

A Clean Slate

Not too many years ago I remember being in school where the teacher used a slate board to write notes and assignments. The serious student never failed to collect all the information on the board before it was filled and erased to start over again. I had one teacher that wrote on the board while he taught. He could write about as fast as he could talk. As he taught, he would write a board full of information, expecting everyone to stay up with him, then when he finished at the end of the board, he'd start back at the beginning by erasing the first column of information he had given. You had to be focused and fast, or you would miss something.

Do you remember the days when the teacher would choose someone out of the class to go and clean the boards and erasers? Sometime this "chore" was given to the "teacher's pet," but since everyone wanted to do it, it usually turned out to be someone who excelled in class on any given day. The reason there were always plenty of volunteers for the task was because the selected person could leave the class while the rest studied. The work was easy enough; it involved going outside and clapping erasers together to remove the chalk powder. Though a messy work, if you were selected, you gladly went knowing that you escaped class work.

Cleaning the slate boards was no easy task. It generally took the tallest one in the class. You needed a wet towel and an ability to stretch. I remember still how clean and pretty the board looked after cleaning the old chalk residue from the board. It made the old dusty chalkboard look brand new. With every swipe of the cloth the promise of new information, new thoughts, a new future, and new opportunities appeared.

Life is like that to some extent. Every once in a while there is opportunity to start over, to wipe the "slate board" clean. No where is it better seen than in the form of spiritual renewal. If a person has been baptized into Christ, then one of the beautiful things about being in Christ is the knowledge that with His blood we are renewed every day, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Isaiah 1:18. As we seek to walk in the light of Christ, His blood cleanses us continually, 1 John 1:7. In this, Christ gives us the prospect of starting over anytime we make messes of our lives. He wipes that "slate board" just as clean as it can be.

Another sense of "starting over with a clean slate" can come at various points in one's life when re-commitment would lean itself to be the right thing to do. For instance, wedding anniversaries seem to be the best time to re-commit one's self to making his or her marriage better in the future than it has been in the past.

Another time to "wipe the slate" is at the end of the year. With every new year, the potential found in "turning over a new leaf" has all the prospects of allowing us to start over with a determined spirit to better ourselves in many areas. Eating better, with more exercise is a typical focus for a New Year determination in our culture. But there are others as well. We may want to save

more money, give up some bad habits, start new and better habits, and just seek to be a better person.

Did you know that the number "seven" in the Bible has the nuance of perfection? The number "six" has the notion of falling short of perfection, whereas "seven" represents completeness, and being devoid of any flaw. To borrow from Biblical emphasis, 2007 has the potential of being the "perfect" year of this century, and the best year of your life. With a "clean slate," you have the potential of having the greatest future possible.

Be sure this year that as we "wipe the slate" that we determine to place things on the board this year that will better our spiritual walk. Determine this year to study the Bible more, reading every word. Resolve to attend all the worship services of the saints, to send more cards, make more visits, and teach the gospel to the lost. Be more spiritual, and think more spiritual things in 2007. Decide that this year evil is going to be more offensive than ever before. Decide to remove yourself from conversations and situations that pull you away from faith in God.

John R. Rice once said, "No matter what a man's past may have been, his future is spotless." Wipe the slate clean! In the new year, start over with a fresh determination to walk closer to Christ than ever before.

—Scott