

Thorsten Evans / General

Stand Alone / Baptism; Faith; Repent; Repentance; Obedience

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Today we get to celebrate a next step for 4 individuals in our church. Our lives are marked with next steps along the way. Some we celebrate publically - graduations, weddings, some we celebrate with family - birth days, promotions; and some we may celebrate quietly for ourselves - personal goals achieved, fears conquered.

I believe we all have a next step in our walk with Jesus. I don't know if you've ever considered that our faith is a walk with Jesus. Last time I checked, walking is a series of one step at a time.

What step are you on currently? What is your next step?

Have you considered this? Have you asked the Lord what He has for you next?

Speaking from experience, I think if are not intentional about growing in our faith, we don't take a next step. Not taking a next step can cause our relationship with the Lord to suffer - taking a step back.

This morning, I want to help you find your next step. I believe the first step that we take is the step of repentance.

## Next Step: Repentance

Repentance literally means to have a change of mind. Change of mind about what? About our actions and the life we are living.

Repentance starts with recognizing there is something to repent for. This usually starts with someone telling us about God's standard and how we are incapable of fully living up to that standard.

God's standard is this: living a perfect, sinless life.

I think we can all agree with Romans 3:23 on this:

### **Romans 3:23 NIV**

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Repentance is not just turning away from our sin, but it is also turning toward Jesus and the forgiveness He offers.

In Acts 3, Peter had just healed a man and he was talking with those who were watching. He said this to them:

### **Acts 3:19 NIV**

<sup>19</sup> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Our first step is recognizing our sinfulness and our need for Jesus. Maybe that's where you are at in your journey. You've been invited to church and now you've heard words express how you've always felt. It's sin and we are to repent and turn to God.

After recognizing this need, the next step is one of Faith

## Next Step: Faith

Faith is something we all have. We all place our faith in something. Today when you sat in the chair, you had faith that the chair would hold you.

When you strive and work hard for your employer, you have faith that you will be paid for that work.

The book of Hebrews defines faith like this:

### **Hebrews 11:1 NIV**

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Unfortunately people all over the world are placing their faith in themselves to be good enough. As we've already discussed we cannot be good enough to meet God's standard.

That faith is misplaced.

It's misplaced because our sin deserves death:

### **Romans 6:23 NIV**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our debt cannot be wiped clean by just doing good. Imagine if your mortgage company just told you one day to not worry about paying your debt because you've done a good job not getting any more debt...that's not how it works. The debt must be paid.

The eternal life in Jesus is only possible because he took our place for us. He paid our debt. He fulfilled the penalty of our sin on our behalf.

God has this promise for us in Romans:

### **Romans 10:9-10 NIV**

<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Our belief in Jesus and what he accomplished on the cross for us is the foundation of our faith.

Today, we will hear about the faith of these individuals. Faith that has been put in Jesus and what He accomplished on the cross.

Our next step is Obedience

## Next Step: Obedience

Once we've placed our faith in Jesus as Lord, there is a bond we have to follow Jesus and his teachings.

There are times that we get this step wrong. We don't step out in obedience so that Jesus will love us. Obedience is because we love him.

Jesus said it like this:

**John 14:15 NIV**

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, keep my commands.

John wrote this about obedience:

**2 John 6 NIV**

<sup>6</sup> And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Obedience often requires us to be selfless. To deny ourselves what we want in order to do what Jesus wants us to do.

There is a challenge to those who have newly given their life to Christ to follow Him and obey what has been commanded. We won't always get it right. Which brings us to the next step:

## Next Step: Repentance

If you have been awake, you may think that I've repeated this step.

You are correct.

If you are a Christ follower and there is a sin issue in your life or you have not been obedient in what Jesus has called you to, your next step is repentance.

Remember, repentance is both a turning away from and a turning toward. We are turning from our sin, from our disobedience and we are turning to Christ and His teaching and His ways.

The next best step any of us can make is a step of repentance. In our Art of Marriage

session last night, we heard of a couple who were drifting apart. When the wife confronted her husband about his part, he responded with repentance. His repentance caused her to look within herself and she recognized a need to repent for her part.

Their next step of repentance likely saved their marriage.

How often should we do this step? As often as needed. Probably daily.

Ask the Lord this question: Is there any area of my life that I need to make right with you? Do I need to make anything right with others?

If He reveals something to you, that is the next step you should take.

## Next Step: Faith

If you are a follower of Jesus, there will come a time where you will be challenged to make a decision that will require faith.

If you have it all figured out, will all of the steps and where all of the resources are coming from, your faith is not in the Lord, it is in yourself.

I'm not saying we don't sometimes make decisions that are logical, but those decisions are not faith.

Faith often is exercised by us acting upon a prompting of the Holy Spirit and then God meeting that action with His provision.

Some of you have been called to serve in a certain way. Your logic tells you that you are not equipped or that you would not be very good at it. When we respond to the call to serve with faith, God equips us with what we need.

I believe there are those today who have been given a vision, a calling, a prompting from the Lord and you have suppressed it because you lack faith. Your next step in your walk with the Lord is faith.

Step out in faith. Allow the Lord to show himself faithful to you.

## Next Step: Obedience

During some of the recent baptism conversations, obedience was given as the reason for getting baptized. Some even acknowledged that to get baptized was awkward and uncomfortable, but they saw where scripture says we are to be baptized and they had not done that yet.

To not come forward would have been disobedience.

There is something that happens when we are obedient. First, it allows for God's blessing to pour out on us. In Luke 5, Peter had been fishing and caught nothing. Here

is what happened:

**Luke 5:4–6 NIV**

<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

<sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

It wasn’t logical, but Simon Peter obeyed and saw a huge blessing as a result.

The second thing that happens when we obey is that we might then be entrusted with bigger things:

**Luke 16:10 NIV**

<sup>10</sup> “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

I have seen this in my life and in the life of several others. Their simple act of obedience in something small opened doors for other things that were seemingly unrelated.

Next Step:

- Repentance
- Faith
- Obedience

I believe every single one of us has a next step defined in one of these 3 ways. We might be in the thick of one of them right now and next week there’s a different next step, but we can only focus on the current next step.

Here is this illustration from Psalm 119...

**Psalm 119:105 NIV**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp for my feet,

a light on my path.

This light is only promised to light up our feet and the path right in front of us. There is no promise of a long range view of what is ahead. We don’t need that. We just need to see our very next step.

What is your next step?