

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Your future needs you. Your past doesn't.

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor



Martin

The late, great philosopher and theologian, Meat Loaf, sang:

*But it was long ago and it was far away
Oh *** it seems so very far
And if life is just a highway – then the soul is just a car
And objects in the rear view mirror may appear closer than
they are.*¹

There is no question we can be haunted by memories. Unless there is some compelling reason otherwise, we can conjure up images from yesterday both good and bad. Your future needs you. Your past doesn't.

It has a lot to do with regrets. Things we should have done, things we did, things that still occupy our thoughts. Things we'd like to take back but can't.

Sometimes those memories crowd in on our waking lives to the extent that they influence our here and now. We say, "I'm sorry," and mean it, but it doesn't undo the past. Consequently, we look ahead with fear, afraid we're going to mess up again. We're afraid of repeating past mistakes. We don't want to submit ourselves to guilt and shame.

That guilt/fear/shame mindset is a killer, and while we consciously know we should move on and look toward brighter days, we find ourselves mired in deep taffy. What's the solution? Are we to be held hostage to what once was?

Absolutely not. There is always hope. What Marvin Lee Aday (see, you just learned Meat Loaf's real name) captured is a haunting sense of loss but if you pick apart the lyrics just a bit, there is a comforting truth to be found:

"...and objects in the rear view mirror may appear closer than they are."

That convex mirror on the right side of a car is designed to give a wider field of view to keep other cars from getting lost in that "blind spot." While an approaching car may seem close, in reality there is more distance than might appear.

I don't want to torture this analogy, but the past is a lot further behind you than you might imagine. It just *seems* close. Here's the fact: Even if something occurred five seconds ago, it's as much of your past as if it had happened ten years ago. The past is just that – *the past* – and as such, it's now in your rear view mirror. It's over and done.

I do need to make a little distinction. There are indeed consequences for past actions. If you rob a bank and get caught, you can apologize but your future is still going to be much different than if you'd not robbed that bank. So, granted, in that sense your past can influence your future.

What I'm talking about is your mind, how your past gets in your headspace and stays there rent-free.

That's where we struggle, and that is what you need to deal with. Say this out loud (probably best if no one is around): *I can't take it back!* Whatever your "it" is, you can't make it go away. It's a point and an event in time. It can even be a thought, a decision you made that changed your way of

thinking, perhaps not for the best.

Here's what might make all the difference in your future:

- Whatever happened, whatever was said, glean what lessons you can from it. Don't waste it.
- Consider this: you are able to empathize with others going through the same ordeal in a way you could not, had you not faced it yourself. Is there a way you can positively use your regret and channel it into something redemptive?
- You absolutely have the power to choose your responses to, well, everything. You better listen to Uncle Tony – there's a mindset in the world today that you'd need to shuck. *You aren't entitled to anything. Having things go your way is not a birthright. You are going to make stupid choices, and you are going to fail miserably. You are going to fail.*

Here's a secret for the ages: you can totally determine what to do next. You aren't a random clump of cellular matter, preprogrammed to act and respond in an unchangeable way. You aren't trapped. You have a free mind.

- That free mind thing? There are some staggering implications for you. The most significant one is that from right now, right this moment, right this nanosecond, you can make choices that will impact your future for the better. You aren't trapped. If you feel imprisoned by the past, it's a prison of your own making.
- The scope of this particular Magnolia Minds entry doesn't allow for a discussion of how to exercise wisdom, or of how to go forward in making wise choices. You're still going to fail and make bad choices but you can certainly cut your losses. Life is hard enough without us bringing undue grief on ourselves by choosing poorly.
- The reason you're alive and able to read this is that you

have yet to accomplish what you were put here to do. There's your hope. Part of your call is to make a difference in someone else's life, and you do that by understanding you can make a difference in your own life in spite of what has been. Living in the past doesn't serve anyone. Living for the future serves all.

Ancient script states, *...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13b-14).*

Goals. Prizes. All available to us. Sounds good to me.

¹*Objects In The Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are* lyrics © CARLIN AMERICA INC.

In addition to serving as associate editor of The Baptist Record, Martin is the author of two novels: The Fixin' Place and Reign of Silence. He may be contacted at tmartin@mbcb.org.

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