

Getting Out of Our Comfort Zone

Ready:

"For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control." - 2 Timothy 1:7

Set

During my brief stint as a collegiate boxer, I had the opportunity to do many things which tested my strength and endurance - endless push-ups, limitless lunges, and hours spent with someone bouncing a medicine ball off my contracted abdomen. These training tools, however, paled in comparison to the times we had to fight above our weight class. At 6'1" with a runner's build, I cut a bit of mass to box at 139 pounds. At that size, I had a significant reach advantage on most other fighters. If I could keep my feet moving, I would generally score well, though I rarely dominated a fight. I had a comfortable rhythm, but needed to be shaken out of it to get to the next level. When I fought heavier opponents, it never ceased to amaze me how much of a difference a "mere" 20 pounds could make. My reach advantage generally evaporated and the additional punching power that extra muscle provided meant I had to radically alter my strategy. Increased hand speed, improved evasiveness, and enhanced endurance proved the keys to my survival. With the skills, I was able to break out of the ranks of the sparring squad and step into the ring of actual competition. My coach knew that staying in my comfort zone was not the way to reach my goals.

Likewise, we repeatedly see God taking people out of their comfort zones to increase their faith and their reliance on him. When God calls Gideon to defeat the Midianites, Gideon's first response is that his clan is the weakest in Manasseh and that he is the least in his father's house (Judges 6:15). Later, when Gideon is preparing to go into battle with 32,000 men on his side, God tells him that is too many. Eventually, God whittles Gideon's forces to only 300 men to face the entire Midianite Army. Talk about fighting above your weight class! But the key to Gideon's success lay neither in the strength of his men, nor his abilities as a leader, but rather in the strength of HIS leader.

God makes this clear in Judges 7:7 when he says to Gideon "...With the 300 men who lapped [water] I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand..." We see repeatedly in scripture that God uses weak, broken people to do great things for his glory. These people were often pulled from their own comfort zone to brave great odds at a high personal cost (think of Abraham, Moses, and Paul). Christ himself came from the most comfortable place that exists - heaven itself - to live a sinless life, suffer all the temptation and maladies common to man, and die a shameful and undeserved death before rising again in glory for our salvation.

While I will likely never be 139 pounds again, I still have many places where I need to be shaken out of my comfort - from running intervals to sharing the gospel. With the Lord's help, I hope to go where he leads, and to finish well the race he has set out for me. How about you?

Go

1. What comfortable routines do you need to be shaken out of today to grow as an athlete and competitor for Christ?
2. What barriers keep you from trusting God's promises today?
3. How can you spur your teammates/players out of their comfort zones and onto love and good works?

Workout

Matt. 19:16-30; Phil. 4:11-13; Matt. 16:24; Is. 42:16

Bible Reference:

Matthew 19:16-30

Philippians 4:11-13

Matthew 16:24

Isaiah 42:16



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