



The Zone

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Eternally Speaking Now

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"Have I not commanded you?
Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

Last May, our family had eight graduation parties or ceremonies to attend. It was just one of those years with a slew of friends graduating. As would be expected, many celebrations took place at the same time, so my family did our best to divide and conquer, getting to as many as we could.

During one of the programs I attended on behalf of our family, the parents of the graduates delivered a brief, heart-felt message about their senior. At one point, while a mother spoke about her daughter, she referred to a book they'd read together entitled, *Do Hard Things*.

I wasn't familiar with that book, but as soon as I heard its title, the Holy Spirit quickened my heart to take note of it. It was such an urgent nudge, that I knew it was the Lord and determined in that moment to buy the book later that day.

Upon the ceremony's conclusion, I rushed out the door to make one more graduation party. I could have easily let the next family know none of us could make their celebration— it was another hour's drive, and I know they'd have understood—but the family is special to us, and for some reason I was strongly led to travel the distance, although I'd only make the last ten minutes of the event.

When I got there they were cleaning up, but I was able to stay a while and connect with several people. As we said our goodbyes, I saw a dear friend by the exit and stayed to chat a while longer. I asked how all her kids were doing, and she provided various updates. Before I knew it, she casually mentioned how one of her sons was reading a book their family ensures all their teens read. What book was that? You guessed it: *Do Hard Things*.

Needless to say, before I started the engine to drive home, I grabbed my phone, purchased that book, and our family began reading it together soon thereafter.

Things only got better from that point.

Weeks later and a several chapters into that wonderful book, we came upon a section where the authors, teen brothers, addressed the dangers of staying in your **comfort zone**. We considered their thoughts, discussed them briefly, and went on with our day.

Fast forward to the following morning. Zach and I were reading our next devotional segment in Tim Tebow's book, *Know Who You Are: Live Like it Matters*. Would you like to know what those pages addressed? **Comfort zones**.

There's more.

That afternoon, Zach and I had a chapter to discuss in his summer health book. As I turned the page to read the segment due that day, you can probably guess what it mentioned. Yup, **comfort zones**.

Do you think God was getting our attention?
You'd be correct if you answered yes.

I shall now pose to you the same challenge our family was presented three times in 24 hours: Are you stuck in a **comfort zone**?

Oops.
Wait.

Before you answer that, let's define what a **comfort zone** is.

This is the point where I move off-script from any of the books I've read on this topic.

The more I contemplated this definition, the more complicated it became.

I understand what the phrase means in our everyday language and culture:
a **comfort zone** is a place, situation or disposition
where you feel safe, at ease, without stress, and, well, comfortable.

It's also most commonly considered negative,
referring to a person being 'stuck' in a **comfort zone**,
unwilling or unmotivated to move beyond it.

For a Christian though, the expression **comfort zone** presents a problem. Its commonly-known meaning actually clashes with the reality of following Christ. Since the simplest definition of **comfort zone** is the zone in which one is most comfortable, then for me (and I hope for all professing Christians), my **comfort zone** is...**Jesus**.

Seriously. I mean that.

God has called me into so many uncomfortable situations, that the only way I've come to both survive and thrive through any of them, is to do so with **Jesus as my Zone**. Consequently, in every one of those difficult seasons (those during which I clung to the Lord), without fail, I experienced the best comfort ever...*because my source of comfort was the Lord*. Let's look at Scripture to exemplify this.

God our Comfort

- The Holy Spirit is literally named our **Comforter**. (*John 14:26*) That's probably enough to make this point, but for the joy of it, let's go further.
- We are called to walk by God's Spirit rather than our flesh. When we walk by our flesh, we experience stress, worry, impatience, and irritability. When we walk by His Spirit, we experience peace, patience, and self-control. (*Galatians 5*) Which of these offers comfort? Clearly Jesus, not our flesh.
- The Lord promises to keep us in perfect peace, if our minds are stayed on Him and we trust in Him. (*Isaiah 26:3*) What better comfort is there than to be in perfect peace?
- God is our refuge. His very name is a strong tower to whom we run for safety. He is our Father, and He is our safe place. (*Psalms 46, Psalm 91, Proverbs 18:10*)

There are many other verses that speak of God as our comfort, so for the sake of time I'll pause here, trusting these are more than sufficient.

God our Zone

As I prayed through this writing, I was led to look up the meaning of the word zone. When I saw these definitions, my heart melted. I had no idea the following would emerge and pray it stirs up a deeper love for the Lord within you as it did me. Here are its definitions:

- An area or stretch of **land** with a particular characteristic or **purpose**: restricted, established or set aside for something specific
- A belt worn around a person's body
- To encircle as, or to **encircle** with a band or stripe
- "In the zone," as in, a state of high-peak performance

Delight in the Lord with me now, as I assemble these into one big, beautiful, holy paragraph. Everything in this summary is biblically true, yet spurred on by these simple definitions. God is glorious!

Jesus is our Promised **Land**.

We are **set aside** by Him for **something specific**.

When we love and obey **Him as our Zone**,

His **established purpose** for our lives is fulfilled.

Since He is the Truth, and we are to put on the **belt** of truth,

then we are to put on Jesus, literally **clothing ourselves** with Him.

All the while, His presence-- even the **stripes** He bore to save us-- **encircle** us.

When we choose **Jesus as our Zone**, we operate at our **highest state of peak performance** and are able to do anything He calls us to do!

Because the Lord is our **Comfort**,
if He is our **Zone**,
then by default he is our **Comfort Zone**.
How may this look in our daily lives?

It will appear differently for each of us. Over the years, the Lord has transported me **out of the comforts of my flesh** and **into His Zone** countless times.

- I didn't want to go on any missions trips, but with the encouragement of my sister, I ended up doing ten. They provided some of the best moments of ministry I've experienced.
- I didn't want to be a public speaker in the way the Lord designed for me, but He had His way and empowered me to do over 1,200 speaking engagements within an 8-year period of time. It would take me months to share all the supernatural things He did during that season of my life.
- I didn't want to move from San Diego to Texas, or later from Texas to Illinois, but each move has taken me deeper in humility, surrender, and trust in God-- in ways that have radically blessed me and shaped my character, literally impacting the way I handle life today.

In every one of those cases,
I'm so glad I didn't stay in **my comfort zone**.

From the big things like getting married, raising a child, writing blogs, and homeschooling, to the smaller things like making breakfast every day or just getting up in the morning with a good attitude, anything fruitful in my life has required I step **out of my comfort zone** and jump by faith into the **Jesus Zone**.

It's time to obey God by denying our flesh and wrapping ourselves up inside **The Comforter**.
As a result, we more readily go where He tells us to go, do what He says to do, say what He speaks through us, and align our thoughts to think as He does.

There's no better way to live.

CHALLENGE

What has the Lord been nudging you about that you've been unwilling to do? It's something you know agrees with Scripture and is from God, yet you've resisted doing it. It may be as big as moving to another state or as small as making a phone call.

What is keeping you from obeying Him? Fear of rejection? Procrastination? Self-preservation? Laziness? Resentment? These are **comfort zones** of the flesh. They bring no good fruit and lead to dead ends. Are you willing to change that?

Can **your zones** truly deliver, save, delight, and free you?
Can **your zones** encourage, bless, equip, and strengthen you?

There are two types of **comfort zones**, and only one is good.
Will we stay in **ours**, or move into the **Lord's**?

Here's the best part:
When we switch into **God's Comfort Zone**,
His Zone becomes **ours**,
and we find ourselves operating from His glory, might, and power.
And then, He uses *us* to comfort *others* in the way *He* comforted *us*!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our tribulation,
that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble,
with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Jesus is our ultimate **Comfort Zone**.

When we wrap ourselves up in Him as our **Comforter**,
we can go anywhere He takes us
and do anything He commands, because
He goes before us (*Exodus 23*),
He is our rear guard (*Isaiah 52*),
He is with us, and
He is in us. (*John 15*)

What a comfort.

**Want another boost to confidently
and resolutely step out
of *your* comfort zone and into
the *THE* Zone with Jesus?**

Catch this message about my camping experience last year. (Talk about getting out of my comfort zone!) I'm glad I did it. It produced incredible blessings I pray you'll receive as you read or listen.

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