

pray every day and you'll grow grow grow." The only bridge from comfort zone to growth is the Bible. Jesus said that the apostles were clean through the Word. What are some practical's to keep in mind?

Allow the Word of God to clean out all the chains keeping you in your comfort zone (1 Peter 2:1-2). Sin and anything that holds one down from leaving the comfort zone should be left behind (cf. Hebrews 12:1). Anything that would hinder growth must be put off. Specific things that hinder growth are private sins, pride, people, and possessions. To help with this, read passages that address your sins, listen to sermons that help you in relationships with others, and talk to someone about your failures (James 5:16). The Psalmist was right when he said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

Read the Word of God for self-improvement (Colossians 1:10-11; Titus 3:14). The word "increasing" comes from αὐξάνω and Thayer says it means "to grow, increase, **become greater**" (Emp. mine, NO). It is important to take opportunities to LEARN how to be better. Read passages, study characters, and meditate upon ways in which the Word of God can make you better.

Take growth seriously (2 Peter 3:18). The word "grow" is in the imperative mood which is a command. If we fail to grow, then we by simplicity are not meeting God's expectations and thereby are sinning. We must be willing to put forth laborious effort to cultivate a growth mindset. The only reason we won't step outside our comfort zones is because we don't want to.

Third, if you want to start making meals with fruit—read God's recipe book!

Make the Necessary Changes (John 15:2).

Change demands action: Peter had to get out of the boat, Moses had to walk to Egypt, Paul had to forsake Judaism, Abraham had to leave his home, Gideon had to go to war with 300 men, Nehemiah had to take the cup to the king, Esther had to go into the king, Jesus had to leave Heaven.[8] James Clear said, "Everybody wants a gold medal. Few people want to train like an

Olympian." [9]

The word "purgeth" means to cleanse. God uses His pruning knife to cleanse us and to make us bear fruit that we are meant to bear. He might do so through punishment, trials (Hebrews 12:11), or change in circumstance. We want to be like fruit that is full of age at the end of our life (Job 5:26; cf. Psalm 1:3) and it may be painful, but it will be worth it in the end. PositivePsychology[10] recorded the following ways to help us get out of our comfort zones:

- Do everyday things differently.
- Expand your professional skillset.
- Try new diet (Get away from "comfort foods").
- Increase work outs.
- Be involved in a creative activity (art, writing, etc.).
- Challenge your beliefs.
- Practice honesty.

Change demands action—what will you change to become better?

How committed are we to change? Satan loves comfort zone Christians—they are some of his most useful tools. Going out of our comfort zones allows us to trust God more, so let us commit to doing the unnormal so we can obtain the eternal. It will be tricky, but it is worth it. Why don't you start including fruit in your diet—you won't be disappointed.

Endnotes

- [1]Forbes article gave the following three points.
[2]<https://www.nsc.org/getmedia/83f46fd1-ff76-4823-8398-02af74f9e880/2024-nsm-complacency-safety-talk-combo.pdf>
[3]<https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/e/excellence.htm>
[4]<https://www.inc.com/quora/9-habits-of-people-who-never-settle-for-mediocrity.html>
[5]<https://www.inc.com/chad-perry/feeling-mediocre-here-are-7-things-to-try.html>
[6]<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-long-does-it-take-to-form-a-habit>
[7]https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230598317_48
[8]<https://preachitheatit.org/devotionals/how-do-i-step-out-of-my-comfort-zone/>
[9]<https://jamesclear.com/goal-setting>
[10]<https://positivepsychology.com/comfort-zone/>



FRUIT

NOT

COMFORT FOOD



NOAH OLSON

Tony Robbins said, “All growth starts at the end of your comfort zone.” Eleanor Roosevelt observed “Do one thing every day that scares you.” Nelson Mandela rightly proclaimed, “May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.” Jim Roan noted “Your life doesn’t get better by chance. It gets better by change.” Billy Bland said, “Instead of standing on the promises, some are sitting on the premises.” People travel to many destinations, but outside their comfort zones is not usually one of them. A comfort zone is defined as a place in which people stay because of the lack of risk, the feeling of security, the position of control, and the consistency of normalcy. It is no surprise then as to why people never leave their comfort zones. The benefits outweigh the discomfort stepping outside our circles brings.

There were many topics at the Passover table the night Jesus was arrested but one of them involved bearing fruit (John 15:1-8). Jesus’ discussion about the branches, vine, and husbandman provide us with an explanation and illustration of how we can get out of our comfort zones. The Husbandman is the Father, Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches who should seek to grow. We can do this because we have Jesus as our source of strength. We want to bear good fruit for God seeing it will create a tree of life (Proverbs 11:30a). Here are four things to do to quit eating comfort food and start eating fruit.

Recognize the Harm of Complacency (John 15:2).

Jesus doesn’t like plants that do not bear fruit. Jesus observed what is naturally true—unfruitful branches are taken away. Why do we grow complacent and secure in our comfort zones? Fear, familial traditions, contentment, and overwhelmingness may be a few reasons, but despite this, complacency is not looked good upon in the Scriptures. Complacency is defined “self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.” Sometimes we may think we have nothing else to do when we have not even filled our buckets. God uttered a proverbial woe to those who were at ease in Zion (Amos 6:1). Laodicean laziness caused Jesus to be sick

(Revelation 3:15-18). God told Jerusalem: “At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill’” (Zephaniah 1:12, ESV). One Forbes article gave the following detriments to staying inside the complacent and comfort circle:

You won’t discover your true self (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13).[1]

There’s not much to learn in your comfort zone.

Routines can breed laziness (Romans 12:11).

In order to stay away from the cliff of complacency we must pay close attention (Titus 3:8). We fall into complacent attitudes when we are on “auto-pilot,”[2] so we must not stop taking heed (Hebrews 2:1). Constant examination must be a continual practice (2 Corinthians 13:5). Ultimately, if we are not willing to grow and do more, we will be denied entrance into Heaven (Matthew 25:26-30). First, mindful recognition of complacency will help us start eating fruit.

Don’t Be Content with Mediocrity (John 15:2, 5, 8).

A “Harvard professor who had given an assignment and now was collecting the papers. He handed them back the next day and at the bottom of one was written, ‘Is this the best you can do?’ The student thought, ‘no,’ and redid the paper. It was handed in again, and received the same comment. This went on ten times, till finally the student said, ‘Yes, this is the best I can do.’ The professor replied, ‘Fine, now I’ll read it.’”[3]

Jesus observed that His branches are not just to bear fruit, but “more fruit” and “much fruit.” Those who have achieved great success have never settled for just ok or mediocre work. Some are content with:

- no fruit—They never do anything for God.
- some fruit—They do the bare minimum for God.
- most fruit—They do the majority of things for God and do not really seek to improve.

Jesus is not content with work—He wants our best work (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23). He was not mediocre and never settled in His efforts on earth

(John 9:4). Ask yourself these three questions to examine if you are doing mediocre work:

- Do you feel right now that you are doing all that you can for God?
- Do you feel right now that in what you are doing, that you are doing your best?
- What areas do I only put minimum effort (worship, leadership, evangelism, etc.).

After correcting the areas that needed improvement, we must then determine to have a mind to work (Nehemiah 4:6), for this is the paper we signed (1 Corinthians 15:58). God knows when we are laborious and when we are lazy; when we give our best or our worst.

Mediocre people are content with where they are and believe they will stay where they are. But, this is a misconception of growth. If one stands long enough on the ledge, he will eventually wear it down and fall. Moving upward then is essential. What are some ways to overcome mediocracy?

- Do things people are unwilling to do (1 Samuel 17). [4] Do something for the church no one else has done or raise your hand when no one else will.
- Be consistent.[5] Inconsistency breeds laziness. Be consistent in your patterns—don’t fail. According to one study, it takes an average of 66 days to form a habit.[6]
- Be imaginative.[7] Dan Winkler said, “If God is your partner, make your plans big.” What big plans do you have for the church? Nehemiah had great plans for his people when he wanted to build the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2).

We must be willing to grow our gardens and not be content with the fruit in our baskets. Second, a mind to be BETTER will help us stop reaching for the comfort food and more for the fruit.

Get in Your Bible Every Day (John 15:3, 7).

The only way that we will get out of our comfort zone is to immerse ourselves in knowledge. Bill Gates read 50 books a year and Warren Buffet said he read 500 pages a day. One child’s song goes “Read your bible