

Happy New Year...in May

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1

**Lesson 8****Focus:**

Depend on the Holy Spirit to change you.

Lesson 8**Bible Basis:**

Ezekiel 2:1-4;
36:24-28

Lesson 8**Memory Verse:**

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”
—Ezekiel 36:26

Students will discuss how difficult it is to change their own lives and how God changing us on the inside is the only change that sticks.

Materials:

- None

Happy New Year!

Okay, 2021's been here a while. It's not even the first quarter of 2021 anymore. *Technically*, it might be May. However, the shift from 2020 into 2021 was largely anticipated by many. Because 2020 was so difficult for a lot of people, they hoped that the world would get better in the new year.

- Was 2020 a difficult year for you? Were you hoping that 2021 would bring positive change? If so, do you think 2021 is going better than 2020? (Accept all reasonable answers.)

But the new year is a state of mind. It's like how people try to have the Christmas spirit all year. Maybe you can have New Year's spirit, too—always thinking about fresh starts and new beginnings!

With that in mind, we're talking about the promises we make to ourselves on January 1 . . . and that we usually forget by January 5. Keeping a resolution can be hard, because changing your life is hard!

- Did any of you make a New Year's resolution? What was it? (Answers may vary.)
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how likely are you to keep these types of resolutions? (Many of your students will probably admit that they aren't likely to keep resolutions.)

➤ **Why are resolutions so hard to keep?** (It's very difficult to shake off old habits and make lasting changes in your life. Many resolutions also focus on a big end goal instead of small measurable and attainable steps.)

On your own, changing your life is hard, whether you try it on January 1 or May 9. In fact, sometimes it can feel impossible to make a lasting difference in your life. If you've ever tried and failed to keep a New Year's resolution, you know what that's like.

Nonetheless, God Himself wants to help you change. God wouldn't demand that we do the impossible, so it must be possible to change your life . . . somehow. Let's look at the prophet Ezekiel's wisdom about life change.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Happy New Year...in May

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STEP 4 

Lesson 8**Focus:**

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36:24-28

Lesson 8**Memory Verse:**

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—Ezekiel 36:26

Materials:

- Pens/pencils (1 per student)
- Pieces of paper (1 per student)
- Colored pencils or markers (optional)

If your class is meeting online, invite them to bring supplies with them to class.

At the beginning of our lesson, we celebrated the New Year in May. Let’s close by celebrating a different holiday at the wrong time of year—Valentine’s Day!

There’s an old saying that God loves you just the way you are, but He cares too much to leave you that way. He knows it’s impossible for us to change our own lives, but He still wants us to do it. How? As we’ve been learning in Ezekiel, He puts a new heart inside of us.

Valentine’s Day is all about hearts . . . but it’s also about love. So as our way of celebrating Valentine’s Day in May, we’re going to ask God to change our lives specifically as it relates to one of the people we love.

Take a moment to pass out pieces of paper and pens/pencils (and colored pencils/markers if using) to each student. If your class is meeting online, invite students to have supplies ready.

Draw a large heart on your paper. Think about one of your relationships where it’s sometimes a struggle to get along as well as you’d like—but where you have the power to improve it with God’s help! Maybe it’s your relationship with your dad, or your little sister, or your BFF you’ve been fighting with. Write that person’s name on your Valentine heart.

Many times, we ask God to change the other person. But today, we’re going to take a minute to pray that God will change us in the way we think and act toward these people, making the relationship stronger. Give students a minute or so to pray for their friend or family member.

➤ **As you prayed, did anyone have an idea for something you could do to show love to this person, improving the relationship in a practical way?** (Your students may or may not have an idea. Allow those who do to briefly share their thoughts.)

If you had ideas as you prayed, write them around the heart. If you didn't, that's okay—you might get one later! God has put a new heart inside you with the gift of the Holy Spirit when you were baptized, so He can inspire you any time with an idea. Give students a few minutes to decorate their papers, drawing designs and using colored pencils and markers if available.

Use this heart as a prayer reminder. Every day this week, pray that God will change your life by helping you treat this person with love and respect. Let this heart be a reminder that God has put a new heart inside of us, which allows us to change into the people He created us to be.

It's also a reminder that part of changing into God's best version of us involves loving the people around you. This week, let this heart remind you to pray about one of your relationships. Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in treating them with more and more love, which will make the relationship better as a result.

Close in prayer.

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