

MAIORANO MINUTES

4TH QUARTER 2012

COMFORT ZONES

What is a comfort zone? You've heard expressions like, "You're in your comfort zone" or "You're out of your comfort zone." You may have heard a sermon challenging you to get out of your comfort zone. Here's a question. Why is it that we think we should even have a comfort zone? Jesus calls us to follow Him. He left us an example to follow. Let's look at that example.

When Jesus came to the earth as a baby, there was no room for Him. How comfortable was the manger?

As Jesus grew, He was rejected by His family, by His community. He was the "goody-two-shoes" (or sandals) brother. He was the 12-year old that was more concerned about His heavenly Father's business, than His earthly father's business. How comfortable was the daily ridicule?

When He began His ministry He stated that the foxes had dens and the birds had nests, but the Son of Man had no place to lay His head. That makes even a stay at Motel 6 sound good. He spoke truth that no one wanted to hear, walked around with a target on His back, betrayed by a friend. No 5-star comfort there.

Now we come to His death. Stripped and beaten, mocked and spit on, flogged until He no longer resembled a man. He was given a crown of thorns and a cross then marched through the streets, so He could be laughed at and cursed. Spikes were driven through His hands and His feet and in pain and agony hung on that cross. He was forsaken by His Father who could no longer look on Him because He carried your sins with Him to that cross. There He hung until He died, for one simple reason. He loves you, and He knew that His death was the only acceptable sacrifice (the perfect, blameless, innocent, Lamb of God) able to pay your debt in full. Your debt, not His. You owed a debt (because of your sin) that you could not pay. He paid the debt that He did not owe on your behalf. That should be what we remember when we think of Christ's birth. Why did He come? He left His comfort zone (heaven) to come here, take on the body of a man, and die in your place.

Jesus says, "Pick up your cross and follow Me." Why is it that if we are following Christ, and we are striving to be more "Christ-like" that we spend so much time making sure that we are in our comfort zone? If we are following His example, why do we think our life should be so . . . shall we say, comfy?

We have been challenged in this area of our lives over the last couple of weeks/months. We will try to share some of the ways God has challenged our thinking, but we are not sure what all He has in store for us. It will be exciting to watch what He is doing. We just pray for the willingness to follow wherever He may lead.

We were comfortable in the classroom. Ten to twelve students was just fine, and it was ok that a couple needed a little extra help. When we began class in January, we started with 18 students. We have another girl joining our classroom. Nicole is 12, in 6th grade, struggling and unhappy in her present circumstance. 18 students, eight of whom have serious issues, another 6-8 on the waiting list and most people haven't even begun looking or thinking about the next educational year. We have talked to our students and asked them to think about the pros and cons of more students in the classroom, possibly 24 if we have help. They came up with more cons than pros, but then one student threw out a thought that trumped all others. If you take more students, you can help more students like you have helped us.

This has been a season in our lives that God has been challenging us to let go. He has had to show us that all we have, He has given to us for a given time to accomplish His purpose. When He asks us to let go, it's because He has something better for us. We let go of the goats and had a parent in tears as they realize that we were putting their child ahead of our desires. I gave up my piano that I have played for 45 years and gained classroom space, a keyboard, and a broader application of music. We thought we needed to gain time for ourselves and discovered God wanted us to have time to reach out to people on His behalf. We are learning to live open handed, holding on to nothing but God.

We have been comfortable ministering within the four walls of our building, but God may be pushing us beyond those walls. Through various people and events, God has made us aware of a world of needs outside these walls. I was once told by one of my Precept teachers, that a need doesn't necessarily constitute a call on our lives. Our job is to be open to hear what God wants us to do and not be quick to jump into something that we think we should do. You can quickly become burned out when you are doing "your thing" because you are doing it in your own power. When we are following God's direction, it doesn't matter how busy we become, we are working in His strength and not our own. As God begins to expand our vision, we promise to bring you along on the adventure, and maybe at the same time, be an encouragement for you to step outside your comfort zone and reach out to a hurting world.

TRAVELING EAST

Jim and I will be bringing five of our students to the PA/DC area for a two week tour of the historical sites of the area. We have booked plane tickets to arrive in Philadelphia on April 13 and return to New Mexico on April 27. We are planning on some visitation, open houses, and church visits, so let us know if you have any interest in meeting with us, and we will see if anything can be arranged. We will have a complete schedule of our activities in our next letter.

ON A SAD NOTE

I received a call from my mother on Friday, December 29, to let me know that my brother-in-law, Gary, passed away. It seems that he died of a heart issue. I am still trying to get in touch with my sister, Bonnie, to see what I can do for her. I am willing to go and see her if she needs a little extra love and support from her family. She lives in Florida and has been very sick herself for quite a long time. Please keep my sister and their children in your prayers. She and Gary had two children, Rustin and Brandi. Gary was the step father to Bonnie's two boys, Jonathan and Jason. Gary also had some children from his first marriage. All are adults, and most have families of their own.

GOD'S ANSWERS TO PRAYER

1. We are thankful to have a former student who is helping in the classroom for 2 1/2 hours a day. Beka will be continuing with us possibly until the end of the year.
2. We have watched an amazing transformation in Jimmy's life over the last month as the Lord has worked in his life, and through him, his family as well. He has been one of the forces that has influenced our lives and opened our eyes to some needs that God may be calling us to fill.
3. We had a great program with the students on December 20th. The students planned, decorated, and presented what they have been doing in the classroom for the first half of the year. We had the frosty Delaware River running down the center of the room and half of the families were seated on the British side near Trenton, NJ, and the other half was on the PA side where Washington's troops were camped. It was a good night, and the students did a great job.
4. Jim has been doing a great job in the classroom with the students. The students enjoy him and talk to him, and it is great from my vantage point to watch him interact with them in various ways. It is a change and a challenge, but both are good.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING . . .

1. Wisdom as we discern what God wants us to do for Him each and every day as He challenges us and pushes us out of our comfort zone.
2. Wisdom as we teach 18 students. I am trying a lot of new ideas in order to help each student to reach their greatest potential. With Beka in the classroom, I needed to free up students so they could work with her and get some extra attention. This will be a lot of trial and error as we strive to help each of our students.
3. Planning and preparation for the trip to the East coast. We want to pack a lot in with history, culture, and exposing them to challenging circumstances both in the preparation and the experience. The students may have the opportunity to share at two public schools in Baltimore, a couple of churches, a nursing home, and in home settings with individual families.

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