

## New Beginnings

In the late 1890s, Swedish Christian, Eric Lund felt God was leading him to become a missionary to Spain. He soon left Sweden to begin his work there convinced he was doing what God wanted him to do. However, his work in Spain was unsuccessful and Lund became frustrated. Then, he met a Filipino man, Braulio Manikan, Lund shared his faith and Manikan became a believer.

Soon the two began translating the Bible into Haligaynon, a language spoken by millions of people in the Philippines. After hearing about their work, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, committed to fund Lund and sent him to the Philippines. He founded the *Jaro Evangelical Church*, the Philippine's first Baptist church and the first Protestant church outside the capital city of Manilla on February 28, 1900.

Dr. Lund and his church were to have an incredible impact, not merely on their community, but on the entire Philippine nation. In 1905, just five years after the church started, it established the first Baptist university in the Philippines, Central Philippine University. The school could not have launched that year without a generous grant from millionaire, John D. Rockefeller.

Lund, like most people who initially fall short, must have felt he was a failure. His decision to leave Spain could not have been easy. However, it illustrates that what appears to be a mistake, may ultimately be used by God in amazing ways.

The Bible is filled with the stories of people who seemed to be a failure, but who eventually saw God use them in ways they could not have imagined. There is Joseph, who in Genesis 38-50, was sold into slavery by his brothers. He became Pharaoh's number two man in Egypt and saved his world from starvation. We also learn of Mark who quit in the middle of his first mission trip, but who eventually penned the Bible book bearing his name. And of course, there is Peter, the famous apostle who denied Jesus three times the evening before his crucifixion, but who later became pastor of the world's first church.

When we attempt to do something bigger than we are, it is no surprise we sometimes fail. However, the prophet Isaiah offers this encouraging promise, "*Truly, O God of Israel, our Savior, you work in mysterious ways.*" (Isaiah 45:15, NLT)

According to Isaiah, God's ways are not always clear, they are, a mystery. As we learn to trust God, we discover he is capable of turning our failures into fresh opportunities. Like Lund and the Bible heroes mentioned earlier, God often surprises those who trust him, with new beginnings they could never anticipate.