



YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Life has a way of pulling us away from our goals and objectives. We can get busy and lose sight of our direction. Sometimes, we need to stop and RESET. We may need to adjust our priorities and goals to achieve our dreams. When it comes to our relationship with God, the demands of life can certainly move this down, down, down, down on our list. Then we wonder why things have gotten so sluggish and unproductive. The truth is, a successful **RESET** always begins with our relationship with God. So, where do we start?

Four steps toward a better relationship with God:

Retreat – Getting away helps restore our brokenness in the presence of God. A retreat, whether long or short, helps us focus on the critical things that help in our relationship with God and others.

Reframe – Consider how we have related to God lately, and then reframe it! We can transform our minds from a Works-Based Righteousness to Grace-Based. Are we thinking that we have to work endlessly to earn God's favor or repair the relationship? Grace teaches us that we don't have to work to earn God's love – God's forgiveness, through Jesus Christ, is sufficient for our troubled hearts.

Reboot – Healthy habits reboot our bodies and good spiritual habits strengthen our souls! Though we don't have to earn God's love, our habits of worship, bible study and prayer help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. What spiritually healthy habit needs a reboot in your life?

Return – Giving back is good for us. The Bible features a great lesson in giving, a story unique to Luke's gospel – The thankful Samaritan



Going away and unplugging from the world helps us reset our relationship with God. Matthew 14 gives us an insight in how Jesus modeled a retreat.

In the middle of his ministry, Jesus received the terrible news about his second cousin, John the Baptist. In one, horrible night, execution was decreed and fulfilled. John the Baptist was brutally beheaded by edict of Herod Antipas. John's bereaved disciples found Jesus and told him the news. Jesus tried to find time to process the violent loss of his second cousin, but he put aside his grief to minister to the needs of the people. After Jesus performed a feeding miracle, he dismissed everyone and went to the mountains for a reset. Jesus, himself, needed to reset his emotions. That is why he went to the mountainside alone to be with God the Father. The devastating news, the needs of 5000 hungry people, and teaching eventually necessitated physical and emotional rest. After his retreat, Jesus felt refreshed and continued to minister.



RETREAT

It's okay to take a personal retreat – 24 hours away from people may be what we need. Other times, we may choose to retreat with a spouse or a friend.

Taking a personal retreat helps us in three ways:

- 1. We grow closer to God.** When we are immersed in God's word, the Holy Spirit brings us closer to God. By omitting a time schedule and worldly distractions, our attention can be totally focused on God.
- 2. We receive clarity from God.** It's not easy to hear God in our noisy world. A place of solitude allows us to hear God speak. We will come to a greater understanding of God's plan and desires.
- 3. We come away rested and refreshed.** We are not made to be on the go all the time. We need rest so that we can be productive and healthy. God modeled holy rest at creation (See Genesis 2:2-3).



Now, that we understand the benefits, here is how we do it...

- 1. Find a quiet location:** There is something about being on a mountain top or a secluded beach that offers the solitude needed to restore our faith journey. No access to these options? A day at a quiet park or public library may be perfect. Creativity is key!
- 2. Release the schedule:** Consider letting go of your daily patterns of when to get up, eat meals or other routines. For some, true rest means no schedule. Others prefer a little structure. A morning quiet time of study, prayer, and reflection or an afternoon time of listening to the Lord, are powerful components of any spiritual retreat.
- 3. Add an Active Experience:** Try incorporating a walk, ride, bike, or hike into your retreat. A little active experience helps you process your thoughts and reframe your perspectives.

REFRAME

In grief counseling, I sometimes use a technique called reframing. This practice helps create different ways of looking at situations, people, and relationships. When we shift the frame, our perspective changes and our thinking and behavior follows.

When it comes to resetting our relationship with God, some reframing may be in order. Many times, I hear people say:

My life is so messed up. There is no way God can forgive me.

But what if I told you there was a way to experience freedom from guilt and shame? Would you be willing to try it? Sure, you would be willing to try it but what's the catch? The catch is that we need to **REFRAME OUR MINDSET** from a Works-Based Righteousness to a Grace-Based Life.

A Works-Based Righteousness teaches that we are sinners who can change our status with God by doing good works such as going to church, reading the bible, treating people fairly, etc. We hope we have done enough to earn God's favor. Truthfully, no matter how hard we work at being good, we will always fall short of perfection. We cannot work hard enough to earn God's favor and that's why we sense God has not forgiven us.

The Bible teaches that we mess up regularly but God's grace and mercy fixes our brokenness. (See Romans 3:23-24; 7:24-25; Hebrews 4:16) You see, we are saved by God's grace through our faith in Jesus. God finds favor with us, takes the initiative, and gives us the gift of Jesus to make us right with Him (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, we cannot work enough to save ourselves. It's up to God's grace. Only God can forgive us through His grace. So, if we want to shift our mindset to the **Grace-Based Life**, we must believe that **God's grace is enough**. (2nd Corinthians 12:9) **If not, we will always believe God cannot forgive us and guilt and shame will always follow us.**

Through the frame of God's grace, we face the truth about ourselves in the light of Grace-Based Life. We recognize that the Bible is the story of God's grace. We break the frame never-ending works for an angry God. **We let God smash that frame and grind it into dust. Then, through faith, we live in a frame constructed solely around the loving grace of Jesus.** This changes everything.

LIVE THE GRACE-BASED LIFE



REBOOT

What do Magnum PI, Hawaii 5-0, SWAT, Creed, Cobra Kai, Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, and Saved by the Bell all have in common? It's simple. Each of these entertaining programs have embraced the power of the *Reboot*. *The Merriam Webster dictionary defines* Reboot as: to refresh (something) by making a new start or creating a new version. And when it comes to our faith, sometimes we need to reboot our spiritual habits to help us grow in our grace and knowledge of Jesus.

Engage the Word, Engage the Father and Engage the Community

ENGAGE THE WORD

Engaging God's Word equips us, teaches us and changes us so that we are producing evidence of our faith. (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; John 15:8) Sometimes, we have great intentions in studying, meditating and memorizing God's word, but life has a way of distracting us from matters of our faith. So, how do reboot the habit of engaging God's word?

- 1. Start with a Small Goal** --10 minutes a day for 5 days and add more time, if you like and choose a reading plan that gets you started. There are many reading plans available on the internet.
- 2. Choose a time and place** – block out the distractions and dive into the word.
- 3. Don't give up** -- Many people quit if they miss a day or two of Bible reading. Remember, we are practicing *Grace-Based Life* – forgive yourself and pick up where you left off.

ENGAGE THE FATHER

Prayer is a conversation with God. People have created several easy acronyms have been created to help us engage God. The ACTS method walks us through adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, while the PRAY method encourages us to pause, rejoice, ask and yield. These methods can be very helpful but if they are not for you, don't worry. You don't have to follow a formula to pray. The important thing is that we share what's on our mind. In prayer, we can share our joys as well as the things that make us angry. We can tell God anything.

If it's been a while and you're not quite sure where to start, here are a few suggestions to help you to reboot:

- 1. Start with a small goal** – How about five minutes in the morning? Your prayer can be praise, gratitude, praying for a friend, confession, asking God for something you need, or a mixture of all of these. If you miss a morning, try lunch or an afternoon break. Small goals lead to excellent daily habits.
- 2. Find a Pray Partner** – A friend can help you reboot your prayer life. Ask your friend to pray with you and for you.
- 3. Try a Prayer Journal** – Write letters to God. Share your requests and results. Then, you can revisit the journal, seeing how God heard your cry and answered your concern. Remembering God's faithfulness in the past is great motivation to reboot your prayer life.



ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

We are not meant to do the Christian life on our own. We need to be part of an encouraging, Christian community. Never underestimate what happens when God's people get together. God speaks through song and message, fellowship, bible study and prayer. We see evidence in the first Christian community. (see Acts 2:43-47) We know being involved in church is important but how do we get back into church.

- 1. Plan and Prepare** – go online and research the church you are planning to attend. Usually, they have plan for you: where to park, how to dress, what to expect, etc. Plan to attend a worship service first before fully engaging the church. If you didn't enjoy it, find another church before giving up. God has a place for you.
- 2. Don't give up** – if you didn't enjoy it, give it another try or find another church. God has a place for you.
- 3. Join a Small Group** – once you have found a church, get involved in a small group. Gathering with believers can encourage fellowship, worship, prayer and ministry opportunities.



A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. The word "RETURN" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image. The image is framed by a red border at the top and bottom.

RETURN

God pours his blessings out on this world. Those blessings can be the basics of rain, food, shelter, or friends. It can be wonderful things of love, fulfillment, peace, security. God showers these blessings on the world, and we gladly accept these gifts. However, sometimes we don't recognize the Giver.

Luke recorded a story in which 10 men were healed but only one came back to thank Jesus. (see Luke 17:11-13) We don't know why the other 9 never came back. But the one who did, his life was changed for eternity. If we are going to reset our relationship with God, we must remember to give back to what God has given to us. Returning a portion of our blessing not only changes our life, it changes the world.

Recently, at Everyday Grace, we gave back through our Toes on the Go ministry. We were able to fit twenty-five children with brand new shoes. Seeing their faces light up as the children were putting on their new pair of shoes was a huge blessing! One boy wanted a blue pair of shoes. He got excited and did a happy dance when he received his pair of blue shoes. It brought tears to the teachers and volunteers that day. We don't give back for our sake. We give back to share God's love and build hope in others. We give back a little bit of the grace God has given us.

We are thankful for the blessing of Jesus – and doubly thankful when we can share that blessing with others!

ARE YOU READY TO RESET?

A successful RESET always begins with our relationship with God. From time to time everyone gets distracted. The demands of life crowd out our relationship with God move it way down the list. To RESET this critical aspect of our lives, we can practice the following:

Retreat – Going away can help restore our brokenness with God by refocusing on the little (and big) things that build our relationship with God and others.

MY RETREAT ACTION PLAN: Where _____ When _____

Reframe – A change in perspective can transform how we relate to God from a *Works-Based Righteousness* to a *Grace-Based Life* teaches us that God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ repairs our relationship with Him. Let's follow God's ways out of love and gratitude, rather than fear, shame and guilt.

MY REFRAMING MODEL: Works-Based Righteousness Belief _____

Reframed Grace-Based Belief _____

Reboot – Spiritual habits can be helpful, joyful, and fun! Our habits of worship, bible study and help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ so that our life is producing evidence that Jesus reigns in our hearts.

SPIRITUAL HABIT THAT NEEDS A REBOOT _____

Return – Give back what God has given us. The Samaritan man gave thanks for his healing. We can give thanks and contribute to the healing of those around us.

RETURNING THANKS: What am I thankful for today? _____

How can I help someone around me? _____