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## **LEAVING YOUR COMFORT ZONE – MOVING INTO YOUR DREAM**

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

Gather round, and today I'll tell you the story of the lost sons. It's the tale of two boys that get lost. They get separated from their father, through their own eagerness to grow up, their desire to have it all. Yet their father is very gracious and kind toward them, patient beyond all measure, and he wants to welcome them back with open arms.

“Oh, wait a minute, Pastor Clarissa! Aren't you talking about the parable of the Prodigal Son? That's a very famous story that Jesus told. You know, the one about the son who took his inheritance money and left home and wasted it all in a far country and so on. But in that story, Pastor, I'm afraid there's only one lost son, not two. So shouldn't you call it the lost son singular, instead of the lost sons, plural?”

But this morning we will go beyond the typical idea of a son that was lost and is now found to discover another meaning of this Scripture –

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Did anyone this week decide they were living in the comfort zone of life and decide it is time to make a change, to escape the zone and move into the borderland - the land that is located near or on the fringes of “I can't and I can do all things through God who strengthens me” ?

It becomes an issue of dealing with the accumulation of fear, which has prevented you from moving forward, in dealing with the phrase, “I can't” which has been holding you captive.

People also become held captive from pursuing their God-given dream because they have refused to forgive themselves from their past failures. They tried it before, it didn't work, so they have huddled in the middle of their comfort zone, refusing to move forward, refusing to risk again, and in the end, losing.

George Washington Carver spent 20 years perfecting the uses of the peanut. Hard rubber tire maker Goodyear spent ten years of study, poverty and public ridicule perfecting the all radial tire. Cyrus West Field crossed the ocean fifty times to lay a cable so men could talk across the oceans. Henry Blair invented the Seed-Planter

after 10 years of continuous failure, but his due diligence allowed farmers to plant more corn using less labor in a smaller amount of time. Westinghouse was treated as bizarre by most railroad executives. “Stopping a train by wind! The man’s crazy!” Yet he persevered and finally sold the air-brake idea.

I could go on and on with dreamers who expanded their comfort zone, pressing past what was holding them back and ultimately fulfilled the dream God had placed in their hearts. These are people who overcame the criticism and their own fears to provide society with inventions that have made life. These people believed in their God-promised potential and did not remain in their comfort zone; they took a step, no, some just put a toe into the borderland and saw their dreams come true. I wonder, how many of you will be in hot pursuit of your dream?

Bruce Wilkinson has laid out seven steps to fulfilling the dream; you begin with a dream, work your way through the comfort zone and then come to the third step of a dream, the borderland.

The borderland exists just beyond the end of the comfort zone. It takes in some of the comfort zone and moves you just beyond a life of comfort. In the borderland you will find people who you know, situations you are familiar with because this overlap exists. This is the place where your friends will want to pull you back into the life you were living because they have an overriding concern of what will happen to them when you venture out of the familiar.

Perhaps you have shared your dream with someone and instead of finding the joy and excitement you thought they would have, rather they threw cold water on what your heart beats for you to accomplish. Not everyone is going to be excited about your dream; in fact, most people will just shake their head and say, “there you go again,” a subtle way to point out your past failures without providing hope to move forward.

In **Luke 18** we read the following, <sup>9</sup> *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:* <sup>10</sup> *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ <sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ <sup>14</sup> “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and*

*he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

The prayer of the Pharisee is the prayer of comfort zone people who want to suppress your dream and make themselves look superior to you. They will try and keep you from pursuing your dream. Your dream has to be more important than what other people think or say. Your dream is not for self-exaltation but for God-exaltation.

You are going to have people tell you it's the wrong dream at the wrong time and you have to make a choice, will you listen to them or will you listen to the heartbeat of God. Sadly, the people who love you the most could well be the people who will hold you back. Love them, but pursue the dream God has given you.

If you are waiting to walk in your dream until everyone says it's a good dream or it's the right vision, the Second Coming of Christ will arrive before you fulfill your purpose. You are going to have people point out the dangers of pursuing the dream. David would never have become king of Israel if he listened to his brothers; Goliath would still be taunting the soldiers of Israel.

When you start to move forward, be ready for those voices that will point out your past, remembering everyone has a past. No one except Jesus has been successful at everything they have done; in fact, past failures become the building block for those who have experienced eventual success. They learned from the past and avoided it again. There will be difficulties, there will be hardship you will endure, you will have failures. But a failure is only a failure if it holds you back instead of your using it to catapult you forward.

Unfortunately, if people cannot hold you back from your dream because of their dissection of your dream, they will try and hold you back by criticism. Warren Wiersbe wrote in *Be Determined* “Leaders are often blamed for things they didn't do and criticized for things they tried to do. They are misquoted and misunderstood and rarely given the opportunity to set the record straight. If they act quickly, they are reckless; if they bide their time, they are cowardly or unconcerned, “If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen!”

They are going to come after you as a person, and it is in that testing time of your personage you will decide whether you will return to the comfort zone or push forward through the borderland. Be strong and be courageous!

You will have to be strong, you will have to be courageous to move into the Promise Land of your God-given dream and destiny, even when it seems impossible, for all things are possible with God.

Right now think about who those people are who have opposed the dream God has given you. They may have done it subtly; they may have outright attacked the dream and the dreamer. What was the main cause of their attack, their desire to hold you back? Did they have a problem with the dream, was it going to infringe on their dream, was it going to take the spotlight off of them? Was their some justification for their objection? Does your dream put the spotlight on Christ? We also have to face the reality that some people who we might think are objecting are really helping to make sure we properly formulate the dream.

Do any of us, see the family resemblance with the brothers in the Scripture? For all of us, both the stay-at-home “golden child” and the runaway “black sheep” of the family—we are all lost sons in one way or another. Maybe we’ve played both parts at different times in our lives. But we all have shown impudence and insolence toward our heavenly Father, who is so gracious and kind toward us. God wants you back, he wants you back home, whether you’ve strayed off to a far country or have been lost at home all these years.

And God doesn’t want you back as servants, either. God wants you here as his dearly loved children. There’s no working your way into God’s favor. You are already in his favor. The reason? Because of Jesus Christ.

You see, God’s love is sacrificial; his compassion is costly—to him. In the story, when the father ran out to greet his younger son, when the father came out to entreat his older son—both times the God-figure in the story was humbling himself, lowering himself, in order to bring his children in. His love was costly. Likewise, God’s love toward us is costly.

It is a costly love with which God welcomes us. The father in the story even sacrificed the fattened calf, a rich feast indeed. And so God so loved us that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for our sin, for all our rebellion and foolishness and pig-headedness. All of that is forgiven, because of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Christ’s death on the cross opens the door of heaven to all believers. “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

So which of lost sons are you? The younger one or the older one? Maybe some of both? In any case, the God today is welcoming you home.

Even more so, God wants you to break out of your comfort zone, move past the borderland and say yes to the dream God has placed in your heart. However, let me forewarn you, there will be people who will come against your dream. Expect opposition. The bigger the dream, the more they will team up in opposition and the more they will work to separate you from the dream. But your dream must remain more important than what any person or group of people say or do to detract you. Ultimately, we pursue our dreams not for the accolades of man but for the applause of heaven. We are here to serve Jesus Christ and the purpose He has given to us before we were born, so that His kingdom will be seen above the din of mankind and His glory exposed for all that He has done to push us in the heavenward direction.

This week, take time to review your dream and see if you might be stuck in the borderland or the comfort zone, and decide what steps you need to take to get yourself back on track.

Don't allow your dream to end in the border zone of life. Do great exploits for God.

LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE –  
MOVE INTO GOD'S DREAM FOR YOUR LIFE.

AMEN, AMEN, AMEN