

West Valley Church
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Missions

Last summer I was able to go back to Guyana for the second time, to help the church in Victoria with their building. It's exciting to be able worship today with you as the Victoria Church dedicates their building in Guyana today. Next Sunday we'll get to see more of the work that has been done, you won't want to miss it.

Going to Guyana was my first experience going on a mission trip and being outside of the country (other than vacation in Canada and Mexico). One great thing about going on a mission trip is it forces you to get out of your comfort zone. You have to try new things, eat new things, go without things you are used to having or not doing something you are used to doing: Like sleeping in your bed, drinking water from the faucet, or in Guyana trying to communicate which is tough because even though they speak English, their dialect and accents are different and you have to listen very carefully. If trying new things and being in a new place isn't uncomfortable to you, then if nothing else, the traveling alone is uncomfortable because you leave here and after multiple flights, and cramming into mini-buses, it takes about 24 hours to get to your room in Guyana.

Three years ago, my first time to Guyana, I was uncomfortable on the construction site. I know how to hold a hammer, but I need some practice swinging it. Well, I met a big strong man, named Crandon. We were working on the concrete staircase that would lead up to their sanctuary. We had hammers and were nailing in the forms for the stairs that would hold the concrete. Crandon is one of the construction leaders on site. He is a builder and very familiar with a hammer, I am not. Well, he was up a few stairs and he noticed I was having a tough time with a nail. The nail was bouncing off the wood like I was hitting a knot or something. After failing a few attempts the nail bounced and before it fell to the bottom of the staircase again, I caught it. So Crandon swings his body upside down, down the staircase, holding his weight with one hand, and his hammer in the other. He shakes his hammer at me and says, "Ol Le Nail". "Ol Le Nail" is Crandon's version for "Hold the nail".



He wanted me to hold the nail while he lies upside down and hammers it in. So in my discomfort I held the nail, he easily hammered it, and I kept my fingers.

Most of us do not like to be uncomfortable, but sometimes doing what God wants of us, means allowing ourselves to be uncomfortable for the sake of serving someone else. Let's

learn today from a person in the Bible who was willing to do something uncomfortable (even dangerous) because God asked him to do it. And because He was obedient, he played a major role in helping the Church and God's Word to us, become what it is today. Our main passage of Scripture today is from Acts 9:1-18, and we are going to read the first half now before I pause for some background information:

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul!

Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

So here comes Saul to Damascus with permission to arrest any followers of Jesus. Threatening them and eager to have them killed for their faith. But after a life changing moment with Jesus, his plan is up in the air now because he can't see and must rely on his friends to help him. But Saul isn't the main person we are learning from today. Instead, we are learning from one who would help Saul, and be asked by God to go into an uncomfortable situation. Let's continue in verse 10:

Now there was a believer in Damascus named

Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

"But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen

instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.

Sometimes when I read Scripture, I wonder “what if?”. When I read this passage, I wonder what would have happened if Ananias didn’t do it? If he said, “that’s dangerous, and I’d rather not”. Instead, because he did it, we get to look at the impact Ananias made because he was obedient to God. Saul changed his name to Paul, the early church grew, he preached to thousands, he mentored other leaders, started churches, and later became a major author of the New Testament. If Ananias refused to do what he was asked, God could have found someone else. Why make God find someone else when we can be part of His plan to redeem the world we live in? Ananias often doesn’t get the credit he might deserve. It wasn’t his idea, but he did say, “Yes Lord.” He was willing to be used by God and become uncomfortable for the sake of serving someone else. We can too. Ananias’ response “Yes Lord” or in some versions “here I am” echoes the same faithful responses earlier in Scripture from Samuel, Moses, and Abraham. Like them, Ananias expresses his consecration and is ready for orders.

It’s not just him saying, he’s listening, but that he is ready to act, ready to serve.

There are many opportunities in our church to serve others and Trunk or Treat is a BIG one coming up. Many of you have already donated candy and I know some of you have already signed up to host a trunk or help with games or food in the gym. At the ministry center after service is where you can get more info. About 2000 of our neighbors are going to come to us. On a particularly dark night of the year, we as a church redeem that night and get to be the light for many in our community. It is a great way for you to step out of your comfort zone for one night, and allow yourself to be uncomfortable so we as a church can provide a comfortable place for our neighbors.

Ananias was a regular guy but he was a follower of Jesus and he was obedient. You know what he also had? Doubts, concerns, and questions. Following Jesus and doing what God wants of us, doesn’t mean we won’t have doubts or seek answers to our questions. Notice what Ananias does with his concerns? He tells God.

“But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.”

But the Lord said, “Go.”

It is okay to have doubts, or to question, or second guess what you think God wants you to do. Ananias did. But after expressing his concerns, he still trusted God and did what he was asked to do.

Ananias was willing to put himself in an uncomfortable situation, but there is a difference between being comfortable and being comforted. God promises to be our source of comfort, he doesn’t promise us to be comfortable. In our discomfort is when we learn to

lean more on God and trust him. In your discomfort, you will be comforted.

Later on, after Saul was a follow of Jesus, and had changed his name to Paul, he wrote to the church in Corinth about comfort:

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

If you have been sitting there this whole time, wondering how you could possibly be open to making yourself uncomfortable in a time when you have no comfort. Know that God is the source of comfort, and begin asking God for comfort. As God comforts us, we can comfort others. By the way, God comforts us in many ways, one major way, is through other people and if you aren't in a small group, that would be a good first step and a major part in helping you experiencing God's comfort through other followers of Jesus.

Saul may have been a little uncomfortable sitting there blind waiting for Ananias to show up. Imagine the relief in hearing the words "Brother Saul" coming from the lips of one whom Saul had plans to persecute. This welcome is an incredible example of Christian love, the kind that Christ can produce when we are obedient. Our words can be a major source of comfort for others. So can our silence. When we are in pain, sometimes words don't help, but a hug does. Words we speak and words we hear have the power to bring comfort and discomfort.

I don't get uncomfortable much anymore when I speak in front of people, but I was nervous three months ago. Alyssa and I got to vacation in Peru. We went to Machu Picchu,



which was incredible but the uncomfortable thing for me was the bus ride to the top of the mountain. I didn't think I was scared of heights till I was staring down the edge of a mountain as the bus gets close around each corner. I know some people who are very uncomfortable trying new food, well not me. I got to eat



some new foods on the trip that I probably won't eat again. Alpaca and Cuy (Guinea pig). Both of which were really good, and as long as you didn't look into the guinea pigs face, you might enjoy it too.



But the whole reason for making the trip was for a wedding. Alyssa's brother and now sister-in-law's. It was my honor to perform the wedding which I wasn't nervous for, I had done weddings before. What made me a little uncomfortable was it was my first wedding in Spanish. I don't actually speak Spanish, at least not very well, but I had been practicing.

I had written out the manuscript for the ceremony, and then Austin and a few others translated it. I spent two months listening to the Spanish translation, speaking it, recording it, listening and doing it all over again.

"Nunca pensei..."

What I just said was early in the ceremony. The first half of what I said got everyone laughing, which added to my discomfort. Thankfully, they laughed because it was funny not because I said it wrong. "Never did I think I would do a wedding in Spanish." But the last half of what I just said is what we all need to remember "when you love someone, you are willing to do something you never thought you'd do."



Ananias's love for Jesus compelled him to do something he would have never thought he would have done. He risked his life for someone who hated him. Our love for Jesus should compel us to love others even if they don't like us, and that could mean doing something we never thought we would have done. Ananias was invited to play a major part in the start of the early church. We are all invited to play a major part in the ministry to our community of West Valley.

Near conclusion:

Last summer I went back to Guyana and when I saw Crandon, I reminded him about the time I held the nail for him. We had a good laugh and a few days later, we were hammering up on the scaffolding and I hit the nail but it bounced off and this time he caught it. He took the nail and held it for me, and smiled and said, "GO."

We have a mission field right here. If we want to love those who haven't seen love, we might have to do something we haven't done. We might have to sacrifice our comfort, so God can use us to help bring comfort to others.

PRAY