

## A NEW BEGINNING

By Jane Phinney

I (Jane) saw the words, again, while sitting in church on Sunday. They were on the cover of the bulletin. It was a vivid reminder that another year had slipped away and 2007 had come, virtually unnoticed. I smiled to myself, knowing that "new beginnings" aren't only marked on the calendar, but they can also be marked in your heart.

My new beginning came in September of 2006, when we sold the home we owned jointly with friends, and we moved into another home...this time a rental. The new beginning wasn't the new house itself. It was what it *symbolized* to me, as evidence of a work God was doing in my soul.

*"Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O Lord, be Thou my helper. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sack-cloth and girded me with gladness; that my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever."*

*(Ps. 30:10-12)*

These were the hope-filled words He imparted to me, early one August morning during my quiet time. You see, it didn't matter that our home felt cozy and homey...or even pleasant to look at. It didn't matter that we had celebrated some of the most significant, joyous events of our lives, to date, while residing within those walls. What did matter was the mark, seared on my heart like a branding iron, left by the devastating results of sin in the body of Christ...our part of the body. The ripple effects had gone everywhere. Once the stone had been thrown in the water, the rings went on and on and on.....can you seek it? Our pain had come because of the *changes* caused by the ripples. We didn't ask for it. We never saw it coming. It just happened. Yes, I had extended forgiveness. Yes, God had taught me life-altering, precious lessons. But the fact was, nothing would ever be the same. And, it had the Lord's permission.

So in the waiting period between selling and moving, Steve and I went out for coffee and talked about what we wanted our new house to represent. We made a list. Time and experience has clarified what's important to us. Everything on the list boiled down to one theme: relationships. In light of eternity, what else is there? However, after our move, it didn't take us long to realize that our "new beginning" wasn't going to just happen. We had to make conscious decisions toward reaching our goals. Small choices can add up to big changes, kind of like the ripple effect...constant and ever-increasing.

In the process of God "loosening my sackcloth" the past 7 years, it's been verified repeatedly that no one person on earth can meet the God-needs of my soul. As good as my marriage is, Steve wasn't designed to be my Savior. And as fulfilling as my chosen career of homemaking & motherhood may be, it is empty without moment-by-moment intimacy with Christ. We give our heart to our expectations. If our expectations are in anything, or anyone else, other than Christ, our heart will be broken. I think Beth Moore says it best: "A new start without a change of heart just results in the same old problems."

I don't make New Year's resolutions. For me, it's a sure way to experience defeat. But God did give me one word to mark this year. That word is "intentional". I've heard this buzz word often but this is the first time I've taken it as my own. The simple truth is that *all* of our decisions leave a mark of some kind, a mark that sends a specific message to others. One of the things God has directed me to be intentional about is being a better communicator, in writing. And because of your involvement in our lives and ministry, you will probably be finding me "in your mailbox" more often. I hope that's OK with you. ☺

This is God's promise to all of us: Every day is *a new beginning* with Him. A fresh start. A clean slate. His lovingkindness never stops. His compassion is always waiting for us. His faithfulness is constant, every morning...all week...throughout the year...for the rest of our lives! The Lord is what I need and I have HOPE IN HIM. (Lam.3:22-24, my personal application)

Recommended reading: *The Most Important Place on Earth* by Robert Wolgemuth. (What a Christian Home Looks Like & How to Build One)