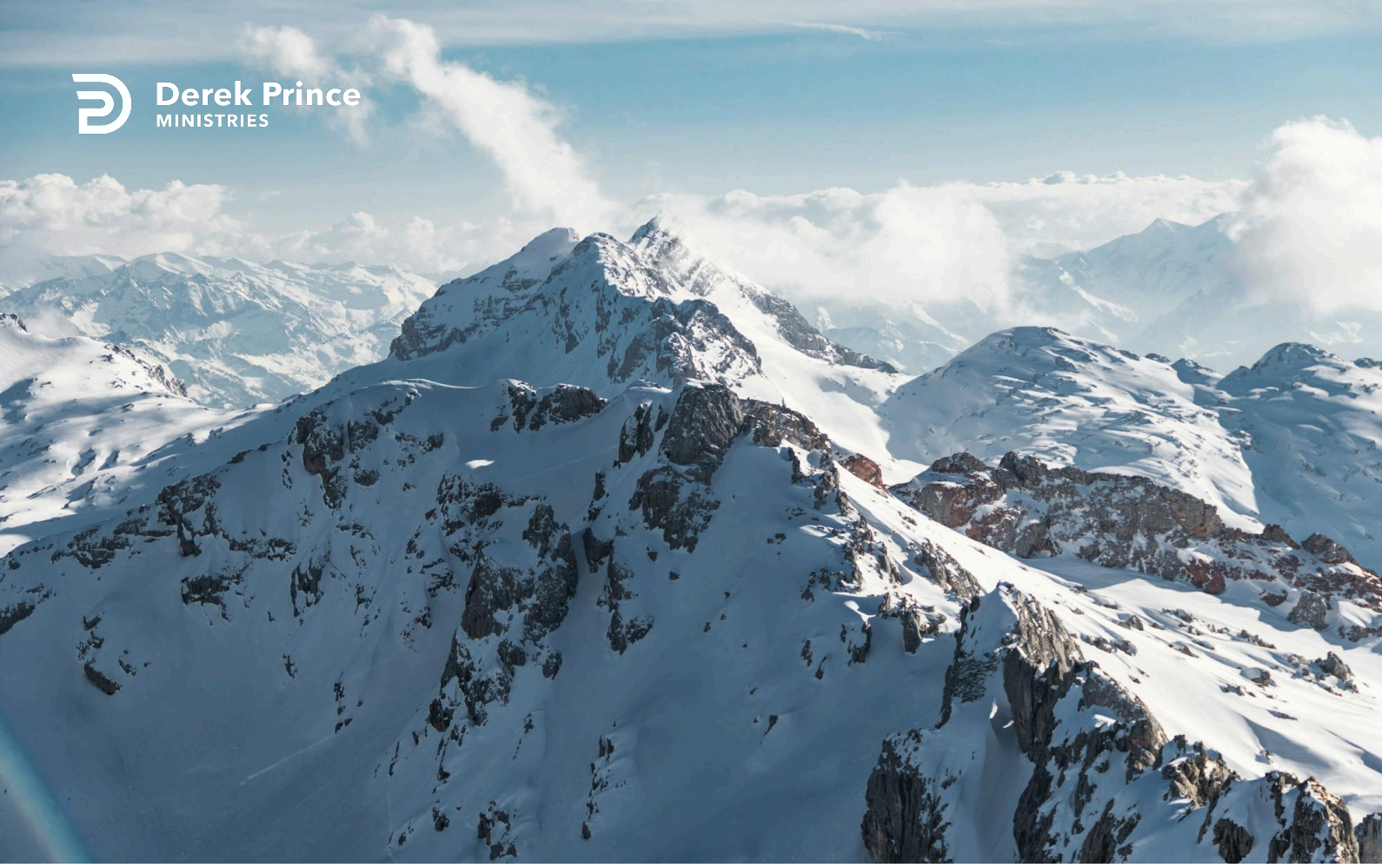


# New Testament Pattern For Instruction Before Baptism



Foundations (Day 127)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday we began to look at how much instruction people should follow before they can be baptised. We read how, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people were baptised. They'd become believers on that same day, so they'd has a couple of hours of instruction, at the most, from the apostles.

A little further on in Acts (Acts 8:36-39), Philip baptised the Ethiopian eunuch on the very same day that he met him and preached the gospel to him. Here again the period of instruction could not have exceeded a few hours.

Then there is the case of Ananias, who was directed by God to go to Saul of Tarsus and lay hands on him and pray for him.

> "Immediately there fell from his [Saul's] eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptised." (Acts 9:18)

Later Paul himself relates that Ananias said to him at this time: And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptised (Acts 22:16).

We see, then, that Saul of Tarsus (later Paul) was baptised on what was probably the day of his conversion – certainly within three days of the first revelation of Jesus Christ to him upon the Damascus road.

Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptised on the same day that he preached the gospel to them (see Acts 10:48).

The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, the seller of purple, to the message of the gospel, and she was then baptised with all her household (see Acts 16:14-15). In this case no further details are given, and no exact period of time is specified.

The Philippian jailer and all his household were baptised the very same night in which they first heard the gospel (Acts 16:33).

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In these passages we have examined seven instances of the baptism of new converts. In every case some measure of instruction was given first. Thereafter, in the majority of these cases, baptism followed within a few hours of conversion. In no case was baptism ever delayed more than a few days.

We are thus able to arrive at a clear picture of the practice of baptism in the early Church. Before baptism they presented the basic facts of the gospel, centring in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and they related these facts to the act of baptism.

Baptism then followed immediately – normally within a few hours; at most, within a few days.

Finally, after baptism the new converts continued to receive the more detailed instruction which was needed to establish them firmly in the Christian faith. This latter phase of instruction is summed up in Acts 2:42, which immediately follows the account of the baptism of the new converts on the day of Pentecost.

> "And they [that is, those who had been baptised] continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

This is the New Testament pattern for establishing new converts in the faith after they have been baptised.

## Devotional

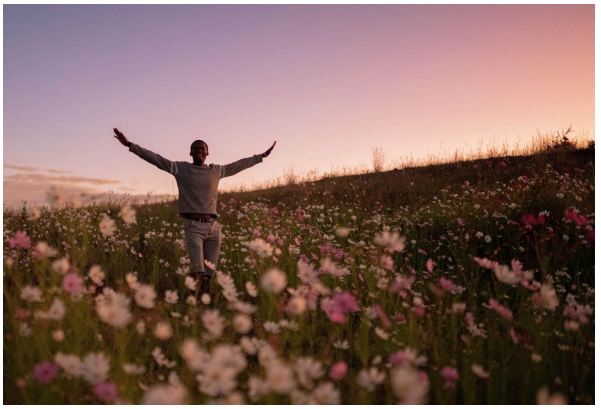
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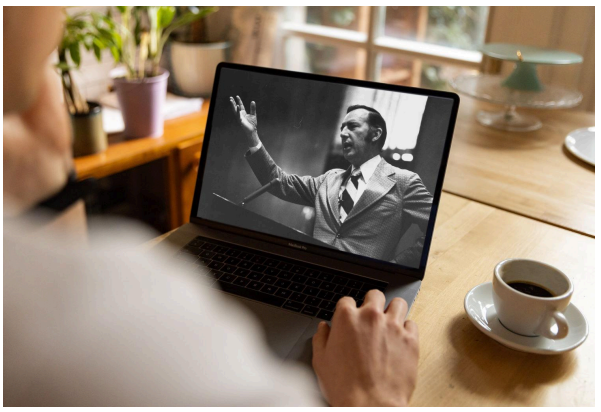
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