



[Main Idea: Starting fresh requires us both to admit those moments where we have had a false start and to receive the clean start that God provides for us by allowing us to start over as someone who is forgiven.]

[Leader Note: this message relies heavily on a physical illustration in which you will demonstrate an idea called, “Filtered Dirty Water.” You will need the following:

- Two clear glass or plastic containers (fill one half way with water)
- Debris (dirt, leaves, small trash, etc.)
- Coffee filter
- Instant coffee maker or other container to hold the coffee filter]

False Start

I get a bit nervous when it comes to being in new situations. Almost all of us experience some sort of anxiety or even fear when we start something new. This worry comes as we begin a new school year, a new team, a new job, a new school, and so many other experiences.

I have had some struggles as well with new experiences.

[Leader Note: Share a personal example here to bring your own heart and story to bear in this message.]

I bet you have an example in your own life where you bobbed the start of a new experience. In the sports world, there is something known as a false start. Whether in running, swimming, or football, a false start occurs when an athlete moves before the gun or snap.

Here’s some examples of recent false starts.

[Leader Note: YouTube has many examples of false starts. Here are a couple you could use:

- Swimmer False Start - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-7qE2sek64>
- Usain Bolt False Start - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzaJUqcHqUg>

- [Everyone But the Center -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkJR7tJFGj8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkJR7tJFGj8)

Whether you have started something new or are about to start something new, each of us probably have a fear of making a bad first impression or having a false start.

A Dirty Life

We are beginning a new series today called, “Start Fresh,” in which I am going to encourage you and equip you with ways to start fresh in your life.

I hope the previous example of a false start was helpful as you think about what it means to start fresh.

Right now, I want to show you another way to look at what it may look like to start fresh.

[Leader Note: Display the container with water and debris to the audience.]

I want you to imagine your life as this container. You start out fairly clean and clear as a baby and child. By your choices, disobedience, and sin, dirt enters into your life.

[Leader Note: Put some dirt into container.]

Let’s talk about sin for just a minute. We use this word in church, but most of us probably don’t fully get what it means. We think of sin as a list of laws that we have to follow, like the 10 Commandments. I want you to think about sin as anything that disobeys or dishonors God. Sin is anything that is less than God’s best. If you think about sin as disobedience or anything less than God’s best, our understanding and definition of sin broadens and is much larger than just a set of rules.

Sin dirties our life. Sin has a way of making us continue to sin. Sin is like a magnet in that when we get caught doing something wrong we often lie, committing another sin, which further dirties our lives.

Some sins are simple and are not that complicated. These sins are a bit like the dirt. Other sins are more elaborate and costlier in their effects. These sins are more like leaves, rocks, sticks, or mud in our lives.

[Leader Note: Put in some leaves, rocks, sticks, or mud to make this point.]

When you think about those things which make you dirty, what is it that dirties your life? What dirties your soul?

As we continue through our lives, there are those times where we make bad personal decisions or bad relationship decisions. These disobediences further dirty our souls.

[Leader Note: Add in some more debris or trash.]

Our lives become so dirty that they begin to stink as well. Others might not want to be around us because of the odor of the rot that is going on in our lives. Just like a middle school guy becomes self-conscious and begins to realize he needs to wear deodorant because he is sweating, we become self-aware of the stench of our sin and desire a way either to hide or disguise the reality of our circumstances.

Here's the problem. We can spray this container with a whole can of Axe Body Spray, but it will not change the reality of what is going on here. We can hide the container, but it doesn't change the reality. We can even mask the container by printing out a hi-def image of a clear container of water and taping it to the front, but it still won't fix what is going on.

The reality of our lives is hopeless. We cannot fix the dirty water of our souls. The Bible talks about this reality in some deep ways. Here are a couple.

Jeremiah 17:9 ESV – "The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Isaiah 59:1-2 ESV – "Your sin has made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."

Sin corrupts our hearts and makes it to where we cannot even trust our own instincts. The presence of sin separates us from a good God who loves us and wants to be close to us but cannot due to sin.

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