Lao Tzu, famous Chinese philosopher, once said, ‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.’

In terms of sheer impact he isn’t quite at the same high level of phootballer filosophers Cantona and Keegan, yet as well as containing a lot of wisdom about life in general this simple sentence manages to speak into the footballing world as well.

Coming into the club after sustaining a serious injury and lying on the physio’s table getting agitated about your possible return date will do you no good at all. You have to take it one day at a time and deal with what’s in front of you. Running out onto the pitch in August dreaming about winning the league isn’t a good strategy for winning the game. As we know all too well the season is long and it has many twists and turns. To use a cliché; play one game at a time.

And today we have another step towards or away from promotion. As we approach the 2nd May (or the 23rd depending…) these games feel increasingly important, yet in terms of points no more valuable than the three points gained on a cold and wet Tuesday evening in November. Just one more step (I could use that as my page title next season – what do you think?).

So often the lessons of football are transferable to life, and vice versa. And at the heart of true wisdom you will always find God’s word to us in the Bible. The book or Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, some incredibly profound and others surprisingly practical. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger, for instance. And how about ‘Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. The book of proverbs tells us that a successful life is one full of wise decision in the small things – one foot in front of the other – and that if you trust in God and his lessons for life things will go well for you.

Jesus also speaks into this in his sermon on the mount when he said ‘Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow has enough troubles of it’s own. Just deal with what’s in front of you today.’

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step: wherever you are on that journey, whether near the destination or just starting out, success will depend on focussing on the next step and not getting caught up in thinking too far down the line.

What helps me in this discipline is the knowledge that whatever does face me down the line I will not be alone. One of the names for Jesus that was announced at his birth was Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us’, and the stand out characteristic of the Judeo-Christian religion is that God is with us: to the extent that he sent his only son into the world to die for us in order to make peace between man and God, in order to bring us back into relationship with us.

Our Chinese friend Lao Tzu also said that the further one goes the less one knows. This is so true isn’t it? And as your growing life experience brings more and more uncertainty into your outlook the central truths become more important to remember, one of which for me is that even thought it sometimes feels like it I am never alone, God is with me through his spirit thanks to his son, Jesus. I hope you will be able to know this for yourself if you don’t already, and that you will live each day that he gives you to the full. God bless you.