



# Foundation of Faith

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**Be of Good Cheer!  
Beginning with God  
Promises for the New Year  
How Do You Use Your Time?  
Simply Turn to a New Page?**

# **The Beginning**

JANUARY 2024

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

*We probably all celebrate our birthdays in some way, and count how many years have passed since the day our life began.*

*There is another beginning discussed in the Bible: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (Revelation 1:8), and in Colossians 1:18 we read, “He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*

*These verses show us the Son of God, Jesus Christ; made in the image of the invisible God, He is the firstborn of all creation. By Him all things in heaven and on earth were created, whether visible or invisible, including thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (see Colossians 1:15–16).*

*It is wonderful to think, but hard to grasp, that Jesus Christ is much more than our Lord and Savior; He is the first and the last, and He has existed since before creation.*

*Dear readers, we are entering a new year that is a gift from God, who watches over us and His creation. As Moses, the man of God, experienced thousands of years ago, “The eyes of the LORD your God are always on [your land], from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:12).*

*Not only does God look down from glory on a fallen world, He still calls out to everyone on earth today, inviting, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).*

*Is that not a staggering thought? Despite all the evil, suffering, and horrible godlessness in the world, the Savior calls, “Come, follow Me!” We can accept His invitation for this year as well, letting Him lead and carry us, and being together with Him every day from now and into eternity.*

H. D. Nimz

# A New Leaf in Your Book of Life

**I**t is very good that you want to turn over a new leaf in your book of life. But, if I may ask, what has become of the heavy pages of your former guilt? A child at school who has smudged a page in his notebook turns it over and starts writing again on the next page. He resolves to be more careful in the future. But turning the page over does not remove the smudges on the previous page. The teacher will soon discover the smudged page.

Perhaps your book of life shows a past filled with grave sins, addictions, and vices. Using all your willpower, you have cleaned up and changed your life. People who know you today can't even imagine your former life. But don't forget that a life of high moral standards cannot eradicate past sins.

Imagine an accountant in a struggling company. He takes the ledger and simply starts a new page without transferring the old balance. Does this erase the old debt? Of course not!

On every page of our life, there is a transfer of the result of the previous page. It is not enough to "turn over a new leaf"; you need forgive-

ness of sins through Jesus Christ in order to become a completely new person. God is merciful. Satan constantly goes around with his pack of lies. To one, he says: "God is too merciful to punish sinners." And if people don't believe it, he tries another lie: "If God really punishes the sinner, then damnation will not be eternal after all."

It is a blessed truth that God is merciful, but He is also holy and just. He never gives up His justice in order to exercise mercy. All His divine attributes are kept in balance. Never can one cancel out the other. He

is long-suffering and of great kindness, but He never leaves the guilty unpunished.

When a criminal is brought before the judge, he must learn that his offense will not go unpunished. God's mercy is only based on the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, and all who refuse to accept redemption through His blood must suffer eternal punishment. "He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

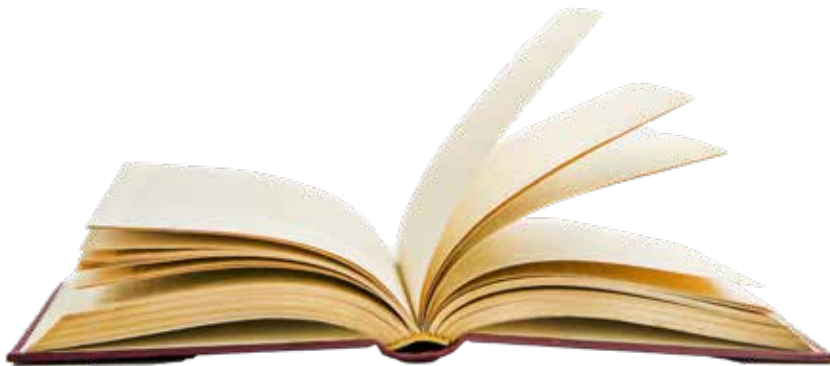
Do you think it is difficult to become a child of God? If so, then you are very wrong. You may be saying: "I have tried again and again to become a Christian, but I can't do it!" Stop trying to earn salvation through your own efforts. Christ has accomplished the great work. Confess your sins to the Lord in repentance and faith and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

Is it difficult to live as a Christian? Which is easier, serving the devil or Jesus? Which service is best rewarded?

Without God, it is impossible for one to live as a Christian. But the One who saved us

has promised to keep us: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). It is easier to serve the Lord than the devil. If you serve the devil, you turn your back on your most faithful friend. You despise His great salvation, resist the Holy Spirit, and trample the Son of God underfoot. In doing so, you plunge into eternal destruction.

Dear Reader, why do you want to be lost when you can be saved?



*B. Boesel*

# Looking Back . . . Looking Ahead

The beginning of a new year is always a significant event for us. If we compare our life to a journey, then the new year is like a mountain on this path, from which we can once again see the distance we have traveled. Although some mountains, clouds, and fog may obstruct the view of the path ahead, we can still discern some important matters. Just as a hiker standing on a vantage point looks back, many people do the same on New Year's Day.

When you look back on your life's journey, you probably see a distant, somewhat blurred image of the way you began the past year. You promised God to use your best efforts and time for Him, seeking His help and guidance for the unknown path ahead. Comforted and encouraged by God, you embarked on the journey.

Certainly, as you reflect, you will find many things that bring joy to your heart. You will soon realize what things truly make you happy. It is crucial to determine this because we can learn from these experiences. Some things may seem very tempting, and we think we cannot do without them. However, when we have them, they often prove to be a heavy burden. Other things, however, which at first seemed too heavy and too costly and promised little joy, become a precious treasure for us.

An example could be that someone gave up a relaxing evening at home last year, even though it was difficult for them to go to an evening Bible study. Looking back, however, he can be happy about it because God blessed him.

On another occasion, however, he may have done the opposite, driving into the countryside on a beautiful Sunday and missing the worship service. He wasn't setting a good example for others either. And, in hindsight, he has a guilty conscience.

Therefore, the lesson for the new year is: whoever sacrifices for the sake of Jesus reaps joy. Whoever acts selfishly reaps a guilty conscience and sadness.

What do you see looking back on your journey through the past year? Do not run off avoiding that

which accuses you! Stand still and take everything to the Lord. Seek forgiveness and make amends where you can. Do not tread the new way with a burdened conscience! Remember, one day you will survey your life from eternity. But then you won't be able to put anything right; you won't be able to ask for forgiveness, and it will be too late forever! Then you would so gladly like to do everything that seems so difficult, almost impossible, for you today. A pure, sanctified heart is the greatest treasure for the new year and for eternity.

Should you look toward the future, then in faith leave the invisible and incomprehensible in the hands of your loving Father. You do not need to know what lies ahead. However, make sure you always obediently follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Do not hesitate to take the path of humility. Do not look at what others are doing with their time. Take time to pray. Pray for the church and for lost souls. Then you will reap eternal joy. God's eyes seek the faithful of the land. He delights in them, and therefore, He blesses them in a special way.

The apostle Paul writes: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Let us not focus on and speak about the negative, "For out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). The apostle gives us wonderful advice: "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called" (1 Timothy 6:11-12). May the Lord grant us all the strength and humility to do this!

*Fritz Friedrich*

## *In the Beginning . . . .*

**E**verything has a beginning. The first words in the Bible are: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). And John writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

In the beginning, there was the eternal God who created everything. Our sun had a beginning. It is about 150 million kilometers from our earth (93 million miles). Our Earth had a beginning. It once orbited around the sun for the first time, and it still does once a year. We could continue to list things and their beginnings.

January is the beginning of each new year. Every human being had a beginning. There was a time when your life began. Do you think life is important? Sure you do; that is why you celebrate your birthday every year. It is a special day for you because on that day you commemorate your beginning.

We want to remember who gave us life. It comes from God. At the beginning of your life, when your heart began to beat—that was before you were born—you received your life from God. Humans cannot produce life; only God can. And when you were born and your lungs began to function, that was from God. Now your heart pumps,

and your lungs breathe. God gave you life, and God can preserve it. Therefore, we owe God thanks. Actually, your life belongs to God. You and I, all of us, should give Him the thanksgiving He deserves, because our beginning comes from God.

January, the first month of the year, also reminds us of many other things in our life that had a beginning. Our first steps, our first words, the first day of school all started at some time. There is also your first prayer. Perhaps it is one that your mother taught you and you spoke.

January is the first month of the year but certainly not the last. It is followed by February, then March, and all the others. Then the year ends and a new one begins. “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). In the same way, praying and giving God thanks should not cease as long as we are on Earth.

Now let us talk about what is most important—the beginning of our spiritual life, a new life from God. It begins with our conversion. Our soul, dead in sin, receives new life from God. It is good to have this conversion experience early in life. The Bible says, “Remember

now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). It is good that a thorough and genuine beginning is laid in order to have a solid foundation for our faith.

This beginning is important; you cannot do without it. After that, learning from Jesus, walking with the Lord, growing in faith, and having victory over sin follow. It is important that we do not remain at the beginning, but also that we do not give up and fall away from God. We must keep on until the end.

Dear friend, have you begun your walk with the Lord? Did you persevere? Did you remain true to the Lord? Have you grown in faith? Do you have a closer walk with Christ now than at the beginning? I wish that you, with the help of God, could have a spiritual beginning—a genuine conversion experience. If this has not yet taken place, do not delay. Do it as soon as possible; do it now. God is waiting for you to come to Him. Soon you can be a useful tool in the Master’s hand, and God can use you and entrust you with small and big matters. The Lord wishes to give you joy, to bless you, and make you a blessing for others.

*Otto Sommerfeld*

## *Simply Turn to a New Page?*

**W**hat I achieved at school wasn't always very glorious. I had particular difficulties in math.

One day, we had a test in class. I opened my exercise book. The first half of the left-hand page was glowing red. It was supposed to be the end of the previous assignment. Due to the fact that I hadn't completed the tasks, there was now a considerable amount of scribbling. Underneath, the teacher had written some less than honorable remarks in red ink—and to top it all off, a very poor grade.

I had an uncomfortable feeling when I saw the mess in front of me again. At the time, I had been glad that my father hadn't asked me about my work. Now I stared at the ruined page. Should I continue

underneath it? Then a thought occurred to me: I would simply turn to a new page. It shone so clean and bright. The terrible mess was simply covered up. Done!

What is the reason for this simple little story? With the new year, we turn to a new page in the book of our lives. Is everything actually okay on the page of the previous year? Oh no! A lot of things are not okay. Bad and evil things happened. But let's not talk about that! Let's just turn over to a new page! Let's just forget all the guilt that has accumulated.

Let's refer back to my exercise book. A short time later, my father said: "Why don't you show me your math exercise book?" I handed it over. He slowly turned the pages. Indeed, at that point—my heart was beating hard—he had

the page that I had simply covered up. He looked at it for a long time. Then he looked at me . . .

I learned then that forgetting and covering up doesn't help. Today I know that there is a Father in heaven who will one day open the pages of our lives. There will be a judgment from God. That is when all the hidden pages will come to light. That's why we can't just turn over to a new page this year without talking to God about the sins of the old year. Through Jesus, who died for us, we have forgiveness for all our sins if we lay them bare before Him. A good prayer for the turn of the year is: "What lies behind, please cover with your grace, and what lies ahead, please control with your power!"

*Wilhelm Busch*



# Beginning with God

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. (John 1: 1–3)*

**W**e are standing on the threshold of a new year. Each of us may have started the new year in a different way. Someone wrote: “We stayed up until midnight and then, together with our children, greeted the new year with prayer. We heard fireworks going off in the street. I pulled up the shutters, and the troublemakers immediately hurried away.” Many people start the new year like this. Why these noisy beginnings when we could start the year in a more meaningful way? In John 1, we read about Jesus’ beginning in this world. John tells us: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness” (verses 4–5). What a wonderful consolation! Käte Walter, a poet, expressed it this way:

*O let us enter boldly into the coming year;  
Though winds are blowing coldly,  
we have no harm to fear.  
The grace of God will lead us,  
through sunshine and through night,  
His providence will feed us till faith turns into sight.*

*We do not have to worry if we can't see the way;  
No reason to be sorry, just trust Him day by day.  
For even in the valley of sorrow and distress,  
Lord, You will guide us daily and grant us happiness.*

*O let our faith be steadfast, our hearts be true to You;  
Our former ways are now past,  
all things have become new.  
The light of God is shining, this confidence is ours;  
The Lord is always with us, even in darkest hours.*

*O take our hands in Your hands,  
dear Savior, Jesus Christ;  
You'll guide us into that land,  
our home of beauty bright.*

Many of us have memories of anxious and distressing beginnings to a new year. Many have, unfor-

tunately, repeatedly gone through dark and stressful beginnings of a year, especially in light of our present unrests and catastrophes. That is why, for example, the state of our businesses, the annual balance sheet, profits or losses, good or bad prospects, are not the most important things to be concerned with at the beginning of the year. A far more important question is: “What, or how, is your life?”

This question comes from God’s Word, and John writes: “In the beginning was the Word,” and this Word was Christ. And the answer to the question: “What is your life?” is: “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away,” and “you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow” (James 4: 14).

Jesus was with God from eternity, and everything that came into existence was created through Him. He was the light and life for us from the very beginning. Only through Him can we receive light and immortal life for our soul. This light flowed powerfully into the darkness of this world and created life. The darkness—the people in their unbelief—did not understand this great event, and they still do not understand it today.

Joyfully, John was able to say: “But as many as received Him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1: 12). Peter confirmed these words: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12).

The Bible testifies that God was the first to create light in this world. So Christ also came to this dark earth to bring light and life from God. Only through Him can we experience the inner, divine light and life for our souls. In addition to beginning a new year, we can also experience the beginning of a new life.

Someone made the following statements: “Time says: ‘Behold, I make all things old.’ The youth says: ‘Behold, I will do all things differently.’ The human heart often laments: ‘Behold, I do all things wrong.’ Death says: ‘Behold, I bring all things to an end.’”



But Jesus said: “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). A beginning like this is what matters in every human life. Goethe said: “Oh, I am tired of all these goings-on! What is all this pain and pleasure for? Sweet peace, come, oh come into my heart!” Unfortunately, many have kept the Savior very small in their lives. Sundar Singh once said: “Christ is number one!” If you put a few zeros in front of the one, the sum becomes smaller. But if you put the zeros after the one,

the sum becomes greater. Whoever becomes smaller within himself allows Jesus to become greater. That is the way to a new beginning in life, for you as well!

It would be very wise to finally begin the new year with Jesus Christ. Christ is the true light and life for us. May this blessing from God accompany us all throughout the new year!

Friedrich Krebs

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## Be of Good Cheer!

**A**s children, we had a tradition of making a special card or letter for our parents containing a New Year’s greeting and best wishes. We children took this task seriously. We would take a clean white sheet of paper and then draw letters with great care to express our wishes for a happy New Year.

Naturally, I am not going to bring my wishes for a new year to you in this manner. However, I have a special wish for you. I wish that you would always be of good cheer in the year to come.

Now, you may sigh and say, “How can I always be of good cheer in my situation? How can I be in a good mood? You have no idea what I am going through! You don’t know my situation, my worries about my family, my suffering, my health.” And some people have a natural tendency to take everything the hard way.

Let me tell you how I came upon this wish for you to always be of good cheer. It was more or less given to me as a gift.

One autumn, I was sick and bed-ridden with a lot of pain, and I had terrible nights in which all cheerfulness had vanished. One morning, I read what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12: 10, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses,” and we can add more of our own to this list—in financial difficulties, in worries about my job, in raising children, in getting along with

my spouse, in loneliness, in problems with stubborn people, in the unfortunate circumstances that have befallen me, and so on.

At any rate, this scripture came to me when I was in a desperate situation that wanted to crush me. I asked myself, why is the Apostle in a good mood? Why is he taking pleasure in these difficult circumstances? I read the verse that comes before this one, and it says: “My strength is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” There is no special prerequisite given for being of good cheer, no extraordinary achievement or advantage, no special insurance or boost of extra energy. All of that was lacking for me. One thing is enough—His grace. His grace and His strength are both there for the weak and those without strength.

Dear reader, don’t you think my wish for you in the new year is an offer that cannot be beat? How happy I would be if everyone would take advantage of this gift from God. His grace. It is sufficient. He wishes to give you this for every new day this year. Certainly, we need to come to Him every morning and take of His fullness.

How do we take of this fullness? Come to the Lord Jesus with childlike faith, and simply tell Him all about your troubles, with reverence and trust, and He will help you every day anew. Then we can have every reason to be of good cheer. ■

# “Here we have no continuing city . . . .”

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” (Hebrews 13: 14)

**O**n New Year’s Day, we stand on the threshold between two years, and we look back as well as forward. Looking back over the past years of life, especially the past year, should move us to praise and thank our God. He has helped us wonderfully so far. Yes, every day proclaims to us anew: “The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psalm 103:8). He has carried us, helped us, comforted us, refreshed us, and blessed us with the riches of His house. Even in dark times, when suffering and affliction came upon us, He still let the light of His grace shine on our path and led us safely through.

But how quickly our praise and thanksgiving can turn into fear and worry when we look ahead to the new year. It is still dark and hidden from us. We would like to lift the veil and know what the future holds for us, but because we cannot do this, the weak human heart tends so easily to become discouraged and sad.

However, that is not the right mindset with which we want to start the new year. The right mindset is courage and faith that is not deceived by empty, exaggerated hopes, nor does it give in to self-made fear. We should gain this courage and faith, hold on to it, and write the slogan for the new year: “Our pilgrimage is here, but our homeland is above.”

Everything earthly is impermanent; we encounter transience everywhere. When we look at nature, we see constant growth and decay. Frost and heat, summer and winter, rain and sunshine, sowing and harvesting, day and night constantly follow one another. One generation follows the next because we have no permanent home here. Time moves with giant strides. Every day brings new discoveries and insights. What was considered true today may be regarded as error tomorrow.

You yourself are a transient being in this restless world. Our years come and go; they leave their mark on our foreheads and our entire bodies. And as the years go by, our short life fades away. Just like ourselves, all our possessions are fleeting. Even if our

whole life has been delightful, its “boast is only labor and toil” (Psalm 90: 10).

We have no permanent home here; we are pilgrims and strangers. And how short our lives are! Even the Psalmist says: “For it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90: 10). So do not approach life with false hopes and expectations but approach the future seriously and resolutely and “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” For soon the tide of your life story will turn and you will need to pass from this life into the hereafter, from the transient into the eternal.

But fortunately, there is a future city of God for the children of God. This future city is blessed eternity, the kingdom of our God. Even if all is subject to change as kingdoms fall and generations pass, we still have an eternal God! The Psalmist says: “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You *are* the same, and Your years will have no end” (Psalm 102:25–27). Yes, He is the unchanging God, the faithful God, the unchanging love even in the new year!

So if you are anxiously asking: “What will the new year bring me?” I advise you: put your hope in God and do not hesitate! If you serve the Lord faithfully at all times, this word will also be true for you:

Nothing can happen to you  
but what He has foreseen  
and what is good for you.

And if you say today in the feeling of your weakness: “Who will take away my worries, help me to carry, fight, and win?”—trust in God and do not faint! Place everything confidently in the Father’s heart and hope in Him. He has given us so many precious promises: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalm 50: 15); “Ask,

and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).

Let us therefore hold onto God’s promises in faith and confidently face the uncertain future with our heads held high! If God is with us and we are with Him, we will surely achieve victory. Yes, after this pilgrimage there is a Father’s house where no more suffering, no more crying, no more fear and anxiety of this life can touch us. The right to this beautiful Father’s house up yonder has been acquired and given to

us by the Savior. He went there to prepare a place for us in our eternal home.

So why should we still feel at home here? Why should we make ourselves at home in this transitory world? Should we strive for it; should our strength be sacrificed for it? No, we need to anchor our hearts in what is permanent. Only a heart that loves God, believes in Him, and hopes in Him, can be secure and blessed in Him alone. That is why our first concern in this new year should be to seek our future home! ■

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## How do You Use Your Time?

**L**ife rushes by like a shadow. It is like the grass that comes up early and soon withers. I once heard an elderly man say the words: “My life is no more than a visit to this earth!” The Psalmist exclaims: “Remember how short my time is” (Psalm 89:47), in a sense asking God to take care of him.

Time is given to us by God so that we can use it wisely. Many are very careful with their money, but they waste their time. When we are young, we think we have enough time to do everything we have planned. The young person speaks confidently: “I still have the best years of my life ahead of me and enough time to achieve many great things.” But time is quickly running out, and some of the things that were supposed to be done need to be postponed or canceled altogether.

Most people are like the young man who received a large inheritance. In his opinion, his money could not become less, and now he wanted to live a life of pleasure. However, as the years went by, his wealth dwindled more and more, and finally he was left with nothing. He had squandered his money.

Our mortal lives also come to an end. And when the last minute dawns for us here below, we realize what a tremendous value time has for us, especially when it has not been spent wisely. Queen Elizabeth I of England was rumoured to have said, “All my possessions for one moment of time.”

The time a child of God has should bear rich fruit for the Lord. “[Redeem] the time, because the days are

evil,” the Word of God calls to us. A certain blacksmith was a good example of this. He became an important and capable preacher, even though he had not attended school. He read instructive books while he worked. He pinned the book to the wall in front of him so that he could spend every minute in study.

Even a shoemaker became an efficient lawyer by looking into a book he had lying next to him from time to time while he was doing his daily work. All great men were anxious to use every minute of their lives profitably. They never wasted a minute.

It is said that when Titus Vespasian returned to Rome after his conquest of Jerusalem, he was sitting at the table with his friends one evening. Suddenly, he remembered that he had done no good deed on the day preceding this social celebration. “Friends,” he exclaimed self-accusingly, “I have lost a day.” There are thousands today who regret losing precious minutes of time—time that is far more valuable than gold and precious stones.

“So teach *us* to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12), prays the Psalmist. A Hindu convert to Christianity bought himself a watch and a Bible. “The watch,” he explained, “will tell me how the time passes, and the Bible will tell me how to spend it.”

To be a fruitful Christian, every follower of Christ must use the passing time in all truth and according to God’s will. It is necessary that we fill a portion of our

time by furthering our knowledge and skills that we use for our work in the vineyard of the Lord.

The apostle Paul spent years studying and preparing for his great task assigned to him by the Lord. The time was truly not wasted. It brought great blessings not only to him but to many others. Above all, however, the time we spend with God in prayer is particularly beneficial. Nothing else can bring greater reward. Wesley occupied himself for hours pondering divine things as he rode from one place to another to hold meetings.

We should also fill our time with winning others for the Lord and bringing sunshine into hearts that are cold and barren. What is our life if at least one soul

whom we have met in this life has not found the way to the Father's heart through us! Remember, every day when the sun turns towards the horizon, a part of your time has again sunk into the sea of eternity. The hours rush by as if on wings. Soon we will reach our destination! What then? When the heart begins to falter and the soul prepares to go to that land from which there is no return, will you also close your eyes with this agonizing self-accusation: "Oh, if only I had spent my life differently!"

Oh, how serious life is when we consider its brevity! How do you spend your time? May we all desire to pursue the one great goal: to make our time available to God! ■



## An Eccentric

A duplex home was being built on the edge of the small town. Strenuous work was being done, and the tanned men were getting thirsty in the hot sun.

“I can’t stand it any longer; we need beer,” Tom said to his coworkers. “Will you join us?” They agreed. They sent one of them to fetch eight bottles of beer.

“You can bring me mineral water,” said Jacob. The others laughed. “Water is cheaper, but beer is the world champion at quenching thirst.”

“I’ll just stick with water; it doesn’t cloud my mind, and it leaves my body feeling unencumbered.”

“You’re just an eccentric,” said Tom and laughed. “No, he’s a coward!” exclaimed Mark, who was always very thirsty and rarely satisfied with one bottle of beer. He couldn’t stand it that someone would not join in, always remained calm and cheerful, and was one of the most efficient at work.

Jacob looked over at Mark for a moment. “You can put that coward in your pocket as far as I’m concerned; it’s not nice to call someone that without good reason. I’ve never heard that you need to be particularly heroic to drink beer.”

The others laughed. They inwardly agreed with Jacob, but no one wanted to openly take his side.

The sultry day came to an end. Black storm clouds were gathering in the west. The workers left the building site; it was quitting time. Mark felt tired, and his thirst was torturing him.

“It’s cool in ‘The Jug,’” he said to his coworkers, “We deserve a drink. And the waitress is a pretty girl. Come along!” Two of them agreed immediately; the others went their way in silence. They had wives and children waiting for them at home. They walked past “The Jug.”

Jacob also went his way. Despite the heat, he was in good spirits and looked forward to returning home. His wife, two lively children, and a healthy dinner were waiting for him. After his hard work, there was nowhere he felt happier than with his family.

“He’s an oddball,” said Tom. There was a strange tone in his voice as if he envied Jacob.

“No, he’s a fool,” Mark roared because he couldn’t stand anyone thinking well of Jacob.

*He violently  
threw a beer  
bottle at the  
waitress.*

On Sunday, Mark was sitting in “The Jug” again with his cronies and saw Jacob going for a walk with his wife and children. He pulled a sour face and sneered: “Look at that lady-servant, that eccentric, that weakling who doesn’t even dare to drink a glass of beer!”

The waitress looked a little wistfully at the picture of the peaceful family. “Be quiet for once, Mark,” she said. “I would much rather go for a walk with a man like Jacob than with you.”

The words sent him into a rage. He violently threw a beer bottle at the waitress. She skillfully dodged it. The bottle flew onto a table where it smashed and cut the face of one of the two guests sitting there.

This resulted in a chaotic uproar and started a brawl. The police were called, and Mark had to spend the night in a jail cell. He felt very miserable. And when his intoxication had worn off, he started cursing and crying. He kept muttering to himself: “He’s the luckier one—this eccentric!” He was struck by the notion that life forces still exist that grant a completely different kind of happiness than intoxication.

Once again, the image of his godly, humble mother stood before his mind as a reminder, and he felt a quiet longing for a new life awaken in his heart.

Jesus is powerful enough to break even these chains. With Him, everyone can start a new life of freedom. ■

# Every Beginning is Difficult!

Exodus 3: 1–4, 13

**W**e may feel a little anxious at the beginning of a new year. We don't know what lies ahead or what situations await us. Perhaps we even anticipate some of what is to come—a doctor's appointment at which we don't expect good news, a move that doesn't promise happiness, and so on. These things may weigh on us, making the future seem formidable.

Perhaps we recall our first day of school. How difficult the beginning was! Who would be our teacher? Who would the children in our class be? Would there be a bully among them who would make our life difficult? But after a few days or weeks, we found that we actually enjoyed going to school.

Perhaps we also recall our first day at work. School days are behind us, and now we must work. The workplace is completely unfamiliar to us. What will the employer be like? What about the supervisor? What will my colleagues be like? Will I even manage? But after a few weeks, you settle in, and now perhaps you have worked there for decades.

The same can happen in our spiritual life. I remember how, as a youth, I used to eagerly attend the [German]

youth meetings until our youth leader, Brother Berndt, took me aside and said, "Harvey, you should pray publicly during the youth meetings!" My German was so poor, and I had only recently started attending the meetings. In addition to that, some of the young people were unfamiliar to me. However, the brother's urging stayed with me: "You should pray publicly!" The next Friday, I went to the youth meeting with trepidation. When the time for prayer came, I prayed with a trembling voice, and I thank God—because I became a man who prays.

I recall another experience from my youth. I lived in a rented house with a brother who also attended the church services. He was old enough to be my father, but we became good friends as we both worked at the university. He used to drive me to church every Sunday. Everything went smoothly until one Sunday on our way to church, out of the blue, he said, "Harvey, you should tithe." Until then, I had considered him a wise man, but now I began to doubt. However, he continued telling me about people who started tithing and how God blessed them. He knew how often the month felt too long for me and my paycheck too



short. In fact, several times I had to borrow a few dollars from him until the next payday. And now, he wanted to burden me with this! I didn't remember much from the sermon that Sunday. Those words kept echoing in my mind. When I was finally alone in my room, I knelt down and promised God that from then on, I would always tithe. At first, it was difficult. I had to park my car for about 6 months because I couldn't afford the insurance. But after that, it was as if God truly opened the windows of heaven (Malachi 3:10). And since then, I have never been in need again (Luke 22:35).

I want to bring to mind a man who faced a difficult beginning:

God met Moses in the desert and gave him the command: "Bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." I can imagine how Moses felt when he heard the word "Egypt." There, in his zeal for the people of Israel, he had killed an Egyptian. Consequently, he fled from Pharaoh to save his life. Now he was being asked to appear before Pharaoh with this request. That could mean certain death.

But God insisted: "You must go!" Then Moses brought up his big excuse: "I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue." But God knows us and knows what He can accomplish through us. After 10 plagues that God allowed to be inflicted on Egypt, Moses, with the people of Israel, was on the way to the desert. Moses had wonderful experiences with God in the desert and learned many things.

Moses, who thought he couldn't speak properly, learned to speak (please read Deuteronomy 32 and 33). What seemed difficult and almost impossible to him became possible through God's grace, and he became a blessing to many people.

Dear Reader, does the future—the beginning of the new year—seem difficult or almost impossible to you? God has promised to be with us every day until the end. Just as He has helped in the past, He also intends to help in the future. Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Look to Him, and confidently enter the New Year with Him!

*Harvey Elke  
Kelowna, BC*



## No Pain, No Gain

Today, two dynamic forces seem to be on a collision course in relation to this topic. On the education side, expectations are constantly being lowered to avoid bias. This is why we are in the process of making the reward accessible to all without demanding performance. In the long run, this can only produce a generation of workers who have not learned to meet certain expectations. So in the future, you could have doctors who don't know sufficient biology because it wasn't expected.

On the other hand, the business world is a very meritocratic environment. In every area of business, performance is what counts. If you don't make an effort, you will be fired. The motto is to produce as much as possible in a short space of time in order to keep up with the competition. However, this means that there will be a rude awakening once you have arrived in the world of work.

The Lord Jesus emphasized this idea in his parable in Matthew 25: 14–30. A man traveled overland and distributed his goods to his servants in the expectation that they would trade them. On his return, he found that the first and second had worked diligently and doubled their wealth. The third, however, had not worked, but had buried his talent in the ground and was severely punished for it. Because he had not been industrious, he did not receive a reward.

But what about the spiritual? It is the case that what is spreading in society is slowly penetrating spiritual thinking. This leads to some trying to inspire people to become Christians with “cheap grace.” God's grace is presented in such a way that apparently no performance is expected from God. The main thing is to decide to accept Jesus as Savior. However, this view does not harmonize with the judgment illustrated by the Savior in Matthew 25: 31–46.

Verse 40 says: “And the King will answer and say to them: ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’” Verse 45 then emphasizes the opposite: “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you,

inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’” This in no way means that salvation can be earned, but it does make it clear that the children of God are expected to perform. This is why Paul urges us in Philippians 2:12: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

The performance expected of the children of God is a life of complete devotion to God and holiness. This is not just a matter of human activity, as Paul writes in Philippians 2:13: “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, for His good pleasure.” The fruit of the Spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22 is what the Holy Spirit produces in his children. However, this requires a good soil of the heart on which the seed of the Word is sown and bears fruit. This is why Paul urges the Colossians in chapter 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Jesus speaks of the Word as a seed that is sown and bears fruit: the one a hundredfold, the other sixtyfold, the third thirtyfold. After all, the heading is true: no pain, no gain.

With regard to practical life, people are called upon to do this in a song:

*We will work for Jesus, we are not our own,  
Jesus, we can never idle be;  
Souls around us dying, purchased for Thy throne,  
We will gather all we can for Thee.*

Paul encourages the Thessalonians in chapter 3:13 of his second letter and says: “But you, brothers, do not become weary in doing good.” The length of the journey and the heat of the day may incline to discourage us because we see little success from our efforts. But God looks not only at the amount of fruit, but at the faithfulness of the heart. Jesus encourages the children of God in the church of Ephesus with the words: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Diligence will have its price!

*Peter Ens  
Toronto, ON*



## My Begining

“The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad.” (Psalm 126:3)

I would like to write a short testimony to the glory of God, because the Lord has really done great things for me.

I grew up in East Germany under communism. We were taught that there was no God. But I had a praying mother and grew up in a family that believed that there was a real God. Nevertheless, I lived in the world and had no personal experience with God.

But the faithful God knew that I needed Him and spoke to me, even in my godless state. It was February 1961, and I had just turned 18 years old.

I was plowing with the horses. Suddenly it was as if a voice from heaven spoke to me: “What will you do when the borders are closed?” I replied: “Dear God, then I’ll be a prisoner of this communist system.” Not long afterwards, in August 1961, the Berlin Wall was built and escape attempts were almost impossible. I see this as God’s guidance.

Without further ado, I left my home and family with a small briefcase and fled to West Berlin. From there, I was flown out to West Germany on the German airlift. I didn’t feel at home in West Germany, even though I was doing well and living with one of my sisters. Then my sister wrote from Canada asking if I would be interested in emmigrating there. I didn’t hesitate long in accepting her invitation.

In September 1962, I arrived in Edmonton, Alberta. After two weeks I knew that Canada was my new home. Here I attended the Church of God and found faithful children of God who were a good example to me. After a year, I was also able to accept Jesus as my Savior and Redeemer. I had the privilege of attending

Bible school in Edmonton from 1966 to 1967. This was a special time for me where I was able to learn a lot.

I am grateful to God for giving me a dear God-fearing wife to whom I have been married for almost 56 years. The Lord has blessed us with children and grandchildren, and we have enjoyed many wonderful years together.

In Edmonton, I was given the opportunity to learn the trade of auto body repairer. In 1970, I was able to start my own business with a God-fearing professional partner. We worked hand in hand for twenty years. Although the beginning

was difficult, the heavenly Father always provided work in a wonderful way and gave His blessing.

I never intended to go into the preaching ministry. But the Lord had other plans and called us into the ministry in 1990. In these 22 years of church ministry, we have experienced God’s help so wonderfully and have seen many answers to prayer.

We have now been in so-called retirement for 11 years. Here, too, the Lord always has tasks and we want to fulfill them joyfully with His help as long as He gives us the necessary strength. We try to support and encourage other seniors to serve God faithfully. Someone once said that there are no unemployed in serving God. As God’s children, we all have tasks, even if we are already of an advanced age.

Looking back, we can say that it was God’s grace that carried us through ups and downs. All glory and thanks be to Him!

Waldemar Makus,  
Edmonton, AB

*I replied: “Dear God, then I’ll be a prisoner of this communist system.”*

## Theme: Wintertime

God says: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."  
(Genesis 8: 22)



### The Snow Blanket

It is winter, and it is very cold outside. Yesterday everything was still gray. Eight-year-old Nicholas and his five-year-old sister Laura really wanted it to snow. Little did they know that their wish would come true very soon. While they slept soundly at night, big white flakes fell to the ground. By morning, a thick, soft blanket of snow covered the whole country. The trees and bushes, which had previously stretched their bare branches upwards, were now coated in white.

With loud shouts of joy, the children quickly got dressed. It was Saturday, so they didn't have to go to school. Dad didn't have to go to work today either. While Mom made breakfast, they helped their father clear the sidewalks of snow. Then they all thanked God together for the beautiful snow. After breakfast, Nicholas and Laura were allowed to go sledding with the neighborhood children. It was great fun because the fine powdery snow was just right for it.

A little later, the sun peeked through the clouds. Its rays fell on the snow, which sparkled like so many precious stones. The children marveled at its beauty. After a while Dad came out of the house and suggested they build a snowman together. By now, the warmth of the sun had turned the powdery snow into perfect sticky snow that was easy to shape into

snowballs. Building the jolly snowman with Dad was a blast!

The snow stayed for a few days. Nicholas and Laura were able to go sledding every day. But then the weather got warmer again, and the snow melted. The snowman also became smaller and smaller and finally collapsed. The children were sad about this. But Mom said that they had no reason to be. God had already given them a lot of joy because of the snow. They should therefore give thanks for it. When snow melts, it also fulfills a very special purpose. It moistens the earth and makes it fertile so that the fields can later produce good crops to feed people and animals.

In His wisdom, the Almighty God alternates summer and winter, heat and cold, day and night. He also has a perfect plan for your life.



## A Letter from Heaven

When we talk about snow, we usually mean a multitude of white snowflakes that slowly fall from the sky to earth like little letters. Up in the clouds, they are formed from individual snow crystals, which consist of frozen water. The structure of the small water particles always gives the crystals and snowflakes a hexagonal shape. However, their design depends on the temperature, humidity, and the path the snowflakes take through the layers of air. The most beautiful snowflakes look like intricate six-armed stars. With a good magnifying glass, you can see the fine, unique pattern of a snowflake. Scientists say that no two snowflakes in the world are the same.

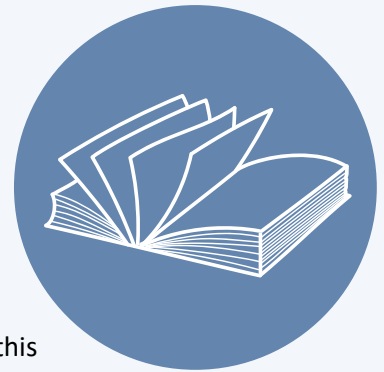


God sends a special message to people through these tiny snowflakes. The consistent hexagonal shape of all snowflakes shows God's love of order and reliability. The unique pattern of each snowflake points to God's infinite creativity and sense of beauty.



These characteristics of God also play an important role in the creation of humans. All humans have similarly shaped body parts such as the head, arms, and legs. And yet every person is a unique work of art. Take a good look at your face in a mirror. Only you have exactly this hair, eyes, nose, mouth, etc. Your voice and your whole personality are also unique. Like David, you can say to God: "I will praise You, for I am

fearfully *and* wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and *that* my soul knows very well" (Psalm 139: 14).



And then there is this special "letter from heaven"—namely the Bible, God's Word. It contains several clear rules for correct behavior: Love for God and fellow human beings, truth, and respect for parents, etc. However, some situations in life are less clear. In such cases, you can ask God for help. The Holy Spirit can show you through other biblical texts how Jesus Christ would have acted. Or He will give you a good indication through the advice of people who follow Jesus. Occasionally, God even changes circumstances to help you make decisions. But He will not leave you in the dark, because He loves you infinitely and wants to bless you. If you obey Him, your life will be orderly, happy, interesting, and unique.

And then there is this special "letter from heaven."



# Promises **FOR THE NEW YEAR**

**L**ooking ahead into the new year can feel overwhelming. We don't know what this coming year will bring, but instead of allowing these unknowns to make us anxious or fearful about tomorrow, we can place our trust in God and His Word, for they always remain the same. This applies to the promises found in His Word as well. Paul writes, "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1: 20). The following are some of the favorite promises from Scripture that the volunteers of the Youth Page would like to remind you of for this coming year.

**"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

**1 John 1: 9**

Perhaps the greatest promise that we find in Scripture is of Jesus promising to forgive all the sins of anyone who confesses them to Him with a repentant heart and the desire to begin a new life with Him.

Over the years of working with young people, I have learned that many shy away from confessing their sins to Christ because they're embarrassed to repeat them. Yet, John reminds us in 1 John 1: 10 that all have sinned. Not only have all sinned, but Jesus already knows all the ways that every person has sinned in his or her life. Sinners don't need to feel embarrassed to confess their sins because Christ already knows what they've done. He wants them to confess their sins so that He can remove those sins through His love and grace and transform their lives into new creations who love God above all and their neighbor as themselves.

Dear young person, if you haven't yet experienced the promise of Christ's forgiveness, please don't delay any longer. Not only will you be able to start the new year with Christ, but you'll then be able to claim the other promises of God's Word as well.

**"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8: 12**

Have you ever been in a situation where it is so dark that you have to feel your way around?

At the beginning of the year, we often feel like the future is just as dark and uncertain. Do you feel the same way? Are difficult circumstances, worries, fears about the future, or sin obscuring the light within you?

This verse is a wonderful promise that you never need to walk in darkness or fear with Jesus by your side. He is the light of the world and has promised to light your way through His Word.

### What does He reveal to you?

- Your foundational goal in life and the hope of eternal glory with Him.
- The certainty that you are His child and that your sins are forgiven.
- The individual steps in your everyday life and that He is with you in small or big decisions and challenges.
- Your trust that He personally guides you correctly and that your whole future is in His hands.

Come boldly to Jesus in prayer knowing He is the true source of light. Only with Him will you gain bright confidence for the new year! Follow this light obediently and stay close to Him!

**“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” 1 Corinthians 10: 13**

What a wonderful promise God has given us here! No matter what kind of attacks the devil has planned for us in the coming year, God has promised that because of His protection, no temptation will ever be too great for us to overcome. Isn't that a great comfort?

God has not just called us to live a holy, victorious life; He provides a way for us to do so by His grace! We don't need to live in bondage to sin where we constantly keep falling back into old ways. Through Jesus we have been made free! Without God's protection, we would have no chance against the wiles of the devil who is determined to ruin our soul, but God's grace and power are more than sufficient to protect us and give us the victory in this spiritual war we face here on this earth. Through Jesus we can be more than conquerors.

**“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Jeremiah 29: 11 (NIV)**

This Bible verse is full of promises. It is amazing to me to think that the Lord has plans for us, for you and for me. Even though there are over 8.1 billion people living on Earth right now, the Lord has a unique plan for each single person. These plans are good because God is good. He cannot do any harm to anyone because that would go against His character and very nature. Keep this in mind the next time you encounter difficulties in this new year.

Perhaps you won't get into the post-secondary program you were hoping to; maybe a relationship will crumble; perhaps you may become injured in an accident, you may suffer from a chronic illness, or death will affect your family. But even in all this, God is good. He has only the very best in mind for you. He wants to see you prosper and do well, He wants to give you hope, and He wants to give you a wonderful future. These are His promises to you.

**“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” Romans 8: 28**

This New Testament promise is one that we often claim with joy when things are not going well in our life. It's a lot harder to see how God will work things out for our good when we are going through a hard time. These hard times can take many different forms. We might ask ourselves: How could these challenges or trials be for our good?

The key to understanding this promise correctly is actually in verse 29. There we read that these things work for our good in that they help us be “conformed to the image of His Son.” In other words, the trials we go through in life allow us to become more like Jesus.

For a child of God, that's really our ultimate goal in life—to become more like Jesus! God's promise to us is that He can work everything in life for our good, to make us more like Him, if we love Him and serve Him faithfully.

*From the Youth Page Team:  
Ryan & Stefanie Henkelmann (Edmonton), Dina Grötzinger (Eppingen), David & Karina Knelsen (Hamilton)*

## “With the LORD All Things Begin!”

The beginning of a new year. One of many we have already experienced. And yet, each time it is a significant step for us; it touches our emotions. So many thoughts arise: questions, uncertainties, concerns, and sometimes fears. We try to hide them, especially because we are people of faith. Logically, we know and are aware that God holds “the whole world in His hands.” At least that’s what the children sing. And yet, as humans, we feel so helpless and uncertain at the threshold of the year.

It was many years ago—I sang in the men’s choir of a church. One song has remained unforgettable to me. From time to time, I am reminded of it, especially at the start of something new, like a new year. The song begins like this: “With the Lord all things begin!” It is quite old; the lyrics were written about 200 years ago by Christoph Christian Hohlfeldt (1776-1849). The song has not lost its meaning over the years. The message is as strong as a boulder in the breakers. It not only guides and encourages but also has biblical references. Shall we look at the words together?

“With the Lord . . . as a child I must trust Him.” How important these words are, especially at the start of the year. The concept of trust runs like a common thread throughout the entire Bible. The Old Testament patriarchs, the authors of the Psalms, the prophets, the apostles of the New Testament, and especially Jesus Christ Himself speak of childlike trust. Instead of listening to the news and predictions of man, we should take the hand of our Heavenly Father and say, “I trust You, my Father . . .”

“With the Lord . . . on thy own strength building never.” Building on your own strength is risky and dangerous. If we do not trust the Lord, there is often nothing left but to rely on our own strength. But relying solely on our strength and thinking is unreliable. It is immensely better to trust in Him and His strength.

“With the Lord . . . humbly keep from pride and sin. With the Lord all things begin.” Humility should be our constant companion in the new year. May God keep us from arrogance and conceit, for God opposes such people “but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

“With the Lord . . . Jesus as thy Shepherd leading.” Some years ago, I read a newspaper article about young people who attempted to climb a mountain without a guide. They thought they could succeed without one. Unfortunately, the story ended tragically. How different it is when we turn to the Lord and say, “Please take my hands and lead me . . .”

“With the Lord . . . then the goal thou will be reaching.” Ultimately, it is about reaching the goal. Whoever chooses the Lord as their guide and lets Him lead will reach their goal. Jesus refers to His followers as a flock of sheep. He, the Good Shepherd, goes ahead of His flock, “and His sheep follow Him” (John 10:4). On this path, it is impossible to miss the goal.

“With the Lord . . . safe the path He guides thee in. With the Lord all things begin.” In this part of the song, we can see various thoughts coupled together: the Guide, reaching the goal, and finally, the thought of the safe pathway. God always leads us with the goal in mind. The path does not always match our ideas,



thoughts, and expectations. Nevertheless, we can know that it is the right path we are on—God’s way. And that is known as the safe path.

“With the Lord . . . courage will thy Helper offer.” The words “Helper” and “courage” immediately catch my attention. Both are needed. Whoever starts the year with the Lord and stays close to Him will soon realize that He is there as our Helper. “He will never fail to help you.” And this every day anew! 365 times in the year ahead of us.

“With the Lord . . . and with joy thy work will prosper.” He is not only by our side to help, strengthen, and encourage but supports us so we can joyfully go our way and complete our tasks, our life. This reminds me of the words of the Apostle Paul, whose desire was to finish his race with joy (Acts 20:24).

“With the Lord . . . thou hast done it all for Him. With the LORD all things begin.” The reason why all is possible lies in this last statement, “done it all for Him,” for God. Therefore, we should always intentionally have God at the center of our lives.

These words of the lyricist are profound. They are especially significant at the threshold of the year.

I have an idea. Why don’t we sing (or you sing) the entire song—right now? The words of this song should engrave themselves deeply into our hearts so that we do not forget them. And now let us take courage, dear brothers and sisters. Those who begin the year with the Lord are safe and secure and will joyfully complete their journey!

*Harry Semenjuk*

With the LORD all things begin!  
As a child, trust Him forever  
On thy own strength building never,  
Humbly keep from pride and sin.

Refrain (Repeat)

|: With the LORD all things begin. :|

With the LORD all things begin!  
Jesus as thy Shepherd leading,  
Then the goal thou will be reaching.  
Safe the path He guides thee in  
|: With the LORD all things begin. :|

With the LORD all things begin!  
Courage will thy Helper offer,  
And with joy thy work will prosper,  
Thou hast done it all for Him!  
|: With the LORD all things begin. :|

Christoph Christian Hohlfeldt 1776-1849

# I Will Be With You

## Part 1: How I Found Salvation

*Salomon Weissburger (1887–1968)*

*God said to the young Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). Thus God had already chosen his messenger Solomon Weissburger before he knew it. The brother wrote this autobiography at the age of 80 with the aim of pointing out God’s wonderful guidance in his life.*

*God called him to follow Him as a young man, allowed him to undergo thorough training for spiritual ministry, and then sent him into the vast field of work. His life impressively demonstrates the work of the Holy Spirit as a teacher and guide. With great wisdom, this mentor allowed him to learn the biblical teachings in theory and practice. His path led him into strength but also into great weakness, into responsibility and the simultaneous awareness of complete dependence on God and His will.*

*God gave him tasks in the years of upheaval of the 20th century in Germany, sent him to icy Siberia, and let him find his final resting place under the hot Brazilian sun in 1968 after a life of sacrifice.*

*This biography also gives us a small insight into the development of the Church of God in Germany. The brother describes a series of experiences and encounters from the years 1907 to 1936 in Germany. God was able to entrust him with important tasks over many years and to spread the gospel in Germany. The last part then reports on the pioneering work in Brazil under the most difficult conditions. But day after day, God gave him grace, strength, wisdom, and guidance. He was never abandoned by God.*

*“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow” (Hebrews 13:7). Let us look at the faithfulness and wisdom of God in a consecrated life, learn from it, and also serve God faithfully in the 21st century.*

### Introduction

“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul” (Psalm 66: 16).

Out of love for my Savior, and to the glory of His blessed name, I would like to share some of the wonderful leadings of God in my life.

I was born in southern Germany on February 21, 1887. My parents were Jews, raised in that religion from a young age. When I was ten years old, my mother died, and I was placed in a Jewish orphanage. After

completing my education, I apprenticed as a businessman.

In 1904, when I was 17 years old, I met Karl Müller. A brother in Christ affiliated with the Church of God, this man from Freudenstadt in the Black Forest was led by God to a house where a young man seeking biblical truth was living. I remember my first conversation with Brother Müller like it was yesterday. He opened by asking, “What religion do you belong to?” I answered, “I am an Israelite.” Then I asked him the same question.

He replied, “I belong to the Church of God. There are no sinners in the Church, and all members’ names





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are written down in Heaven.” That was a new concept to me, and it made a deep impression. He asked me to come to his room so that he could use the Old Testament to show me that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Accepting the invitation, I entered his room to find an Old Testament with Hebrew annotations, translated by Israelites from Hebrew into German. That put rest to my prejudices. He opened it to Isaiah and read aloud some of the well-known prophecies regarding Jesus. He did not say much else, but something wonderful happened within me: My inner eyes were opened, and I clearly saw that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. When I left the room, I was filled with conviction. Jesus could have been speaking about me when He said, “Flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16: 17).

For all of eternity, I will be grateful to the Lord for this hour. However, the battle was only beginning. One voice said to me, “I must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” But another power held my mouth shut. Around four weeks passed like this before I got the strength to give a small testimony. Even then, I qualified the testimony by saying that it would be impossible for me to become a Christian myself. This obstacle seemed insurmountable, and I felt too weak to take up the fight again. When I discussed this with Brother Müller, he said, “The Lord will be with you!” This struck me like words from Heaven, and the Lord

grew in my eyes. My soul was filled with power and faith, knowing that I could not fail if God was with me, even if everything else worked against me. I began praying to the Lord and repenting, and He granted forgiveness for my sins. Three or four days after that, we got together again for another discussion.

I told him that, because the Lord had forgiven my sins, I wanted to join the church he had spoken about, where no members were sinners and all had their names recorded in Heaven. That first discussion with him had been engraved in my mind, and I will never forget it. He answered something like, “If you have been born again, you were born into the Church of God. The Lord has already accepted you. You are already a member of the Church of God.” This brought a new ray of light into my soul, and I understood what the Church of God was. Praise be to God!

More than 60 years have passed since the moment I found my eternal home in the Church. In all this time, I have encountered no better option. In fact, I came to realize that there can be nothing better because the true Church of God is the church of the living God. Within a few months, the Holy Spirit was able to give such grace to a 17-year old, sitting in sin and darkness, to be able to recognize this.

It seems to me that there was hardly another person who was as ignorant about Christianity as I was. Despite this ignorance, God granted me a personal



conviction deep enough to clearly see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God also gave me true salvation, which held firm through the most difficult times of my life, and let me recognize the one true Church of God.

Before, in my old life, I believed it was a sin to speak the name of Jesus. I think that every child of God should have such a personal conviction of Jesus Christ and of biblical truth. Only if we ourselves are firmly convinced of the truth can we properly defend it before others.

If the first Christians had not had such a deep personal conviction that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, it would have been impossible for them to take up the fight, living, suffering, and even dying for this truth! I believe that we need such a personal conviction to stand up for the Kingdom of God during these times of unbelief and confusion. I bought a Bible and with great longing read the New Testament, which confirmed the truths that had been revealed to me.

My relatives soon found out about my conversion. This led to a big fight with my family and the Jewish merchant where I worked. I went through a difficult time that lasted about six months.

I was in a similar situation as other Israelites who became Christians. Most of the time, I was without brothers and sisters in Christ, but the Lord gave me the grace to love Jesus more than my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, earthly things, and my own life. I

would like to briefly mention some of these struggles:

One day, my father came to see me. It was an extremely difficult day for me. He had a stick in his hand and threatened not to let me go until I promised to renounce Christianity. But the Lord helped me to stand firm and not give in to my father. Two days later, the businessman spoke to me, probably at my father's request. He asked me if I had performed the usual Jewish prayers. I replied, "No!" He insisted on it. Because I didn't follow his orders, he commanded me to leave the store immediately.

Alone, without help, I stood on the street. Where should I stay now? It was impossible for me to go home. And anyone familiar with German conditions knows that you couldn't get a job as a shopkeeper just like that. At the time, I only had 90 cents in my pocket. In all this, the Lord preserved my soul and kept me in peace. He took care of me. After about an hour, I was brought back by the businessman I just mentioned, and for a while my greatest need was over. I stayed at this store for another year.

Most of the time, I was without the fellowship of God's children, but I longed for it very much. I resigned from my position, although they did everything they could to keep me. The boss promised me a higher salary, but I paid no attention. When the Lord redeemed my soul, everything earthly took a back seat to the spiritual.

*~ to be continued ~*

## Lost and Found

**Y**ears ago, I delivered a sermon about the story of the prodigal son. As I prepared to go to my apartment after the conclusion of the service, a man approached me in the hallway and asked if he could speak with me privately. I was happy to oblige.

We went upstairs. He introduced himself and asked me not to be startled: “I am a criminal who is wanted by the authorities.” He then shared his shocking life story. He had plunged into gruesome depths. A prison sentence lay behind him. And now, he had committed a new and serious crime, which is why he was wanted by the prosecutor’s office. The police were on his trail. He knew it. In his current inner state, returning to the prison cell was not an option for him. He feared despair, madness. In this inner and outer distress, he had made his way to the town’s fortification wall that Sunday afternoon. Yet an Invisible Hand held him back from the final plunge into the abyss. He turned around and came back into town. The path led him past our chapel. A young man approached him and asked him to join the assembly, since the church service had just begun. He allowed the young man to lead him into the chapel, where he heard the sermon about the prodigal son.

“Is what you preached true? Does God have grace for a wretched person such as I am?”

“Yes!” I answered that question joyfully. Then we prayed together. There was a long, earnest struggle with God. Finally, at the tenth hour of the evening, the jubilation of faith finally broke through for him. “Mercy has been shown to me; mercy I’m not worthy of!” he rejoiced.

Then, he made two requests. I should tell his dear mother that her lost son, who had caused her endless sorrow and heartache, had found his way back to God

and become a new person. And secondly, he asked me to take him to the police station. He wanted to turn himself in that very hour. We did just that, but what a heavy task it was.

The detective was shocked when he heard the man’s name. He bade me goodbye and then calmly allowed himself to be handcuffed. He was sentenced to eight years in prison. We exchanged a few letters. Then I heard nothing more from him.

One afternoon, I was in the company of some spiritual friends. A prison chaplain sat next to me. We shared some experiences. Among other things, I told him the story of the criminal’s conversion.

“I can finish his story for you,” stated the man. And then he told me that one day, this inmate had sent word to him, telling the prison chaplain about his conversion. He went on to explain that he had become a new person with no other desire but to love and honor his Savior, from whom he had received forgiveness and peace. “It won’t be long now; I can feel it! Soon I will be transferred from this prison to the Father’s house.”

The chaplain continued: “Six months later, I was called to the infirmary. There he lay before me. He was fighting his final battle. His hands were folded in prayer. His gaze was directed upwards. Suddenly, his facial expression changed. The morning glow of eternity shone forth. ‘I’ve reached the destination! Now it’s from prison to the Father’s house!’ He closed his eyes and was home.”

I can’t forget this story. May it be a blessing to many! May it encourage young people to kindly invite others to worship with them! May all the lost sons and daughters who read or hear this story gain courage to trust the gracious Savior. He won’t reject you, lost soul! You just need to come as you are. ■

# *Guide Me With Your Eyes, Lord!*

**I do not know what tomorrow is going to bring me.  
I cannot tell what the future holds in store.  
I cannot see the path that lies before me,  
But I will trust in the Lord forevermore.**

**Perhaps my path leads through dark and dreary valleys,  
Or perhaps there's sunshine and singing every day.  
I know that Jesus is on the journey with me.  
If I follow Him, I shall never go astray.**

**Should friends prove untrue, should they forsake me,  
Should shame and sorrow be what the future brings,  
Should I grow poor or be robbed of my possessions,  
The joy in the Lord is more than all these things.**

**Lord, guide me with Your eyes and I will follow.  
Lord, lead me with Your strong and mighty hand.  
Lord, guide me with Your eyes and I will follow,  
And bring me home into that heavenly land.**

*Gerhard Mielke*