



# New Beginnings!

Manda Lewis

At the beginning of this New Year, I received a booklet from Hope 103.2, called 'Starting Well'. So, to vary my normal Bible reading, I decided to take up this 31 day set of readings.

Often I find myself challenged about my personal prayer life, whether it be in depth or breadth or regularity. Prayer is something that I find easier to embrace when I feel out of my depth, in whatever circumstances I am facing. Toward the end of the booklet I was challenged yet again about how I see prayer and, in effect, part of the way I relate to God.

In response to Hebrews 4:14-16 was written: "... as in any true friendship, we don't simply talk to Him to get something from Him... Prayer is never to be merely functional, a means whereby we get what we figure is good for us. It does involve the sharing of feeling and the expression of desire, but it is more than that. If prayer is seen as an outworking of our friendship with God, it ceases to be simply a means to an end. It is itself an end."

It is my prayer for myself and you, that we will continue to get to know God for who He really is and that, as we do, this will grow us into the children of God He desires us to be.

With so many life changes over the past twelve months, at times I have been brought to my knees asking God what He is doing and how He wants me to respond. But as I was also reminded in my recent study based on Jeremiah 6:16-19, "When faced with life choices, we

need first to be sure that God plays no games with us. If we are intent on following Him, He will not idly stand back and watch us head down the wrong road. True, many times each road is equally acceptable to Him: not all crossroads are matters of choosing good or bad. However, when such a choice is before us, God will direct our thinking and our choosing."

I have not only had a lot of change to adapt to, but many of those changes have required me to make significant choices. Though stressful at the time, in hindsight I am immensely thankful for the changes and challenges that continually refine my faith and make me me. God has been gracious and His love has continued to prove unconditional.

Since returning to Australia in the first half of December, I have endured the grief of losing my Nan (Dad's Mum); the joy of meeting my new niece Emily; and more 'firsts' with Josh, from Christmas, to New Years and Valentine's Day.

Alongside these 'firsts' have been celebrations and preparations, not least to mention our Engagement Party on 8th February. It was such an amazing blessing to have many loved ones celebrate this special day with us, and particularly since our actual Engagement took place overseas. Again, I want so express Josh's and my thankfulness to those who, despite the 40C heat, were able to make it, and who generously showered us with love and even gifts.

On the latter side of our engagement

## Please Pray...

» **Praise** God for His peace among so many significant changes and **Pray** that He would continue to shape Josh's and my plans as we keep making decisions about our future together.

» **Praise** God for a joyful time with family and friends at our Engagement Party and **Pray** for things to go smoothly, both in the lead up to and, on our wedding day. May God be glorified.

» **Pray** that God will guide the development of the Roma Network, my role in member care and my decision about the after school care position.



Sharing the love of God through International Teams

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party and Newcastle photo shoot, wedding preparations are certainly in full swing, with just five weeks to go.

We are both very grateful for all the support and help we have already had in the lead up to our wedding. It truly is amazing to see all the bits and pieces starting to take shape, as the reality continues to set in that, life as we know it is all about to change... and we can't wait!

Of course change goes beyond the fact that we are getting married. After our honeymoon, Josh and I will be house sitting for three months whilst we look for somewhere to live beyond this. With Josh studying Mechatronics at Macquarie University for another three years, it means we are bound to Sydney for this time. I am still working out what that looks like for me and in particular for my role with International Teams.

It is amazing to think that this time last year, I was planning on heading to work long term in Romania- Yet, as I look in hindsight at how God has lead and changed my path, I am reminded again about just who holds the reigns! Since initially learning the phrase "expect the unexpected," when on my first short-term trip to the Solomon Islands in 2004, I haven't ceased to hold to it. I have learnt to plan things but hold them loosely, expecting God to throw curved balls, and at the same time, knowing that I couldn't have planned things even half as well or appropriately as the Lord has done.

At this stage, I am embracing the plan of splitting my role between continuing to work on the Roma Network remotely and, after the honeymoon, taking on an aspect of the member care work for International Teams. Depending on Josh's Uni timetable, I will be working in the North Parramatta Office some days and from home on others. I am also praying about taking on an after-school-care role one afternoon per week, beginning in term two.

With regards to the Roma Network, I am currently developing a project plan to identify the needs and objectives to be established over the rest of 2015, as well as an envisioned timeline for the next few years. This may include several short term trips to Romania to host conferences and to seek and maintain links with the Roma workers around the country. There is certainly a big picture there, but how it comes to fruition, obviously only the Lord knows!

So in summary, my entire life is about to enter a new chapter, and whilst I am excited about the changes, it is certainly daunting. It is times like this when the importance of prayer is ever more evident and when, the support and love from family and friends can make all the difference between everything being suffocating or encapsulated by peace. Thank you for continuing to pray with Josh and I about our next steps.

And for those who haven't yet put it in your diary, we would love for you to join us on 4th of April (Easter Saturday), as we commit our lives to each other as husband and wife. I look forward to writing my next newsletter to you all- my first as a wife, with a new surname, from a new house, with a new job, but yet- still me!

In His hands, Manda LEWIS.

*Photos: (front page): Our Engagement shoot at Newcastle; (Above): Family Christmas- my first Christmas with Josh; with Kez, Josh, Mum, Adam & Fiona and baby Emily, and everyone at our Engagement Party on 8th Feb; Our Engagement shoot in Newcastle.*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

~ Please Join Us ~

9:00am

4th April, 2015

(Easter Saturday)

Castle Hill Baptist Church

**"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are- yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." - Hebrews 4:14-16**