

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

aCTIVATED

Vol 15 • Issue 1

BLANK PAGES IN AN OPEN BOOK

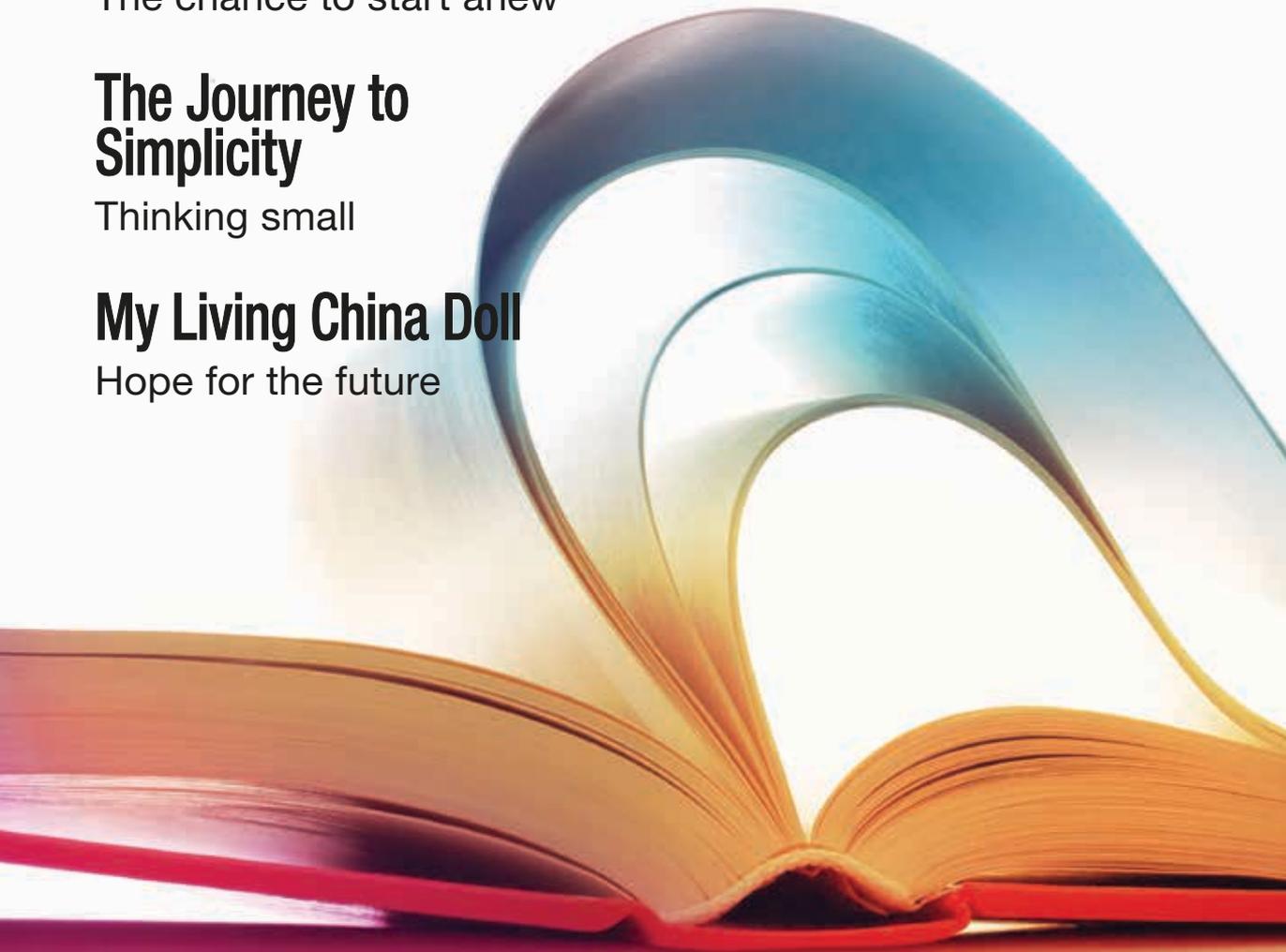
The chance to start anew

The Journey to Simplicity

Thinking small

My Living China Doll

Hope for the future





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION NEW BEGINNINGS

The new year is a good time to take stock of what we've accomplished over the past 12 months, to thank God for the blessings He's brought our way, and to open our hearts and minds in anticipation of all that is to come in the year ahead.

Many people also take advantage of the new start to make resolutions for improving their character, fitness level, health, knowledge, or circumstances. God wants us to examine our lives regularly, and to try to become better persons every day. "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."¹

God makes resolutions too, and fortunately for us, these are usually to do good things for His children: "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame,"² for example.

If keeping your resolutions is difficult, you're not alone. University of Scranton research suggests that just 8% of people achieve their New Year's goals.³ What's usually happened in my case is that whatever I resolved to accomplish or change was either so formidable that I never felt ready to get started, or conversely, so trivial that I put it off, thinking I'd get around to it some other time. However, someone recently pointed me to an article about setting SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Time-bound) goals,⁴ and my first resolution this year is to give it an honest try.

But what about God? Does He ever fail to comply with or carry out His resolutions? Thankfully not. As Joshua observed, "The Lord promised to do many good things for Israel, and he kept his promise every time."⁵

May your 2014 be filled with God's kept promises!

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. Lamentations 3:40 NIV
2. Isaiah 58:11 NIV
3. Source: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics/>
4. <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/setting-smart-management-goals.html>
5. Joshua 21:45 CEV

Browse our website or contact one of the distributors below to enjoy the inspirational, motivational, and practical help offered in our books and audiovisual material.

www.activated.org

Activated Ministries

P.O. Box 462805
Escondido, CA 92046-2805, USA
Toll-free: 1-877-862-3228
Email: info@actmin.org
www.activatedonline.com

Activated Europe

Bramingham Pk. Business Ctr.
Enterprise Way
Luton, Beds. LU3 4BU, United Kingdom
+44 (0) 845 838 1384
Email: activatedEurope@activated.org

Activated Africa

P.O. Box 2509
Faerie Glen
Pretoria 0043
South Africa
Tel: 0861 888 918
Email: activatedAfrica@activated.org

Activated Philippines

P.O. Box 1147
Antipolo City P.O.
1870 Antipolo City, Philippines
Cell: (0922) 8125326
Email: activatedPI@activated.org

Activated Australia

Email: info@activated.org.au
www.activated.org.au

EDITOR Samuel Keating
DESIGN Gentian Suçi

www.auroraproduction.com

© 2013 Aurora Production AG. All Rights Reserved. Printed in Taiwan by Ji Yi Co., Ltd. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. Other Bible quotations are from the following sources: New International Version (NIV). Copyright © 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. Contemporary English Version (CEV). Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. New Life Version (NLV). Copyright © 1969-2003 by Christian Literature International. Used by permission. New Living Translation (NLT). Copyright © 1978, 1996 by Tyndale House Publishers. Used by permission.

SEARCHING FOR EBENEZER



BY ROSANE PEREIRA

TOWARD THE END OF LAST YEAR, I was haunted by the word “Ebenezer.” It all began when I heard it on a Christian podcast, but the speaker didn’t clarify what it meant. The word stayed in the back of my mind for days, and I wondered where I’d heard it before. My children identified it as the unusual first name of the Scrooge character in Charles Dickens’ famous novel, *A Christmas Carol*, but that wasn’t the Ebenezer I was looking for.

The mysterious “Ebenezer” popped up again when I visited my daughter during the holidays. There it was, written in bold letters above the entrance to a new shop in the village square. “Ebenezer” seemed to be appearing all around me, but who was he?

The answer came when I was listening to another inspirational audio. Out of the blue, the speaker mentioned the word, and also gave a Bible reference: 1 Samuel chapter 7. I looked it up right away and it turns out that in the passage, the prophet Samuel puts a rock between two places, Mizpah and Shen, after his people had won a great battle against their enemies. This rock was named—you’ve guessed it—Ebenezer, meaning “the stone of help,” and was set up in acknowledgment of and appreciation for God’s assistance. And so it turns out that “Ebenezer” wasn’t a “who” but a “what.”

I can picture myself sitting on top of that big rock. On one side, the year that has just ended, with all of its obstacles and trials and victories and joys. I look back from

my vantage point and my heart fills with praise.

On the other side, the new year, full of mysteries yet to unfold. I’m filled with anticipation. If God has always come through for me in the past, surely He will in the future too!

This year, every time a sorrow or difficulty comes my way, I will strive to rely on Ebenezer, the stone of help and the rock of hope. I will make a resolution to face this new year with the expectation that the future is as bright as the promises of God! In the words of David, “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.”¹

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. Psalm 121:1–2 NIV

NEW YEAR PERSPECTIVES

BY JULIANA CONNOLLY



WHAT A CRAZY YEAR I'VE JUST BEEN THROUGH! In the space of 12 months I left a job I'd had for five years, moved to a new country, went on an emotional rollercoaster, spent many sleepless nights worrying, and on it goes...

I'll admit it was tough at times to live through, but now, with the benefit of hindsight, I'm seeing things somewhat differently. It's true I left a job, but I got a new and better position. Yes, I moved away from my old friends, but I've broadened my horizons and already made many new friends in my new situation. It's been an emotional rollercoaster for sure, but it's also been a learning experience. I might have worried a lot last year, but here I am at the dawn of a new year, safe and sound. The start of a new year has always symbolized for me a time of

reflection and evaluation on the year that's past, and I've learned to cherish my year-end analysis. With the passage of time, perspectives change, big issues turn to naught, fears dissolve, and wounds heal. Perhaps the pithy proverb about "giving time to time" actually has truth to it.

Aside from it lending perspective to life, I find a second major benefit of looking back is identifying what I'd like to do differently this year. On this occasion, two things stand out:

- 1) **I want to draw closer to God, and I want Him to be the one I turn to when I need help. I want that quiet confidence I see in people who have learned the art of depending on God.**
- 2) **I want to think less about myself. Too many hours last year were spent worrying about me.**

Instead, I want to spend some of that time and energy on other people and things that matter.

I don't know what this new year will bring. I'm sure it will include surprises, joys, sorrows—and sure, most likely even some sleepless nights. But if I can implement these two goals even just a little; if in the heat of the most turbulent moments that this year brings I can manage to remember that my perspective will most likely change in just a few months; if I can keep God and others on my mind, no matter where I am or what I'm doing, then I know this year will be a success!

JULIANA CONNOLLY LIVES IN AUSTIN, USA, AND IS A RESEARCH AND PRODUCTION CONSULTANT FOR THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■



BLANK PAGES IN AN OPEN BOOK

WE WILL OPEN THE BOOK. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.

—*Edith Lovejoy Pierce (1904–1983)*

Let us believe in a long year that is given to us, new, untouched, full of things that have never been.

—*Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)*

Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come,
Whispering “it will be happier.”

—*Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892)*

We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives ... not looking for flaws, but for potential.

—*Ellen Goodman (b. 1941)*

For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.

—*T. S. Eliot (1888–1965)*

The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written. We can help write that story by setting goals.

—*Melody Beattie (b. 1948)*

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective.

—*G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936)*

Each new day is a blank page in the diary of your life. The secret of success is in turning that diary into the best story you possibly can.

—*Douglas Pagels*

Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right.

—*Oprah Winfrey (b. 1954)*

No, this is not the beginning of a new chapter in my life; this is the beginning of a new book! That first book is already closed, ended, and tossed into the seas; this new book is newly opened, has just begun! Look, it is the first page! And it is a beautiful one!

—*C. JoyBell C.*

The chief beauty about time
Is that you cannot waste it in advance.
The next year, the next day, the next
hour are lying ready for you,
As perfect, as unspoiled,
As if you had never wasted or
misapplied
A single moment in all your life.
You can turn over a new leaf every
hour
If you choose.

—*Arnold Bennett (1867–1931)* ■



MY LIVING CHINA DOLL

BY BONITA HELE

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, we lived near an apartment complex housing college students. At the end of the school year, the students would give away or sell cheaply whatever they didn't want to haul home.

One day, my brother brought me home a China Doll plant. My mom, who has a green thumb, said it was a good find. I took it to my room and would set it out on the front porch every few days for some sunshine. After I'd had the plant for a few months, its leaves started drooping and then falling off until there were no leaves left. When I asked my mom what was wrong, she said it had gone into hibernation. A plant without leaves held no interest for me, so I put it in the backyard with my mom's other potted plants, and there it stayed for quite some time, leafless and forlorn.

And then, one day, my mom brought a plant to my room. Yes, it was my China Doll, and there were tiny sprouts at the tips of its branches. Soon the sprouts grew into new shoots and leaves, and eventually my plant was in full bloom again. This cycle continued over the years.

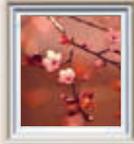
I eventually moved away from home and left the China Doll with my mom and her green thumb. In one letter, my mom wrote: "I thought your China Doll had finally died. I almost tossed it, but you know how I hate to throw away a plant. I waited a while, and sure enough, it grew back fuller than ever."

Last spring, I went to visit my mom. She has more time for gardening now that most of her kids have moved away, and the back yard

was beautiful, full of aromatic rose bushes and flower-covered arbors and trellises ... and my China Doll was now transplanted into a new pot and was at least four feet tall.

As I begin the new year, some things seem to be hibernating—a few dreams and goals—but with the sunshine of God's love, the water of His Word, and a little of His tender loving care, they will blossom in His good time. If He causes a simple plant to begin anew and grow stronger year by year, how much more can we expect Him to do for us, whom He loves dearly and for whom He created all the rest?

BONITA HELE IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR IN THE U.S. AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■



BY EVELYN SICHROVSKY

New Year's DAWN

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SUNRISE.

The pale light of dawn had brightened into a glorious golden glow, kissing the clouds with tints of pink and orange as it heralded the arrival of a new year. But idyllic new year feelings were the furthest thing from my mind. As I watched the sunbeams dance across my hospital bedsheets, my thoughts retraced the events that had brought me there. Two nights earlier, I had suddenly developed an excruciating pain in the lower right side of my abdomen. I was rushed to the emergency room, where I underwent emergency surgery to remove a ruptured gangrenous cyst. Now I faced a hospital stay and several months of recovery.

1. Matthew 10:29, 31 NLT
2. Isaiah 41:13
3. See Mark 7:37.

For the first twenty-four hours after the surgery, I was too overwhelmed to think clearly, but as the pain lessened and the shock subsided, questions came in a flood. I felt confused, discouraged, and afraid.

It was then that I noticed a pair of tiny birds soaring into the dawn, and I was reminded of a verse: “What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.”¹ It was comforting to be reminded that my life rests in God’s hands, and that He will always be there to help, hold, and guide me, no matter what comes my way. “I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”²

The year that followed proved to be an unforgettable one. The surgery

was the first of many health struggles during the subsequent weeks and months, yet I felt Jesus always close by my side, comforting me, giving me His grace and strength, and reminding me of His unfailing love and care. The difficulties and challenges were balanced by countless beautiful experiences, blessings, and joys that gave me a deeper appreciation for life and for the One who does all things well.³

As another year dawns, I think back on that New Year’s morning at the hospital. The memory reassures me that my future, while unknown to me, is known to Him. With my hand in His and my eyes on His promises, I can trust Him for the year ahead.

EVELYN SICHROVSKY IS A STUDENT INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEER WORK. SHE LIVES WITH HER FAMILY IN TAIWAN. ■



THE CHANGE EQUATION

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

THIS IS A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE IN THE WORLD—technological, economic, religious, political, business, and environmental. The results are seen in governments, organizations, and in the lives of families and individuals. Although it's sometimes more evident and easier to recognize and take stock of at the start of a new year, change is actually constantly affecting all spheres of society.

Many people, from religious leaders to productivity gurus to life coaches to political leaders, realize the benefits of change and emphasize flexibility. Everyone knows that it is

rough to go through, but when the difficulties are weighed against the benefits that change brings about, most agree that it's worth it.

Much of the benefit we derive from the changes that come into our lives depends on how we look at them and whether or not we embrace them. As always, our attitude is a key factor. Attitude can make the difference between succeeding despite difficulty or succumbing to it. Life is a journey; and change, even big change, is a part of life's equation. As we follow God and read His Word, we will find the faith that can help us through

difficult times, including times of painful change.

Some factors that have helped me to develop a positive outlook on change include:

Trying to anticipate the resultant good results ahead. Since there often isn't any way we can stop change—and if we try, it will knock us over—I've found that in those cases the best thing to do is embrace it and go with the flow. Being positive can mean the difference between riding waves of change and drowning in them.

Asking God to help me to see the benefits of the changes that He's allowing in my life. When I ask Him



for the understanding and wisdom to get the most out of these changes, He speaks to me and gives me the answers that I need.

Realizing that at times the toughest things that I have to pass through are the things that are the most beneficial for me in the long run. It can be hard to remember this when I'm going through a difficult situation, but sometimes I just need to "hold on," knowing that once the storm passes, the sun will come out and I will see everything in a new light.

Connecting with God regularly for my personal encouragement and guidance, through His Word,

Our days are a kaleidoscope. Every instant a change takes place.

—*Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)*

There is nothing permanent except change.

—*Heraclitus (540–480 BC)*

**O Lord, as the years change,
may we find rest in your eternal
changelessness. Help us to meet
this new year bravely, in the faith
that, while life changes all around
us, you are always the same,
guiding us with your wisdom
and protecting us with your love;
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

—*William Temple (1881–1944)*

Christians are supposed not merely to endure change, nor even to profit by it, but to cause it.

—*Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969)*

through meditation and prayer, etc. As destabilizing as change can be, God will always remain our anchor, and His Word will give us faith that will make the ride smoother.

Remembering that God loves me and cares deeply about me and my happiness and well-being. In His great and all-abiding love for me, He sometimes has to allow something in my life that might not seem good, but that will actually turn out to be an experience of great benefit. Believing that He can manifest His love through difficult circumstances, and having the faith to see that even tough things can be good things, is a

Change is a common catalyst behind progress. It is often easier to keep doing things the old way than it is to change. Change takes time and effort, but good changes are worth it in the long run.

—*Mottos for Success*¹

There is One amid all changes
Who standeth ever fast,
One who covers all the future,
The present and the past;
Jesus is the first,
Jesus is the last,
Trust Him for thy future,
Leave with Him the past;
Christ the Rock of Ages,
The first and the last.

—*Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843–1919)*

1. *Mottos for Success* is published by Aurora Production and is available here: <http://shop.auroraproduction.com/calendars/daily-desktop-quotebooks.html>.

challenge, but I've found that if I can accept that challenge, I'm well on my way to feeling more comfortable and at peace with change.

Sometimes God simply can't bring the good that He wishes to bring into our lives without us passing through some pretty stormy times. So if you're feeling the waves crashing about you, trust Him and have faith that He knows what He's doing. He desires only the very best for us.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a black tank top, is looking down at a barbell in a gym. The background is slightly blurred, showing other gym equipment. The overall color palette is blue and black.

FORMING NEW HABITS

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

THE MONTH OF JANUARY, when the new year is celebrated in most of the world, is named after the Roman god Janus. Because he had two faces, he could look back on the past year and forward into the next. He was the god of beginnings and the guardian of doors.

Making resolutions at the start of a new year is an ancient and established tradition. Apparently, the early Babylonians' most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.¹ We make resolutions, but we don't seem well equipped to keep them. One reason we have a hard time changing old bad habits or forming good new ones is that sometimes our expectations are too extreme. Instead of making some gradual permanent lifestyle changes, we want instant success.

Fitness guru Jack LaLanne (1914–2011), who continued with his daily exercise regimen well into his 90s, observed, “The average person means well, but they set their goals too high. They [try] it two or three times and say, ‘This is too tough.’ And they quit.”

When I used to do private English tutoring in Indonesia and Japan, I was confronted with this type of unrealistic expectations. Many of my students thought that if they hired a native English speaker to

give them lessons, they would learn through some sort of magical osmosis, without doing the homework and study needed to make progress. It just doesn't work that way. We're conditioned to want quick results, whereas in reality, it often takes work over an extended period of time to achieve anything worthwhile.

Messages are sent along the pathways of our brain through neurons that are connected to one another. These like to travel on known pathways, the “comfortable” way, and it takes time and effort to create new ones.

Carlo DiClemente, chairman of the psychology department at the University of Maryland, suggests setting realistic goals and making daily progress to realize them: “We all wish some things. We might say, ‘I wish I were a better parent.’ But that's pretty vague. Maybe you say, ‘I'm going to count to five before I start yelling at my kids.’ That's good, but then you discover you need a plan to remind you to count to five.”

Armed with the right goals, the desire, and the persistence, you can form a new habit this year. You can become the master—rather than the victim—of circumstances.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME FACILITATOR ([HTTP://ELIXIRMIME.COM/](http://elixirmime.com/)) IN MUMBAI, INDIA, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. See <http://www.theage.com.au/news/General/Ready-for-midnight/2004/12/30/1104344926295.html>.

SETTING GOALS. AND REACHING THEM.

BY IRA SHARMA

SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SO DISCOURAGED WHEN THEY'VE FAILED TO MEET THEIR GOALS THAT THEY'VE GIVEN UP ON HAVING ANY AT ALL, so that they aren't disappointed by the "inevitable" failure. There's a lot of advice available today on this topic, and there isn't actually anything too tough or mysterious about setting and reaching your goals.

Here are five easy steps to follow for success.

STEP 1:

What are you aiming for? Write down your goals for the year. Keep the list to a few top priorities: Too many can dilute focus and scatter your energy.

STEP 2:

Take steps—even large, seemingly crazy ones—toward reaching your goals. The important thing is to kick-start the process. The fine-tuning can come later! Try to focus on actions that will advance more than one of your goals at once. For example, taking your kids to the pool or riding a bike with your spouse would promote staying fit as well as spending time with your family.

STEP 3:

Keep at it. You'll probably fail periodically, but don't give up: Pick up the pieces and start again! In fact, if you



never fail, your goals are probably too easy and need to be revised.

STEP 4:

Have fun! Enjoy the challenge! Fighting your fears and weaknesses in order to achieve your goals can be difficult, but it's also tremendously rewarding. Much of the appeal of running a marathon is the challenge. Make reaching your goals the "extreme sport" of your life.

STEP 5:

Review the progress toward your goals on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. If you're serious about it, you'll put effort into it. If necessary, be open to tweaking your goals or the action you're taking to reach them, but be careful to not water down your original goal!

IRA SHARMA IS A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND FREELANCER BASED IN WESTERN INDIA. ■

GET STARTED

So many fail because they don't get started—they don't go. They don't overcome inertia. They don't begin.—*William Clement Stone (1902–2002)*

The beginning is the most important part of the work.—*Plato (428 BC–348 BC)*

Perfectly Imperfect

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

I WENT TO THE FARMER'S MARKET THIS MORNING AND WAS SO PLEASED TO FIND A GOOD DEAL ON SOME ORGANIC PRODUCE. When I got home and pulled the tomatoes out of the bag, however, I realized that some of them were too squishy to use, and I had to cull out the bad ones so they wouldn't harm the others. As the saying goes, "One rotten apple (or in this case, tomato) spoils the whole bunch."

As I examined the tomatoes, I was surprised by their many imperfections. I've been used to going to the grocery store and finding piles of perfectly shaped fruits and vegetables. However, when I cut one of the "imperfect" tomatoes in half and took a bite, I was amazed at the flavor. I decided that in this case "imperfect" can definitely be better.

We often judge by appearance, but looks can be deceiving. Often, those apparently perfect pieces of produce have much deeper flaws that can't be seen. It could very well be that they have no bug bites because they have been sprayed with chemicals whose long-term effects might be worse than the insects. The processes used to speed their growth probably affected their flavor as well. Judging between the imperfect, organic tomatoes

and the seemingly perfect ones in a supermarket, the imperfect is definitely better.

God could have created a perfect world with perfect people, but He allowed man to have a choice. After the fall of man, imperfections entered our world, and man began to have to deal with problems, disease, bugs, and pain.¹ But all of these imperfections drive us back into the arms of our heavenly Father. If the road were perfect and our path without difficulties, we would never find the better way to the perfect place He is preparing for us.

Sometimes, people think they can get along without God. It is only when we take a good look at our imperfections that we see the need for a Savior. Then we open our heart and receive the greatest, most perfect gift of all.

So give me the imperfections of life. Give me the odd-looking produce. Give me the rocky path. Give me all the problems and weaknesses that drive me into God's arms. Because I know how imperfect I am, I am thankful for a perfect Savior who looks at me through the eyes of love, and whose perfect love has changed my life.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■

1. See Genesis 3:1-24.



THE JOURNEY TO SIMPLICITY

BY AMANDA WHITE

THE OTHER DAY I WAS LISTENING TO A CHRISTIAN RADIO PROGRAM ON THE WAY TO THE GYM. Each day they ask a question for their listeners to respond to, either via phone or their Facebook page, and the topic that day was: “What do you look forward to?”

The answers that listeners were sending in were simple, yet refreshing. For example, one woman said she looked forward to having a cup of tea at night once her children were in bed.

It got me thinking about the simple things in life. Essentially, that’s what we all generally look forward to—the little things. A hug after a long day. A cup of something hot in the morning. The sun shining again after a rainy patch, enabling us to finally hang our laundry. A comfortable bed to slide into at

night. A refreshing shower. A freshly mowed lawn. A meal out.

I like to see these small things as being as much a part of God’s love for me as the bigger gifts He sometimes sends my way. As Robert Louis Stevenson put it: “The best things in life are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life’s plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.”

Sure, sometimes we look forward to big and exciting things, like an upcoming vacation. But more often than not, it’s the simple day-to-day things that bring us joy and put a smile on our face. I’m reminding myself that I need to think more about those things,

as they get so easily lost amidst the craziness of life. It’s not a new realization by any means. It’s just one of those principles of life and happiness that easily fade out of focus when so many bigger and more stressful things are obstructing my view or weighing me down.

I decided to start small. I took that woman’s advice on the radio. I set aside a few minutes to relax with a cup of tea that night after the kids were in bed, and I enjoyed every sip!

I’m on a journey to find simplicity in my spiritual walk as well. The simple things in life make *me* happy. Perhaps my simple things will make God happy too?

AMANDA WHITE IS AN OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. ■

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS INTO THE NEW YEAR

A QUICK GLANCE BEHIND...

If you feel that you have made mistakes, taken wrong turns, even failed miserably at this or that, you're in good company. Many of God's heroes in the Bible did those same things, but they learned from their mistakes. And God came to them, sitting in the midst of failed dreams or disappointed hopes, and gave them a new reason to live. That's what He can do when we give up on our own plans and projects and decide to try His. He gives us goals to help us grow and move in the right direction, and then He helps us attain them. Give Him your heart and life, and let Him give you all the good things He has planned for you.—*Nana Williams*

1. Colossians 1:11

2. See Philippians 4:13.

3. <http://www.auroraproduction.com/en/p/moments-morning>

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.—*Albert Einstein (1879–1955)*

The world is a book and every step turns a new page.—*Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869)*

A story is told of an elderly woman who slipped and fell on a busy street. Several people quickly went to assist her, but she was already hoisting herself back up.

"I'm all right," she assured them. "I always fall forwards, never backwards."

When we've "taken a fall," instead of dwelling on the mistake or hurt, let's make it a fall forward by learning from it and looking to the future.

—*Abi May*

A STEADY LOOK UPWARD...

We are given a fresh start not only at the beginning of the year, but every morning when we wake up. We have the chance to start anew and make things right.—*Mottos for Success*

To improve the golden moment of opportunity and catch the good that is within our reach is the great art of life.—*Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)*

Look upon every day as the whole of life, not merely as a section; and enjoy and improve the present without wishing, through haste, to rush on to another.—*Jean Paul (1763–1826)*

Let us labor to be like unto angels, "strengthened with all might,"¹ walking about the world as conquerors, able to do all things through Christ which strengthens us.²—*John Trapp (1602–1669)*



All of us carry the future in us, the hopes, the dreams, the good and the evil, the potential to create a better world, if we can only make the right choices, if we are only willing to pay the price, to search for the goal and reach out for it.

We all search for love at some time or other, and so love will come to us. But how will we treat it when it arrives? For love might come to you as a princess, or as a beggar, or a slave; majestic and glorious, or uncomely and in rags, and void of respect. Though we cannot choose who we are when we are born, and what kind of life we get born into, still we can choose *how* to live our lives and what kind of person we will be when our earthly path ends.

—*Colin C. Bell*

Never hesitate to trust the unknown future to a known God.—*Mottos for Success*

THEN A FIRM FOOT FORWARD.

Faith gives us courage to face the present with confidence and the future with expectancy.—*Mottos for Success*

I am willing to go anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—so long as it's forward.
—*David Livingstone (1813–1873)*

A teacher took her primary school students to the assembly hall for a lesson with a difference. Standing at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she asked, “Is anybody good at jumping?”

Quite a few young hands shot up. “Well,” she continued, “could any of you jump from the floor here up onto the stage?”

No hands went up this time. “I can,” said the teacher, “and I’ll show you how.” Beginning at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she hopped onto the first step. From there she hopped onto the second, and so on until she reached the top.

Many things can only be accomplished little by little, step by step. When a task looks daunting or the way ahead too steep, just take it one step at a time.
—*Abi May*

Lord, when you call us to live and work for you,
Give us the wisdom to remember
That it is not the beginning
But the faithful continuing of the task
That is most important in your eyes,
Until we have completed it to the best of our ability;
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Who laid down his life for us
In order to finish your work.
—*Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540–1596)*

THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON EXTRACTS FROM THE DAILY DEVOTIONAL VOLUME, *MOMENTS IN THE MORNING*, AVAILABLE TO ORDER IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH.³ ■

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

DREAM NEW DREAMS

Life is all about the little decisions you make every day. Decisions of the past have had their effect, but every new day can be a new start. No matter what has happened up till now, you have a chance to make the right choices today.

Don't waste time reliving the pain of past mistakes and wrong decisions. That only saps your power to do the good that you can do today. You can't change the past, but the future is what you make it, starting right now, so take full advantage of the present.

Learn from past mistakes and put them behind you today. Forgive those who have wronged you and ask forgiveness from those you have wronged. That probably won't be easy, but don't put it off; do it today. Look to Me and My Word for fresh courage and hope, starting today. Dream new dreams today. Set new goals today. Spend your time on things that truly count today. Love your family today. Be a friend today. Do things better, starting today.

With My help, your future can be filled with wonderful accomplishment and fulfillment that will more than make up for past disappointments—and it all starts today.

