STARTING NEW THINGS **(Including new lifestyle disciplines)**

This year God will be opening up many new doors of opportunity for believers to make an eternal difference in the lives of many others

God will also be opening up new doors of opportunity in people's careers and even in the area of new relationships for some people. However, it is crucial that we are always prepared to seize the opportunities that come our way in life

Procrastination is the thief of time. The enemy loves to waste our time and he does this best by *stopping us from making a start* to the things that God has planned for our life. Many people are waiting on God but He is waiting for many people to start doing those things that He has planned for their lives. We must simply at times have the initiative to start things

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote about the importance of using our time wisely and always doing the will of God for our life. Our time is our most precious resource. Each day once lived cannot be regained

The Apostle Paul wrote, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." **(Ephesians 5:15-17)**

Many people also as they go on in life become more resistant and fearful to starting new things. We can all become creatures of habit

When something needs to be done in our life or ministry, we need to be simply committed to MAKING a start or change NOW. We must refuse to continually procrastinate in life so that we miss the God given opportunities that come our way in life

In the book of Proverbs we read,
"Go to the ant, you sluggard!
Consider her ways and be wise,
Which, having no captain,
Overseer or ruler,
Provides her supplies in the summer,
And gathers her food in the harvest.
How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
When will you rise from your sleep? **(Proverbs 6:6-9)**

Right now there is a harvest of lost souls in our world that need to be saved

How important it is that we make the most of every God given opportunity to help people to come to Christ in the season that we are now living in.

Jesus Himself said, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, **lift up your eyes** and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" **(John 4:35)**

The hardest thing for many people is to make a start to new things, or to CHANGE DIRECTION in the way that they are doing things when God puts on their heart new ways of doing things.

This is particularly the case when it comes to spiritual things

The Devil will continually try and stop Christians from coming into fellowship to stunt their spiritual growth and to render their Christian witness ineffective. A lot of Christians have been out of fellowship for some time, fully intending to return to church one day, but have never got around to doing so. For these people they must simply choose to start fellowshipping with other believers again so that they can grow in their faith

The Devil will also try and distract and stop Christians from using their spiritual gifts to make an ETERNAL DIFFERENCE in the lives of many others. As a result of this inability of many Christians to commit to using their spiritual gifts, the effectiveness of the church in making a difference in our communities has been greatly diminished. Again for these people they need to just start looking for opportunities to use their spiritual gifts

Prayer has the power to transform our lives and circumstances. Yet so often we can struggle to make time to pray on a consistent basis. Prayerless people are powerless people. Given the potential of prayer to make such a great difference in our lives and in the lives of others, is important for all Christians to make a start to developing a consistent prayer life

Spending time in God's Word is also a great key to growing strong in our walk with the Lord. But the enemy will always try and get us too busy to spend quality time in God's Word. Building our lives on the Word of God is a great key to fulfilling our God given destiny.

For this reason for those Christians who have struggled to spend quality time in God's Word, it is important that this year they make a start to developing a habit of spending quality time in God's Word on a regular basis

The simple fact is that there are many people with good intentions and that have had dreams to do much in their life, but they have never yet committed to starting those things that they have had on their heart to do

We must simply become people who start things and commit to doing things when God opens up doors of opportunity in our life

BUT we can be assured that once we make a start to things we will:

i. Begin to gain momentum in those things that we are doing
ii. Begin to see God directing our steps (Psalm 37:23)
iii. See God empowering and resourcing us to complete the tasks that He gives us to do (Philippians 4:13) (Philippians 4:19), and
iv. See God connecting us with the right people

WE MUST NOT PUT OFF TO TOMORROW THE THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE TODAY

The more we look at what needs to be done without doing anything about it, the bigger the tasks begin to appear and the less likely we are to start and complete them.

Today I would like to encourage you to seize every God given opportunity that comes your way this year by giving you a few keys to becoming a good starter of things (and finisher), so that you will begin doing those things that need to be done in your life and that you would fully embrace all the God given opportunities that come your way in 2018.

The simple fact is that as believers if we fail to do those things that God has called us to do, the whole Body of Christ will be affected.

The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote,

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" **(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)**

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary**." **(1 Corinthians 12:18-22)**

So how important it is for every believer to faithfully fulfil God's plan and purpose for their life. That we are always prepared as believers to START those things which God has called us to do and to faithfully complete each task assigned to us

The following keys will help you to become better at starting new things:

1) We need to seek the Lord for His timing to commence the new things that He has put on our heart to do and then SET a commencement date. God moves when we begin to move

2) We need to prayerfully make plans, (seeking God for His wisdom and guidance) to help us to have a successful start to the new things that God has planned for our lives. Having a good start to new things is a great key to seeing us succeeding in all that we do in life.

   There is a saying, "If we fail to plan, we plan to fail." Plans help to give us a clear focus and clarity in how we can best use our time and resources.

   Plans help us to do what is necessary to see the new tasks being completed. Plans help us to work out such things as:

   i. What needs to be done *to prepare* for the new tasks or projects being undertaken,
   ii. How to best accomplish these new tasks and assignments,
   iii. Who to work together with, and
   iv. What equipment and resources are required to help successfully implement the new things in our life

   Plans help us to find the time to start and to complete the new things that God has planned for our life.

In the book of Proverbs we read,
"The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty." **(Proverbs 21:5)**

3) We must not keep focusing on the potential problems, (this can cause us to become double minded and discouraged) BUT keep seeking God for His wisdom and help to overcome any hindrances and problems. When we step out to do the new things that God has prepared for our life, we can be assured that God will help us each and every step of the way. (Hebrews 11:1) (Philippians 1:6)

   We have a God who promises to both hear and to answer all of our prayers that are in line with His will for our life. (1 John 5:14-15)

   The Apostle Paul wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." **(Philippians 4:6-7)**

   Jesus Himself said, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." **(Mark 11:22-24)**

   In the book of James we read, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." **(James 1:5)**

4) We need to reassess our priorities when new opportunities come our way in life. We need to be prepared to release and remove the unproductive things from our life, so that we can fully embrace the new things that God has planned for our life

   In the book of Isaiah we read, "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." **(Isaiah 43:18-19)**

5) We must never allow our past failures and disappointments to affect our thought life and decision making in such a way, that we fail to embrace the NEW GOD GIVEN opportunities that come our way in life. We have all failed at things in the past. We must refuse to allow our past failures to stop us from taking steps of faith in the future and to *stop us from starting new things* when God opens up new doors of opportunity for us

   This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; **but one thing I do**, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." **(Philippians 3:12-14)**

6) We must REFUSE to allow our fears to stop us from embracing new God given opportunities that come our way in life. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrew 11:6) Many people have avoided committing to new relationships that God had for them, because of a fear of being rejected due to their past bad experiences

   The Apostle Paul wrote,
   "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." **(2 Timothy 1:7)**

7) We must always have a bigger picture perspective of why we are doing the new things. That we always consider how what we will be doing is going to be a blessing to the wider Body of Christ and help others to succeed in life. As Christians we have been called to serve others and to help people to be reconciled to Christ. Having a bigger picture perspective of why we are doing things helps to give us greater purpose and meaning in all that we do in life

   The Apostle Paul wrote,
   "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:" **(1 Corinthians 12:4-7)**

God's plan for our life unfolds over time.

King David wrote,

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD and He delights in his way." **(Psalm 37:23)**

There are different seasons in our life including seasons of preparation. Before we can take step two in our walk with the Lord we must first take step one. In each season of our life God also prepares us for the next season. As we are faithful in the little things God can then entrust to us greater responsibilities and tasks. (Matthew 25:21-23)

Having a bigger picture view of why we are doing things gives us greater purpose and meaning in completing those tasks that God gives us to do (including the menial tasks) and a greater willingness to start the new things that God puts on our heart to do.

8) We need to commence new things with <u>enthusiasm and zeal</u> and a *commitment* to fully completing them. If we enter into new things with an attitude of seeing how things may work out, we will invariably quickly lose heart when we experience trials and setbacks.

If God has called us to do a NEW thing, let's always do it with passion and enthusiasm. It is in an atmosphere of faith and enthusiasm that our plans will succeed

The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." **(Philippians 1:6)**

King David wrote,

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord**, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass." **(Psalm 37:3-5)**

9) We need to continually involve God in all that we do, so that we position ourselves to succeed in those things that God calls us to do in life. God's ways are higher than our ways. We must learn to continually let the LORD lead in all that we do in life.

In the book of Proverbs we read,

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

"Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established." **(Proverbs 16:3)**

Continually committing our plans to the LORD will help us to find and to follow and to complete God's best plan for our life

10) We need to always have a clear understanding of the "WHY" behind what we are doing in life, including all the new things that we embrace this year. It is the WHY behind what we are doing that gives us great purpose and meaning in life.

It is the "WHY" which also causes us to sacrificially give of ourselves and which helps us to see our plans succeed. As Christians we have been given the ministry of reconciliation to help unbelievers to come to Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) So as Christians the "WHY" behind how we live our life and what we do is always one of helping to populate heaven AND to plunder hell and to help other believers to fulfil their God given destiny

As Christians what God calls us to do will always be centred on helping our lives to make an eternal difference in the lives of others. Given this very important WHY we do things, helps to motivate us to quickly embrace and to start the new God given opportunities that come our way in life

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**

With a clear WHY behind what we do in life and for others, we are always more willing and enthusiastic to commence new God given assignments to make a greater difference in our world for eternity

11) Finally, for some things like getting fit and losing weight and forgiving others to mend broken relationships, we need to just start doing these things TODAY. We need to simply make time and adjust our lifestyle habits TODAY to see these things happen in our own life

Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of doing some things immediately (NOW). To the woman in Samaria He said,
"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **(John 4:23-24)**

We are now living in times where anointed worship is touching the lives of people all around the world. Worship is a great key to seeing revival in our hearts and churches and cities. God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3)

In the gospel of Mark we read,
"And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **"THEY IMMEDIATELY LEFT THEIR NETS AND FOLLOWED HIM"**

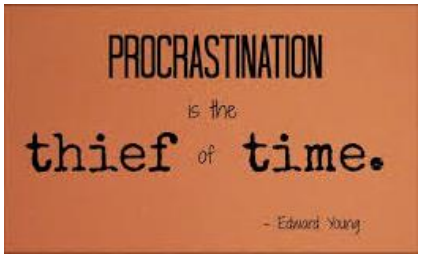
"When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. *And immediately he called them*, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him." **(Mark 1:16-20)**

All four of these fishermen immediately responded to God's call upon their lives' and become world changers as they chose to follow Jesus Christ. How we too need to be like these four fishermen and be always willing to immediately commence the new things that God has planned for our lives

So may I encourage you today to become a good STARTER of things! That you make a commitment to seize every God given opportunity that comes your way in 2018, by simply acting in faith and starting those things that He directs you to do. That you would also fully embrace all of those things that He would wish to bring into your life this year, to help you in your walk with Him. A year of God's blessings

God has new and bigger things in store for our future.

The Apostle Paul wrote,
"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us," **(Ephesians 3:20)**

In the book of Jeremiah we read,
"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." **(Jeremiah 33:3)**

But to see all that God has planned for our life in 2018 come to pass, we need to be quick to start those things that God calls us to do EACH AND EVERY STEP OF THE WAY