GETTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN FAITH - PART 1

I. Introduction: In today’s world one of the buzz phrases that everyone seems to be using is “Let’s Get To The Next Level.”

A. I went on the internet to see if there were any websites that could help someone to get to the next level. There were 830,505 hits on the internet.

* Next Level, Inc. (Software)
* Pro Speed, Inc - “Getting to the Next Level in running.”
* Taking The Message to the next Level, Inc. (Advertisement)
* Sega’s Universe - “The next level In Entertainment”

1. The reason why is that more and more people are the realizing that the potential, to have more, be more, and do more is unlimited.

2. People are being challenged to believe for more, to strive for more, to push the envelope, to break the barriers, to boldly go where no one has gone before.

3. This thirst for exploring the unlimited possibilities hits every aspect of our lives except our religion.

   a. We seem to be content with a religion that is stable, small, packaged, and with boundaries

   b. If our religion remains the same, it will cause us to remain the same

   c. I’m not talking about adding to, but discovering and releasing from.

      1) George Washington Carver - a peanut

      2) If there is that much potential in a peanut just think of what is in your life

      3) Psalm 139:17 (thoughts = “rea” = aim or purposes = targets)
      “How precious are the aims or purposes that You have for my life, O God! They are innumerable!”NLT

4. The point I am trying to make is that God doesn’t need much to do a lot.

   a. He enjoys taking little things and using them to do big thing.

   b. Taking the least and using it to produce the most;

   c. Taking the insignificant to accomplish the significant.

1 Corinthians 1:26 - “Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don’t see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential. Isn’t it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the world overlooks and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies”
B. How do Christians get to the next level?

1. **The motivation to get to the next level in the world is greed**
2. The motivation to get to the next level in the church is need
3. **The world wants to be more and do more so that they can have more.**
4. As Christians we should want to be more and do more so that we can give more

II. The Bible speaks about moving on to the next level. Ps 84:7 - Rom 1:17 - 2Cor 3:18

Each new level will require more strength and more faith from us. **Which will then produce more glory for us. How does this happen?**

Jeremiah 48:11-12 will tell us the problem that keeps us from changing, the process that God uses to bring about change, and the penalty of not changing.

A. The Problem - Verse 11

1. “At ease since his youth” - This describes a condition of idleness or complacency.
2. “Undisturbed on his lees” - This describes an unfinished process or mediocrity.
3. “Neither has been emptied from vessel to vessel nor has gone into exile.”
   a. He doesn’t go backward, but neither is he going forward.
   b. He’s not cold but neither is he hot. There is a comfortable mixture in his life.
4. **The result of “being at ease and undisturbed” is “his flavor and his aroma has not changed.”**

B. The Process - “Vessel to Vessel”

Psalm 84:7 - Romans 1:17 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 - Deuteronomy 7:22

1. The imagery here is that of purifying wine.
2. **The “vessel” is something that God is trying to do in our lives that is designed to tax us, to stretch us, to push us beyond our comfort zones into the next level.**
3. It’s the process that God uses to bring about change in our lives and to move us from strength to strength, faith to faith, glory to glory, and from level to level.
4. **Each proceeding “vessel” is designed to bring about new growth in our lives which will then take us to the next level. It could be:**
5. The first thing that the new “vessels” will do is expose impurities, which come in the form of:

- weaknesses  - inconsistencies  - attitudes  - feelings of inadequacy
- selfishness  - Anger  - pride  - self-sufficiency

6. Let me give you some personal examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Impurities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Bible &amp; Praying</td>
<td>(Round)</td>
<td>Laziness &amp; inconsistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share my faith</td>
<td>(Oblong)</td>
<td>Shyness &amp; Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Vessel</td>
<td>(Triangle)</td>
<td>Inadequacy &amp; Unbelief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Church</td>
<td>(Octagon)</td>
<td>Misconceptions &amp; Prejudice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving out in the gifts</td>
<td>(Rectangular)</td>
<td>Pride &amp; Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving to Lancaster</td>
<td>(Polygon)</td>
<td>Impatience &amp; Criticism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. The Penalty - “I shall send those who tip and shatter vessels.”

1. **Some where in the process we move from not wanting to change - to being unable to change.**

   a. Because the vessel that would have brought about a particular change in our life has been tipped and shattered.

   b. **Continued refusal to change or grow causes one to fossilize.**

2. For the past 6 years I have been at ease and undisturbed.

   a. But I haven’t felt His presence like I once did.

   b. I have continued to feel the waves of His presence

   c. **The Lord told be He was right outside my comfort zone**

   d. Last summer He spoke to me, that this could either be a begging or an end.

   e. **Meaning I could either go through the vessel to vessel process or I can have all those vessels tipped over and shattered.**

3. God will not allow us to ignore our weaknesses. We either deal with them or he will allow them to deal with us.