

MONDAY MANNA

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LIFE AT THE END OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

By Robert J. Tamasy

Some people are natural risk-takers. They are the first ones to try skydiving or bungee jumping. They study a restaurant menu and search for the unusual selection, the exotic concoction few people ever order. Rather than opt for the security of a job with an established company, they venture out on their own without assurance of success but certain they don't want the regret of not pursuing their dream.

I admire people like that. Because I have spent much of my life choosing what I perceived to be the safe and secure course, often the path of least resistance and stress. Making cautious, carefully considered decisions. Electing to stay with what felt comfortable. However, many of my most rewarding experiences have come when I have been willing to venture beyond my comfort zone.

A speaker reminded me of this recently when he talked about "life at the end of your comfort zone." This can mean many things: the willingness to consider new ideas, even ones that challenge your accepted views and understanding. Being willing to forgo your standard choice at your favourite restaurant to try something different – or even trying a new, unusual restaurant!

Over my career, many of my most rewarding accomplishments have come at the end of my personal comfort zone: Attempting to submit a magazine article for the first time, risking rejection; collaborating with someone in writing a book for the first time; leaving the security of a guaranteed income to join a ministry that required me to raise all of my financial support; agreeing to speak publicly despite my natural shyness.

Spiritually it has been much the same for me. I remember learning about CBMC's discipling program, "Operation Timothy." I asked a good friend to take me through it as a mentor, but he recommended, "Why don't you find someone that you can take through Operation Timothy, instead?" Even though I did not feel very prepared for helping someone else grow spiritually, I discovered that experience among the most fulfilling I have ever had. And in the process, I found the person who grew the most rapidly was...me.

The greatest example of moving past the end of our comfort zone, spiritually speaking, is committing our life to Jesus Christ, not only for the hope of life after death, but also for life before death – including in the workplace. Operating a business, or carrying out our job responsibilities, according to biblical principles, especially when it runs counter to the practices of our peers, definitely takes us out of our comfort zone. Here are just a couple of things the Bible says about that:

Clinging to integrity when competitors do not. Living and working in a competitive world, it seems easy to yield to the temptation to act the same as everyone else does. God's standard, however, is often very different. It requires faith not to do as everyone else is doing. *"The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out"* (Proverbs 10:9).

Trusting God when circumstances do not make sense. Situations arise that take us off guard, ones we cannot comprehend and don't know how to resolve. Often these are occasions God uses for teaching us to live outside our comfort zones – and instead, find our comfort in Him. *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"* (Isaiah 41:10).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Are you a risk-taker, eager to test the new and challenging? Or do you prefer to operate within your personal comfort zone, both in your personal and professional life? Explain your answer.

Why do you think most of us find the "comfort zone" so attractive?

Give an example of a time you willingly stepped beyond your comfort zone – or were forced to do so? What were the circumstances, and the results? How has that experience affected you since then?

Do you think that truly trusting in God, acting according to faith in Jesus Christ, requires us to venture far outside of our comfort zones – maybe even many times? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about principles it presents, consider the following passages:

Psalm 1:1-6

Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:3,9, 23:23

Isaiah 26:3, 40:27:31

Jeremiah 29:11