

MONDAY MANNA

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DISCOMFORTING FACTS ABOUT THE COMFORT ZONE

By Sergio M. Fortes

Several months back, an edition of *Monday Manna* discussed something many of us have encountered: the comfort zone. It seemed fitting to revisit this topic, since it is a common issue of the everyday workplace, as well as people's lives. It is where we like to be and feel least threatened; it is familiar and predictable. It seems comfortable because we are not being stretched or challenged beyond our normal practices.

Our individual "comfort zone" can be identified through specific actions, thoughts, concepts and behaviors, which become a permanent habit. The comfort zone brings the benefit of harmony, without fear, anxiety, or risk. However, life in the comfort zone can prevent us from achieving more than we knew that we could. It keeps us from discovering we have greater capacities than we realised, because we refuse to extend ourselves beyond what we already know. The comfort zone prevents us from exploring new ideas, blocks questions, and inhibits decision-making.

Enjoying the benefits of safety and the feeling that everything is under our control, we often find it difficult to change that *status quo*. However, rather than being an asset, the comfort zone can lead a company or an individual onto a path that fosters boredom, stagnation, dissatisfaction, envy towards others, and supplies excuses for everything.

Choosing to remain in the comfort zone means giving up the development process, as well as opportunities for growth. It could be regarded as aborting one's professional life. The years pass unchallenged, and the stagnant life becomes impoverished. Escaping from the comfort zone leads to discovering new opportunities and potential, the conquest of greater trust, increases in creativity, and even revival of the will to live.

The Scriptures present numerous examples of people who seemed very comfortable where they were, doing what they had been doing. But God had bigger and better plans for them. To accomplish those, He needed to force them out of their comfort zones. Here are a few of them:

The Challenge to Abram. God challenged Abram: "*Leave your country, your family, and your father's home*", going to a land that he would show him (Genesis 12.1-3). Despite the fabulous promise that he would become "*the father of a great nation*," it was quite an attack on Abram's comfort zone. The word "leave" in Hebrew is "lech-lecha," a nearly identical two-term word play. The first means, "Go," and the second, "To yourself." It meant Abram's traumatic departure from his homeland, with the challenge to seek his most authentic identity.

The Huge Project of the Promised Land. For Israel, a people used to the sameness of four centuries of routine, God's instruction for them to leave in pursuit of the Promised Land must have been an overwhelming rattle to the nation's comfort zone. Great leaders were raised by God who guided them precisely during the process we know as the "exodus." It serves as a unique story for how to face and overcome the comfort zone.

Exploring the Other Side. Jesus Christ challenged His disciples: "*Let us go across to the other side*" (Mark 4:35). They knew that sea very well. They knew how to navigate it comfortably. But getting to the other side was a great challenge: it was late and going there could be risky. Then, soon after they left, a raging storm began! Their comfort zone was bombarded. Only trust in Jesus enabled them to survive the realm of discomfort.

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Jesus' statement is comforting: "Let us go...." Do you know why? Because it means He goes along us. And knowing that He is there, crossing to the "other side" can become a safe, yet exhilarating adventure!

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Do you have a "comfort zone"? How would you describe it?

How easy do you find it to venture outside your comfort zone? Why do you think this is so – not only for yourself, but also for others? Even for businesses, corporations and other types of organisations?

Think of an example when willingness to step outside your comfort zone proved to be beneficial. Did that result in your being able to step into the unfamiliar more often? Why or why not?

What role does faith have in overcoming the temptation to remain within one's comfort zone? What does Jesus' challenge and promise, "Let us go to the other side," mean for you?

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

Genesis 6:9-7:5

Exodus 3:1-14

Psalms 37:4-5

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 28:19-20