



By Thomas Lindberg

There's *a message in the Bible for every season of the year.*

- *As the year begins, "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33, NKJV).*
- *As Easter dawns, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).*
- *On July 4, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).*
- *At Thanksgiving, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

But how about at the end of the year?

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Here's a key verse for anyone who is serious about serving God and being his or her best for Him in 2006: "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62, NLT).

Jesus Christ spoke these words. What did He mean by them? Our Lord was, in essence, saying, "The past is behind us. Like water poured on the ground, it cannot be picked up. Move on with life. Don't look back."

The apostle Paul echoed this truth when he wrote, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, NIV).

As we face the new year, we need to ask ourselves three key questions: "What should I forget?" "Why must I not look back?" "How should I move forward?"

What should I forget?

What should you forget? Certainly not God's benefits. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2, NKJV). Try writing down the blessings of God you experienced during 2005 and recalling them often.

So what should you forget? Be sure to forget your mistakes in 2005. We all make mistakes. Our mistakes may have been as parents, at our job, handling our money, in decisions we made, with words we've spoken, or in 101 other areas. We must learn from our mistakes, but we must not dwell on them.

The kangaroo is Australia's national symbol. It was chosen because it always moves forward. That's a good practice in life.

Don't continually rehearse past mistakes in your mind. It will ultimately erode your faith, joy and peace.

Forget your resentments of 2005. Bitterness and resentment will rot your bones (see Proverbs 14:30). Forgive, move on, and don't look back.

When you drive by roadkill, do you stop your car, open the door and take a deep breath? Of course not. You get past that carcass as quickly as possible. You need to treat hurts and resentments that way. Don't stop your life by them. Forgive and move on.

Forget your forgiven sins. Certainly, if you have not faced your sins of 2005, do so right now. The Bible says, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13, NIV). But once you ask God to forgive you, live in the Spirit and move on with life. Don't look back.

Why should I not look back?

What did Jesus mean when He said we are not fit for His kingdom if we look back? The Greek word translated "not fit" means not usable, not in a suitable condition.

For example, if you have a pair of shoes with a big hole in the sole, that shoe is not in a suitable condition. If one of your tires has a steady, slow leak, it's really not usable.

If you are always looking back to the bad events of 2005, you're like that shoe with a hole or that tire with a leak — you're not in a condition where God can fully use you.

Most parents have had the experience of a child who made a big

mistake and begins to pout.

It affects his or her whole attitude. What do we tell our children? "Stop crying over spilled milk!"

God basically says the same thing to us. He tells us to move on past our bad experiences and not look back. If we refuse to obey Him, we're not fit for the kingdom of God.

An old, seasoned captain of a fishing boat was asked, "What's the key to survival when the ocean is angry and rough?" He replied, "There's only one thing to do. You point your boat directly into the storm, give her enough throttle,

and don't veer to the port or starboard." You know, that's also true in life. Constantly looking back at 2005 is no way for God to use you and be a success in 2006. Jesus' counsel is so much better: "Put your hand to the plow and don't look back."

How should I move forward?

Forgetting your past and moving ahead with life is more than keeping your chin up and just getting over some things. You need to maintain a grateful spirit. As difficult as your circumstances may be, you need to be sure to give thanks in the midst of them.

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Some people recoil and say, "No way! I'm not going to give thanks for bad things."

I'm not saying give thanks for tough situations; I'm saying give thanks *in* them. Paul did. To paraphrase his words, "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. Tell God everything you need and be sure to thank Him. If you do, the peace of God from the God of peace will be yours" (see Philippians 4:6,7).

When did Paul write those words? While in prison. If you would follow the principle in that verse, it would change your life.

Last summer a horrific wind-

storm blew through my city. Winds reached 100 miles per hour. One man I know lost a big oak tree. He told me, "I was so sad to see it down. It had provided my house shade and beauty for more than 40 years."

I sympathized with him and then asked, "What are you going to do now that the tree is gone?"

I liked his answer: "I'm going to clean up my yard, thank God for all the good memories, plant a new tree and not look back." That's a wise way to live.

The secret to looking ahead

Knowing what to do is one thing;

having the power to do it is quite another. Everything about your natural emotions will want to dwell on the past and nurse old wounds. Be sure to surrender your life to God. As you deliberately surrender your life to the Lord, He will give you the strength to move into a new year.

As you move into 2006, it's wise to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13, NKJV). Deliberately surrender yourself and the new year to God, and then let Him work. With God at work in your life, 2006 can be your best year ever. ■

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ISBN 0-88243-325-3

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