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4 Sermon Ideas to Start the New Year Right

Looking for New Year's sermon ideas? Here are four approaches to help your church start the year off right.

CATEGORY

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New year. New start. New season in your church.

After the rush of the Christmas holiday, it's easy to let your new year's sermon become a last-minute affair. But your first message of the new year can set the tone for the next twelve months and beyond, so don't waste the opportunity.

Many people have resolved to pay more attention to their spiritual growth in the new year. That means your congregation is ready to listen and eager to be disciplined. The first of January doesn't just mark the beginning of a new calendar; it can also mark the beginning of a spiritual renewal in your church.

But what to preach on? Here are four ways to make the most out of your New Year's sermon:

Remember

Just because there's a new year stretched out in front of your congregation, it doesn't mean your church family has made a clean break with the year that was. Your first message in January may be the perfect way to take stock of all that God did in the life of your church during the past year.

While it can be unhealthy to spend too much time dwelling on the past, the Bible provides plenty of examples when God's people took time to remember all the ways He had been faithful to them in their history.

Psalms 105 tells us, "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced" (v. 5). Several times in the book of Psalms, David and the other psalmists do just that, recounting Israel's history and the spectacular things the Lord had done.

This kind of spiritual reminiscing isn't just for the sake of nostalgia. It actually plays a part in our current and future intimacy with God.





unexpected, the seen and unseen—gives us faith for what He will do next. Our trust in the Lord grows when we take time to remember He has always been faithful.

Refocus

At the beginning of a new year, people often take stock of their life. They assess their past decisions and consider the trajectory they're now on. That makes January an especially good time to call people back to what matters most.

Consider a new year's sermon series that highlights the essentials of the Christian faith. Just ask yourself, "If I were discipling someone who knew little about the Bible, where would I start? What would I want to make sure I didn't leave out?"

Chances are, with all the New Year's resolutions being tossed out, there will be several people in the pews or watching the livestream who are new to church and the Bible. This is your opportunity to set them off on the right path while also giving long-time followers of Jesus a reminder of what it's all about.

Hint: It's all about Jesus.

Just take it from the apostle Paul. When he wrote about the essentials of the faith, he focused on the death and resurrection of our Savior: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

Restart

Another approach to your first message for the new year is to lean into the atmosphere. Many people make some sort of resolution at the start of the year—whether it's to lose weight, eliminate debt, or read through the Bible. Embrace this spirit and remind people of the most important resolution of all: to make Jesus first in their life.

For some people, this fresh encounter with Jesus may look a lot like the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19. He was so bowled over by the love of God that he eagerly repented of his sin, proclaiming, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (v. 8).

The new year is the perfect time to inspire someone to have their "Zacchaeus moment" by declaring the richness of God's grace from the pulpit.

For others, and perhaps even for your community as a whole, giving Jesus first place may look more like an intentional moment of recommitment. In the busyness of life, it can be easy to forget that we are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27).

Early in the year, while resolutions and priorities are top of everyone's mind, why not preach a message on the importance of coming back to the Lord when we've strayed? The story of Josiah's reformation, found in 2 Kings 22–23, provides a wealth of application, while emphasizing the importance of knowing the Scriptures.

Revelation

Finally, while a new year seems to bring with it a sense of hope for the future, our real hope lies not in a new year, but in a new age.

There is coming a day when "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4), when heaven and earth will come together and God will come to live with His people. And it's all because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

While men and women in your church are focused on the new year before them, take the opportunity to point them to Jesus' second coming and the new age that will begin in that moment. This might take the form of a sermon series on the book of Revelation, a look at Jesus' own teaching on the final days (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5–36), or a study on the books

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New Year's is all about new beginnings, so take some time to consider the new beginning you'd like to see your congregation have, and begin your sermon prep from there.

Question: What are you hoping to see the Lord do in the life of your church in the coming year?

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