YOUTH GROUP CURRICULUM · AGES 11–18

NEW YEAR

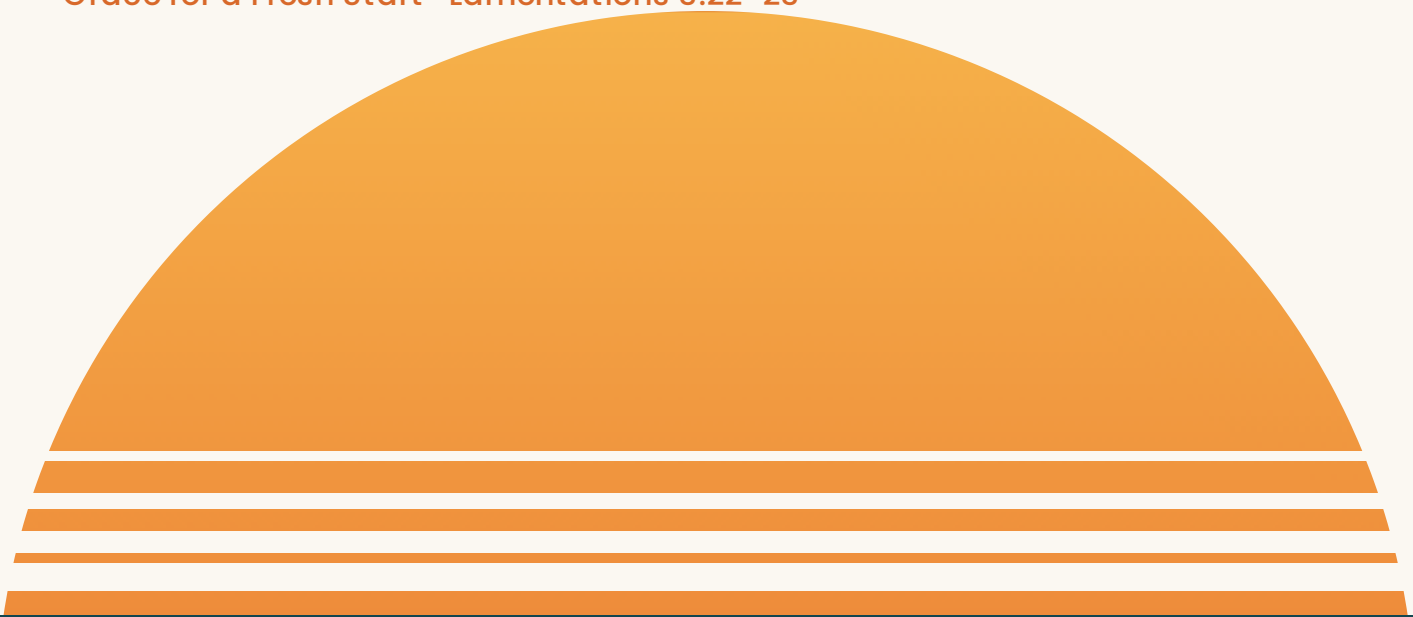
FRESH START

A 4-week New Year series for youth groups

WEEK 1 OF 4

New Every Morning

Grace for a Fresh Start · Lamentations 3:22–23



Inside: 45 / 60 / 75-minute plans · Word-for-word scripts · Activity Menu with 4 games
Response activity · Discussion · Joys & Concerns · Pastoral prayer · Student pages + devotional

DAHAM
NEXT GENERATION MINISTRY TOGETHER

WEEK 1 · LEADER GUIDE

New Every Morning

Theme: Grace for a Fresh Start · Main text: Lamentations 3:22–23 · Memory verse: 2 Corinthians 5:17

THE BIG IDEA

A fresh start doesn't begin with a better you. It begins with God's mercy, which is new every morning, not just every January.

The question to carry all night

"What would I do differently if I believed I really get a fresh start?"

By the end, students will…

- Name what they want to leave behind
- See that God's mercy is new every morning
- Pray for each other and leave with one small step

NIGHT AT A GLANCE · PICK YOUR LENGTH

SEGMENT	WHAT HAPPENS	45 MIN	60 MIN	75 MIN
Welcome	Welcome back! Greet new students by name and grade; your announcements	—	—	5
Game 1	Pick from the Activity Menu (next page)	8	10	10
Game 2	A second game from the menu (optional)	—	—	10
Hook + Message	"New Year, New Me" · Lamentations 3:22–23	10	12	12
Response Activity	Clean Slate + My One Step	10	12	12
Small Group Talk	Pick 3–4 questions	—	8	10
Joys & Concerns	"I lift up ___ to God." / "Lord, hear our prayer."	10	10	10
Pastoral Prayer	Leader prays over what was shared + send-off	5	5	5

WELCOME BACK *First night after break. Say "Happy New Year!" and ask for a quick "best part of break." Keep "hardest part" optional: break isn't happy for everyone.*

Supplies

- Sheet protectors + dry-erase markers (or paper)
- Index cards, pens, a trash bag
- Game supplies for your picks (see each game)
- Student pages (last 3 pages), one set each
- Bibles or a Bible app · a phone timer

Before students arrive

- Choose your games using the Activity Menu
- Read Lamentations 3:1–33 once through
- Practice the hook out loud one time
- Think of one fresh start God gave *you*
- Pray for each student by name

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

CHOOSE WHAT FITS YOUR GROUP

Activity Menu

The first night back after break can go either way: a room full of energy, or a few sleepy students still on vacation time. Pick one or two games, then finish with the response activity. Every game ends with a debrief that points back to tonight's question.

ACTIVITY	ENERGY	PREP	BEST WHEN…	MIN
A. Minute to Win It: New Year Edition 60-second challenges in pairs	High	Cheap supplies, 10 min	Students need to move; you want laughs and partners talking	12–15
B. Rose, Thorn, Bud Share a high, a low, and a hope in trios	Low	None	Small or quiet group; you want real catching up after break	8–10
C. Clean Slate Pictionary Draw, guess, erase, start fresh	Medium	Whiteboard or paper, word slips	You want team fun and the strongest link to the message	10
D. New Year's Would You Rather Countdown Pick a side, count down 10 to 1	Medium	None	Lots of new students; zero prep time	8–10
E. Clean Slate Response activity (after message)	Reflective	Sheet protectors or paper, index cards	Every night: this is the heart of the week	12

SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS

Big, high-energy group (10–15)

A. Minute to Win It → C. Clean Slate Pictionary → Message → E. Clean Slate

Small group (4–6)

B. Rose, Thorn, Bud (whole group) → Message → E. Clean Slate in a circle

Lots of first-time visitors

D. Would You Rather Countdown → A. Minute to Win It → Message → E. Clean Slate (low-pressure option)

Short on time (45 min)

C. Clean Slate Pictionary → Message → E. Clean Slate → Joys & Concerns

GROUND RULES FOR EVERY GAME *Nobody is forced to share. Nobody is the punchline. New students get paired with a regular. If a game ever starts to single someone out, change the round and keep moving.*

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

A. Minute to Win It: New Year Edition

12–15 min · High energy

Purpose: Fast, silly, 60-second challenges that get everyone laughing on the first night back. Between rounds, partners answer a quick get-to-know question, so students learn real things about each other, not just who can stack cups fastest.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Set up 4–6 challenges from the list below before group. Keep supplies cheap: plastic cups, ping-pong balls, balloons, pennies, spoons.
2. Students pair up (new students with a regular). Each pair picks a team name that has something to do with the new year.
3. Announce a challenge, show how it works, then shout "Go!" and start a 60-second timer. One partner plays while the other cheers, then switch next round.
4. After each round, give partners 60 seconds to answer the **Between-Rounds Question** together.
5. Pairs get 1 point for finishing a challenge and 1 bonus point for the loudest, kindest cheering. Most points after 5–6 rounds wins.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Happy New Year! Welcome to Minute to Win It: New Year Edition. Grab a partner, ideally someone you didn't hang out with over break. You'll take turns: one of you plays, the other one is your personal hype squad. You get sixty seconds. And between every round, you and your partner answer a question. Ready? Here's round one."
>
> "Time! Nice work. Now turn to your partner. Here's your question..."

60-SECOND CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE	HOW IT WORKS
Countdown Stack	Stack 10 cups into a pyramid (4-3-2-1), then back into one stack.
Ball Drop	Bounce a ping-pong ball off the floor into a cup. Land 3 to win.
Keep It Up	Keep 2 balloons in the air with only your hands. No catching.
Penny Tower	Stack 10 pennies using only one hand.
Spoon Walk	Carry a ping-pong ball on a spoon across the room and back, twice.
Cup Flip	Flip 5 cups from upside down to right side up by flicking the rim off a table edge.
Tissue Pull	Pull every tissue out of a box using one hand, one tissue at a time.
Card Tower	Build a tower of index cards 3 levels high that stands for 3 seconds.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

BETWEEN-ROUNDS QUESTIONS

- Best thing you ate over break?
- Latest you stayed up over break?
- A show or game you got into?
- Snow day activity of choice?
- Something new you tried last year?
- A skill you'd love to learn this year?
- One place you'd love to go this year?
- Best New Year's tradition you've seen?
- What song should start this year?
- If this year had a title, what would it be?

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Everyone plays at the same time while the leader times. Go around the circle for the question.
- **Relay:** Teams of 3. One challenge per person, back to back, fastest team total wins.
- **Do-over rule:** Every pair gets one "fresh start" card they can use to replay any round they missed.

LEADER NOTE *Skip any challenge that involves food or putting things in mouths (allergies and germs). Keep the scoreboard light. The cheering bonus matters more than the wins.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
> "How many of you missed a challenge and wished you could just try again? That's the best part of a new year. It feels like a do-over. Tonight we're going to find out that God's do-overs don't only come in January. Here's the question for tonight: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

B. Rose, Thorn, Bud

8–10 min · Low energy

Purpose: A calm way to catch up after break. Students share a rose (something good), a thorn (something hard), and a bud (something they're looking forward to). It's honest without being heavy, and it helps new students get to know people fast.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Split into trios. Mix it up: "Find two people you haven't seen in a while."
2. Explain the three parts: **Rose** is the best part of break or last year. **Thorn** is something hard, and you share only as much as you want. **Bud** is something you're looking forward to.
3. The leader goes first for the whole room, modeling a short, light answer for each.
4. Each person gets about 90 seconds. The other two listen, then each ask one follow-up question.
5. Finish by asking a few volunteers to share just their **bud** with everyone.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Get in groups of three. We're going to catch up the way gardeners talk. A rose is something good. A thorn is something hard. And a bud is something that hasn't bloomed yet, something you're looking forward to. I'll go first."
>
> "My rose is ___. My thorn is ___. My bud is ___. See? Short. For your thorn, share only what you're comfortable with. 'It was a long week' totally counts. Go!"

PROMPTS (IF STUDENTS ARE STUCK)

ROSE	THORN	BUD
Best meal over break	Something that didn't go as planned	Something on the calendar this month
A fun day with friends	Being bored or stuck inside	A new class or semester
A gift you actually use	Getting sick over break	A trip, game, or concert coming up
Time with family or a pet	Missing someone	A skill you want to get better at
Sleeping in	Going back to early alarms	A friend you want to spend more time with
Something you're proud of from last year	A hard part of last year	One thing you hope God does this year

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Stay together in one circle. Do all the roses first, then thorns (passing is fine), then buds.
- **Buds only:** For a big group of new students, skip thorns and do roses and buds.
- **Year version:** Rose, thorn, and bud for the whole past year instead of just break.

LEADER NOTE *Keep your own thorn light. Some students had a hard break: family stress, loss, or loneliness. If someone shares something heavy, thank them and check in quietly later.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
>
> "Everybody had roses, and everybody had thorns. Nobody's year was all one or the other. Tonight we're going to read something written in a really thorny season, and it still has hope in it. So think about your bud: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

C. Clean Slate Pictionary

10 min · Medium energy

Purpose: Classic team drawing with a twist: every round ends with erasing the board and starting fresh. Teammates talk, shout, and laugh together, and the game sets up the message perfectly: a wiped-clean board is a picture of a fresh start.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Split into 2–3 teams. Give each team a whiteboard and marker, or a stack of big paper.
2. One drawer from each team comes to you and sees the same word. No letters, numbers, or talking.
3. Drawers race back and draw. The first team to shout the right word gets a point.
4. Everyone yells **"Clean slate!"** and drawers wipe their board (or flip to a new page). A new drawer goes next.
5. Play 8–12 rounds. Save "fresh start" for the last round.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
> "Teams, send up your first drawer. I'll show you a word. Draw it, no letters, no talking. First team to guess it gets the point. When I say 'Clean slate!', everybody wipes the board and we start over. Nothing from the last round carries over. Ready? Go!"

WORD LIST

- Fireworks
- Calendar
- Snowman
- Alarm clock
- Countdown
- Party hat
- Sunrise
- New notebook
- Gym
- Ball drop
- Resolution
- Hot chocolate
- Level up
- Sledding
- First day of school
- Clock striking midnight
- Confetti
- Blank page
- Butterfly
- Fresh start

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** One board, one drawer at a time, and everyone else guesses. Rotate the drawer each round.
- **Partner draw:** Two drawers share one marker, holding it together.
- **Talk it out:** After each round, the drawer says one thing they'd love a fresh start on (a class, a sport, a habit). Passing is fine.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
>
> "Every round, no matter how messy the last drawing was, you got to wipe it and start again. Nobody said, 'Sorry, your last snowman was so bad you can't draw anymore.' What if life worked like that? Tonight's question: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

D. New Year's Would You Rather Countdown

8–10 min · Medium energy

Purpose: Zero prep, instant movement, and every round ends with students explaining their choice to a neighbor. The countdown from 10 to 1 feels like New Year's Eve, and the last rounds lead straight into the message.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Point to two sides of the room. Call out the round number, then two choices.
2. Everyone moves to the side they pick. No standing in the middle.
3. Turn to someone nearby and share **why** in 30 seconds.
4. Ask one or two volunteers to share with everyone, then count down to the next round.
5. Rounds 2 and 1 are the bridge rounds. When you finish round 1, the whole room shouts, "Happy New Year!"

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Everybody up! We're counting down to the new year, ten rounds. I'll give you two choices. Pick one and walk to that side. Then turn to someone near you and tell them why. Round ten! Would you rather..."

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

ROUNDS

#	WOULD YOU RATHER…	…OR	FOLLOW-UP QUESTION
10	Stay up until midnight	Go to bed and wake up early	"What did you do on New Year's Eve?"
9	Snow day	Beach day	"Perfect day off: go."
8	Fireworks	Confetti cannon	"Loudest thing you heard over break?"
7	Learn a new instrument	Learn a new language	"Which one and why?"
6	Get a brand-new phone	Get a brand-new wardrobe	"What would you keep from the old one?"
5	Read 20 books this year	Run 200 miles this year	"Have you ever done a challenge like that?"
4	Relive your best day of last year	Skip your worst day of last year	"Which one would you pick?"
3	Know everything that happens this year	Be surprised	"Why?"
2	**Bridge:** Get a fresh start once a year	Get a fresh start every morning	"What would change?"
1	**Bridge:** Earn your fresh start	Be given one as a gift	Lead into the debrief

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Stay seated. Point left or right, then go around the circle with a quick "why."
- **Student-led:** Let students call out rounds 7 through 4.
- **No-move version:** Hold up one finger or two fingers instead of moving.

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
>
> "Look where everybody went on those last two. Most of us want a fresh start every morning, and most of us would rather be given one than have to earn it. That's actually what God offers. So here's tonight's question: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

Hook: "New Year, New Me"

2 min

SAY

"Quick show of hands. Who has seen a 'New year, new me' post in the last couple of weeks? Maybe you posted one. No judgment."

"Here's the thing. Every January, people make big promises: gym every day, no more junk food, straight A's, off my phone. And then what usually happens a few weeks later? Yeah. The gym gets quiet, the snacks come back, and 'new me' starts to look a lot like old me."

"That's not because people are lazy. It's because we're trying to start fresh by becoming a better version of ourselves, all by ourselves. Tonight we're going to find out where a real fresh start begins. And here's the question: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

Message: Mercy Is the Starting Line

10 min

1. We love fresh starts

SAY

"There's something about a fresh start. A brand-new notebook before you've messed up the first page. A new level in a game where you get full health again. A new semester where your grade goes back to zero. We love it because it feels like the past doesn't get to decide what comes next."

"But most of us also know the feeling of messing up the notebook by the second week. So is a fresh start real, or just a nice feeling in January?"

LEADER NOTE *If you have a short, honest story about a fresh start God gave you, maybe after a mistake or a hard season, tell it here. Thirty seconds is plenty. Students trust leaders who go first.*

2. Written in the worst season

SAY

"There's a book in the Bible called Lamentations. A lament is a sad song, a cry. It was written after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. Homes burned, people gone, the writer sitting in the ruins. This is not a 'New year, new me' post. It's the worst season of his life. And right in the middle of it, he writes this."

[21] This I recall to my mind; therefore I have hope. [22] It is because of Yahweh's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassion doesn't fail. [23] They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

LAMENTATIONS 3:21–23 · WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

"Some Bibles say 'his mercies are new every morning.' Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, 'Things are great.' They aren't. He says, 'God's love is still here. His compassion hasn't run out. And it shows up new every single morning.'"

3. Mercy is the starting line, not the finish line

SAY

"Here's where a lot of us get it backwards. We think, 'Once I get my life together, God will be happy with me. Mercy is the prize at the end.' But the writer of Lamentations had nothing together. The mercy came *first*. It's the starting line."

"That's why 'New year, new me' runs out of gas. It starts with me trying harder. God's fresh start starts with him showing up, every morning, not just every January. You don't have to wait for next January to start over. You get tomorrow morning."

4. You don't have to earn your restart

SAY

"And it goes even deeper than a new morning. Listen to what Paul says about anyone who belongs to Jesus:"

> *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 · WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

"Not 'a slightly improved version.' A new creation. Your restart isn't something you earn by keeping resolutions. It's a gift Jesus gives. You still get to grow and make good choices this year, but you do it *from* grace, not *for* grace."

"So here's the question again, and I want you to really think about it: **what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

E. Response Activity: Clean Slate

12 min

Purpose: Help students privately name something from last year they want to leave behind, then physically wipe it away while hearing God's promise. They leave with a fresh card, a simple morning habit, and one small step for the week.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Give every student a sheet protector with paper inside and a dry-erase marker (or a scrap of paper), plus one index card.
2. **Leave it behind:** Students privately write one thing from last year they want to leave behind: a regret, a habit, a hurt, a worry. Just a word or two is fine. Nobody will read it.
3. **Wipe it clean:** Everyone holds their slate. The leader slowly reads Lamentations 3:22–23 out loud. On "They are new every morning," students wipe the slate clean (or tear the paper and toss it in the trash).
4. **Step into it:** On the index card, students write: **"His mercies are new. This year I want to ___."**
5. **My One Step:** Students fill in "My One Step This Week" on their student page. Suggested step: every morning this week, before you check your phone, read Lamentations 3:22–23 and say one thank-you to God.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY (LEAVE IT BEHIND)**
>
> "Everybody has something from last year they'd love to leave behind. Maybe something you did, something someone did to you, a habit, or a worry that followed you around. Write it on your slate, just a word or two. Nobody is going to read this. Not me, not your friends. It's between you and God."
>
> **SAY (WIPE IT CLEAN)**
>
> "Hold your slate. I'm going to read our verses. When I get to 'They are new every morning,' wipe it clean. *(Read Lamentations 3:22–23 slowly.)* Look at that. Clean. That's not you pretending it didn't happen. That's God saying, 'My love hasn't run out on you.'"
>
> **SAY (STEP INTO IT)**
>
> "Now take your card. Write, 'His mercies are new. This year I want to…' and finish it. Not a huge resolution. Something you want to step into because God is with you, not so God will like you."
>
> **SAY (ONE STEP)**
>
> "Last thing. Mercy is new every morning, so let's practice meeting it in the morning. Here's the step: every morning this week, before you check your phone, read these two verses and say one thank-you to God. Thirty seconds. Write it on your student page and put your card by your bed."

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

"Leave behind" ideas (read aloud if stuck)

- A grudge
- Being too hard on myself
- Always comparing
- A mistake I keep replaying
- Staying up too late
- Worrying about everything
- Giving up too fast
- Hiding from God
- Mean words I said
- Mean words said to me

"This year I want to..." examples

- ...talk to God before my phone.
- ...forgive someone I've been mad at.
- ...be kinder to myself when I mess up.
- ...be the friend who invites people in.
- ...show up here most Wednesdays.
- ...start over when I fall, not quit.

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Sit in a circle. After wiping slates, each person reads their "This year I want to" line if they want to, and the person on their right says, "His mercies are new every morning."
- **Low-pressure option:** Skip writing. Students just hold a blank slate while you read, and think of one thing. "God knows what you're thinking about. That counts."
- **Fresh Start Wall:** Students copy their "This year I want to" line onto a sticky note (no names) and put it on a wall. Leave it up for all four weeks.

LEADER NOTE *Never collect or read the slates, and make sure paper ones actually get thrown away. Some students may write something painful. If someone looks upset, check in quietly later. See the Care Note at the end of the leader guide.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
>
> "Look at your slate. It's clean, and you didn't do anything to earn that. You just held it out. That's grace. Tomorrow morning his mercy will be new again, and the morning after that. **So what would you do differently if you believed you really get a fresh start?**"

Small Group Talk

8–10 min · Optional

Groups of 3–5, with one adult or student leader per group if possible. Pick 3–4 questions that fit your group.

WARM UP

1. Have you ever made a New Year's resolution? How long did it last?
   Follow-up: What made it hard to keep?
2. What's your favorite kind of "fresh start": a new notebook, a new level, a new season, a clean room?
   Keep it light. It's a warm-up.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

GO DEEPER

3. The writer of Lamentations was sitting in ruins when he wrote "They are new every morning." Why do you think he could still say that?
   What does hope look like when things aren't fixed yet?
4. Do you tend to think God's love is the starting line or the finish line?
   Where do you think you learned that?
5. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "all things have become new." What's the difference between a new creation and a better version of yourself?
6. Why is it sometimes easier to forgive other people than to let God give *you* a fresh start?

TAKE IT HOME

7. What's one area of your life (school, friends, family, faith) where you need a fresh start this year?
8. What would you do differently tomorrow morning if you believed you really get a fresh start?

LEADER NOTE *Silence is okay. Count to seven in your head before rephrasing. If no one answers, answer it yourself briefly and honestly, then ask again.*

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

Joys & Concerns

10 min

Purpose: Students practice praying *for each other*, not just hearing about prayer. It's often the moment new students realize this group actually cares about them. Tonight it fits the theme: we start the new year by bringing God our real lives, the good and the hard, and trusting his mercy with both.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Sit in a circle if you can. Explain the response: when someone shares, they end with "**I lift up ___ to God.**" Everyone responds together: "**Lord, hear our prayer.**"
2. Start with **joys** (things to thank God for), then move to **concerns** (things we're worried about or carrying).
3. The leader goes first to model it, with one joy and one concern.
4. Anyone can share, or pass. "Unspoken" requests are welcome, too.
5. Jot down what's shared (first names only) so you can pray for each one in the Pastoral Prayer.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Before we pray, let's take time to share what's going on in our lives. It's a new year, and some of us are coming off a great break, and some of us are coming off a hard one. Both are welcome here. God's mercy is new every morning, so let's bring him what we're carrying into this year. What's something good you're thankful for? Or something you're worried about, for yourself, your family, or a friend?"
>
> "When you share, end with 'I lift up ___ to God.' And all of us will say together, 'Lord, hear our prayer.' Let's practice. I lift up this new year to God..." (*All: "Lord, hear our prayer."*)
>
> "I'll go first. My joy is ___. I lift up ___ to God. My concern is ___. I lift up ___ to God."

Joy starters (if students are stuck)

- Time with family or friends over break
- A birthday, new sibling, or new pet
- A fresh semester or a new start
- Someone I love got good news
- Just being back here tonight

Concern starters

- Going back to school or finals coming up
- A grandparent or relative who is sick
- A friend who's going through something
- Stress at home or school
- "I have an unspoken request."

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Go around the circle so everyone gets a turn, and everyone is allowed to pass.
- **Big group (12+):** "Popcorn" style: anyone shares when ready. Cap it at about 8 minutes.
- **Written version:** Students write joys and concerns on slips of paper. The leader reads them (no names) and the group responds.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

LEADER NOTE *Say once at the start: "What's shared here stays here, unless someone's safety is at risk." If a student shares something serious, thank them, pray, and follow up privately afterward (see the Care Note).*

Pastoral Prayer

3–5 min

Pray this over the group. The **[bracketed]** lines are where you name the joys and concerns students just shared.

Faithful God,

Thank you for every person in this room, and thank you for bringing us back together in a new year. Thank you that your love didn't take a break over break. Your compassion doesn't fail, and it's new every morning.

Thank you for the good things you've given us. *[Name the joys shared: "Thank you for Ava's time with her cousins, for Caleb's new puppy..."]* Every good gift comes from you.

And we bring you what we're carrying into this year. *[Name the concerns: "Be with Noah's grandpa. Give Lily peace as she starts at a new school..."]* And for the things that stayed in our hearts tonight and weren't spoken out loud, you already know them. Hold them too.

Some of us wiped something off a slate tonight. You know exactly what it was. Help us believe it's really gone. When we wake up tomorrow and the old voice says, "Nothing's changed," remind us that your mercies are new. We don't want to start this year by trying harder on our own. We want to start it with you.

For anyone who had a hard break, be close to them. For anyone who is new here, thank you for bringing them. Help them feel at home. And help us meet you each morning this week.

In Jesus' name, amen.

SEND-OFF

"Take your student pages home. There's a five-day devotional in there, just a few minutes a day, and a tracker for your one step: before your phone, read Lamentations 3:22–23 and say one thank-you. Bring it back next week. We're asking one question this whole month: *Who is God shaping me to become this year?* Next week we dig into that: '**Who Are You Becoming?**' See you then."

Next Week Follow-Up: Open Week 2 by asking students to look at their One Step tracker. "How many mornings did you read the verses before your phone? What helped? What got in the way?" Celebrate any progress, even one morning. Then ask: "Did anyone need a fresh start in the middle of the week? What did that look like?"

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

Care Note for Leaders

The first night after the holidays can stir up a lot. Some students had a hard break: grief over someone missing from the table, family conflict or divorce, loneliness, or a home that isn't safe. "Leave it behind" can also bring up regret or shame. And January is full of pressure: perfectionism about resolutions and "new year, new body" messages that can feed unhealthy eating or exercise. Watch for signs like skipping meals, extreme dieting talk, or harsh words about their bodies.

- **Stay calm and thank them** for telling you. "I'm really glad you told me."
- **Don't promise to keep secrets** if someone's safety is at risk.
- **Follow your church's safety policy** and tell your lead pastor the same day.
- **Connect them to trained help:** parents or guardians, a school counselor, or a licensed counselor. In the U.S., anyone can call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time.

You're not expected to be a counselor. Your job is to listen well, take it seriously, and make sure they're connected to the right people.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

THE FULL SERIES

FRESH START · 4 Weeks

Each week stands alone, so new students can jump in any Wednesday in January. Taught in order, the four weeks move from grace, to identity, to daily rhythms, to getting back up when you fall, and keep asking one question: *Who is God shaping me to become this year?*

#	WEEK	TEXT
1	**New Every Morning** Grace for a fresh start	Lamentations 3:22–23
2	**Who Are You Becoming?** Identity-shaped habits	Daniel 1:8–17
3	**Small Steps, Real Rhythms** Daily spiritual rhythms	Mark 1:35
4	**When You Fall Off** Perseverance	Philippians 3:12–14

Every week includes

- 45 / 60 / 75-minute schedules
- Activity Menu with 4+ game options
- Word-for-word leader scripts
- Scripture (World English Bible) and one big idea
- Response activity + "One Step" challenge
- Tiered discussion questions
- Joys & Concerns prayer time
- Pastoral prayer with space for your group
- Student pages and 5-day devotional
- Next-week follow-up

Built for real youth groups

These weeks were written for a real Wednesday night group: 5 to 15 students, often with a new face or two, led by a pastor or volunteer with limited prep time. Games never single anyone out. Every activity has a small-group version. And every leader script can be read word for word when you're short on time.

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together. All rights reserved.
Purchasers may photocopy and share the student pages and leader guide for use within their own church or ministry.
Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (public domain).

Name: _____ Date: _____

TONIGHT'S BIG IDEA

A fresh start doesn't begin with a better me. It begins with God's mercy, new every morning.

THE PROMISE · LAMENTATIONS 3:22–23

Written in the worst season, sitting in the ruins of Jerusalem:

"...because his compassion doesn't _____. They are new every _____. Great is your _____."

What comes first: **God's mercy** or **me getting it together**? _____

LAST YEAR / THIS YEAR

Write a word or phrase in each box. Be honest. This is just for you.

AREA	LAST YEAR WAS…	THIS YEAR, WITH GOD, I HOPE…
School		
Friends		
Family		
Faith		
Me		

What I'm leaving behind:

What I'm stepping into:

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

My One Step

MY ONE STEP THIS WEEK

Keep it small enough to actually do.

Every morning, before I check my phone, I will read Lamentations 3:22–23 and say one thank-you to God.

My thank-you for today: _____

When I mess up this week, I will remember:

_____

Example: "I don't have to wait for next January. I get tomorrow morning."

MY WEEK TRACKER

Check each morning you did your step.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

MY PRAYER LIST

Write down the joys and concerns people shared tonight (first names only) and keep praying this week.

JOYS: THANK YOU, GOD, FOR…	CONCERNS: PLEASE BE WITH…

✂ CUT OUT AND KEEP BY YOUR BED, IN YOUR PHONE CASE, OR IN YOUR BIBLE

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

His mercies are new. This year I want to: _____

My step: M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together

5 New Mornings

TAKE-HOME DEVOTIONAL · 5 MINUTES A DAY

Each morning: read the verse, think about the question, write one honest sentence. That's it.

DAY 1 Lamentations 3:22–23 · New every morning

This was written in the worst season. What's one thing you can thank God for this morning, even if things aren't perfect?

DAY 2 2 Corinthians 5:17 · A new creation

"The old things have passed away." What's one old thing you want God to help you let go of?

DAY 3 Isaiah 43:18–19 · A new thing

God says, "Behold, I will do a new thing." Where would you love to see God do something new this year?

DAY 4 Psalm 51:10 · A clean heart

David prayed this after a big mistake. Write your own one-line version: "God, make my heart clean in..."

DAY 5 Philippians 1:6 · God finishes what he starts

God began a good work in you, and he's not done. What's one way you hope to grow this year?

A prayer you can pray this week

God, thank you that your mercy is new this morning. I don't want to start this year by just trying harder on my own. Help me leave behind what you've already forgiven, and help me start fresh with you, every morning, not just in January. Amen.

Next week · Week 2: **Who Are You Becoming?**

© 2026 Daham Next Generation Ministry Together