

# Bulletin

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Get a Fresh Start!

## NEW BEGINNINGS

BY JIM DALY

HOW DID LAST YEAR GO FOR YOU? DID YOU ACHIEVE EVERYTHING you hoped?

If not, don't feel discouraged. The new year is underway, and with it comes a fresh opportunity for you to change the course of your life. Although nothing about flipping the calendar from December to January makes change easier, the new year is a natural time to reassess what you want your life to be and to begin making changes to achieve those goals.

A great place to start is to forget about what's happened in the past. Nobody can go back and fix their mistakes or make different choices. But all of us can start right where we are and create a brand-new future.

The way to do that is to focus on the choices you can make today to move your life in a positive new direction. Even small steps can add up to big changes by the end of the year.

So whether your goal is to improve your marriage and your parenting, to further your career or to deepen your relationship with Christ, let go of what didn't work in the past. Then take one positive step forward at a time.

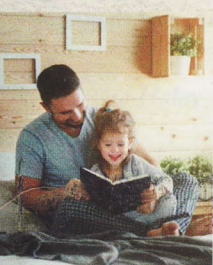
Make today your day to create a brand-new future for yourself. How you begin this year will have a huge impact on how you finish it.

Want to know more? Visit [www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com).



**Tough  
Questions  
from Kids**

**Do babies  
stay in  
heaven until  
they are  
born?**





## NEW YEAR, NEW PURPOSE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

The New Year tends to be a time of resolutions and new beginnings. What if this year we spent time making resolutions for the improvement of our marriage relationship?

Amid the busyness of life, we often forget that there is an actual purpose for which God united us with our spouse. The power in your union results from what God does in marriage when He takes two individuals and makes them one. He unites couples to do together what they could never do alone.

I wish my wife, Erin, and I had been aware of this when we married almost 24 years ago.

Although we didn't understand this concept at first, we've since been through a few different seasons in our married life when we have asked this question. About eight years into our marriage, Erin and I spent time at a family camp teaching on this subject. As we sent the conferees out to pray together and ask the Lord what He was calling them to do as a couple, we did the same. It was clear to both of us that we were being called to adopt. We were blessed with our little Annie almost eight years later.

As we continue to ask God, "What now, Lord?" He continues to answer.

How about you and your spouse? What is the Lord calling you to? The beginning of a new year is a wonderful time to ask this question. Be open to what God may be calling you to do together. Consider the following:

- Lead a Bible study in your home
- Serve in leadership roles in your church
- Spend time on the mission field
- Give financially to a ministry
- Work with troubled youth
- Lead a prayer ministry
- Mentor another married couple
- Help a troubled marriage



As Erin and I have sought the Lord regarding His plan for our marriage, we've been amazed by the deep intimacy and satisfaction it has brought to our relationship with each other. Let me encourage you to find a cause in 2022 that you and your spouse are both passionate about. Find something that benefits those beyond your marriage relationship, and then trust the Lord to use you and your marriage in the new year.

—Greg Smalley

## TEACHING CHILDREN TO BE PRO-LIFE

As parents, the Lord has entrusted us with the precious life of another human being, one who was formed and fashioned in the image of their Creator.

How does one go about teaching that precious little one to value the uniqueness of all life? Does instilling pro-life values into our children rest solely in advocacy for the preborn, or does it expand the gamut of all human life the Lord has created?

Teaching our children to be pro-life is most impactful when we model the concept through consistent and intentional actions. Some of the building blocks to this process are instilling within them the truth that God has a purpose and plan for each life He creates. And teaching your child to be genuinely pro-life will require sacrifice from you.

Being pro-life is not merely stating you believe all life is valuable. Neither is it only voting for those political candidates who say they are pro-life. Demonstrating you are pro-life, and deeply imparting this value to your children, is best accomplished by backing up your words with intentional actions, even when it feels inconvenient.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:14-17

If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth.

1 John 3:17-18

Teaching our children to be genuinely pro-life requires intentional and often-times inconvenient actions. As with all things, it is imperative to look at the example Jesus gave us while here on earth. Christ served others relentlessly, and ultimately, He willingly surrendered His life so we could have eternal life. He gave up heaven's comforts to sacrifice everything for us—those formed in His image.

—Angie Haley



# FAMILY MATTERS

Answers to your questions...

**We've moved and need to find a new home church. We looked online and visited several. I like one particular church, and my husband prefers a different one. Any advice on how to resolve this issue?**

## ANSWER:

Here are a few principles to consider—especially if you and your spouse are having trouble with this decision:

**1. Husbands have a spiritual leadership role—within limits.** Generally, the biblical standard is that the husband has a responsibility to lead spiritually at home. Whenever possible, the wife is to respect and follow that leadership rather than openly rebel against it or passively undercut his efforts. The husband has a sacred duty not to trample on or ignore his wife's needs, preferences and feelings. If a husband is "leading" his wife into

churches or practices that are heretical or cultic, of course, the wife has to refuse to participate. Her first allegiance is to God and His truth. Most of the time, however, differences in churches are not that extreme.

**2. Give your relationship priority.** God doesn't want a dispute over church to tear your marriage apart. Try to compromise in a way that both of you can live with. Keep looking for a church that provides for the spiritual growth of both spouses. Expect that both of you are seeking what God wants for you.

**3. Try creative alternatives.** You might try the "mix and match" approach. Many churches offer both a "traditional" and "contemporary" service. Some couples attend a Saturday night "contemporary" service and also occasionally a Sunday morning "traditional" service at the

same church.

Some couples decide to "solve" this problem by skipping church altogether. Clearly this is not a decision God would want for them. Scripture states that Christians are not to abandon fellowship with other believers.

If you are at an impasse over this issue, don't despair. Keep praying with each other that God will give you a solution. Examine your motives, asking yourself why you find it so hard to accommodate your spouse. If deeper issues are preventing reconciliation, seek out Christian counseling if necessary.

Most couples, if they're seeking to please God and not just themselves, eventually find a church where both spouses are satisfied.

(Adapted from the *Complete Guide to the First Five Years of Marriage*, general editors Phillip J. Swihart and Wilford Wooten)

## TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

### ANSWER:

**Whenever God creates a person, He creates a new soul, a new person who never existed before. Babies do not live in heaven waiting to be born here on earth. The Bible teaches that God forms each one of us inside our mother's womb. Every baby—even one that is not yet born—is one of God's precious creations!**

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