

TAKE A STEP UP!

INTRODUCTION

Earlier this week, in my quiet time, I felt that the Lord dropped the words, "step up" into my spirit. I saw it as the Lord speaking about going to the next level. As a church and even in my own life, we are going to take a step up. That's exciting stuff!

What does it look like to take a step up? Let me give you a personal illustration: When this overhead projector above me needs repairs, someone needs to go up there and fetch it. It requires scaffolding because it's so high. Let me tell you, that's a huge step up. It's scary up there if you have a bit of a phobia of heights like me. But from there you can see the whole auditorium. And you can do things that you can't do down here.

Another example of taking a step up is actually moving from one of these steps leading onto our platform, to the next. It may not be high, but each step is higher than the other. Once again, from the platform, we minister the word and we lead worship. This step up is onto ministry.

A final example of taking a step up is found in the game of baseball. The batsman steps up onto the plate from where they will bat. When they step up, it means they are responsible for scoring runs. They need to read the ball and hit it with skill to ensure maximum results for their team. To step up in this sense means to take responsibility and to be serious and committed.

Each day this week, the Lord gave me another example from His word of what it means in His terms when He says it's time for us to "step up". Let's have a look at what the Lord wants to say to us about it being time to "step up".

MESSAGE

A STEP-UP MEANS WE ARE FOLLOWING IN JESUS FOOTSTEPS

God is busy in us, growing us, preparing us, getting us ready. He wants to bring us to a place where we can take a step up. That sound great doesn't it?

But a step up is not only about promotion! It's really about drawing closer to God. It means there is something that we must do from our side to take that step up and **move to a higher level in God.**

John 3:14 (NKJV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

John 12:32-33 (NKJV) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Jesus greatest work was done when He took that "step up" onto the cross! He was lifted up on a cruel cross so that mankind could take a "step up". It was on that cross that He gained victory over satan once and for all as He paid for the sins of all mankind.

Our step up is to follow in Jesus footsteps and "step up" by living the crucified life. Dead to sin, dead to this world, but alive in Him.

Are we willing to die to the world and its lusts and "step up" into the abundant life we have in Christ Jesus?

A STEP-UP MEANS DEALING WITH "I"

When we choose to follow in Jesus footsteps and live the crucified life it's going to mean that we must deal with "I"!

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) **I** have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer **I** who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which **I** now live in the flesh **I** live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

I believe it begins here: "It is no longer **I** who live". Once we get this right, when we crucify our flesh and it's sinful desires, when we deal with pride and self, "me, myself and I" and start living full out for Jesus, we are ready to take that step up and enjoy all the blessings that come with it.

Are you willing to do deal with the "I" today and say, "It is no longer I who live"? Because that's what is required to take "a step up".

A STEP-UP IS NOT ALWAYS A WALK IN THE PARK!

Once we've decided to live the crucified life and dealt with the "me, myself and I", taking a step up does not get easier, we will need to go through some stuff!

John 15:19(AMPC) If you belonged to the world, the world would treat you with affection and would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world [no longer one with it], but I have chosen (selected) you out of the world, the world hates (detests) you.

We sometimes romanticise the idea of what happens when God gives us a "step up". After all, promotion should make things better! Sadly, we are in the world and not of it. The closer we get to God, the further we move from the world. In truth, a "step up" will result in persecution because the world hates us, as it is under the sway of the devil.

John 15:18,26 (AMPC) If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you. 26 But when the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Advocate,

Intercessor, Strengthener, Standby) comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth Who comes (proceeds) from the Father, He [Himself] will testify regarding Me.

We must rejoice when we face persecution because God has given us a "step up", the world is simply treating us as they treated Jesus. **What a privilege to be identified with Him!**

But we must not be discouraged because of persecution. We have a helper without compare, He is the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengthener, Standby).

Today we are challenged to embrace the "step up" God has for us with the help of the Holy Spirit! Even if it's not easy, as we do so we will bear much fruit for God's Kingdom.

A STEP-UP MEANS LEARNING TO PRAISE IN ADVERSITY

When persecution comes because of the "step up", we need to know what to do:

Acts 16:24-25 (NKJV) Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Paul and Silas had as it were, taken a step-down. They had been thrown into the inner prison, the dungeon, with their feet in stocks. Anyone in such a situation would feel despondent and down, but Paul and Silas had kept their faith. They were singing hymns to God, giving their hearts and minds, and those of the prisoners around them a "step up". **They were positioning themselves for a physical "step up".**

Acts 16:24-25 (NKJV) Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed.

We may be in a dungeon of pain, discouragement, depression, financial problems or relationship issues and in desperate need of a "step up". That's when we must start to praise God. As we declare our faith and hope through prayer, praise and worship, we position ourselves for a "step up". God can lift us up out of the darkness of the dungeon into the bright light of His glory. Let's start to pray, praise and worship right now!

A STEP-UP MEANS STANDING OUR GROUND

2 Samuel 23:11-12 (NKJV) And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. 12 But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the Lord brought about a great victory.

Sometimes God has promotion, provision and victory for us, but the when we see the enemy coming against us, we are tempted to turn and flee like the people fled from the Philistines. **That's not the way to take a "step up"!**

There are times we need to defend that "step up" the Lord has for us. We do it by stepping up to the plate like in a baseball game and standing our ground in the face of the enemy.

When we show God we are willing to trust Him to protect us in our existing lentil patch, He will know we are ready to take a "step up". Let us stand strong today in the Lord and in the power of His might!

A STEP-UP MEANS WE NEED TO RISE UP AND BUILD

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (NKJV) Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. **So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.**

Often the need for a "step up" comes when we are facing distress. These are times when it feels as though we have been through the fire and everything seems scorched and in ruins. This is when we must remember the good hand of our God which is upon us and decide **to rise up and rebuild and set our hands to do the work it will take.**

Nehemiah 2:20 (NKJV) So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Do nyou need a "step up" today? Let us rise up and build with full faith, We have a God in Heaven who Himself will prosper us.

A STEP-UP COMES FROM GOD!

Psalms 40:2 (AMPC) He drew me up out of a horrible pit [a pit of tumult and of destruction], out of the miry clay (froth and slime), and set my feet upon a rock, steadying my steps and establishing my goings.

What better “step up” can we have than when God lifts us up out of every miry, messy, horrible situation we face, even sin, and He sets us down upon our solid foundation, Jesus Christ. In Him new are established, settled, forgiven encouraged and we have victory. He is the Solid Rock, our salvation.

Romans 8:37 (AMPC) Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us.

When God gives us a “step up”, we find our feet firmly planted on Jesus Christ our Rock and we need never fear. He will establish us and bless us with surpassing victory regardless of our circumstance. Let us ask the Lord to give us that “step up” today.

CONCLUSION

1 Peter 2:9 (TPT) But you are God’s chosen treasure —priests who are kings, a spiritual “nation” set apart as God’s devoted ones. He called you out of darkness to experience his marvellous light, and now He claims you as His very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his glorious wonders throughout the world.

Here's the core of the “step up”, God has given us a “step up” out of darkness and into His glorious light. We are not who we used to be; bound, depressed, addicted, lonely, hopeless captives to darkness. We have been raised up from that chaotic life into a life of holiness as a royal priesthood. We are different because we have taken a “step up” in Christ Jesus. We are now God’s very own. Nothing can be better than that!

Today as we desire a “step-up”, we must remember that to “step-up” we need to:

- Walk in Jesus footsteps and live the crucified life,
- Deal with the “I” and say, “It is no longer I who live”,
- Be willing to face persecution and difficulty because of our choice to follow Jesus.
- Learn to praise God in the midst of adversity so that He can give us a “step”up,
- Learn to stand our ground, “step-up” and defend our lentil patch.
- Be willing to begin to do the good work that needs to be done.
- Realise that the only source of a true “step-up” is God.

Finally we need to position ourselves as those who have taken a “step up”. It’s time to rule and reign in this life, as those called to be God’s chosen treasure, a holy nation of royal kings and priests. May the Lord give us all a “step-up” today.