

Advancement

I am going to Talk about third value of the church... which is **Advancement** (H E A R T). We covered Honour and what that means to God, ourselves, our neighbours in society, and in the church honouring one another. We covered Excellence as something that underpins who you are, what you do and how you do things. It's what underpins everything we do.

Advancement is all about making progress in our lives, in relationships and in ministry God gives Joshua the assistant of Moses a promise following the death of Moses and says these words in *Joshua 1:3. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.*

What a God of promise to encourage Joshua as he steps into leadership. God is promising Joshua victory in taking territory but notice that it is Joshua who has to take the first step. God was saying the territory in front of you is already yours however you still have to take steps to go in and possess this territory. You have to advance or take steps to see it through.

Life is often like this where you have got to grab a hold of the opportunities and advance or step into it. Relationships are like that too - you have got to take the first step towards building that relationship and ministry too where God gives you the plan but then you have to advance take steps to bring it to pass.

Advancement is like growing from a baby stage to maturity. We are always advancing or growing through various experiences and maturing towards adulthood. We don't stay babies all our lives. There is natural progression or advancement in the process of life.

Let's just think about this and focus on the things or the steps you have taken to move forward or to advance. How many things have you had to cut out to enable you to move forward? How much did you have to change to move forward? What did you need to prioritise to move forward? Think about that.

The question to ask ourselves is, where have I got stuck? Why haven't I moved forward or advanced? What do I need to do to make that shift to move forward? For Joshua to move forward he had to take steps of faith. God told Joshua three times to be strong and courageous and Joshua had to trust God and move in faith to lead the people. Nothing happens without faith. To move forward you need faith. It is an important factor.

For some advancement can mean saying sorry to someone in order to move forward or it could be functioning in a team to learn to be a team player in order to move forward or it could be something you need to do in order for your faith to be activated in order to move forward.

Often in my role as Pastor I do from time to time encourage people to step into roles and functions and get involved in an activity in the church, why? To enable movement and advancement, and often that takes a step of faith.

When I came in as a Pastor it was a huge step of faith I had to take. I only knew I had been called but nothing else was guaranteed. I did not know who would come, who will leave, what things did I have to change, what shape the church would take, what challenges would I face? I knew God's call and I had to obey to advance and sometimes you may be asked to do something which I guarantee when its from God has to be activated by faith because you never get the whole picture, only a bit. You have to step into or advance into that which God is calling you to do.

Joshua's first battle or challenge was taking Jericho. Joshua was a warrior and one would have thought he'd know how to strategize for battle but he had to seek advice from God and has an encounter with the Commander of the army of the Lord for specific direction.

Sometimes we too need direction from God with our faith to see His plans come to fruition. The question we have to ask ourselves is this, who are we inviting to speak into our lives? Are we asking God for wisdom to make those decisions that will move us forward in life.

We may all recollect bad decisions that we made not having sought the Lord where it has led us into terrible problems but it is never too late to get back on track and seek the Lord for His direction in our lives.

We can all learn from past experiences as to how we made decisions and if what we are doing now is not getting us anywhere then it is time to make a change. Maybe it could be prioritising God's purposes before ours, or pursuing excellence in how we do things for God, or in seeking to honour God by putting weight behind what matters to Him.

When you are a disciple of Jesus you grow and mature. Discipleship causes you to advance. Paul, in *Ephesians 4:11-13* talks about the five fold ministry that has been given *to equip his people for service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith...* building up the church to a place of strength and maturity until we measure up to Christ.

This is about advancement by equipping people to move forward in the things of the Spirit. Here everybody is making progress in their identity in Christ, where everybody is participating and sharing together and that causes growth of the body in love.

Here's how we can apply this. If you are someone who is struggling with advancing and kind of stuck where you are then you can look at some things that will enable to have movement or growth.

Examples:

- taking a course of studies,
- it could be disconnecting from something currently and joining something new;
- it could be looking at new avenues of work,
- it could be taking a risk at something you haven't done before, broadening your circle of friends,
- it could be seeking mentoring, skill building, ask yourself, what can I do to change ?

There's a scripture in Isaiah that talks about progression in 54: 2-3 *Enlarge the place of your tent (need bigger tents) stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; And your descendants will take possession of nations And will inhabit deserted cities*

God is always looking to enlarge us on the inside and increase our capacity to experience more of Him. God wants us to have large hearts so that we can welcome more people and see more people come to faith in Jesus.

When Jesus sent the seventy disciples he sent them with his authority to advance the kingdom and in like manner Jesus has equipped you and me with His authority and power to advance His kingdom here in New Malden.

Paul says this in **Philippians 3:12-14 (msg)** *I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.*

Ask yourself, What do I need to do? And then do it.

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