



Following the Cloud

Lessons on Guidance from Desert University

Desert Lesson 5: Guidance Is Step—Stretch—Leap

Introduction

In Desert Lesson 5, Pastor Jamie explores what it means to follow God's guidance when the path is unpredictable. Using the image of Israel following the cloud, he describes three movements of faith: a step, a stretch, and a leap.

This lesson encourages us to trust God deeply, especially when He calls us beyond comfort into the unknown.

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2 Corinthians 5:7

7For we live by faith, not by sight.

Psalms 119:105

105Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

1 Corinthians 10:13

13And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

8We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

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The Three Levels of Faith

A PROGRESSION OF SPIRITUAL TRUST: DAILY OBEDIENCE, INTENSE GROWTH, AND TOTAL SURRENDER.

LEVEL 1 – THE STEP (DAILY WALK)

THE DAILY WALK (PSALM 119:105)

Faith is a “left foot, right foot” process guided by immediate light for the next step.



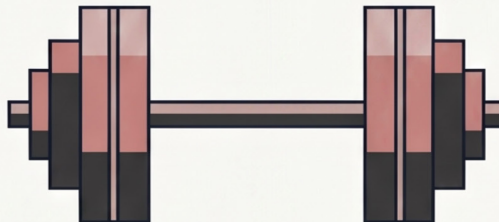
THE CLAY LAMP

An ancient oil lamp strapped to a sandal, illuminating only the immediate path ahead.

LEVEL 2 – THE STRETCH (GROWTH)

STRENGTH THROUGH RESISTANCE

Growth occurs when God “adds weight to the bar,” requiring greater reliance on Him.



THE BARBELL METAPHOR

Representing the “stretch” where you must cry out for wisdom and strength beyond yourself.

LEVEL 3 – THE LEAP (ALL-IN)

THE “ALL-IN” LEAP

Using the metaphors of a skydiver’s parachute or a high-stakes poker “all-in” moment.



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Message notes:

Yesterday's guidance is _____ for today. Whatever got you to here isn't going to get you to the next stage.

Faith journey is a _____.

It's always a _____ walk. It's never "Here's the future. Let me tell you how it's going to go."

Second level is what I call the _____ level. This is where you're putting more _____ on the bar if you're in the gym.

When you feel like you're not _____, ask yourself, *is there more weight on the bar?*

There's going to be times God's going to ask you to do things that aren't a step and it's not a stretch, but it's a _____.

You know you're stretched when you're _____, "God, help me. Jesus, I need wisdom here."

Humility is important, but don't stay in an unhealthy humility that just focuses on your _____.

Additional notes:

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Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Jamie describes 'level 1: step' as a faith walk, drawing on the biblical image of a lamp that only illuminates the next step. In what areas of your life are you tempted to demand a full picture from God rather than trusting Him with just the next step?
2. In 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, Paul describes being pressed beyond his ability to endure so that he would not rely on himself but on God. Think about a time when you experienced a season where God allowed you to be overwhelmed to deepen your dependence on Him. What did that teach you about His character?
3. The message reveals that 'level 2: stretch' is a time when God asks you to trust Him beyond what has become comfortable or familiar. Where do you sense God may be 'putting more weight on the bar', asking you to trust Him in a bigger way than before?
4. Pastor Jamie observes that older people often regret not taking more risks, and challenges us to pursue God-directed leaps rather than comfort. What is one area of your life where fear or comfort may be keeping you from a 'level 3: leap' that God has been calling you toward?

Ministry Time:

Pray for those who are struggling in their walk of faith, when each small step feels difficult and uncertain. Invite God to strengthen their hearts and remind them that His love is strong enough to keep them from wandering out of His reach.

Pray for anyone who has a stretch or leap they have been sensing. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight people in their life who can help pray for them and guide them. Pray that God would guard each person from presumptuous leaping and from fearful inaction.