

## Introduction

- Now think of a time when you felt most fully alive. It might have been when you created something beautiful, accomplished a major goal, or made a life-altering connection with someone. Perhaps you hiked to the top of a mountain and felt like you could see the whole world. The joy you experienced came because of taking a risk, pushing yourself beyond what you thought you could do, or giving of yourself extravagantly. It took something out of you, and the fulfillment you received in return was even more valuable because of how *uncomfortable* you had been along the way.
- Our desire to know our purpose and destiny as believers is at an all time high. We want to know the plans that God declares He has for us. Plans to prosper us and not harm us and to give us a hope and a future as it is written in **Jeremiah 29:11**. But did you know the task before us to come into this promise may require us to become...uncomfortable? And then become comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- So, we will explore the mystery of this paradox as we search through the scriptures and investigate those whose lives, for the sake of their calling, were not the least bit comfortable as it may appear to be written. But the price that they would pay to be unusual and above normal in their walk with God made those around them and even the world uncomfortable.

### I. Uncomfortable Christians make others uncomfortable.

Finley Peter Dunne (1867-1936) an American journalist noted for his humorous sketches, coined the phrase that could much more aptly be spoken of Jesus: He came to "*comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.*"

There were many times Jesus asked pointed questions or told stories that greatly disturbed some of those listening. Some people, especially the children or sick people, loved being around Jesus. Others, especially many of the leaders, could not wait to get rid of Him. Jesus clearly made some people extremely uncomfortable.

#### **Luke 24:13-34**

Shortly after His resurrection Jesus met two men walking home from Jerusalem and joined them incognito. The men were anxious and upset, and Jesus did not immediately go about soothing them. They later described their hearts as "burning within them" during their conversation with Jesus.

When you have Holy Ghost fire burning on the inside others may become inflammable. Makes for a nice T-shirt too! It is contagious and combustible.

*It comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.*

It is our nature to desire to be comfortable. We have been conditioned by society to believe that the more comfortable our lives are the more we have arrived. Our natural man loves to be pampered and spoiled. Therefore, it requires sacrifice to bring our thoughts and our body into subjection as stated in **2 Corinthians 10:5** by casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

When we are born again, our spirit man is born again. And our mind begins to become renewed, it begins a transformation to become uncomfortable with things in this world that does not look like the Kingdom and is offensive to God. It cannot let it go. Once it sees it, it cannot unsee it. For the spirit man, it is not comfortable ignoring what the devil is doing to people and pretend he does not see it.

It remains at the ready to hear Holy Ghost instructions of what to do about it. Something the natural man, of course, would rather not be a part of. That is why we must feed our spirit man the word of God daily to be conditioned and strong to keep our flesh under subjection to the will of the Father and the Word of God.

## **II. It's not nice to make others feel uncomfortable.**

Nice people will want you to be comfortable. Who do you think of when you think of the word "nice"? Gandhi? Mother Theresa? How about Jesus? Most artists' renditions portray Jesus as the sweetest, nicest-looking man, usually accompanied by lambs or children. They're not entirely wrong – Jesus is known as "the lamb of God," and he did love to bless children. But that does not mean Jesus was nice. Jesus was more than "nice". Christians love to proclaim: "God is love!" They're right. God IS love. And in **1 Corinthians 13**, love is described as patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not rude, selfless, not easily angered, and ungrudging. "Nice" never shows up on that list. But "Kind" does. The difference between niceness and kindness is like the difference between tolerating and embracing, political correctness and love, appearance, and reality.

Unlike niceness, which is focused on outward consequences (a desire to not ruffle feathers or to minimize conflict); kindness comes from inside (love for others and desire for their well-being).

- Nice people donate money to a beggar. Kind people invite the beggar home for lunch.
- Nice people ask you how you are. Kind people actually want to know.
- Nice people do occasional "good deeds." Kind people consistently love others.

Jesus was not nice – he was kind. He touched the untouchables. He told the disciples to "let the little children come to me." He ate meals with the rejects of society. He declared "I have not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world." Especially to people who were sick, discouraged, beaten down, humbled. If you were sick, discouraged, and beaten down, would

you want someone to give you a pat on the back and a “You’ve got this!” – or would you want someone to hold you, love you, and encourage you until you get back on your feet again? If we’re really honest with ourselves, we don’t really want people to be nice to us, either. “Nice” is just what we settle for when what we really want is for people to be kind. Jesus didn’t care about niceness – he cared about righteousness. Nice people don’t make enemies. But Jesus did. Lots of them. Because he cared about righteousness more than making and keeping friends.

And He was not comfortable with what He saw; and that was people who desperately needed God. People who were without hope, broken hearted, hurting and in despair.

### III. Comfortable Christianity produces passive believers.

**(Ephesians 6:10 -17 NIV)** <sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup>Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup>and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- Jesus was really about the business of making sure we understand we are not to be passive believers. The more comfortable we are the more passive we become. There is a reason why out of all the weapons of our warfare described in Ephesians 6:10 NIV, only one item in that armor is an offensive weapon; The Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God! It’s the only offensive weapon we as believers will ever need. And it is what allows us to go on an offensive attack against the devil. Comfortable Christians will not always fight. Comfortable Christians may even forget they are wearing armor. They will eventually become passive in their walk with God, passive to prayer, passive to fasting, and passive to caring about the lost.

**Luke 9:57-62 NIV**, Here, we find an interesting dialogue between Jesus and a few men as they make their way to Jerusalem. One of the men tries to make himself look and sound good to the others as he exclaims to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus, knowing the man’s heart, looks at the man and smiles kindly. He warns the man that following Him would be uncomfortable and unpredictable. The man’s smile slowly disappears as he ponders the weight of Jesus’ response. Jesus then turns to a different man and says, “Follow me.” That man, excited that Jesus is acknowledging him, nearly jumps to the moon. “YEA! I’ll follow you. But first, since my Father is old, let me wait until he dies. Then I will be right behind You.”

- Still another man exclaims to Jesus, trying to make himself look better than the previous guy, "I will follow you! Let me just run and say goodbye to my family."
- The problem with these men's comments was that even though they were willing to follow Jesus, **it was on their terms**. They wanted to be in control and be comfortable as they followed Jesus. They would follow Jesus based on their schedule, only after certain things had been done. They were not willing to drop everything and follow Him on His terms. They were not prepared to be fully committed to being uncomfortable.

### **2 Kings 7:3-5 ESV Why are we sitting here until we die?**

*"Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, 'Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die.'" So, they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there."*

- We must be mindful not to sit still until we become comfortable. So much so we will not venture to see what awaits us on the other side of the risk. One thing we do know, if we continue to sit here and not take the risk, nothing will change. What is the risk? The risk is saying yes to anything the Lord will have us do with sometimes little to no immediate instructions. To please God, Jesus said in **Matthew 16:25** *For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it*. You could risk friendships, relationships, financial opportunities, positions, and titles when your motive is to really please God in your obedience to Him. If we remain as we are to keep our lives and not challenge ourselves to search out the deeper depths of God, we will never grow. God is not against safety and wisdom. You will know God wants you to get out of your comfort zone and into the unfamiliar and uncomfortable when the risk is worth the reward.

### **Romans 12:1 ESV To be a living sacrifice means to live every minute of every day as an offering and service to the Lord.**

- "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. A living sacrifice."
- What exactly does it mean? To be a living sacrifice means to live every minute of every day as an offering and service to the Lord. It radically goes against our culture of self-promotion and making our own dreams come true. It means laying down our own ambitions, dreams, gifts, and fears, and telling God, "Do whatever you want with me. I am your servant."

- After encouraging his readers to make themselves living sacrifices, Paul expounds upon what he means in verse 2. From this verse, we can discern three basic elements of a living sacrifice: 1) Not conformed to the ideals of the world; 2) Transformed by an inward renewal that works outward; and 3) Able to discern the will of God.
- First, we are told that a living sacrifice is not conformed to what the world looks like. Second, a living sacrifice is to be inwardly transformed and renewed, which will work its way out into actions. Finally, Paul tells us that a person who is committed to being a living sacrifice will be able to discern the will of God by testing.
- The word that the ESV translates as testing can also be translated to discern, examine, or approve. Basically, he is saying that as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and we grow in our understanding of who God is, we will develop the ability to test a situation and determine if the direction we want to go lines up with God's desire for our lives. This is an incredible promise! We do not have to guess God's will for our lives and just hope we don't screw up. If we prayerfully seek his wisdom, He will give us the ability to see His will. This may not look like an angel coming to us in a dream or an audible voice saying, "Take the job." But God will guide us as we navigate trying to live our lives in service to him.

#### **Matthew 14:27-32 Get out of the boat.**

- But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.
- I realize that none of the 12 disciples were comfortable, out in the middle of rough water, scared. But once Peter jumped onto that water, he chose to do something even more uncomfortable. It was beyond uncomfortable. It was downright terrifying!
- Peter placed himself in a situation that depended on Jesus. He also created a situation that put a lot of stock in Jesus. If Jesus could not be trusted, if Jesus hadn't been there working a miracle, Peter would have a much shorter career than we know of. We tend to focus on the way that Peter became scared and sank...like a rock. The only reason he was there was because he was following orders - he got out of the boat and walked away from it. He was far enough away from the boat that when he did start to sink, he was closer to Jesus. Hmmmm. (-:
- Peter was the only one of the 12 who managed to get out of the boat. The rest were just fine where they were! ("We're behind you, Peter! Waaaaay behind you!") LOL For the rest of his life, Peter would be able to have checked off his bucket list: "climb out of boat and walk on water." What I really think we are supposed to take away from this story about

Peter walking on the water is a challenge to enter a situation that's scary and depends on Jesus.

- Somewhere along the line, while there's still time, each of us needs to be able to say that the Lord placed a challenge in front of me, and even though it was scary, I did it! Too often we let our fears decide what we will and will not do instead of the clear calling of Jesus to get out of the boat. Maybe that calling is not really clear for everyone, but could it be that for a few people here today, you know who you are, that you've been resisting doing something God is pushing you to do but you've held off because you're afraid?
- So, you do not make the move, take on the ministry, get out of your comfort zone. And it does not get done. If that is you, try putting this on your bucket list. Get uncomfortable. Get out of the boat.