

## Little by Little

If you have ever started a new medication to treat an illness, then you are probably familiar with a common principle of prescriptions—gradually increase the dose. Sometimes, in our eagerness for relief, we become impatient to receive a higher dose. But our bodies need time to adjust to most medications, and getting too much too fast could cause all kinds of side effects and new problems. So, in spite of our impatience, it is usually best to stick to a gradual increase.

According to Exodus 23:29-30, the principle of “little by little” can be good for Kingdom work as well. After the Lord had given Moses the Ten Commandments He promised to clear a way for His people into the Promised Land, past enemy nations like the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites—but not all at once. God told Moses, *“I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”*

If the Israelites had taken possession of the land too quickly they would not have been prepared to organize themselves, manage the land, face the battles or resist foreign gods. God did not tell His people to hesitate or turn back, just to move forward little by little, one step at a time, so He could prepare and guide them. We can see the same principle at work in the early church. There were a few mass conversions, but overall the spread of the Gospel radiated out gradually from Jerusalem, little by little, step by step, as the message traveled to Rome and beyond.

Eagerness to reach a new place in our Kingdom work is a good thing, but we must resist the temptation to get there ahead of God’s plan. The Lord knows the right time to move forward, engage in battle, pursue a friendship, create a new ministry, expand a fellowship, reorganize a congregation, plant a new church, change leaders, bring up a certain topic, share our lives, share God’s Word, or anything God gives us a vision to do.

God knows the terrain, provisions and enemies that lie ahead. If we move too fast, we might not be fully equipped to take possession of the land; people may not be in place to carry out the work, hearts might not be prepared to receive us or our message, the Lord might need to test our ability to persist and cooperate first, or He may be at work increasing our resistance to the evil one.

The Lord is clearing a way for our Kingdom work. There is no reason to hesitate or turn back. It’s forward motion all the way, little by little, in step with God’s plan.

### **Group Discussion:**

(Please note: There are no right or wrong answers to the discussion questions. Let the Holy Spirit work through each member of your group. The best learning will happen when everyone shares his/her own insights, questions, concerns, and ideas.)

1. Share some of your own examples of situations where moving forward slowly and steadily is better than rushing ahead would be. (Examples may be from any area of life, past or present)
2. Read Exodus 23:27-30 aloud, then discuss the following: Imagine you are gathered with God's people on that border between the wilderness and the Promised Land. What are some reasons (good or bad) that you are eager to move forward in a big hurry? What are some of the potential benefits you can see of doing things little by little?
3. What "new lands" are you, your group, or your church preparing to enter at this time?
4. Consider the situation(s) you identified above as you discuss the following. (If you were not able to identify any actual examples above, you can imagine you are preparing to do one of the following: start a new ministry for single parents, create a satellite worship service at a second location, or reach out to a group of new refugees.)
  - a. Name some reasons it might seem good to conquer this "new land," or ministry, quickly.
  - b. How can you, your group, or your church determine when and how fast to move forward according to God's timing?
  - c. What are some of the ways that "the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you," if you were to get ahead of God's plan for this ministry? (i.e. what problems or obstacles might arise?)
  - d. What are some of the potential benefits of moving forward in a way that will allow you to "increase enough to take possession of the land?"
5. How does "little by little" differ from hesitating or turning back? Identify some things we can do to make sure that "little by little" doesn't actually immobilize our Kingdom work.
6. Share one way you think your Kingdom work will be different as a result of this study.
7. Close with a time of prayer about the lessons and changes you identified. One member of the group may pray for the whole group, or each member may pray for the person on his or her left and so on.