

A NEW BEGINNING

During my younger years I always looked forward to the last day of school. What kid didn't? Summer had all the promise of relaxation and fun. By that last day everybody was ready for the summer break. Throughout the day you heard your friends say, "See you next year!" Come to think of it, for the first eighteen years of my life I thought New Years Day was just another holiday! Next year for me started around the first of September.

Fast forward about three months! The new school year held so much promise for us kids. Do you remember the smells? What about the smell of yeast rolls wafting down the hall? Or, what about the ammonia cleaned restrooms, and the freshly shined floors? New beginnings held so much promise. Remember how the desks were clean and empty? I loved the smell of new books! Then there were the brand new notebooks with no "doodling" around the spirals. The freshly sharpened pencils, and the metal lunch boxes had all the making of a pretty good time back at school.

One of the great joys of life, whether in school growing up or as an adult, is that new beginnings are packaged gifts. You can take a gift and set it in a closet unopened, and from time to time as you go to that closet you can admire the pretty packaging, and remind yourself that you have a nice gift. However, the true value of the gift is found when you rip the paper off and open its contents. If it is an article of clothing, you begin thinking about wearing it with all the other things in your wardrobe. But the real enjoyment is when you put it on, and make it a practical part of your life.

The Christian life has so much promise with each new beginning. Struggles and trials are a part of the Christian experience. Getting beyond them, however, holds all the promise of a new slate, with new things to be written, new experiences to be enjoyed.

To enjoy the greatest future, to be sure to write with the best clarity on the new pages of life, much depends on one's ability to let the past stay in the past, keeping your eyes focused on the potential of what is now and what is to come. The apostle Paul said, ". . .one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," Philippians 3:13,14. (ESV)

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it,"
Psalm 118:24. (ESV)

—Scott Harp