

Ordered Steps

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Sometimes it's difficult to know where you're going unless you can appreciate where you have been. As a follower of Christ, I believe it would be more accurate to say, "You can't know where you have been unless you appreciate where you **absolutely** know you are going."

I come to this understanding through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit inspired David to pen a few appropriate words concerning the ordering of our steps. In his 37th Psalm, David wrote:

"If the Lord delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm (i.e., He 'orders' them), though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand." *Psalm 37.23-24 NIV*

God is faithful to His own. I believe God orders our steps. Proof of His faithfulness was demonstrated to me, in a large way, some time back. And, I can say with sincere conviction, His ordered steps for my life have not always been easy or without stress.

Around 5:00 a.m. on Monday, August 6, 2012, an elephant slipped into my bedroom, put a rock on my chest and proceeded to sit on it. I experienced all the negative effects of a heart attack and awoke in a hospital suffering with congestive heart failure and with an angioplasty and a stint in my left arterial arteries. Definitely not the way I had planned to begin my work-week. Something I have probably said many times before but, "this" gave me cause to pause.

While the medical staff took control of the moment in the emergency room, my thoughts were gripped by the seriousness of the event. I went directly to *Abba*, Daddy God, and submitted my personal understanding to Him that I wasn't done with what He had called me to do. I surrendered to His will and asked Him if it was time for me to come home.

Thus far in my walk with the Lord, I have heard His audible voice twice. This was one of those times. His answer was immediate and audible. The Holy Spirit simply said "**No**" and His peace took control. When the episode was complete, I woke up in an ICU room with renewed assurance that God was in charge. My thoughts drifted into revisiting some of the recent steps I now know God had ordered for my life.

Several weeks prior to the heart attack I had been mowing my lawn. Added to this understanding is the fact that I collect and compost the lawn clippings. Not a remarkable commitment but one that requires multiple “load-hauling walks” from the mower to the compost bin in the back yard. Usually twelve to fourteen trips per mowing effort. In reality, there was nothing extraordinary about it. However on that particular mowing adventure I ran over an exposed tree root and bent the blade on the mower. Unusual on this occurrence because I had pushed the mower over that same root many times before with no negative results.

We all know a bent blade is unacceptable and a replacement was necessary. But, try as I might, I could not get the blade off of the mower. So I took the mower, blade on, to the shop and asked them to replace the blade. Later that day a shop rep called to tell me they had the blade off but in the process they had inspected the shaft and it was bent. He also told me the cost to repair the engine exceeded the value of the mower. That meant more mowing that season would be done by others. So, how does this relate to God ordering my steps?

Well, it came together pretty well when I understood that in previous years I had easily removed the blade for sharpening. This year I could not remove it from the mower. Had I been able to remove the blade on my own, I would have simply replaced it and “banged on” with a bent shaft. All while my as yet undiscovered heart condition grew worse during the warmest part of the year.

God also has a few specific things to say about a man providing for his family. Here, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is what Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy:

“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” *1 Timothy 5.8 NIV*

Our household was fiscally running in the negative, as a direct result of the national economy and its impact on real estate development. Projects upon which I relied for funds to augment our standard SSR income were defunded and stopped. It was obvious some type of employment would be necessary to assist meeting our financial obligations. For whatever reasons, prospect after prospect went to “No” or “Not at this time.” In early December, 2011, a dear brother in Christ made me aware of a potential position with a company in Branson. It took a bit of time but I was hired and went to work in March, 2012.

As a “full-time” employee, I became eligible for an employer sponsored group health plan. And, had I not been allowed to start during the month of March, that insurance would not have been available or in-force on August 6th. It’s a God thing.

Since we live in Springfield, a daily commute was involved. But, instead of being on the road to or from, or actually in Branson, at the time of the event, I was at home with my wife when the encounter with that elephant occurred. And, as God would have it, our home is only blocks from Mercy Hospital.

Totally out of my conscious understanding, but not God’s, the surgeon quickly set to work, discovered the problem and took the steps necessary to address the situation. I was operating with 10% heart function as a result of congestive heart failure. With the surgical improvements in place I advanced to 25%, with an irregular heartbeat. A special treatment to address this condition was unsuccessful and I was sent to a regular room to await further developments.

In the wee-hours of the next morning I was told by the attending nurse that my “heart rhythm” was normal. Sometime between 11:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m., God reached in, touched my heart and returned it to a normal rhythm. And, I am pleased to say it still is.

While in the hospital I was given multiple drugs, resulting in an extremely sore stomach and hallucinations of gargantuan proportions. The hallucinations invaded my mind and every part of my room. The answer was the Word of God, where I went with the aid of the Hospital’s in-room Gideon Bible. I spent hours in a chair near my bed in prayer and immersion into the Word. Getting close to the Lord was very rewarding and provided the best way to deal with the demons that were covering the room. Stomach problems were another issue.

My doctor’s decision was to have a sonogram performed which indicated my Gallbladder was inflamed and swollen. Had the meds not made my stomach hurt the condition with my Gallbladder would have gone undetected and put more strain on my weakened heart.

My medical team was committed to my wellbeing and they performed periodic checks, along with some post-operative tests, to confirm my progress. They also prescribed a 36-session cardio-rehab program which involved three sessions per week with an option to follow-up on my own. I completed the 36-sessions and took the option and today I continue the process weekly.

A team of physical therapists monitor my activities and encourage my efforts. On a regular basis they tell me that no one with congestive heart failure can walk-through the tri-weekly program at the levels I have attained. But, with God's enablement, I can and do. In fact, my latest MUGA test indicated my heart function at approximately 36%, only 14 points off of the 50-60% for normal heart function. As a result, praise the Lord, I am no longer a candidate for a defibrillator implant.

I am truly born again and not only filled, but baptized, with the Holy Spirit. God has called me out and made me an Evangelist for the Lord Jesus Christ. He has led me to a total commitment resulting in my having turned over my work, my career, my family and my life to Him. He has given me a boldness to share the truth of our Living Savior with anyone the Holy Spirit directs. Truly these are "ordered steps."

My ministry is called "Faith Harvest." It is good to remember that in His Word, God says "... by grace you have been saved, through **faith** — ... not of yourselves, it is the gift of God —." It's the Lord's work and we are definitely the laborers in His field. He says, "... look at the fields! They are ripe for **harvest**."

All Believers have a responsibility to share the truth of Christ with those around us. How we go about it is a personal thing between an individual and God. The Holy Spirit leads the way in this effort, so our responsibility includes submitting our commitment for outreach to Him. We put our faith in Him and He "**orders our steps**."