

Coffee with Phil. 34. Advance & Occupy

Introduction.

Well, hi and Welcome to the podcast, welcome to coffee with Phil, and I will be Phil, and I will be having coffee. So, you're welcome to join me this afternoon, as I sit in the comfortable chair in my office and enjoy my flat white.

Sad story, I have recently told you about the repair to my coffee roaster, since then, there's a need for another repair, that was far beyond my capabilities, and so this afternoon I'm enjoying some beans from Kokako, which is an Auckland roaster sold locally and very, very nice, I might say. I'm not sure what coffee you're having, but wherever you are, whatever you're doing, I hope you're having a fantastic day.

Today I wanna do something a little bit different than I intended. I've got a couple of podcast planned out here in front of me, and I was originally gonna talk to you about kids and money, and that's a topic that has always been dear to my heart, and something that I've worked on for my family personally. In fact my third book was called 'Kids and Money', and it's sitting here on my desk, so I might finish what I'm about to do, and then record your podcast on that.

But coffee with Phil episode 34, here we are today, and as you can see by the title, I want to talk to you about the spiritual season we're in called 'Advance and Occupy'. I was wrestling with what to share with you this afternoon and I really felt the Lord say to me that I had made a commitment, a promise to him and to you, the three or four of you that listen to this, I made a promise that I was going to be open and honest about the spiritual and faith journey that I'm walking and it needs to be current, it needs to be relevant, and it needs to be real, and so that's what today is all about, I feel that I need to prioritise this.

And so by way of introduction, what I want to say to you is that this is very much what I would call a spiritual season. One of the, I suppose things, or gifts, or attributes that I carry, as a leader, is the ability to discern the seasons and the times that God is moving. What I would not say, I did not say, you did not hear me say that I'm a prophet, but we know that in the Bible, when it speaks of the sons of Issachar, they were men that knew and could discern the seasons and the times of God, and for some reason that just seems to be a grace that God's given me.

So, I am saying to you today and this is, I'm going to share what I'm doing and you can take from it what it may mean for you. But I really feel like we're in a spiritual season where God says 'it's time to advance and occupy', this is a season in the spirit world, and our natural world is subject to the spirit world. Now, what does that mean? That means that if it's springtime, we can't, or we shouldn't, act like it's winter, and some people just turn up to the wrong season, well, they turn up to the right season, wearing the wrong clothes. If you turned up to a ski resort in your summer bikini or a swimming outfit, you would not only look silly, but you would freeze your extremities off, and it's the same thing in the spirit world, if you turn up wrongly prepared, or with wrong expectations in a spiritual season, you can get just totally out of step and the key point that I'd like to make is it's really important for us to stay in step with God.

And I can tell you I've had seasons where I've been out of step, and it's painful. When I'm trying to do things that are not in line with what God wants to do. I find myself pushing hard, overreaching, overworking, trying to break down obstacles that God's put in front of me, and I just end up burning myself like a candle that burns the wick out, it's just pointless. It's like, if you think about rowing a boat, I don't know if you've ever rowed a boat, but I once tried to row a boat against the current, and man it was hard. There was, actually it wasn't that many years ago, Jackson and I grabbed a canoe out of a friend's garage and we decided to paddle across the harbour at Raglan, because we wanted to see what's on the other side, but we thought we'd go for a swim when we got there, and I can tell you what going against the current with the paddle is hard work. Conversely, when you go with the current, it's a lot easier, and that's what it's like working with God or working against God. When you're out of step with the seasons of God, it's like paddling against the current, it's hard work. You will make progress, but you'll get tired, you'll get worn out, and quite frankly, you might end up in the wrong place. So, what's my point? We gotta learn to recognise the seasons.

And for me, I sense the importance of recognising the season that I'm calling 'Advance and Occupy' and I want to speak about it because it's drastically, as it should do, it's drastically affecting how I live, how I think, how I pray and what I'm expecting to see. So, I'm going to talk to you about this in three parts and then I'll finish with something very different for you that's a bit prophetic.

Advance.

What I want to say at the beginning is that the first part of this is advance, and I'd like to say this to all of us. Friends, it's time to move forward, and I'm saying this to me as much as I'm saying it to you. The advantage I have is that I've been saying it to me for several months. You know what I've noticed, and we would all notice this, is that over the last four years, there has been a shrinking back. Firstly, we were told to be fearful that the world was ending, everyone was gonna get sick, and we're gonna have mass casualties from the pandemic, and so we shrunk back. We were told to isolate, so we isolated. We were told to stay away from friends and family, so we stayed away. We locked ourselves in a cupboard. We bound ourselves up in fear, and we became uncertain about the future.

Well, I'm telling you that season is over. We did shrink back, and it was for our safety, and I don't regret doing it for one moment, we had an opportunity, and some of us took it, and some did not take it. But the opportunity was to regroup, refresh and rethink. So having had the chance to regroup, refresh and rethink, I've determined in my mind, in my spirit, in my determination, is to move forward. It's time to advance.

We've got to move into the promises of God. We can't stand still any longer. You know, for those people that understand the Bible narrative, you know, all those of you that are part of our church, we've certainly been talking out about it for some time now. The journey through the desert to cross the Jordan River into the promised Land is a fantastic analogy for all of us, it doesn't matter who you are, but if you're standing on the wrong side of the river you're not going to step into your promised land.

Now there is two and a half tribes, or three tribes as it were, that got to stay on the eastern side of the river, they were given their inheritance, but they weren't allowed to stay there until everyone had walked into their promise. What's my point? We all have to cross the river, we all have to move into the new space, and into a new way of thinking, and a new way of operating. We must move forward, and I'm going to talk about why you might not do that in a minute, and help you out of it, because I've been doing the journey and I'd like to share it with you.

But here's my point, you can't live in the promise while still in slavery. There was no way that the Lord would allow his people to stay in Egypt one day longer than was necessary. They were in bondage, they were under oppression, and they were slaves with no inheritance, and the Lord said 'that is not my promise for you, I brought you here so that I would show all of the world how powerful I am in delivering my people, my chosen, my special possession', and they couldn't stay, they needed to leave. You can't live in the promise while still and slavery. And so some of you listening to this might be thinking 'Well, what? Does that mean? I want to move forward but I don't think I can move forward', and I gotta say to you, this time last year I would have been saying the same thing. I was really struggling, I suppose with where I was at and not happy with where I was at, and wanting to work out what needed to change.

Be Free!

So, in this second part of the podcast, I want to say to you it's time to be free from slavery. It's time to be free from slavery. And so I've been asking this question, and I'd like you to ask this question in your prayer time, which might mean while you're driving, it might mean while you're on your knees beside your bed, it could be while you're sitting in your special chair. Whatever you're doing, make sure you're having a quiet time. Make sure you're asking the Lord questions and then make sure, you're stopping to listen. But ask God this 'what am I still enslaved to? What am I still bound to? What do I come under? What is over me and oppressing me? What do I need to be free from?' And I've got four things here that I felt like the Lord said to me, and some of these were big, and some of these were small, but I still had to work through them.

One of the things that I needed to break free from was the wounds of my past. We've all got a journey. We've all got things that went well for us, and we've all got things that didn't go well for us. The things that don't always go well create wounds, and God wants to heal our wounds. Some people have an issue with generational issues, the past, the family they're part of, what Peter Scazzero, my friend, calls the 'I've got Jesus in my heart, but I've still got grandma in my bones', meaning that the generation or the family of origin is what causes some of the behavioural, psychological, or even emotional challenges.

It could also be, as it was with the Israelites, that you need to be set free from a lack of faith. So, what this means is taking a look at the things that God has said, and comparing it to what you're actually believing is true. You know, the Israelites went into the promised land where they sent spies into the promised land, and there were twelve men, one from each tribe that went in, ten came back and they said 'the giants are too big, the land is too wide, there is no way we can overcome those people that already live there', and yet two men said 'God is for us, who can be against us, surely the Lord is with us, and this land that is flowing with milk and honey shall be our inheritance'.

You know, there was contrast there between those that believed what God had said, and those that were struggling to believe, because they were allowing their natural sight, their circumstances, to affect their faith and what they believed in the unseen.

So, the four things, I've done three, the first, the first one was wounds of the past, second one was generational issues with the family of origin, third one was lack of faith, the last one that I felt to share with you, with regards to being free, was the journey of being emotionally overdrawn.

I've done a lot of reading in this season about depletion, lack of margin, lack of reserves, not having enough in the tank to sustain the journey, and I remember when I was a young fella, my first car was a 1971 Ford Cortina, and look, it was a piece of junk to be honest, but I loved it and drove everywhere in it, it was noisy, not in a good way, and it was uncomfortable, also not in a good way, and the other thing that was a problem with my car is that the fuel gauge didn't work, so I had to guess how much fuel was in the tank, and my family will attribute to the fact that I often, well not now, but I have had a season in my life when I just run out of gas in my car, and I put it back to that season where I was like, just living on the edge and I was like, oh, I haven't got enough money this week, I'll put gas in my car next week, and my poor little Cortina would often just conk out on the side of the road. This is long before anyone had cell phones, so, or smartphones, so I'd have to run and catch a train to try and find my way to someone that could help me.

The point I'm making is when you're overdrawn, when you're overdrawn emotionally, you don't have enough gas in the tank to get where you need to go. It was like my Ford Cortina, I often didn't have enough gas in the tank to get where I need to go. What I found in this past season, one of the things that I needed to be free of was being overdrawn emotionally, spending too much, and not putting enough back in the tank.

And so, when I say that the ability that we need to have to advance the mandate, what's given us the instruction, the invitation, the command, he said to advance to occupy, we can't move forward if we're still enslaved to these things. And so, I feel like I've been relatively open, and transparent, and real with you guys, just around this journey I've been on, and I just went back through the podcast channel on Spotify and look at episode 18, was about this call into a place of refreshment, episode 22 was about forgiveness, this episode 25 was about picking up spiritual mantle, episode 28 was about how to live with margin, episode 29 was about a redirect that I felt the Lord had brought me to a wall to move through a wall, episode 31 was about how to live with safe boundaries, and recently episode 32 was about how to wrestle with the fact that God is not black or white, and by that I don't mean his ethnicity, I mean how we do life with him.

So, what I'd say to you is find the help you need. I'm living this journey in a way that will hopefully help you to live the journey also, your journey is not mine, but if there's any way what I'm sharing with you can help, it would be just my privilege to support you as you live your life of faith.

Occupy.

So, the Lord says it's time to advance and occupy, and so the second part of that would be to occupy. First we accept that it's time to advance. We set ourselves free from slavery and bondage, and then we can move into a place where we could occupy territory, and what do I mean by this? For me I feel like it's time to take a position of authority in the local city, or the local area of influence. Years ago, I was being mentored, not one to one, but certainly in lots of group settings by a guy called Lance Wallnau, quite a powerful biblical prophetic teacher, and he would teach us in the class, he would teach us about understanding our Metron. Metron is a Greek word that would define your area, or your sphere of influence. Where has God placed me? Where has God planted me with roots down so I have stability? And where has God called me to influence? This, my friends, is our Metron.

So, for me, in 2015, the Lord called me out of a place of business, out of the city, and Hamilton, and called me and my family to move to Te Awamutu. Now we said yes to that opportunity, we moved physically, we put down roots to establish a base, and then set about looking to establish some kind of influence.

So, the question that I've been asking myself lately is, how can I leverage the God-given influence that I have? And the biblical encouragement for me in this as I read Scripture, to have my life shaped by scriptures, I think about Daniel, who was in fact taken prisoner and moved to Babylon and yet became significantly influential, not under just one king, but several kings, and at the beginning of the book of Daniel was very encouraging with regards to the journey of Nebuchadnezzar and the way that really Daniel revealed God to him.

Recently was speaking with a friend of mine about Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the king in a later season, and how he had that position of influence to petition the king, who then King Cyrus, as predicted by God through Isaiah, King Cyrus basically bankrolled Nehemiah and his mission to rebuild the walls at the City of Zion, Jerusalem, and so massive, massive opportunity there. And then recently I was called to preach at friends Church and felt the Lord, opened up the book of Esther to me, that was really what I need to preach on, and as I studied the book of Esther, I was just astounded at the way God uses all kinds of us, people, all kinds of people like us, to occupy territory as part of his plan.

So, what I've been wondering, lately, for me, is why am I in this position of authority and influence in this local community, and how does that fit into God's plan? See one thing that I would say I've done wrong in the past, is I've assumed that God put me here for my plan, because I'm pretty good at making plans, pretty good at coming up with ideas, and I'm pretty good at banging down doors to make opportunities. But I feel like the Lord say 'no, you need to understand the season. You need to understand the timing, and you need to understand where you fit into my plan' says the Lord, and you know, I'm looking through those podcasts titles and I notice there's one there says 'Is Jesus really leading?'.

My brother and I were talking about this on the weekend, just how so many Christians say to Jesus 'Hey, Jesus, come follow me' instead of the other way round. And so that the position of authority that God gives us, the Metron, the sphere of influence God gives us, is about leveraging that which he has given us, that we would participate in his plan, and I meet a guy in California once, Blake, big tall guy, massive guy, but such a soft heart for the ministry that God had given him in the marketplace, and he taught me the phrase that 'we would be co-labourers with Christ' and we spoke about it over lunch one day, just this idea that we would be in partnership with God, but not as the senior partner, as the junior partner doing the work God had prepared for us.

So, what I'm now thinking in this spiritual season is that I have to think differently. I've got to look at opportunities differently. I'm not shrinking back to regroup, refresh or rethink, I've done that, I've done the work behind the curtain, I've done the work in the prayer closet. I'm allowing God to continue his healing work on the inside of me. But I'm also understanding that when God says it's time to move forward, that means we need to move into the position of authority that he's given us in order that we would see his Kingdom advance.

So, the questions I'm now asking are 'what areas in my community has God called us to shape, or change, or to shift, to improve, or to serve?' So, I'm knocking on doors and I'm asking people. People who have influence in the city 'what can we do to help?'. I'm looking through prayerful eyes to see the areas of darkness that God would like us to bring light to, and I'm certainly very open to the Lord, creating partnerships with all kinds of people, and I'll give you Nehemiah again as the best example. Nehemiah went to a Pagan King, an unclean, he was not, you would say, not saved in our language. He was not Israelite. He wasn't a Hebrew. He didn't have faith in God. But he was chosen by God, prophesied through Isaiah, and he was used by God. And so I take that as permission to build relationships with leaders in our community outside of the church, in order that their wealth and their influence might become favour for us as we do God's work, and I encourage you to think about that in the world that you live in.

Prophecy for you.

As I bring this episode to a close, I really wanted to, I suppose close with a prophecy, and this can be your take away should you want it. But I feel like the Lord would say that it's time for each one of us to pick up the mantle that he gave to us, which is a mantle as an assignment, a mantle is a responsibility, the mantle is a package of gifts.

So what I want you to do is imagine that Lord is inviting you to come forward, to bow down, and to pick up, to physically pick up, practically pick up, the package of gifts that he has prepared for you, and in that, here in New Zealand we have a custom where we come on to marae, or we greet a group of people that are hosting us, that they would come forward, the visitors would come forward and they would leave Koha, they would leave a gift. It would be put on the ground. They would step back and then the recipients could come forward to receive it.

I see this picture of the Lord bowing, bending, to put a package down for us to receive, and that we can choose to step forward, to bow down before him, and to receive the package that he's prepared for us. This package is full of gifts. It's full of spiritual gifts and the enablement, the grace, the spiritual enablement to carry those gifts, and the opportunity, this is what I call your mantle. You can choose to pick it up, or you can choose to ignore it.

I feel like the Lord is saying it's the season to move forward. You've had your time to shrink back. You've had your time to regroup. You've had your time to rethink. Now it's time to move forward into a new position, and I urge you, urge you to look at your life differently, to look at your future differently, and to do that in partnership with God.

And as I say that, I just want to encourage you that I know that some of you that listen are on an amazing journey and you're doing amazing stuff, and please don't allow the devil to criticise you, or condemn you, or judge you for what you have done, or haven't done, but allow the Lord to blow a fresh wind into your life this week, in order that you would receive that life giving spirit that will spur you on to do great things. And friends, as I say that to you, I'm receiving it for me personally, because I feel the spirit of God on this, just blowing a fresh his wind into my life also, and what of privilege it is.

So, as I close, I would say thank you for being with me today, thanks for sharing the journey and I hope you have a great day, and I hope this has encouraged you, and perhaps listen to it again, take some notes, and spend some time with the Lord, as I do, asking these questions so that we can advance in freedom and occupy what God's called us to.

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