A Brand Spanking New Year

By Tom Jones

It is that time of the year when we reflect on the past and have a fresh hope for the future. I have a tendency to undervalue “New Year’s Resolutions”. I suspect that is because I place a high value on promises and most New Year’s Resolutions and broken by January 2nd.

If you need to lose weight, start today – whatever day it is – don’t wait for January. If you need to stop spending money – start today. If you need to show your love for your wife – start today. If you fail today, don’t wait to start fresh again someday – START TODAY!

I do think there is value in taking time to look backwards and to see what the Lord has done in my life. Was there a trial He had me face this year that had He asked me to face it last year I would have failed? (1 Corinthians 10:13) Has He shown His mercy to me this year in a special way? (Exodus 34:6-7) Did I allowed myself to be distracted by the cares of this world and the Lord showed patience with me like a father towards a small child? (Psalm 145:8-9)

I also think there is value in planning for the future, understanding that we should be seeking His eye. (Psalm 32:8) James challenges us to plan but to do it according to God’s will. (James 4:13-15) What do I want to accomplish in the next year that will matter in eternity? Earn more money? Earning more money on earth has no value in eternity. Giving more money for the Lord’s mission of evangelizing the world will have lasting value in eternity.

I often hear people say. “If I made more money, I could give more money.” It sounds “spiritual,” but it is not. It is a lie in the skin of a reason. What we are actually saying is that God has not provided me enough to show Him how much I love Him. Do you want to know how much money you would give to God’s ministry if He gave you more money? Take a close look at how much you give Him now. How you use your money NOW shows where your heart is. How you spend your money now is a strong indicator of where your heart will be TOMORROW. (One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Proverbs 11:24 ESV)

Maybe you have identified a need to love your wife more intentionally this year. How are you going to measure your progress? How will you know in six months if you are improving or getting worse?

What about your love for the lost? In 1910, General William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army was seeking a way to encourage those who were ministering through the Salvation Army for the next year. After much thought he sent a telegram and it said, “Others”. I do not care if you think the Salvation Army is a good ministry or not, the illustration is the best one I know to make the point that we should be looking forward in light of that single word.

“Others” – when I have a disagreement with my wife, a friend, a neighbor - my perspective should be “Others.” When I see someone in need of encouragement, gas for the car, food for the table - do I look at that situation through the lens of “Others”? or do I look through the lens of “what is in it for me”?

As we look forward to a New Year, I think the word “Others” should still echo in our ears.

How about it? What are you going to do this coming year that matters in eternity?