

## MONDAY MANNA

8 April 2019

### THAT TERRIFYING, TERRIFIC FIRST STEP

By Robert J. Tamasy

A journey of a thousand miles, according to the Chinese proverb, begins with a single step. In more contemporary terms, you cannot finish something until you decide to start. The problem for many people is, they never get started.

I can relate to this. There are some things I once dreamed of doing, even might have considered to be life goals, but I never accomplished them. Because I did not take that first single step. Even though I have been a professional writer, I have never written a novel – because I have yet to take that first step. In high school, I played drums in several bands, but always wanted to improve my skills. I never took that first step to do so. I have always wondered if I have the ability to paint landscapes. But – you are right – to date I have not taken the first step to learn how.

On the other hand, I can think of “first steps” I have taken, ones that have made all the difference in my journey, both professionally and personally. Early on, I transferred to a different university because I wanted to study journalism. This resulted in my career that has spanned nearly 50 years. I always felt intimidated by speaking in public but took the first step to put myself into situations where I had to speak in front of groups. Public speaking still isn’t my strength, but I can do it reasonably well when necessary.

After more than 44 years of marriage, I wonder where I would be today if I had not taken that first step to ask my wife out on a date. And we had often talked about taking a trip together to another country; last year we finally did that, accepting the invitation of some friends to join them on a memorable trip to Italy.

Dr. Mark Jobe, president of Moody Bible Institute, on his radio program spoke about the importance – and difficulty – of taking the first step. He pointed out many reasons for people being reluctant to take the all-important first step, but here are three of the most common. I have added some biblical passages that apply to each of these:

**Conditions are not ideal.** Jobe used an example of desiring to start an outdoor exercise program. One day might feel too cold. The next day might be a bit too hot. Conditions are rarely perfect for taking the first step, so the best plan is simply to take it as soon as possible, then continue moving forward, one day at a time. The Scriptures urge us to, *“A man’s steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?”* (Proverbs 20:24).

**Timing might not seem perfect.** Many of us desire to make a difference in the world around us, whether it means getting involved in community activities, or investing time and energy in helping another person grow personally and spiritually. There is no excuse for waiting; there is no better time to start than now. *“Do not say to your neighbour, ‘Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you,’ when you already have it with you”* (Proverbs 3:28). *“...redeeming the time, for the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:16).

**Stepping out in faith may force you to confront your greatest fears.** In some cases, fear prevents us from taking that initial step. It could be fear of failure, fear of the unknown, or fear of how others might react. That is where faith fits into the equation: When we feel great anxiety, trusting in the Lord enables us to take that step anyway. *“So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”* (Isaiah 41:10).

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

What can you think of that you have never accomplished – at least to this point – because you have been unwilling, or too afraid, to take that first step?

Can you think of something you were initially reluctant to do or to try, but once you determined to take the first step, discovered it was life-changing – and now you sometimes wonder why you delayed moving into action for so long?

How can we overcome hesitation to step out when conditions do not seem to be the best, or you question whether the timing is right for getting started?

In what ways can faith in God – trusting in and relying on Him – enable us to get past fears that may be causing us to procrastinate over that first step? What about taking the most important first step of all, committing your life to Jesus Christ and making Him the Lord of your life – have you done that yet?

*NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this topic, consider the following passages:*

Psalm 37:4-5

Proverbs 3:5-6

2 Corinthians 6:2

Colossians 4:5