

When God Wants to Send You, Will You Go? By Robert J. Tamasy (Monday Manna)

Some weeks ago, my friend Sergio Fortes wrote about “the comfort zone,” where we feel, obviously, comfortable. It’s familiar, predictable, and usually does not require more effort than we are willing to give. So how do you respond when asked to venture outside your comfort zone? Do you resist? Dig in your heels and refuse? Or simply respond, “No, I can’t”? What about when you sense God directing you on an unfamiliar course, asking you to do something you have never tried before, maybe even something you feel totally unqualified to do?

I think of numerous biblical accounts when people were asked to take such steps: Noah, asked to build an ark with a global flood approaching; Abraham, told to leave his friendly confines in Haran for a land he had never heard of; Moses, selected to lead the Israelites out of Egypt after more than 400 years of being enslaved; Isaiah, responding, “Here I am! Send me!” when God was looking for a prophet to take His message; and each of Jesus’ disciples, who left their livelihoods to follow Him.

We might never have our life stories featured in a book, but if we are true followers of Jesus Christ, there will be times when God calls us out of our comfort zones to serve Him in another place, in another way. In my own life, I can recall numerous times when that happened. Let me cite just two:

After 10 years as a community newspaper editor, God opened a door for me to become director of publications for CBMC. I had never written a magazine article, or a book, but both were in my job description – exciting and daunting. But even before making that major career shift, the Lord wanted me to do something that for me was quite frightening – to speak to a crowd of more than 400 people.

Being what I call an “extroverted introvert,” I was comfortable speaking to people individually or in small groups, but speaking to hundreds at one time? Yet this is exactly what God was directing me to do, through my pastor in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. He had suggested I briefly speak to our congregation one Sunday morning to tell what I would be doing, and to solicit their prayers.

My initial reaction was, “I can’t do that!” But I agreed to pray about it, and eventually felt impressed this was what I should do. That Sunday morning I was, as expected, very nervous waiting for my turn to speak, but when I stood behind the podium and saw many faces staring back at me, I felt what Philippians 4:7 calls “the peace that passes all understanding.” My short talk went surprisingly well. That step of obedience proved to be a stepping stone for many opportunities to speak at CBMC events in a variety of settings. Which leads to the second example I want to mention:

In 1999, I was on staff with CBMC International, and Tim Philpot, then its President, said we needed to reconnect with the ministry in Brazil – and I was the one to do it. “What?” I knew nothing about Brazil, could not speak Portuguese, and was no expert in “ministry development.” But drawing from past experience, I trusted God knew what He was doing in sending me there.

The trip turned out to be extremely fruitful, and to this day I maintain friendships that were formed more than 20 years ago in Sao Paulo, Curitiba and Vitoria. Out of that ministry journey came an unexpected result: An enthusiastic group of Brazilians who to this day translate “Monday Manna” into 5-6 other languages, then send each edition literally around the world. This and other instances taught an important lesson: When we step out in obedient faith, God will always do more than we could ever imagine.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe your own “comfort zone”?
2. Have you ever had a time when you felt God directing you to do something that was far outside your comfort zone, perhaps even something you felt unqualified to do? How did you respond?
3. Why do you think that taking a step of faith at such times is so difficult? What is the role of prayer when the Lord calls you to do something and you think, “I can’t do that!”?
4. Can you think of a time when you – or someone you know – did take that step of obedience and the outcome proved to be “exceeding abundantly beyond anything you can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20)? Describe the impact it had on you – and others.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Psalm 37:4-5; Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:1,3, 19:21; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 28:19-20