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LOOKING FORWARD LOOKING BACK”

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Looking forward, looking back!

Very often we choose to do it the other way round. It's a lot easier to look back, to reflect and dream. But very often the dreams of the past are a lot brighter than they were in reality.

But looking forward?

Now that's quite another thing.

There can be a certain sense of excitement about looking forward. But looking forward requires courage. It requires vision. It means being prepared to take a risk. It requires some self esteem and confidence. It means having a positive attitude; having a dream and going for it. Perhaps it means having a role model or a hero; having faith and having trust. Well one of my “heroes” – if you like – was a bloke who sang the song, “Looking Forward, Looking Back”.

If anyone could have been excused for looking back instead of forward it was him. But no, not this bloke! At the time this song was released he was 73 years of age, he'd just completed his 100th album - something no other Australian had ever done - and I reckon it was one of his best. But even then he was not thinking of putting his feet up and taking it easy. He was already working on album 101 & 102.

His name? David Gordon Kirkpatrick, who is better known as Slim Dusty.

Mention his name, and some folk smile. He's not cool in many circles.

But if he was good enough for the Sydney Olympics and the Wiggles he's good enough for me. In fact it's because of his appearance on the Wiggles that our little granddaughter has come to love listening to “Dusty”. So, I reckon he's alright. For starters Slim was always himself. He didn't get caught up in all the hype that goes with being a star. Secondly, he was always unashamedly Australian, and he always kept in touch with ordinary Australians.

But what I liked most about Slim were the word pictures he painted of this land and all its people in the songs that he wrote and sang. He was a good bloke. And the thing is, he had a dream as a youngster and he went for it.

He reminds me of someone else I know; a man who had a mission in life and who never deviated from it; a chap who's a real hero. He copped a lot of flak in his time too. And even today some folk laugh when you mention his name.

For some people it's not all that cool in today's world to believe in him or to follow him. But he's the best. And in fact he's the reason we can look forward to the future with real confidence, no matter what our circumstances in life might be.

And if there is one person who is in touch with ordinary people it's him. In fact he thrives on being part of the everyday lives of ordinary people wherever they might be.

His name is Jesus Christ, and life and living is his game.

Today we stand at one of those crossroads in life. One year is gone, and another prepares to rise before us.

As the words of the song state, "We've come a long way down the track."

This past year has brought with it many highs and lows. For some it's been a very frustrating year. For others it's been a year of great achievement. For some they've been way out in front this year, while others may have felt they've been overlooked – as though they were second class citizens.

You know, we are only second class citizens if we allow ourselves to be that. It doesn't matter what others think. What matters is what we think – who we say that we are. But more importantly who God says we are. Through Jesus, God tells us that each one of us is special. The important thing for each one of us is to be ourselves. And the wonderful thing is that we don't have to fill anyone else's shoes but our own.

Slim Dusty's song goes on to say, "There are strange days, full of change on the way."

As we look forward into the year ahead one thing that we know for certain is that there will be changes. Every year is the same. There are changes in our lives and living. There is uncertainty and perhaps some trepidation. We have the cloud of terrorism and global unrest hanging over us. Climate change and global warming seem to be the topic of the day. Water shortages and dealing with drought are the pressing issues of the time. There are millions of people in many parts of the world struggling to exist.

Strange days indeed!

But the song goes on, "But we'll be fine, unlike some, I'll be leaning forward to see what's coming."

No matter how clouded and uncertain the future we step into may seem, we can step forward with confidence. We can thank God for the past and go forward into the future knowing that with him as our strength and our guide we'll be fine – no matter what. O, life won't be a bed of roses. It never has been and never will be; not in this life.

However, we can press forward confidently, with expectation and excitement. We can follow our dreams because, while we don't know what the future holds for us, we do know who holds the future securely in his hands.

So as we stand at the beginning of a new year let's take some advice from the apostle Paul who wrote;

"Forgetting what is behind, and straining forward to what is ahead, press onward toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Jesus Christ."
Philippians 3:13

So, put your hand in the hand of the man from Gallilee and step forward confidently and expectantly. Allow Jesus Christ to be your companion, your mentor and your guide as you take one more step along the road of life. He promises, "I am with you always." And he's "fair dinkum" about that. So trust him and keep looking forward. There a great future waiting for you.