Looking Forward to 2011 **[1]**

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I am usually a very sentimental person and get very much so around the end of a year. Looking back at the end of the year offers one the opportunity to reminisce about the good times and reflect on the bad times.

2010 has brought me new friends and new friendships. It has seen my understanding of the Bible grow. I went on my first mission (hopefully not my last) and gained new insights. For these things, I am truly thankful and feel very blessed.

But 2010 has also brought a fair share of pain and heartache. At the risk of being labelled a cynic again, I think it is necessary to stop and consider the "negative" of the year, as it has hit hard and close to home this year. Death and near-death reminded me of how short our time here on earth is and the destructive power of sin. But perhaps more than reflecting on my own mortality, it reminded me of the mortality of other people who still need to hear the gospel. I also had my heart broken into a million pieces for other people. The bitter lesson of patience is one that I continue to grow in; I wonder, however, how much I really have grown in this regard.

So what about 2011? Looking forward, I am very excited, because 2011 is going to be a game-changer. I Grow Up and start a Real Job. This has me rearing with anticipation; so much so that I hardly think about the challenges that I am going to face. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement: I am now going to start a journey which is likely to last, in one form or the other, for 40 years. This prospect has me dreaming big and bold. But I am brought back down to earth again when I think about James' words to the proud and defiant:

> Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow let's go into this city, and spend a year there, trade, and make a profit.' Whereas you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. For what is your life? For you are a vapour, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will both live, and do this or that.'
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> James 4:13–15 (WEB)

This is a great comfort for me. It causes me some anxiety, sure, because I always want to be in control. I want to create my own fortune and security. But patience and obedience are the lessons I continue to be instructed in. At the end of the day, I just want to be nearer to the Lord and follow Him more closely. I want to live out the purpose of my life that He has apportioned me. And I am much too much a fool to be able to discern this purpose myself, so all that I can do is surrender the course of—but not absolve responsibility for—my life to the One who conceived me long before I was

conceived.

My the Lord bless you in 2011. Let His will be done. Shalom alicheim.

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