

Getting Out of Our Comfort Zone

Even though we can't see it, it is surrounding us. It's the invisible boundary separating that which makes us comfortable from that which makes us uncomfortable. For example: Singing out loud with the radio while riding in the car = comfortable; singing in front of an audience = uncomfortable. Living in the same town for years = comfortable; moving far away to get a new start = uncomfortable. Keeping to oneself almost to the point of isolation = comfortable; reaching out to meet new people = uncomfortable. Do you see yourself in any of these situations? If not, the likelihood is great that you nonetheless have drawn some type of boundary around yourself and are quite content living in your personal comfort zone.

Why don't we take this up a level and talk about our spiritual comfort zones? For example: Standing by quietly while someone teaches error = comfortable; speaking out for the truth = uncomfortable. Sitting back and allowing others to teach and lead = comfortable; volunteering to teach and direct in worship = uncomfortable. Allowing our lost friends and family to go toward eternity unprepared = comfortable; asking them to study the Bible = uncomfortable. Refusing to step outside our comfort zones in the examples given in the first paragraph is not always damaging, although it can keep us from some potentially incredible accomplishments. Refusing to step outside our comfort zones in spiritual matters not only overlooks opportunities to lead souls to Christ, but it can also cause us to digress into spiritual stagnancy.

From an earthly standpoint, most of us want to improve ourselves and our lot in life. That's why we will take risks like going off to college, extending or accepting a marriage proposal, and going after jobs that offer more promise of growth than a current position. But spiritually speaking, how much risk are we willing to take? Are we willing to test out a talent we've never before attempted to use? Are we willing to go somewhere we've never been in order to teach the Gospel? Are we willing to dig deeper in study of God's Word?

The apostle Paul wrote, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:14). Do you imagine that Paul ever crossed the boundary between his comfortable ways and that which was uncertain and uncomfortable? A casual reading of the book of Acts and Paul's epistles will prove that he did so frequently. His life was constantly being threatened (Acts 9:23; 23:12). Read about the tribulations he suffered for the faith in II Corinthians 4:8-10 and 11:23-28. Was it comfortable for Paul to be beaten, cold, hungry and in many other ways abused? Of course not. So why did he leave his comfort zone? His words in Philippians 3:7-8 answer this question. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Then, of course, there is Jesus Himself who, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8). Talk about leaving one's comfort zone! As in all things pure and right, Jesus was the supreme example of taking on challenges for the purpose of doing the Father's will. As His people, Christians are to follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21).

In America, we live in a relative world of luxury. It is very easy to become complacent. It is so simple to allow ourselves to be trapped in a comfort zone. But how will we ever become more Christ-like if we refuse to take some risks and do some things we have never done before and go to some places we have never gone before in order that we might bring more glory to God? Let me urge you to take a moment to think about one act of service you would like to give to God that you never have given in your life. Do you want to teach a Bible class? Do you want to work in a foreign mission field? Do you want to teach a friend the Gospel? Isolate that one act of service and begin to focus on it. Pray about it, ask other Christians for their prayers and encouragement, and then remember the One who gave up everything for you so that you could have eternal life. Getting out of our comfort zones is not quite as difficult when we realize how much Jesus gave up for us. Paul understood that. Hopefully we will as well.

