"Don't look back", those were the words of the pastor as he seemed to look straight into my soul and speak. "Don't look back." He spoke of examples in the Bible, like Lot and his wife in Genesis 19:17, just before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed and the angel told them, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you..." I think the King James version says something like, “don't look back and be consumed.” I could relate. I was being firmly poked, prodded, and pummeled by the Holy Spirit in hearing these words, "Don't look back."

Granted, the Bible tells us many times to in fact, look back and remember, but the pastor continued on to make these points about what we're not to be looking back at:

1) Don't look back at past failures and sins and allow them to be stumbling blocks for what God wants to do with us in the future. Referencing Romans 7:21-8:2 where we see that in Christ there is now no condemnation, our sins are paid for, they are done away with, and totally forgiven. And in John 8:3-11 where we find the woman being accused of adultery, and Jesus, after saying, "he who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her", she finds she has no accusers. Jesus’ words to her then are "Go. From now on, sin no more." Christ did not want her consumed by who she was, He wanted her to see the potential of who she could be. It's the same for us. We need to understand the full blessing of WHO we are IN CHRIST. Our position in Christ sets us apart to a personal relationship with God. It blesses us with every spiritual blessing to live godly lives (Eph. 1, 2 Peter 1). If our eyes are only on our past sins we will miss out on the power to live different now that we are In Christ. That power comes directly from God Himself, Who provides His very Spirit to dwell in each believer, so that we no longer have to be who we were.

2) Don't look back on past accolades or victories. In Phil. 3 we have Paul giving an account of all the things he had accomplished, all the things that could provide credibility for who he was. But he says in v. 7-9a, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him..." The point is that it doesn't matter how many ministries you've been involved with, or how much you may have accomplished, if God doesn't have you still doing those things, He wants to do something new. Don't look back and think you've done enough, or you've done your part. If there is breath left in you, He has something to do in and through you. Warning: It may be very different than what you use to do, it may be very unfamiliar. So, no resting on your laurels! Be looking ahead to what He has for you now.

3) Don't look back on your current situation and long for the comforts of the past. Quite often God moves us out of what is comfortable so that He can grow us. We have so many
examples in the Bible of having to "leave" what they know, where they are, what they have built up, leave it all to follow after His calling. Think of Abram leaving Ur, or Ruth leaving her land to travel with Naomi. (The pastor just had to throw in, "Don't look back when it's lonely!") Leaving family, leaving ministry partners, leaving friends is hard - Truth! But I can't look back and long for what was, and let sorrow blind me to what He wants for me now. Comforts of hearth and home are temporary. Life always changes. It's a fact of this world we live in. In Luke 9:57-62 it talks about the fact that if we choose to follow Christ we may have to leave the familiar comforts. He tells them, "foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Are we going to follow Him, wherever He may lead?

I must admit this sermon was very personal for me, having recently moved away from the familiar, having left the comfort of the known for an unknown territory, having to leave the women's ministry I was involved in, selling or giving away all our possessions... It's been a year and a half and I still struggle occasionally with looking back. I miss so much of what I HAD. Truth is, I can still get angry about it. Don't be shocked, but in vulnerable moments I have even found myself saying, "I hate my life.” Just being honest here, we're all sinners after all. But in that honesty, comes the quick realization that I can't live that way. I chose to follow God and looking back can be a big problem. Confession, usually (and thankfully), follows quickly. My mind must turn from any form of "stinkin' thinkin" to an attitude of gratitude. So, I'm learning to not look back, in certain ways.

Notice I said, in certain ways because I firmly believe that there are many reasons to look back, there are appropriate ways. Here's some points where I think it's completely appropriate to look back:

**Looking back with gratefulness**, Yes, by all means. Looking back and seeing the blessings of the ones left behind - the family, the sisters in the Lord, the ministries, the events, the home, the friends. I have so much to be grateful for! The words in the Book of Esther ring in my ears: "For such a time as this." God had purpose for where I was, and what I was doing, and for that I am so grateful to look back and see. **But**, if I'm looking back with longing for things as they were? I can't. That type of looking back quickly breeds discontent with where He has me, and stunts what He may be trying to accomplish in me now. And who knows, except the Lord, that I am here for such a time as this.

**Looking back on past ministries to see how God grew me in those times**, Yes. To see how He has changed me as I was involved in bible studies, events, and working with different ministry teams. Looking back I can see just how He was at work to change me in the process, softening my hard edges, increasing my people skills, stretching my heart and growing my faith. **But**, looking back on past accomplishments and thinking I'm done, my ministry life is finished, I'll never have that "team" again, or those events again. Wrong. I have no idea what God has in the future, any more than I knew what He was going to do in the previous years until He revealed it.

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Don't Look Back

My motto must remain, "Sitting on the edge of my seat, head stretched out, longing to see what He will do next."

**Looking back at past mistakes, sins, and regrets, so we can learn from them.** There are lessons we are to learn from those past sins so that we can "Go, and Sin no more!" We were once of darkness, but now we are of the Light, let us walk as children of the Light! The difference comes when we realize that past sins have no hold on us when we look at the price Christ paid for them, and how He reconciles us to the Living God, not regardless of our sin, but because of our sin. In Christ we are blessed to know that He casts our sins as far as the east is from the west. He forgives, He does not hold them against us any longer, so if God doesn't, why do we try to? Forgive as we have been forgiven. Accept the new creation that you have become and don't look back on those sins as a hindrance to whatever ministry He may have for you. He is incredible at taking what was once intended for evil and making it good. Those very failures and sins may be what He will use to make you winsome to others as you humbly share your place of redemption. A right perspective of past sins results in gratitude for what Christ has done. And regrets can become a catalyst for change. Perspective is everything.

**Looking back with the right perspective, a godly perspective, with full trust in what God has done and will do.** A perspective set with eyes locked on God, allows us to look back and remember how He has blessed us. To look back and remember those we’ve met along the way who still need our prayers and encouragement. Look back, and feel the joy that He is not finished with us yet (Philippians 1:6), and has moved us to a place where He can accomplish something new! Look back through His lens, and not our own. See what He's done, and then look forward! Head outstretched, longing to see what HE will do next.