

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

84. When God Calls You Into the Uncomfortable

You are listening to episode 84 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled *When God Calls You Into the Uncomfortable*. Welcome to the podcast today! Friend, is God calling you to something you're just not sure about? Or something that's making you feel uneasy and a bit uncomfortable? Well, that seems to be what God does, don't you agree? Because God's plans for our lives are always bigger and better than ours. And He grows us through what He calls us to. Today we're picking up where we left off in last week's episode where I began to share my story of when God called me to my own Nineveh. Maybe He's calling you to yours, too? Together today we'll find real life encouragement as we take a look at when God calls you into the uncomfortable. Let's get to it.

To recap a little from last week, my Bible Study Fellowship teaching leader asked from behind the microphone in class one Wednesday morning in 2009 a question that made me want to get sick to my stomach. She asked,

What will you do if God calls you to Nineveh?

We were studying Jonah in that lesson and well, you might be familiar with the story. God called Jonah to Nineveh, but Jonah ran from God in the opposite direction to Tarshish. Because he'd rather do anything else than go to Nineveh. He didn't like the Ninevites, and he wanted nothing to do with them, and he certainly didn't want God to show them mercy. But on the way to Tarshish at sea, Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

In that question my teaching leader asked, I knew God was calling me to my own Nineveh. Would I follow Him or would I be like Jonah and run? I wanted to be like Jonah, but I knew better. My pulse raced, my head spun, and my stomach felt all queasy and uneasy. The thought of this made me very uncomfortable, but the thought of sitting in the belly of a whale made me feel more uncomfortable!

God was calling me into the uncomfortable, and I had to follow.

So, one Tuesday morning, nervous, scared, and a little excited, I showed up at my own Nineveh. At our local mission to serve the hurting, the hopeless, and the homeless in our community. To the formerly incarcerated, the lost, and the least in the world's eyes,

Now, it's not that I didn't like these people, I just simply didn't know them. They scared me, they made me nervous, and I felt I had nothing in common with any of them. Little did I know I would soon learn I had more in common with them than I thought.

I wasn't sure what to expect that first day. I certainly didn't expect for God to open wide my eyes and my heart, and completely change my life forever. And I most certainly didn't expect to see God show up every single day and awe me and others by His presence. Neither did I expect to fall in love with people who I once feared.

But in the days, months, and years to come, all that happened and more.

Going to Nineveh was the best thing I could have done.

But that's what God does, doesn't He? God calls us to the places, the people, the circumstances that He will use to grow us, to change us, to mold us into the people He desires us to be. He knows what's best for us, and He will call us into the uncomfortable to bless us with His best. He doesn't do anything half way, including His calling on our lives. No wonder He calls us into the uncomfortable. No wonder He calls us to do what we think we can't or shouldn't or have no desire to do. And no wonder He uses the uncomfortable to draw us closer to Him.

Our uncomfortable is where God does some of His most transforming work. Our uncomfortable is where God leads us by the hand and opens our eyes to see what we never would have seen on our own. Yes, our uncomfortable is sometimes God's very best for our lives.

I'll try to explain. I am a simple, ordinary, small-town girl. Yet, God called me to this place to love people who lived different than me. He opened my eyes to see I was no different than they were. We just lived different lives. My life wasn't better, and neither was my heart in God's eyes. He loved the people I served just the same as He loved me.

And when I came to grips with that reality, my life changed. Forever. My heart softened and I began to love these people, to pray for them, to desire God's best for them, and to help them in any way I could. The man who lived on the streets. The guy who just got out of prison. And the woman who was all alone, pregnant with her third child, not knowing who the father was. And the thing is, I realized I could have been in their shoes. Just one misguided step or mistake in my younger life, and I could have been visiting that mission as a patron, not as a helper.

These people became my friends.

One of our mission friends had been given a grim prognosis in his illness. He had just weeks to live, and He asked me to help him plan his funeral. And so I did.

Another friend liked to discuss the things of God, and even though He struggled to grasp biblical truths at times, he knew I was a safe person to talk about such things.

And other one stopped in before leaving for drug treatment. Scared and uncomfortable, she asked me and another staff member to pray for her. She returned months later clean and sober.

I saw God do miraculous things in that place.

Things that I've not seen done since I left. Like the day the food pantry was extremely low on food, and in walked someone with flats of canned food items to restock the shelves.

Or like the summer day a donation came in of ice cream cones. No ice cream, just cones. A couple hours later, wouldn't you know, two buckets of ice cream hung on the arms of a total stranger. He wanted to give the patrons a summer treat, not knowing we received ice cream cones earlier!

And the time we ran out of food at lunchtime. God provided just enough take home sandwiches to feed those who were hungry.

I saw instances like this day after day after day, and I could list how God showed up time and time again. This was the hardest work I had ever done, yet the most rewarding and fulfilling. But the thing is, God did it all. I was just His vessel. And through it, God completely changed my life and my faith in Him.

God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 NLT

So, what or where is your Nineveh, friend?

Is God calling you there?

You know the thing. You've got that lump in your throat or butterflies in your stomach. And you're praying you've just got a case of indigestion. But you know God is calling you.

Maybe it's to invite that unfriendly neighbor across the street over for dinner.

Or maybe it's to write your story.

Or maybe it's to start a ministry, or a Bible study, or a women's event.

Maybe God is calling you to have another child.

Or to volunteer at a local soup kitchen.

Or to apply for that job that will stretch you.

I don't know what or where your Nineveh is, friend, but I encourage you to follow God's lead there. One thing I know for sure, He won't lead you wrong. God won't lead you astray. He knows what He's doing, and taking you to Nineveh might be the circumstance that will completely transform your life in the most beautiful way.

This reminds me of my Bible verses for this year regarding my word for the year: uncomfortable. It's Psalm 32:8-9 TPT. I hear the Lord saying, "I will stay close to you, instructing and guiding you along the pathway for your life. I will advise you along the way and lead you forth with my eyes as your guide. So don't make it difficult; don't be stubborn when I take you where you've not been before. Don't make me tug you and pull you along. Just come with me!"

"Just come with me."

Those are beautiful words, aren't they?

I know it feels uncomfortable. I know it feels like it's beyond you. And I also know how it feels to think someone else is more qualified and would do it better. But God isn't calling someone else. He's calling you.

It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work not because we deserved it but because that was his plan long before the world began—to show his love and kindness to us through Christ. 2 Timothy 1:9 TLB

And if you're in the place where you're not feeling any sort of calling from Him at this point, well, may I suggest to just be open and be prepared. Because God always has something in mind to grow us, to serve Him and others, and to be a light in this world. If He's not calling you now, be prepared for His

prompting to come in the future. And His promptings are always good, even if we aren't so sure at the time.

God knows what's best for us.

I served God and His people for five years at that mission, and God eventually called me to an even greater role in that ministry to supervise the day facility. Who would have ever thought? Not this girl.

I still run into some of my mission friends every now and then. Some remember me and some don't. But one thing's for sure, it warms my heart when I see any of them. I think of them often still today, and I pray for them. I pray God keeps them safe and provides for their needs.

Nineveh ended up being a beautiful place in my life. God gave me numerous gifts through it.

God never changes his mind about the people he calls and the things he gives them. Romans 11:29 NCV

We are taking this conversation over to our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. Head over there to be a part of the discussion and this encouraging space. The link to the group is in the show notes.

Also, I invite you to rate and or review this episode from where your listening today if you found encouragement and hope. This helps others find this encouragement too. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast to never miss an episode.

In closing, looking on our own, Nineveh can be an uncomfortable place, but if God is calling us to go there, He's going to lead us every step of the way. We can't foresee what God will do there, but we can be sure of this: it will impact our lives and the lives of others. Be willing to step into the uncomfortable with God, friend. He is with you. Thanks for being here today. I'm cheering you on. God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre