

Bring Us to a Good Start

لنبداً بدعاً حسناً



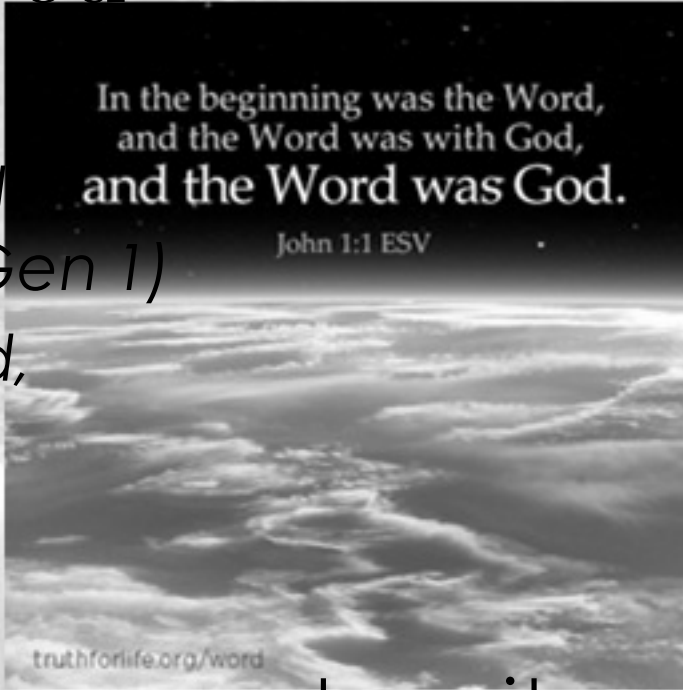
The Beginning...

- “...preserve us and bring us to a good start”
(First Hour prayer)
- First step
→ success or failure
- Half the work; must be completed
- Baby's first step
- Monk's first day
- How to Begin?



1. Begin with God

- He is the beginning:
 - “In the **beginning** God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen 1)
 - “In the **beginning** was the Word, and the Word was **with God**, and the Word was **God**.” (Jn 1)
- His Grace is always available; we must use it:
 - “Behold, I **stand** at the door and **knock**. If anyone hears My voice and **opens** the door, I will come in to him ...” (Rev 3:20)
 - opens the door: our work



In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

John 1:1 ESV

truthforlife.org/word

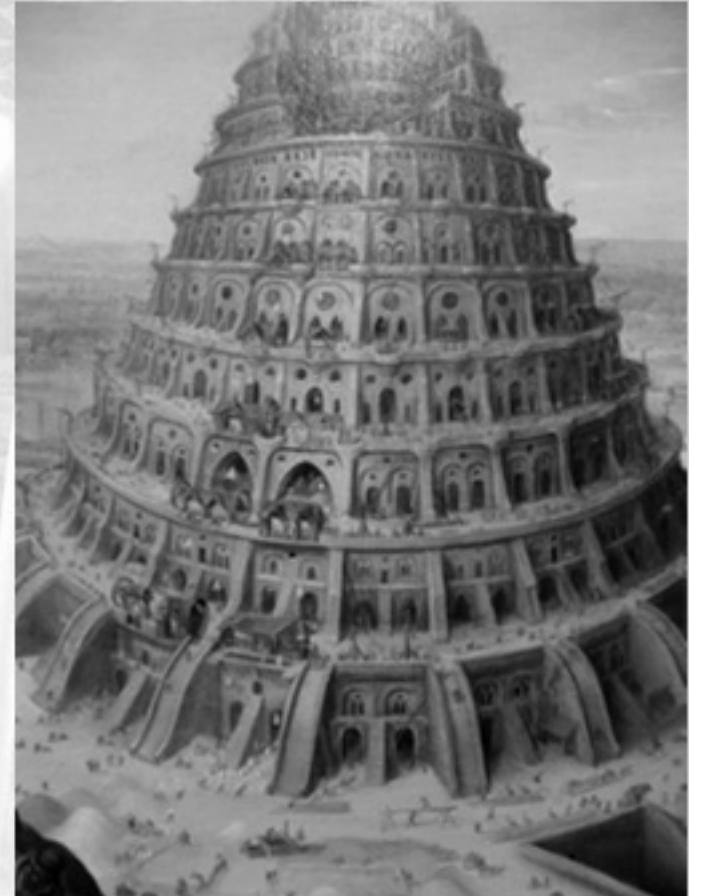
2. Begin with Principles

- Struggle to keep them
 - Judas – started with Grace, performed miracles
 - Lack of principles → betrayal
- Source of principles: Holy Bible



3. Perfect Your Way

- “ ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to **finish it**—
²⁹lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him” (Lk 14)
- Count the cost
 - Have a plan, map



Types of Beginnings

- Good Beginning
- Bad/Evil Beginning
- Incomplete/Shallow Beginning



Good Beginning

- Beginning of righteousness, wisdom
 - (fear of the Lord)
- Serious beginning!
 - Studying from day 1 seriously (principles) for 10 months → graduation (perfection)
 - “⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has **begun a good work** in you will **complete** it until the day of Jesus Christ;” (Phil 1)
- Good beginnings:
 - consecration, service, monasticism, marriage, study, work...



Bad/Evil Beginning

- Foolish, wrong – beginning of sin
- A “new” bad beginning along the path:
 - “Are you so **foolish**? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal 3)
 - Started well (with Spirit), stopped (went backwards), ended in shame
 - Judas, Demas, St. Peter
- Some began foolishly, fixed their way:
 - Saul of Tarsus, Moses the Black, Augustine
 - Not easy to make that change, requires principles!



Incomplete/Shallow Beginning

- Some hardships (can't find a house/job/wife)
→ Monasticism!
- Someone attractive → marriage, without thinking, researching, praying
- “...all who see it begin to mock him” (Lk 14)
 - Started without principles
- Saul of Tarsus:
 - began with principles of Gamaliel,
 - God guided and instructed him,
 - he accepted the refined principles,
 - went to the desert (action): meditate, think, plan,
 - became an apostle!



What are the Principles?

1. Faithfulness - الأمانة
2. Order - النظام
3. Enthusiasm - الحماس



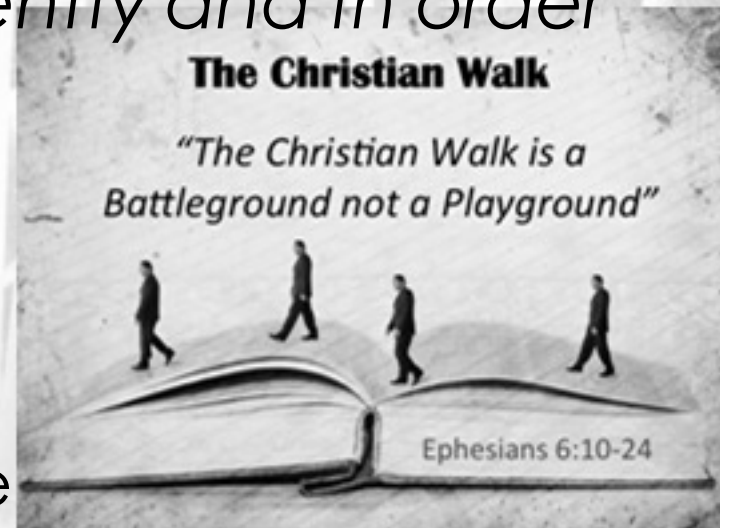
Faithfulness

- “Be **faithful until death**, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)
- Daily life-long faithfulness
- You chose a path, remain faithful in it:
 - Work, school, family life, monastic life, service...
 - Story: youth working 20 days → 15 years
- Even if no one is watching
- Faithfulness in time!



Order

- “¹⁵ See then that you walk **circumspectly**, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶**redeeming the time**, because the days are evil.” (Eph 5)
- Over-burden yourself – will not succeed in any
 - A student: studying FT, working FT, betrothed FT
 - New priest: Liturgies, Bible Studies, Hymn classes, ...
- “*Let all things be done decently and in order*” (1 Cor 14)
- God of order:
 - Creation in 7 days
 - Feeding the 5000
 - Order of service in Tabernacle



Order

- Without order, things take more time:
 - Traffic in Egypt!
- Oil Rig Day Rate: \$500K
 - If you finish drilling 6 days early: \$3M
 - Biggest challenge on rigs: safety violations – disregarding order
- Prayer is organized: Agpia – 7 prayers
 - Liturgy – Vespers, Praises, Matins, Offering, Readings, Eucharist
- St. Paul's missionary trips:
 - Each was longer than previous
 - because of order and experience



Enthusiasm

- Always see the goal!
- *“Cursed is the man that does the works of the Lord deceitfully [carelessly]^{LXX}” (Jer 48:10)*
- Enthusiasm fills one with energy
- The Whole Armor of God (Eph 6)
 - A soldier: energetic, ready, focused
- Nehemiah: *“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down!” (Neh 6)*



Enthusiasm

- Hunt dogs: chase prey, only 1 sees the goal.
- “⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have **left your first love**. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you **have fallen**; repent and do the first works” (Rev 2)
- The goal must be clear, so we can continue
- What is the goal of the service?



Bring Us to a Good Start

1. Three steps:

1. Begin with God
2. Begin with Principles
3. Perfect your way: **“I am the way” (Jn 14)**

2. Three beginnings:

1. Good
2. Bad
3. Incomplete

3. Three principles:

1. Faithfulness – in everything
2. Order – “walk circumspectly”
3. Enthusiasm – Always see the goal

