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activated

Vol 16 • Issue 1

ON THE RIVER'S EDGE

Boldly stepping in

Five Steps To Success

Unlock your potential

Lunar Landing

Finding God



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION A DIFFERENT KIND OF WISH

No one knows what the future holds. We're quick to wish a "happy new year" on January 1st, but we actually have very little control over how things will play out. "You do not know what a day may bring,"¹ the Bible cautions. Over the past year, a number of my friends went through some very trying times,

and wishing them happiness and success now feels slightly hollow.

It's good to plan ahead and lay solid foundations in our personal and professional lives, but we know from the start that the year is going to be full of events and circumstances that we haven't foreseen and that we will have limited ability to influence.

That's not necessarily a bad thing, though, if it reminds us that when all is said and done, the happiest and most secure place for us and our loved ones is in God's hands. Perhaps rather than wishing the outward manifestations of happiness to those we care about, we should wish for them to be connected to the source of those blessings, the loving Father who promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."²

Whether this year brings prosperity or hardship, health or sickness, love or loss, we can be assured of God's love and presence,³ His ability to answer our prayers,⁴ and His standing resolution to make all things work together for good in the lives of those who are His children and who love Him.⁵ God never forgets His promises and He's never unable to keep them. As Paul observed, "All of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding 'Yes!'"⁶

God bless you with His presence and care in the coming year.

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. Proverbs 27:1
2. Hebrews 13:5
3. See John 14:23.
4. See 1 John 3:22.
5. See Romans 8:28.
6. 2 Corinthians 1:20 NLT

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An astronaut cannot be suspended in space and not have God in his mind and his heart.
—Yuri Gagarin (1934–1968), Soviet cosmonaut who was the first human to journey into outer space

LUNAR LANDING

By CHRIS HUNT

Photo: NASA

IT'S BEEN ALMOST HALF A CENTURY SINCE NEIL ARMSTRONG DECLARED ON JULY 20, 1969, "That's one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind." It was a momentous occasion—the first time a member of the human race had stood on the surface of the moon.

Technological expertise took the crew of Apollo 11 where no person had gone before. We can scarcely imagine the thoughts and emotions of both the astronauts and their families, but there is a lesser-known incident that took place when the crew first landed that gives some surprising insight.

1. <http://www.ericmetexas.com/writing/essays/buzz-aldrin-guideposts-article-full-text/>
2. See <http://www.websterpresby.org/wnLunar.asp>.

Fellow astronaut Buzz Aldrin had come prepared. Before anyone stepped outside, he silently read a selection of the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John. Then he took out a miniature chalice and a small portion of bread and wine. This is what Aldrin told *Guideposts* magazine in 1970:

"I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon the wine curled slowly and gracefully up the side of the cup. It was interesting to think that the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the first food eaten there, were communion elements."¹ Due to NASA policies, this ceremony was not publicized at the time, but it has since been well documented.²

Aldrin was not the only astronaut to express his wonder and gratitude to God. Around a year earlier, Frank

Borman was on the first manned mission to fly around the moon. Looking down at our planet from 250,000 miles away, he radioed back a message quoting the opening words of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

He later explained, "I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us—that there was a God, that there was indeed a beginning."

As these men took dramatic first steps in a journey of discovery, God was there. As we take our own first steps into this new year, may we too find God's presence and acknowledge Him in our lives.

CHRIS HUNT LIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND HAS BEEN READING *ACTIVATED* SINCE IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1999. ■



BY MARIE STORY

ON THE RIVER'S EDGE

AS THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE PREPARING TO CROSS THE JORDAN RIVER, Joshua sent the ark of the covenant ahead. He instructed the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.”¹

“Never been this way before”—I often feel that way! I run into a situation or a dilemma that’s all new to

1. Joshua 3:3–4 NIV
2. Joshua 3:8 NLT
3. Joshua 3:15–16 NIV
4. Isaiah 30:19–21 CEV

me, and I have no idea how to tackle it. Should I go or stay? Should I take this offer or turn it down?

Some decisions are easy to make. Sometimes the path ahead seems pretty straightforward, even if you’ve never taken it before. Other times, it can feel like there are potential dangers and pitfalls all around. Looking ahead can be exciting, but it can also be a little frightening because of the many unknowns.

As I write this, I’m facing a dilemma. I’ve been offered a job that seems pretty appealing. It’s work that I’d enjoy and the pay is good. But it would mean a major move to another city—when it feels like we’ve only just gotten settled where we are. It

would mean putting other goals on hold and moving away from relatives and new friends. It’s exciting, in a way, but it’s also challenging, because I don’t know how things are going to turn out.

The children of Israel didn’t know how things were going to play out for them either. They knew there was a promised land ahead, but there was also the River Jordan blocking their way.

The Israelites hadn’t traveled that way before. That’s why they had to follow the ark, which represented God’s presence and His promises. By following the ark—by following God—they could walk confidently, knowing that they were headed in the right direction. It

Whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it.

—*Author unknown*

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

—*Martin Luther King (1929–1968)*

A great accomplishment shouldn't be the end of the road, just the starting point for the next leap forward.

—*Harvey Mackay (b. 1932)*

Some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity.

—*Gilda Radner (1946–1989)*

I think there is something more important than believing: Action! The world is full of dreamers. There aren't enough who will move ahead and begin to take concrete steps to actualize their vision.

—*W. Clement Stone (1902–2002)* ■

Sometimes, the way God leads doesn't seem to make sense. Sometimes it can look downright crazy, like when He instructed Joshua to tell the priests who carried the ark of the covenant to “take a few steps into the river and stop there.”²

I imagine some of the people were more than a little anxious as they approached the flooded riverbanks. But we're told that “as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away.”³ The priests stood in the middle of the dry riverbed while all the Israelites walked safely across.

I think this story offers a pretty awesome formula for making decisions. When you're facing tough choices, when you “haven't been this way before” and you're dealing with brand-new challenges or seeming impossibilities, keep your eyes on Jesus. Only God knows what's ahead, so it's a good idea to follow His lead.

God cares about your problems and concerns and dilemmas just as much as He cared about His people stuck at the banks of the Jordan River. The Bible promises, “The Lord is kind, and as soon as he hears your cries for help, he will come ... and he will guide you. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, you

will hear a voice saying, “This is the road! Now follow it.”⁴

God's Word contains solid promises that you can stand on and claim in prayer whenever you're desperate for His answers and direction in your life. Then as you keep your eyes on Jesus and follow His lead, you'll be able to march confidently into the future God has in store for you.

MARIE STORY IS A FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR AND DESIGNER, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. THIS ARTICLE WAS ADAPTED FROM A PODCAST ON WWW.JUST1THING.COM, A CHRISTIAN CHARACTER-BUILDING WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. ■



TAKING THE PLUNGE

BY LILIA POTTERS

THE LITTLE BOY MUST HAVE BEEN ABOUT FOUR YEARS OLD.

I watched with interest as his dad walked to the edge of the diving board at the deep end of the pool and showed him how to dive. The boy clapped and cheered at the splash his dad made as he entered the water, but when encouraged to jump in as well, he backed away apprehensively. “Don’t worry, son,” his dad assured him. “I’ll catch you.”

After some prodding, the boy ventured to the end of the diving board and teetered there, signaling wildly to his dad in the water below to come a little closer. “No, Dad, a little more this way! ... No, *that* way!” This went on for a while until I thought for sure he was going to take the plunge. But at the last second, he chickened out,

turned around, and walked back to the poolside, his head lowered sadly.

Rather than express disappointment, his dad patiently urged him not to give up and finally coaxed him back to the end of the diving board. The whole procedure was repeated until the boy finally jumped into the waiting arms of his father. The look on his dad’s face said it all. “You did it, son! I’m so proud of you!”

I’m a lot like that little boy. For several months, I’ve been in the process of pulling up stakes and preparing to move to another country where new work, new experiences, and new friends are waiting. But even though I’ve determined that this change is going to be good, I still worry at times about how it’s all going to turn out.

God says, “Don’t worry! Just take the plunge! I’m right here in front of you, and I’m going to catch you! I won’t let you down!”

But I argue, “Okay, I’ll jump, but could You just come a little bit closer? Could You move a little this way or a little that way, so I can feel more secure?”

God, who is infinitely more patient than any earthly father could ever be, continues to assure me that I can trust Him. And He’s right about that, of course. He’s always been there to catch me, and no one rejoices at my little victories like He does. So once again I will take the plunge.

LILIA POTTERS IS A WRITER AND EDITOR IN THE U.S. ■



A SINGLE STEP

BY MILUTIN BUNČIĆ

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, I took an English teaching training course. My first language is Croatian, and I had been working as a professional translator and interpreter for over 20 years, so I spoke English on a daily basis and was quite happy doing some freelance English teaching.

However, I eventually realized that a teaching diploma would open more opportunities, and I also wanted to use teaching—in Christian summer camps, for instance—as an avenue to share God’s love and encouragement. Hence the training course, and the good news is that since then, I’ve been able to pursue those opportunities I was looking for.

I’ve worked with both adults and children, and I can empathize with the trepidation and fear experienced by those who feel inadequate and unable to learn a new language. In

fact, even as I’m writing this article, I’m facing my own fear of the future!

I sometimes build my lessons around a pithy motivational quote. “Even a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” is one of my favorites. Starting out is always the hardest; when we endeavor to try something new in our lives, we often see it as a huge mountain in front of us and we just “know” that we will never be able to climb it. True, it’s a daunting sight, especially when we compare ourselves with those who have been at the top for some time. But when we are able to overcome the initial fear and take that single step, we find ourselves on the road to victory.

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God’s love is amazing! When we are reassured of His love, it gives us the faith to reach beyond our own limits and confines, and enables us to step out into the unknown and reach our full potential. It helps us to believe that anything is possible. His love gives us confidence. His love gives us faith.—*Maria Fontaine*

Your past is important, but it is not nearly as important to your present as the way you see your future.—*Tony Campolo (b. 1935)*

My friends, I don’t feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done.—*Philippians 3:13–14 CEV*



LIVE TODAY!



SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT TODAY IS A MARVEL OF OPPORTUNITY, crucified between two thieves, yesterday and tomorrow! Today, this very day, is one of the most wonderfully precious things you will ever have.

You can have faith for almost anything if you'll take it a day at a time. God's Word says, "As your day, so shall your strength be."¹ Every morning, look up and put your hand in the hand of Jesus and say, "This day I will trust You; this day I will, with Your help, walk step by step by Your side, and You will keep me in perfect peace today."

Today you can do some of the things that you've been putting off for so long. You can't do them yesterday and may not have the chance to do them tomorrow, but today is yours! Today you can be the kind of person you always dreamed you'd be "tomorrow."

1. Deuteronomy 33:25

Your yesterdays are left with God, and none of their disappointments should be dragged into this day. Tomorrow is still unborn and you shouldn't borrow from it. Today is filled with golden opportunities and pregnant with great possibilities! This is the golden tomorrow that you dreamed about yesterday.—*Virginia Brandt Berg (1886–1968)*

Make the choice to embrace this day. Do not let your TODAY be stolen by the ghost of yesterday or the To-Do list of tomorrow! It's inspiring to see all the wonderfully amazing things that can happen in a day in which you participate.—*Steve Maraboli (b. 1975)*

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

Every second is of infinite value.—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)*

One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon—instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.—*Dale Carnegie (1888–1955)*

At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict, or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child, or a parent.—*Barbara Bush (b. 1925)*

Resolve to make at least one person happy every day, and then in ten years you may have made 3,650 persons happy, or brightened a small town by your contribution to the fund of general enjoyment.—*Sydney Smith (1771–1845)* ■



The only limits to the possibilities in your life tomorrow are the “buts” you use today.—*Les Brown (b. 1945)*

The problem that we are facing in the church today is that we have so many Christians who have made a decision to believe in Jesus but not a commitment to follow Him. We have people who are planning to, meaning to, trying to, wanting to, going to, we just don’t have people who are doing it.—*Tyler Edwards*

NEW YEAR, NEW COMMITMENTS

BY PETER AMSTERDAM, ADAPTED

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR IS SUCH AN INTERESTING TIME. We often think back over our experiences of the past year as well as look ahead to what the new year will bring. It can be encouraging to see the challenges met, the victories won, the progress made, the commitments carried through, and the blessings we’ve had throughout the previous year. It’s also a time to assess areas where we had hoped we’d make headway but didn’t quite live up to our aspirations. Perhaps there’s something to learn from the hard times and difficulties—or even

some outright failures—that we experienced.

As the door to the new year opens, and while you are thinking about the resolutions or commitments you will make, this is also a good time to put some thought and prayer into your relationship with Jesus, your prayer life, your service, your giving. The tasks of supporting ourselves and our families, raising and educating our children, taking care of our daily needs, are all vital responsibilities and part of what builds a better future in this life and world; yet we are reminded of what Jesus told His followers: “Desire first and foremost God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all

these things will be given to you as well.”¹

Making commitments to our relationship with God, to basing our values on His teachings, can and will make a difference in our daily lives throughout our lifetime and in the hereafter as well. These commitments will make us more Christlike in our interactions with others and a greater blessing to our families, friends, and loved ones—better individuals, more godly human beings. That’s worth committing to.

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

1. Matthew 6:33 CEB



HOLDING ON

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

AS A YOUNG CHILD, I would lie in bed at my grandparents' house, listening to the sounds of the television downstairs and looking at the pictures on the wall. One was a picture of a woman with wavy reddish hair in a nightdress clinging to a stone cross in the middle of the raging sea. Pieces of a boat drifted around her and the waves threatened to drag her back into the water, but her eyes were fixed on the cross and she held on with all her might.

At the time, I really didn't understand the meaning behind the picture, and I remember thinking about it as I drifted off to sleep. I wondered why the woman was hanging so tightly to the cross and why she didn't let go and just grab one of the pieces of wood floating

around her. Holding on looked very difficult.

As years passed and I encountered some of my own crises of faith, the picture began to have more meaning for me. During those times, I tried holding on to various other things that did all right at keeping me afloat, but my life had no direction or purpose. I realized that holding on to God—especially when it's hard to do—is really the most important thing.

There's another deeper meaning to that picture that struck me when I

Cause me to hear Your loving-kindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.
—Psalm 143:8

saw it again years later: Most of the painting was dark, with the exception of one ray of light that shone directly on the cross. I realized that was another reason why the woman was holding on to the cross rather than grabbing a piece of wood and floating away. She could have drifted around in the darkness, but she wanted to stay in the light.

As we enter the new year and face a world filled with unknown troubles, it can be quite frightening. We have only one solid place in the middle of the storm, and one light in the darkness. Disaster, danger, and death may be all around, but God is my light and my salvation.¹ He is the strength of my life and will help me hold on.

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

1. See Psalm 27:1.



5 STEPS to SUCCESS

BY PETER OGUNDELE

ARE YOU FACED WITH STARTING A NEW PROJECT OR MAKING DECISIONS? Why not get a head start by using these tried-and-proven steps to success.

1

Pray: Don't neglect or undervalue the place of prayer. A prayerless individual is a powerless individual. When power is absent, strength is absent too, and defeat is inevitable. When prayer becomes a *habit*, victory becomes a lifestyle. It is prayer that gives wings to your dreams: if you want to make your dreams fly, give them the prayer edge.

2

Dream: A life of no vision is a life of no mission. If you know where you're going, you're already halfway there. Don't just jump at everything

1. Acts 27:22 NLT

2. See Psalm 121:5,8.

3. See John 16:33.

4. See Proverbs 4:18.

5. See Isaiah 43:1; John 15:16.

6. See Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 54:10.

7. Isaiah 40:31 NLT

8. Psalm 51:10

life throws at you—know what you want and pursue it. Remember, the wind never blows fair for the sailor who knows not to which port he is bound. It is not enough to dream great and lofty dreams; stay committed to fulfilling and achieving them.

3

Work: Success happens when grace meets preparedness—in other words, hard work. Don't expect a work-free walk to success.

4

Learn from others: You don't have to make the same mistakes others have made. Working smart means adopting principles from those who have successfully traveled the route you are following.

5

Be positive: Standing on a ship that was floundering in the midst of a raging storm, the apostle Paul proclaimed, "Take courage! None of you will lose your lives."¹ When you put your faith into words, God can turn your dreams into reality. Stay positive by expressing positive thoughts.

Five positive proclamations to make each morning:

God is forever with me, so I will get where I need to go.²

This time of trouble will pass and I will overcome.³

I am constantly learning.⁴

I am an indispensable tool, created by God for a special purpose.⁵

I will never be lost to God's love.⁶

PETER OGUNDELE IS A PASTOR, LIFE COACH, EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT, AND *ACTIVATED* READER IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA. ■

A PROMISE AND A PRAYER

Dear Jesus, before starting out on this new year, I'd like to pause for a moment with You.

Your Word promises that "those who trust in the Lord will find new strength."⁷ Please give me strength for whatever the coming year holds.

King David prayed, "Renew a steadfast spirit within me."⁸ Please come into my heart and life, and guide me in the days ahead. ■

NEW YEAR CHOICES



BY KEITH PHILLIPS

I'M QUITE EXCITED ABOUT MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION, and I think it's going to work. No, I *know* it's going to work. It's got to, because I see now that my future hinges on it. "Think small."

That may seem like a contradiction of the usual New Year refrain—"Think big"—but actually, it complements it. I hit on "Think small" after a friend pointed me to "The Formula," an online article by Jim Rohn. Here are a few excerpts that sum up the "think small" strategy:

Failure is not a single, cataclysmic event. We do not fail overnight. Failure is the inevitable result of an accumulation of poor thinking and poor choices. To put it more simply, failure is nothing more than a few errors in judgment repeated every day.

1. Source: www.affirmware.com.au/Sculptor-Private/the_formula.html

On their own, our daily acts do not seem that important. A minor oversight, a poor decision, or a wasted hour generally doesn't result in an instant and measurable impact.

Failure's most dangerous attribute is its subtlety. In the short term those little errors don't seem to make any difference. Since there are no instant consequences to capture our attention, we simply drift from one day to the next, repeating the errors, thinking the wrong thoughts, listening to the wrong voices, and making the wrong choices.

Now here is the great news. Just like the formula for failure, the formula for success is easy to follow: It's a few simple disciplines practiced every day. As we voluntarily change daily errors into daily disciplines, we experience positive results.¹

What better way to further our major life goals than by determining to make better "small" choices, what better time to start than the New Year, and who better to help us make

and stick to those choices than the One who made us and knows exactly what we need! With God all things are possible. "Think small."

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED'S* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE U.S. ■

CHOOSE

Choose to love, rather than hate.
Choose to smile, rather than frown.
Choose to build, rather than destroy.
Choose to preserve, rather than quit.
Choose to praise, rather than gossip.
Choose to heal, rather than wound.
Choose to give, rather than grasp.
Choose to act, rather than delay.
Choose to forgive, rather than curse.
Choose to pray, rather than despair.
—Author unknown



MALLORY'S MOUNTAIN

BY KOOS STENGER

WHEN SOMEONE ASKED THE FAMOUS MOUNTAINEER GEORGE MALLORY why he wanted to climb Mount Everest, he simply stated: “Because it is there.”

Didn't he know that staying home would have been a whole lot safer? Didn't he care about the dangers, the hardships, and the risks?

Sadly, a mysterious accident befell Mallory and his climbing companion in 1924 while attempting to reach the summit of Everest; his body was only found 75 years later. He had literally died trying. Still, I have an inkling that if he'd had the chance, Mallory would have tried again. Vision is never risk-free, but it carries its own rewards.

Most of us wouldn't mind standing on top of a mountain, but it's the journey to the top that worries us, the sacrifices involved that make us waver. On the other hand, to those who have

vision, even the journey is exciting, part of the reward. Only those who conquer mountains will see the world in a new perspective. As amateur mountaineer Henry Edmundson said, “There is the sheer beauty of the landscape that you never saw before, the mystery of what's beyond the next bluff, the muffled roar of a torrent a thousand meters below, the stillness of the late afternoon and the intense companionship when you share this dream with others.”

I can already see some mountains on the horizon of this year that will need to be conquered. I want to climb them with faith and vision, holding on to the hands of my gentle Shepherd who walks with me and has promised He will never leave me, not even for a single day.

Let this year be a year of vision!

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■

If you cannot understand that there is something in man which responds to the challenge of this mountain and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward, then you won't see why we go. What we get from this adventure is just sheer joy.—George Mallory (1886–1924)

These men go up the mountain, enter into the clouds, disappear, reappear. The road is uneven, its difficulties constant. ... As they rise, the cold increases. They must make their ladder, cut the ice, and walk on it, hewing the steps in haste. The air becomes difficult to breathe. ... The lightning plays about them ... No matter, they persevere. They ascend.—Victor Hugo (1802–1885)

Notebooks and Planners



BY ANNA PERLINI

EVER SINCE MY SCHOOL DAYS, one of my greatest thrills has been to start a new notebook. That first nice-smelling white page, all clean and perfect, without wrinkles or dents, was so inviting and promising! It could be because I wasn't always so neat, so here was another chance to finally improve my handwriting, or simply because I was excited about starting something new. Inevitably, as the days passed, I got sloppy again and couldn't wait to throw away that notebook and start another new one.

Later on, I transferred this feeling of anticipation to new yearly planners. They came in all sizes and types—from the big, thick, luxurious ones to the small, humble pocket-sized that fit nicely into my smallest purse, then to the electronic ones that simply did away with paper altogether.

A few years ago, something changed in my perspective. Due to increasing responsibilities in my work, which required a higher level of organization, I also started using a large wall planner that allowed me to see the whole year ahead at a glance and start filling out the main upcoming events.

That's when my focus also changed. I felt the need to have a yearly vision and not just a nice first few clean and perfect pages at the very beginning. It's great to start off all excited, with great propositions and the best of intentions—they *do* say that well begun is half done—but I've been learning that it's just as important to project all the way to the end goal, measure my strength, and realize that it's going to take quite a few steps to get there, not to speak of the inevitable falls along the way.

With this in mind, the best pages could come around the end, or anywhere, for that matter.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE ([HTTP://WWW.PERUNMONDOMIGLIORE.ORG/](http://www.perunmondomigliore.org/)), A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■



THE BIBLE TELLS OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ATTEMPTED AN AMBITIOUS BUILDING PROGRAM. Sadly for them, work on the world's first skyscraper—the Tower of Babel—had unforeseen consequences. In fact, they got themselves into quite a mess.¹

Things don't always work out like you anticipate, no matter how well you prepare or how adequate your resources are. After all, it might not be a good plan at all; and even if it is, there's no way of knowing what the

future holds.² But that isn't the full picture. While first attempts can lead to disappointment, they can also lead to success and fulfilment:

Someone had to be the first to try it. The sight of powdery flakes on the ground was a puzzle for the people of Israel, hungry and discouraged on their long wilderness journey, but the first taste of manna was a pleasant surprise. It was the beginning of better things to come.³

The master of a wedding feast was amazed when he took his first taste of the miracle wine. It had started as water, but Jesus had created a delicious, high-quality drink—and quite a stir in the process. What a beginning to a dramatic ministry!⁴ “What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through

which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”⁵

When Jesus sent His followers out on the road, they didn't really know what to expect of this first faith trip. They could have easily been afraid of unforeseen consequences and missed the opportunity. But they went out as instructed and later returned jubilant.⁶

As we take our first steps into 2015, let's remember that first taste of manna, that first sip of wedding wine, that first journey following Jesus' instructions. Let's look to God for His leading, ask Him for the courage to try something new, and then with faith in our hearts, place our feet confidently on the road ahead.

ABI MAY IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDUCATOR IN GREAT BRITAIN. ■

1. See Genesis 11:1–9.
2. See James 4:13–15.
3. See Exodus 16:13–15,31.
4. See John 2:1–11.
5. John 2:11 NIV
6. See Luke 10:1,17.



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Adventures ahoy!

Ahead lies a world of new minutes, new hours, new days, new weeks, new months. On this threshold of the new year, so much is new and fresh. Your past sins and mistakes are washed away by My love and forgiveness.¹

I won't promise that the new year will be easy, but I do promise to be with you through the challenges and strengthening experiences that it will bring.

I am your Good Shepherd and you will not lack for anything that is within My will to give you.

I will bring you to green pastures and restore your spirit every time it is weary and tired, and let you rest beside still and peaceful waters.

I will lead you in the paths of My righteousness, with My truth and promises by your side—because you need to be strong and able in Me.

Even if you walk through dark valleys, or face the possibilities of danger to your body or spirit, or endure deep and trying experiences, I will give you the power to not fear; I will grant you the ability to rise above those circumstances.

I will be with you through everything—the hard times and the happy times. I will instruct and guide you and comfort you in times of trial.

My goodness and mercy and love and strength will follow you everywhere! You will dwell in My house forever—first My spiritual house on earth, and then forever with Me in heaven.²

Happy New Year!

1. See Isaiah 1:18.

2. See Psalm 23.