

Message Reflections

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Reflections accompany the [weekly message](#).

I am a child of the 80s, and whenever I hear the music of the 80s, a bit of nostalgia washes over me. I think back to when I would sit in my room with my Sony walkman, listening to the radio for all the pop songs I loved. Then in 1989, my older brother introduced me to a new song, The Dance, by Garth Brooks.

I had never listened to country music before. In fact, I used to make fun of all my friends who did listen to country music. But when I heard... "Looking back, on the memory of, the dance we shared, neath the stars above..." I was a romantic at heart, and immediately I was hooked. It was a new song, in a new music genre, by a new artist, and it hit the music scene when the CD was the new way to listen to music. That's a lot of new!

We know from the Word of God that God loves to do new things. One of the new things He did in my life was to teach me how to seek His Kingdom. Before 2008, I thought I had this thing called life figured out. I had lots of cool stuff, I went on big fancy vacations, and I had a home mortgage, two car payments, and lots of credit card debt. But I didn't see the problem... until 2008 happened, when I lost my job, almost lost the home, and I was driving a 10-year-old Toyota.

I went to God, with my fist in the air and said, "What are you doing!" I will never forget the verse I read the next morning in my Bible reading plan, "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." When 2008 happened, and the painful financial fallout that followed...I loved God, I was going to church, I was reading my Bible, and I was praying every day. But the Lord made it clear to me, I was not seeking His kingdom first. Instead, I was building a nice little Kingdom of Steve right here in central Indiana. What's that you say, you never heard of the Kingdom of Steve? Not too many have. It wasn't really all that impressive.

God used the painful years that followed 2008 to do many beautiful new things in my life. Those times forced me to take a serious look at myself and what I placed value on and in. I learned to work with my wife in taking control of our finances through Financial Peace. That was new. I started driving really old cars (and I still do), that was new. I started saving for vacation before packing the car, which was new.

And more than anything else, I began to seek God's Kingdom over my own, which was a renewed path the Lord led me in. I am not perfect at seeking God's Kingdom over my own. This world we live in has a certain allure to it that we must learn to turn away from if we are going to seek His Kingdom first. As the word of God says, you must "not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will." (Romans 12:2) Sometimes the new things God does are renewed in us. And when God renews something in us, He has a special way of making it feel brand new.

This brings me back to Garth Brooks. My new discovery of country music, of course, meant I would eventually ask my parents for a new guitar. As a young man, I practiced that guitar until my fingers would bleed. That guitar has provided the music for new songs I sing, especially when times are tough. When I was going through the valley of 2008 and 2009, I used to play a very simple chord progression and sing a new song in my heart that was from Psalm 96:

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised
Come into His sanctuary and praise His Name
He is mighty and clothed in glory and strength
Come into His sanctuary and praise His name
He is full of beauty and splendor and great is His Name
Great is the Lord and is greatly to be praised.

When you start your days this week, I encourage you to ask the Lord to give you a new song to sing of His greatness. Many blessings my friends!

- What new things has God done in your life recently or in the past?
- What new things do you need God to do in your life?

