

15. COMFORT WILL BE THE DEATH OF US

*When life gives you lemons
make lemonade.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

COMFORT WILL BE THE DEATH OF US

Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Are you familiar with the saying: 'What we do in life echoes through eternity'? It is a saying which demonstrates that the things we do in life now, are very important for our eternal life later. This is also echoed in the Bible when it speaks about how God has created us, not just to exist, but for good works. These good works will also be seen in eternity.

When I was in school I never really learnt very hard to pass. As I was growing up I realised that I only had to do a certain amount of work in order for me to pass. I just wanted to be an A-student, not a 90% A-student, more like a 80% A-student. I learnt that I did not have to work that hard to get 80%, so I put in just enough work in order to get my 80%. I learnt what to do to get by, to just get what I wanted. I knew I could get more, but I was happy with low attainments.

I later realised that being happy and being comfortable with low attainments, became a habit. Not only did it become a habit with regard to my school work and college work, it also spilled over into my adult life. I realised that I was becoming content and happy with just getting by and having and living a mediocre life, a comfortable life, as an adult. I became comfortable as well with having a mediocre relationship with God, living a satisfactory Christian life, kind of a lukewarm Christian life. Perhaps it is the same with you.

WHAT WE DO IN LIFE ECHOES THROUGH ETERNITY? IT IS A SAYING WHICH DEMONSTRATES THAT THE THINGS WE DO IN LIFE NOW, ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR OUR ETERNAL LIFE LATER.

The Bible says: *"Now is the time of reckoning."* We are given today only to live life to its full potential. God has called us as His workmanship to live with good works in our lives and to walk in these good works. In Ecclesiastes 9:10 we read: *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."*

I fear that the need to be comfortable is going to be the death of us. We have grown up seeking comfort more than seeking those things which are important for our growth. With COVID-19 at our doors and so many changes to contend with, it is easy for us to retreat back into our safe space, our comfort zone. Maybe before the pandemic hit us, you had big plans, for example plans to study further, plans to open your own health shop, plans to change your life and become a better person in order to live up to that ideal God has meant for your life. Those plans may now seem like they are a little bit too much effort. With social distancing and not being able to go out and do things the way we used to, you may feel that all those dreams and ideals became a waste of time.

I've heard people saying that it is the end of the world. Why then should we even bother with all these things we wanted to do? The problem is, we do not know if it is the end. No one knows when Jesus is going to appear. Perhaps you said you are not really letting go of your plans completely, you are just putting your dreams on hold, on pause, until life normalises again. What if life does not get better? Are you going to let go of your plans, your dreams, your aspirations towards growth and progression?

**DON'T PUT YOUR DREAMS ON HOLD,
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Are you going to settle back into a mediocre life, into a mediocre relationship with God? Are you going to settle back into being a lukewarm Christian?

I am sure you all know the expression: *'When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.'* Yes, this pandemic has brought us to our knees. Yes, this pandemic is difficult and it has shattered our dreams and our goals we set for ourselves, but do not let this turmoil derail your train. You were heading somewhere in life. Stay on track despite the ride being a bit bumpy. If you are not on the train track yet, get on! Some of the most amazing people have made their dreams and their goals and aspirations come true despite trials and discomfort. Jim Carrey, believe it or not, used to be homeless. Pro-surfer Bethany Hamilton had her arm bitten off by a shark, but she did not stop surfing. Stephen King's first novel was rejected thirty times. At the age of 15, Charlize Theron witnessed her mother shooting and killing her alcoholic father in self-defence. Steven Spielberg was rejected by film school. All these people did not allow themselves to be derailed from their goals and dreams because of adversity. They refused to retreat back into their comfort zones because of the discomfort they were facing. They allowed the discomfort to mould them, to help them to become better people, to help them to achieve their goals, to push them harder. All this to attain earthly goals!

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us of God saying that we should not be satisfied with mediocre lives, not here on earth and not for the life to come. *"I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and to give you hope and a future."* Not plans for you to become comfortable or just to survive or just to exist or just to get by the way.

**ARE YOU GOING TO SETTLE FOR A
MEDIocre LIFE, FOR A MEDIocre
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? ARE YOU
GOING TO SETTLE FOR BEING A
LUKEWARM CHRISTIAN?**

Your life was not meant to be mediocre. It should be a prosperous life, a life that gives you a hope and a great future. Stop waiting to start living. Stop waiting for some great thing to happen. Nobody can live your dreams for you, but you.

What dreams and goals has God placed in your heart which you have not started working on yet? The fear of COVID-19 or the world's possible impending doom has perhaps caused you to freeze up in fear. A type of flight or fright reaction. You might have said something like: "It is too late for me now. I've wasted my life. I haven't detained much on this earth and I haven't worked on my relationship with God. Now it is too late. I might as well go back to my old ways of life, being comfortable, being lazy, not studying further, not growing in my relationship with God."

This fear or discomfort that we feel, that pushes us back into the comfortable is actually something that is built into us. You might be surprised to hear this. We are not designed to do things that are uncomfortable or scary or difficult. Our brains are wired to protect us from those things that are trying to destroy our lives. Our brains are designed to keep us alive. If certain situations evoke fear and discomfort inside us, our brains will naturally make us run from those things because of the fear. Our brains will stop us at all cost from doing anything that may hurt us. I am using the word 'hurt' sarcastically, because the things we think are going to hurt us, are sometimes the things that are going to push us into success, that are going to push us into a different level of living, a different level of life.

We have to learn to rewire and teach our brains that some uncomfortable situations are good for us and that we should embrace them and become more comfortable with the discomfort.

**YOUR LIFE WAS NOT MEANT TO BE
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In order for us to change our lives, we have to start doing the things that are scary and difficult and uncomfortable. Then only we can rewire our brains. We have to teach the brain by constant repetition that the things it thinks are going to be uncomfortable or scary, are the things that will benefit us. By doing those things over and over again, we can rewire the parts within our brains.

You may ask whether it is not too late? No, it is never too late. It is never too late to change your life. It is never too late to ask God to come into your life and to transform your life into that which He wanted it to be. He wants you to prosper and to have a future, to have a good life. The Bible tells us there was a man that hung on the cross next to Jesus when Jesus was crucified. The Bible calls him a thief, and that thief, in his last dying moments, turned to Jesus and said to the Lord: "Lord think of me when You are in your Kingdom." Jesus promised him that one day he would be in the Kingdom with Him.

If today, you are hearing a voice in your mind speaking to you, saying to you it is not too late, you need to change because there is a higher standard of living you need to attain, that voice is the voice of God speaking to you. Get up! Get up and do what needs to be done, even though you feel time might be too short to do what you need to do. Get up and realise that it is not too late. Stop giving yourself permission to live a small, comfortable life, physically and spiritually. God wants you to prosper. God wants you to dream big, physically, mentally and spiritually.

'Higher than the highest thought is God's ideal for His children.' He wants us to attain God- likeness. Godlikeness must be the goal for us to reach.

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His goal for us is much higher than the temporal, selfish interests of this life. Of course there are things we need to attain in this life. There is a life we need to build here, but we must also reach higher than that. God does not want us to be happy with small attainments; He wants us to dream big, to reach for the stars and then perhaps we will fall amongst the trees.

1 Corinthians 2:9 says: *"What no ear has heard or eye has seen or has come into the thoughts of man, is the very thing God has prepared for those who love Him."* We often think this is speaking about heaven and maybe it is, but I believe God says there is so much more for you to have here in this life (better than your wildest dreams), and even in the life to come. Live large, live scary for God's Kingdom. There is a calling that God has called you to live up to, a standard for your life He is calling you towards. We should be ever-growing and ever-developing towards being a better self.

Your comfort zone is your enemy. It is ironic because when we try to live a comfortable life, life often sends us more and more discomfort, more problems and rocks and resistance. Instead of comfort, we should be aiming towards growing.

A wise grandmother once asked her lazy grandson: "If you could choose to be a pumpkin or an oak tree, which one would you want to be?" The son exclaimed: "An oak tree, of course Grandmother!" "Well," she said to him, "it only takes a few months to grow a pumpkin but many years to grow the majestic oak tree. You get what you give, my son. What are you doing to become the oak tree?"

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Are you comfortable with being a pumpkin, because if you are in your comfort zone you probably are going to end up being a pumpkin. If, on the other hand, you get out of your comfort zone and take time and effort you will become that great majestic oak tree.

You are not on this earth to be comfortable, to sit on the beach and sip ice tea and get a tan. Your one purpose in life is to grow – holistically. You have one of two options; either you can commit yourself to constant growth and feeling discomfort of your own accord while becoming the master of your destiny with God's help; or you can hand over the keys and just let life happen and experience the other kind of discomfort.

"A tree that is not pruned, will not bear much fruit", the Bible says. You can decide how this pruning will take place, by either placing yourself in the Hands of the Master pruner, or you can relax and just let nature takes its course and let your leaves grow where they may and allowing the birds to nest in your branches, pecking off the little bit of fruit you've managed to grow despite your inactivity. It will definitely not be easy to be pruned, but Jesus set the example of growing in discomfort.

Hebrews 12:2 says: *"Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end."* Jesus did not give up because of the cross. On the contrary **because of the joy that was waiting for Him, He thought nothing of the disgrace or the discomfort of dying on the cross and now He is seated at the right side of God's throne.** Christ sacrificed Himself completely, body, mind and soul for His goal – His goal to be with us eternally.

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He experienced many discomforts on the way to achieve this goal. Discomforts like persecution, social alienation, poverty, separation from His Father, betrayal, grief, loss. Are you willing to follow His example, realising that the discomforts of life will help you to attain your goal? If so, what are you sacrificing to attain your goal? Are you sacrificing social media for family time? Are you sacrificing revenge and jealousy and greed for kindness and compassion and love for your enemies? Are you sacrificing sleep to achieve your goals?

Ask yourself what the things are that you know in your heart you should have started doing long ago, but you didn't because it is uncomfortable. What are the things that will build the experiences and the knowledge you need to grow in order for you to succeed? Give up being scared and going back to your comfort zone. Choose growth and development through hard work and dedication, asking God to bless your plans. It does not matter whether you go back to your comfort zone or whether you go into growth and development, because both of these parts are going to include discomfort and possibly pain. The one involves growth pains and the other one involves the pain of losing out on that which could have been.

The inactivity or procrastination you think is going to bring you comfort, is only bringing discomfort. You might as well feel uncomfortable for something that is worthwhile. Sleep, procrastination, comfort zone ... no one ever achieved anything by any of these. Diamonds are formed under pressure, severe and tremendous pressure. You got to give up your comfort. You need to start feeling comfortable with being uncomfortable. Do something you haven't done yet.

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DON'T DELAY ANY LONGER .**

Do that which scares you. Step out in self-sacrificing faith and be uncomfortable for your own benefit. This is how you are going to grow and how you will become worthy of being that person sitting on the beach, sipping your ice tea.

The rewards of life only come after hard work. Only then you will feel truly satisfied and comfortable to enjoy those things because you've earned them. The Bible tells us that the workman is worthy of his meal. Life will not let you get away with enjoying the things you have not earned. You will always feel a sense of discomfort. Revelation 22:12 tells us that God also has a reward in store for us. He says: *"And behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to every man according to his work."*

When you choose to place yourself in discomfort, your friends will notice, your family will notice, your colleagues will notice and they will start to back you up and to support you in your growth.

Do not be content with mediocre. Routine is good, it teaches us responsibility ... but routine can become a comfort zone. Do not settle for being ordinary. God calls us to be extra, to be more, to be extra-ordinary. Do not be content with just being ... become! Become what God has planned for you.

We are so used to living a mediocre life. We need to fulfill our true potential. Life begins at the end of our comfort zones. Today, God is calling you to develop yourself, to teach yourself, to weaponise yourself to reach that full potential He has set for you in His Word. See discomfort as God's signal that there is work to be done. Reach into that discomfort, go into it, move into it. Fall forward into the problems of life, into the difficulties of life, so that happiness and the reward afterwards can be enjoyed also.

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