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God Leads Us One Step at A Time

by Zac Poonen

I have discovered through the years that God leads us one step at a time. His promise is: "As you go, step by step I will open up the way before you" (Proverbs 4:12 - Literal translation). The pillar of cloud led the Israelites day by day. So does the Holy Spirit lead us today.

Soon after I received the assurance of salvation, I was told that the next step for me was to be baptized in water. I had been christened as a baby in the Syrian Orthodox church - a ceremony that they called "baptism". And I knew that there were born-again Christians on both sides of this theological fence - those who were "baptized" only as babies like me and those who were baptized as believers. I decided therefore to study the Word of God on this subject to see what it said.

As I studied the Word, I discovered a number of truths: First of all, there was not a single mention of child-baptism in the entire New Testament. A few instances of baptism of entire families were there, but there was no mention of whether there were any babies in those families - and we cannot prove any doctrine from the silences of Scripture. John the Baptist baptized only adults. Jesus Himself was baptized only when He was an adult. Jesus baptized adults (John 4:1) but only laid hands on (blessed) children. (Many churches however do the exact opposite: they baptize children and lay hands on adults (confirmation)!) When God blotted out my past completely, that included my unscriptural child-baptism as well!! The first step of obedience that every believer took in Acts of the Apostles was water-baptism.

All this convinced me that I needed to be baptized. But some child-baptized believers told me that there was a far greater need for preaching the gospel in the Orthodox churches than in the believers' assemblies; and if I got baptized, I would be expelled from the Orthodox church and would then lose opportunities to give the gospel to the unbelievers there. This seemed a very convincing argument - and so I decided not to be baptized.

I remained thus for 18 months. But every time I knelt down to pray, I felt as if God was saying to me: "If you are not listening to Me, why should I listen to you." And in all those 18 months I made NO spiritual progress at all. This began to disturb me. Finally I told the Lord that I would obey Him, even if I was thrown out of every church in the world. And so in January 1961 I got baptized.

After that, I began to grow in my Christian life by leaps and bounds. I then realized that I could not possibly be a blessing to others, if I was disobedient to God's commands myself. I decided thereafter that I would obey God's Word immediately in every matter - big or small - whatever men or churches may say. How much spiritual loss we suffer when we listen to the arguments of human reason and disobey God's Word.

Since that first step of obedience 45 years ago, God has shown me many more steps of obedience. But each time, He showed me the next step, only after I had taken the step He had already shown me. God's Word is "a lamp to our feet" (Psalm 119:105), meaning that it shows us only the next step for our feet and not the whole road in front of us. This is like holding a torch and walking along a dark road. We can see only a little bit of the road at a time - just enough for the next step. To see more of the road ahead, we have to move forward.

If I had not taken that first step of obedience, I might never have seen another step in God's will for my life - and I would have wasted my days on earth, even if I did go to heaven. If God has clearly shown you some step of obedience now, obey Him immediately, lest you miss the will of God for your life.

Obedience is a step-by-step matter.