

Are You Trapped in Your Comfort Zone?

God wanted the disciples out of the comfort of Jerusalem so the gospel would spread.

Growing up on the famed Jersey Shore, I spent all my summers on the beach. Music, friends, hot dogs, french fries, fun and the ocean—I loved it all, especially the ocean. Even today—though I have much less opportunity because I live in Arizona—I could spend all day at the beach.

Consider the Christians of the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit performed signs, wonders and miracles among them. Fellowship and a sense of community arose quickly. People immediately were swept into the kingdom of God.

They had great revelation and teaching; they could worship like they never had before; they could give and receive prophecies; and they could be blessed, blessed, blessed.

That could've gone on forever! Kind of like living by the ocean and soaking up the music, food and fun—why would you want it to stop?

All of what those early believers had sounds great to me. But if that move of God had not eventually changed, it probably would have imploded, become very ingrown and weird—or simply dried up.

Why? Because God knew the human tendency—even of the early believers—would be to hang out in Jerusalem and just soak up the blessings.

But in Acts 7-8, everything seemed to change overnight. “At that time a great persecution arose against the church... and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and

Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1, NKJV).

It looked like the party was over. It really wasn't—but the imperative from the King had changed. It would no longer just be about receiving from heaven; it would be about sharing heaven's life with the world.

Fortunately, the early believers did what God intended, even though the way His will came to them—through trouble and persecution—was not the means they would have chosen. But the results were terrific: "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:4,8).

Today we are plagued with violence, terror, an unstable economy and church scandals. Could it be that once more God is using the "stir stick" of adversity to get believers and the gospel beyond our Jerusalems and out where the lost and suffering live?

If you believe this is even remotely possible, then consider a simple three-word strategy drawn from Acts that will work for any Christian who will dare to think along these lines.

1. Saturate. Seek to immerse yourself in God's presence—be filled with the Holy Spirit, renewed through God's Word and walk every day in the Spirit. But don't stop there. Instead, saturate your home, school, workplace and neighborhood with prayer.

Try walking through your own neighborhood while praying. Where you live may become an attractive-looking mission field that calls for greater personal action from you.

2. Infiltrate. Go beyond your comfort zone. God wanted the disciples out of the comfort of Jerusalem so the gospel would spread throughout the earth. There is nothing wrong with being comfortable unless it keeps you from fully obeying the Lord.

Jesus likened His followers to light and salt. Both infiltrate. Light works best where the darkness is deepest. Salt works best on things that are tasteless (and it's of no use if it merely sits in a salt shaker or cupboard).

3. Proliferate. There was a great harvest on the day of Pentecost. More important, however, adding new people or members to Christ's body became an everyday occurrence.

I don't think the early church took the time to go to seminars (although today they do help). They just quickly began to declare the gospel and saw immediate results.

If you feel as if you might have spent a little too much time on "the beach" and have become spiritually waterlogged, then the best thing I can suggest for you is to get into action—now!

After all, who would want all the great things God is doing to end with us? They won't, if we spread the gospel everywhere we go.

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