

Doe The Nexte Thyng

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God may someday call you to a very difficult ministry. The challenge may be so immense that months, and maybe years, of preparation will be required. Maybe He will send you to an unreached people group. Perhaps he will have you become a foster parent. He may have plans for you to serve in a demanding role in the life of your church.

But what about today? The will of God right now, wherever you are, is for you to follow and obey Christ. Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must . . . follow Me” (Mark 8:34). And John wrote, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3).



Dreaming about and planning for future ministry endeavors is appropriate, but we must always fulfill current obligations. We still have to wake up tomorrow and take care of the children or go to work. Bills must be paid. You might have classes to attend or urgent emails to write. Perhaps someone close to us gets very sick and needs attentive care. And along with personal responsibilities come fears and worries. How will we make it financially this month? What is it going to take to get that stubborn child to obey, and what if he continues to rebel? What if I lose my job? Will we be able to keep the house?

We sometimes prefer daydreaming and scheming about the distant future because today’s God-given tasks seem mundane, or less rewarding, or too hard, or they heighten our fears. However, here’s what you can and should do immediately: *Do the next thing.*

The first three stanzas of an old poem describe it like this:¹

*From an old English parsonage down by the sea
There came in the twilight a message to me;
Its quaint Saxon legend, deeply engraven,
Hath, it seems to me, teaching from Heaven.
And on through the doors the quiet words ring
Like a low inspiration: “DOE THE NEXTE THYNGE.”*

*Many a questioning, many a fear,
Many a doubt, hath its quieting here.
Moment by moment, let down from Heaven,
Time, opportunity, and guidance are given.
Fear not tomorrows, child of the King,
Trust them with Jesus, doe the nexte thyng.*

*Do it immediately, do it with prayer;
Do it reliantly, casting all care;
Do it with reverence, tracing His hand
Who placed it before thee with earnest command.
Stayed on Omnipotence, safe ‘neath His wing,
Leave all results, doe the nexte thyng*

This way of life is not simply about “trying hard” one moment at a time. It involves trusting Christ as you take the next step of obedience, and then the next.

When Jesus says that his disciples “follow” Him, He means that they acknowledge His Lordship, listen to Him, and obey Him as their King. But you can’t do in one day what He is going to have you do in an entire week. Therefore, Jesus says, “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34). Furthermore, you can’t do in one hour what Christ has designed for you to do in an entire day. Therefore, don’t even worry about later on today—each hour has enough trouble of its own!

But here is our hope: Because Christ’s death and resurrection set us free from sin (Romans 6:6-14), and since He is with us always as the risen Lord (Matthew 28:20), there is *always* enough grace for the next thing.

*Looking for Jesus, ever serener,
Working or suffering, be thy demeanor;
In His dear presence, the rest of His calm,
The light of His countenance be thy psalm,
Strong in His faithfulness, praise and sing.
Then, as He beckons thee, doe the nexte thyng.*

¹ This anonymous poem is found in *The Shaping of the Christian Family* by Elisabeth Elliot.