

# Questions questions



Loving God, you have a purpose for us all. Make your ways known in my life this coming year. Help me to know how I can serve you, and see your glory revealed in the world. Amen.

## New year, new life

### Part 3 – a new start

by Jane Williams

Many of us start the year with a desire for a clean slate. It's something we all experience at one time or another. Maybe a relationship has gone sour, or our finances are in a muddle, or we feel stuck in a dead-end job. There's a story about a traveller asking for directions. After long thought, the local says, "If I wanted to get there I wouldn't start from here." Hardly helpful advice, but that's how life can feel.

Starting from where we actually are, it's hard to see how to get anywhere else. It is precisely this that is addressed by the Christian doctrine of salvation. We don't have to start from somewhere else in order to be saved, because God meets us where we actually are. In Jesus, God comes to the world just as it is, accepting its limitations but, by his very presence, transforming them. Jesus has lived our life, in our world, as a real human being, and has brought with him the presence and power of God. So now God is present and active in every part of life. ☺

“I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared 'Go down again – I dwell among the people.'”

John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Roman Catholic cardinal, theologian and poet

John Witcombe *reflects on* 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

**D**o you ever ask yourself, "What on earth is God up to?" I do quite often, especially as I look around where I live, in the centre of a city, with all sorts of challenges waiting as soon as I step out of the door.

People who seek after God having been asking this question throughout history – and today's readings promise that those who are looking for God's salvation will find God, whether in the seedy port city of Corinth, or wherever you live.

As we continue through Epiphany, the season of God's revealing, where is God calling you? We are not too far into the year to break free of old habits. It is not too late to find new freedoms, as we seek to serve God in new ways. When John, Simon and Andrew realised that there was something special about Jesus, they didn't hesitate to follow him into a new life.

If you want to know what God's up to, ask to be taken somewhere new! Each of us has been called by God to play a part in the overall purpose of good for the world – do you know what yours is? Are you living it out? As you set out into this year, be confident that God will be revealed to you and those around you. ☺

## Bible characters

### Hosea

by Caroline Fletcher

Hosea was a prophet who lived more than seven hundred years before Christ in the Hebrew Northern Kingdom. His prophecies are recorded in the Old Testament book that bears his name. He warned people to stop worshipping idols, or God would destroy the nation. Unfortunately, nobody listened and the Assyrians invaded, taking many captives.

Although Hosea proclaimed God's judgement, his own personal circumstances showed

him much about God's love, revealing that God did not punish lightly. The pain Hosea felt when his wife was repeatedly unfaithful helped him understand God's pain over Israel's unfaithfulness: Israel had rejected and hurt God, just as Hosea's wife had rejected and hurt him. Yet despite this, God could not stop loving Israel and punishing them was heartbreaking. Hosea describes God crying, "How can I give you up, Ephraim [Israel]?"

Hosea shows us a God who, despite our faithlessness, just keeps on loving us. ☺