosses daily, dying to ourselves and following Jesus.

*CrossPoint* speaks of continually pointing people to Jesus, because He is the only One Who can set them free from the prison of self-centeredness and selfishness and the tyranny of sin.

*Jesus is the only One* Who can open the door to a relationship with God, where there is freedom and power and purpose ...

*CrossPoint Community* speaks of a community of people loving one another the way Jesus loves us; putting aside childish me-first ways and relating to one another in love and kindness and integrity; **“bearing with one another and forgiving each other ...”** *Because* the world will know we are genuine followers of Jesus with an authentic message only if we love one another.

*CrossPoint Community Church* is a church, a gathering of people, from all walks of life, who are devoted to following Jesus.

*What if, brothers and sisters, what if, when the words “CrossPoint Community Church” were spoken out in our community, what if people said things like this:*

- They *don't condemn* people, they help them.
- I was talking to someone from that church the other day; they seemed really genuine when they talked about God ... like they really knew Him.
- My boss goes to that church. He acts like a real Christian. He cares about his employees.
- I felt accepted when I went to a service there. They were very kind.
- They have classes to help people with marriage and family problems, recovery, relationships, and the kids and youth really like going there.
- They say they're trying to do what Jesus would do if He was here today, even though they know they aren't going to get it perfect.

Do you want a *new beginning* for *this church*? Do you want a *new beginning* for *your life*?

Then, let's make this more than a name change. Let's make this a new beginning together ...

### **PRAY**

### **AFFIRMATION**

Now is the time the leaders of this church are asking you to affirm the decision to rename this congregation "CrossPoint Community Church."

Randy Reeves, who is chairman of the deacons will come to lead us.

**WORSHIP SONGS:** Larry

**CLOSING:** Wade

We will let you know the results of the vote via e-mail and we'll also send a letter. I hope to see you at the picnic this afternoon!

### **PRAY**