



Encouraging Words with DARLENE SALA

A New Pencil and Notebook

When I was a kid, I always liked to get a brand new yellow pencil, sharpen it to a perfect point, and sit down with a fresh new notebook. Somehow there seemed to be so much potential in that pristine pencil and paper. What should I write? What could I draw? That's what a new year feels like to me—a fresh beginning.

I remember one year sitting down at the start of the year and praying, "Lord, I want this whole year to make a difference for you." That's a pretty straight-forward prayer. Yet, the problem is that every year comes in 365 parts, each of which has 24 hours, or 1440 minutes. Unless I make those individual days and hours count for God, when December rolls around again, nothing will have changed.

Maybe one never gets to the place of total, 24-hours-a-day-for-the-rest-of-your-life commitment to God's will. Maybe, in actuality, it only comes in moment-size acts of obedience. I find no problem, personally, in committing the whole year to God—or my whole life, for that matter. It's the moments that give me trouble—the little decisions about the use of my time, money and energy. I want to do God's will in general, but today I don't want to go to work, block out time for exercise, spend time with my new neighbor, or eat exactly right. At least not right *now!* (You probably have your own list, right?)

The question is, "What does God want me to do right now?" Am I willing to do it?

Lord, beginning today, help me to look at each moment as important to you—not that you expect me to work all the time, for I remember that you told your disciples to "Come...to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31). But just help me to care more about what You want than what I want. Thank You for the "new pencil and new notebook"—a fresh start.