

CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ MY SWEET LITTLE COMFORT ZONE

One night I was watching a commentary on how the Army Rangers trained at Fort Benning. The goal of the training was to push people to their limit to see who would be afraid. If they became scared, then at any point they could quit the training. I believe they started with about 300 candidates and finished with about 30-40 who passed the test. The particular training was at a lake where they had to climb up this 60-80 foot skinny little ladder, where when they got to the top they had to walk across this very narrow beam which had no hand rails of any kind. At the end of this 100 foot long rail 80 feet in the air was a zip line that you could hold on to and slide down to the water. It was the Army's way of getting these men out of their comfort zone – and it worked!

Have you ever had someone try to get you out of your comfort zone – like jumping out of an airplane, or bungee jumping off of a bridge? I recently watched people bungee jumping into rock ravines. That has to be way beyond insane. I will never forget one time when we were designing a fire training tower and we were asked to go to Fort Jackson and look at one of their training towers. When we got there, I realized that it was a tower where they were training people to parachute, so it was very, very high off the ground and had a very steep climb to get up to the top. Once on the top, there were no ropes around the tower to keep you from falling off. Like a pure idiot, I started following everyone else to climb up the side of this high tower, but after getting about half way up, I decided that I did not like heights and that it would be best for me to climb back down to the ground. It definitely was not in my comfort zone.

We all have our own little comfort zones and we like them so much that we do not appreciate when someone tries to get us out of that comfort zone. Today, you have your own spiritual comfort zones. It is the place that you are so comfortable in that you may have no desire to change, even if you know that God wants you to change. **In some ways, you may think that your comfort zone is your security, when in reality it may be your prison.** If you are not careful, your comfort zone can become your danger zone. I.e., it may seem like a nice place to be, but nothing spiritual grows there. For example, you may have reached a place where you are very comfortable in never sharing your faith with other people. That is not a good place for a Christian. I know many professing Christians who seem to be comfortable in never attending church. That is not a good place for a genuine believer. Generally, real spiritual growth begins on the other side of your comfort zone. Most of the time **when God is doing a deeper work in your life, it will make you very uncomfortable** – and you must see that as good. A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are for. One person said “*Find your comfort zone, then leave it.*”

My daughter-in-law showed me a couple of signs that always intrigued me. One says “*Life begins at the end of your comfort zone*”, and the other one says “*Life is a balance of holding on and letting go.*” Just think about Jesus. He said all kind of things that made people really uncomfortable like “**love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.**” When His audience heard those words, I can assure you that they quickly became very uncomfortable.. They had never one time heard anyone say anything like what Jesus said, and it made them extremely uncomfortable. In [John 6:53-56](#), Jesus made this startling statement while He was speaking,

Jn 6:53 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

So, what was the result that ensued from that statement? [John 6:66](#) tells us.

Jn 6:66 (NKJV) From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

What was Jesus trying to do? He was trying to get them out of their spiritual comfort zones in which they felt very safe and secure. When you read His Word, He will do the same thing to you, so please do not be surprised. Your tendency will be to read over the uncomfortable verse and move on to the next verse, but that is the exact opposite of what God wants you to do. Those parts of God's Word that make you uncomfortable have been specifically designed by God to do exactly that.

I am convinced that genuine spiritual growth and personal comfort can never really coexist together at the same time. Why is that? It is because if comfort is your goal, if being comfortable is what you really want, if you have to have your security, then you will never grow. You will always be chasing comfort, convenience, and personal security, but **being comfortable is not the goal**. If it is, then spiritual growth will take a secondary role in your life. It should be clear that Jesus was really skilled at making people very uncomfortable. So, when it comes to how you think, **the goal is to become comfortable with being uncomfortable**. This is an entirely different way of thinking for most people. This needs to be a mindset that you develop in your life. This needs to be a place where you change your thinking so you can change your life. Your comfort zone is something that can actually paralyze you from seeing what God wants to do in your life. In fact, you will never fulfill God's calling on your life in your comfort zone. Maybe a question that you should ask yourself is this "*Am I a comfortable Christian or a committed disciple?*" There is an enormous difference between the two. For instance, notice what Jesus said in [Luke 9:23-24](#),

Lk 9:23 (NKJV) Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Let us assume that you are not comfortable being around certain kinds of people or certain personality types that just do not seem to fit well with your personality type. You are a certain way and when you get around someone who is completely different than you are, you become extremely uncomfortable, maybe even frustrated and irritated with them. Those kinds of people surround you every day of your life. Well, what you have to do is to jump in there and learn how to become comfortable with them. You have to become comfortable with being uncomfortable. You have to get stretched in that area of your life. If you are struggling in your relationship with someone, then in all likelihood, the Holy Spirit is going to ask you to respond differently than you may have been responding in the past to them. Stated another way, He will be forcing you out of your comfort zone, out of those places that you do not want to leave or forfeit. His goal is to move you out of what you are comfortable in so that He can do a deeper work in your life. This is how you can know that you are growing spiritually. It is when you are outside of your normal comfort zone so that you are learning and maturing in areas of your life that you may

have previously ignored. **When God places you in an uncomfortable situation, you have to learn how to become calm and relaxed in that discomfort.** In [Mark 6:8](#), Jesus sent His disciples out with virtually nothing.

Mk 6:8 (NKJV) He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts—

[Luke 9:3](#) says the same thing on another occasion,

Lk 9:3 (NKJV) And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.

Are you kidding? What if I asked you to go to somewhere, but you could not take anything – no car, no money, no credit cards, no clothes, no protection. You would think I was crazy – but that was exactly what Jesus did. The point is that Jesus was constantly saying things to His disciples that made them very uncomfortable. Once again, what was Jesus doing? He was getting them out of their comfort zone. He was pushing them, stretching them. He was making them uncomfortable so they could grow. If you are someone who is attached to your creature comforts and your conveniences and your personal comfort zones, you can mark it down today that chances are very good that you will never grow spiritually.

KEY PRINCIPLE 14: YOU MUST LEARN HOW TO BECOME COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.

❖ **BUT I LIKE MY FRIENDS**

I want to say this in an even different way. **You always want to know that you are growing.** You have to become spiritually “**growth minded**”. THIS HAS TO BECOME YOUR SPIRITUAL MINDSET – AM I GROWING? You have to be challenged to grow and to step outside of your comfort zone. My role in your life is to provoke you, to challenge you, to confront you through the Word of God. This is how you grow. If all that I do is appease your whims, then for the most part I serve no spiritual value in your life.

Right now, today, if you are not working on different areas of your spiritual life, then you simply are not growing and not getting better. Unfortunately, you have become satisfied with where you are spiritually, and that is the wrong way to think. You always need to be pushing yourself when it comes to spiritual growth. You have to always be asking yourself “*Am I growing spiritually?*” Are your spiritual friends pushing you into a deeper walk with God? Is your marriage partner pushing you towards a deeper walk with God, or is your spiritual life always just in the “status quo” mode? In fact, I think you should ask yourself the following simple questions - “*Can the people I have surrounded myself with really help me spiritually? Are they willing to spiritually push me? Will they make me comfortable when I need to be uncomfortable? Are my friends helping me to change how I think so that I can change my life?*” If you did an honest assessment, you may get the wrong answers for those questions. Normally what you do is surround yourself with people like yourself. You like them, they like you, and it just seems like a good fit. The problem is that they most likely will not push you, and you become very comfortable in that scenario. The truth of the matter is that you need the kind of people in your life that are willing to challenge you and to push you towards godliness. If they are never willing to challenge areas of your life that are out of order, then they may not really be that good of a friend. [Proverbs 27:6](#) says,

Pr 27:6 (NKJV) **Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.**

Proverbs 27:17 says,

Pr 27:17 (NKJV) **As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.**

When my youngest son Benjamin worked in Tyler, Texas building pools, his boss pushed him so far past his comfort zones that it is almost funny. He gave him jobs to do that Benjamin had no idea what he was to do. Today, he knows so much about pools and pool equipment that it is mind boggling to me what he is able to do. There is the pouring of concrete, installing rebars and PVC piping. There is the wiring of breakers, relays, dealing with 110 and 220 voltages, ground bars, neutral bars, line side relays, load side relays, lights that must have a transformer, timers, automation systems, low voltage communication wiring, salt cells, booster pumps, variable speed pumps, single speed pumps, valves, actuator valves, check valves. Then you've got to program it and set it up with Wi-Fi systems. The difficulty comes when there are multiple facets to the pool, meaning an in-floor cleaning system pump, filter pumps, spa jet pumps, spa blowers, sun deck area bubblers, deck jets, wall and water features, landscape lights and fountains, water heating systems, mechanical covers, colored light shows and so much more. Why does he know so much about building pools and systems that at times cost well over \$500,000? It is because someone pushed him way outside of his comfort zone, and that is where he began to learn. Today he is invaluable to the company where he works.

Listen carefully. If the people that surround your life are no more motivated than you to grow spiritually and to change spiritually, then chances are pretty good that they simply will not push you anywhere. In essence, they are actually hindering you. They will not be motivating or inspiring you to do anything spiritually. All they will want to talk about are meaningless issues that are fairly benign and uneventful, and they will generally agree with you when something difficult happens in your life.

You have to be very careful where you get your counseling. If you go to your best friends for counsel, chances are excellent that they will only give you counsel that benefits you – and that may be the worst counsel you could ever have. Godly counselling has to challenge you, it has to confront you, it has to question you, and even oppose you at times. I am constantly challenging my students to excellence in the ministry. Some students believe that I actually have the gift of discouragement because I am not willing to let them just stay in their sweet little academic comfort zone. If they are not willing to pursue excellence and all that I receive are bad test grades and bad papers, I encourage them to get out of the ministry. Why? It is because the ministry demands excellence. Mediocrity is unacceptable.

What I am saying is really very simple. You need to surround your life with people that are more mature than you are in the areas in which you need to grow spiritually. Once again, this is a mindset that you have to develop. **You have to be careful who your friends are because they will have a great influence on your life.** I have always heard it said “*Show me your friends and I will show you your future.*” I heard one speaker say, and I think he is right on that “*You are the average of your five closest friends*”. You will always find that **the strongest Christians think differently from the rest of the people.** They have trained their minds to think a certain way that is so much different than how the non-committed believer actually thinks. Your best friends are the ones who will challenge you, who will stretch you, and who will make you uncomfortable. Trust me, but **you do not want to push them out of**

your life. The moment you do, it is at that moment that you lose one of God's greatest tools in your life – a friend who will not let you be comfortable in wrong thinking.

KEY PRINCIPLE 15: WHAT AND HOW YOU THINK WILL ALWAYS INFLUENCE AND DETERMINE HOW YOU LIVE.

The issue is really very, very simple. **If you want to change how you are living, then you have to change how you are thinking.** You cannot separate your living from your thinking. Your thinking ALWAYS drives your living. You become what you think. **What you put into your mind is what comes out of your life.** Stated another way, it is the old adage that if “*you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you always got*”. I.e., if you always think the same way, you will always get the same results. We all know the definition of insanity. It is always doing the same thing, but expecting to get different results. Unfortunately, that is exactly how most people live and function. Something may not be going the way that they want it to go, **but they never want to change.** They may make a minor change here or there, but never anything major. They simply are not comfortable in changing. **They always want the other person to change,** so they never make any real progress in their life. With that kind of perspective, with that kind of thinking process, they become spiritual dwarfs, spiritual midgets. They never grow. Why? It is because when they do not have a mindset that says “*God, what do You want ME to change*”, they stunt their spiritual growth. They become their own worst enemy. If you want to know if you fall into this category, then just ask yourself this question when your next conflict rolls around. Ask yourself “*Who do I want to change, me or them?*” How you answer that question will have a great impact on what happens in that circumstance or that relationship. Your spiritual focus, your spiritual mindset should always be “*God, what do You want ME to change? What adjustments do You want ME to make? How can I spiritually grow from this conflict?*”

So what have we addressed today? What were the key points of this study today?

1. **Today, you think that your comfort zone is your security, when in reality it may be your prison.**
2. **When God places you in an uncomfortable situation, you have to learn how to become calm and relaxed in that discomfort.**
3. **KEY PRINCIPLE 14: YOU MUST LEARN HOW TO BECOME COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.**
4. **You have to be careful who your friends are because they will have a great influence on your life.**
5. **KEY PRINCIPLE 15: WHAT AND HOW YOU THINK WILL ALWAYS INFLUENCE AND DETERMINE HOW YOU LIVE.**