

A Dangerous Comfort

Parents – a gift from above sent to guide and protect us on our way to maturity and adulthood. In Proverbs, we are told to “hear the instruction of your father” and “not forsake the law of your mother.” We need the guiding wisdom of parents as we work to build our character and beliefs. Words, however, play only a part of this process. Verbal instruction must be backed by example.

My parents have certainly not neglected the instruction of their children. One of the most important things they have taught me is the confidence to branch out. This may seem like a simple and rather insignificant concept, but for me, the execution is often elusive. I am a reserved person who generally does not welcome change and fears the unknown. Were it not for the continual encouragement of my parents, I would rarely break out of my comfort zone. The verbal encouragement of my parents, however, does not contradict the example they set for me. Their lives are permeated with instances in which they broke out of their comfort zone. Sometimes it may be little more than inviting the new couple at church over for lunch, but other times, the example is staggering. Ten years ago, for instance, my parents took a step that found them walking by sheer faith. They quit their jobs and sold our house, having no other prospective jobs or places to live. They were, in a sense, taking a “blind” step of faith that some may have considered rash. Despite all the resistance they faced from other people and from their own instincts, they followed God as He prodded them further and further out of their comfort zone. The rewards our entire family has received as a result of their obedience have been

tremendous. The blessings have come in the form of neighbors, friends, and homeschooling liberties that we could not have elsewhere.

I probably do not follow the example of my parents as often as I should. Nevertheless, one example in my own life stands out clearly. During my first year of junior high, I made the agonizing decision to play volleyball for our local homeschool group. I was hesitant, however, for two reasons. First, I had never before played volleyball. Although this was probably a valid concern, the second reason was my main hesitation. I did not know any of the girls on the team. Being the shy person that I am, this was very far out of my comfort zone. Looking back, I am almost shocked that I did it, but I am also brimming with thankfulness that I plowed ahead and did not back away from fright. Although the first year was rather rough, a whole new realm of friendships was eventually opened up for not only me, but also my family. Through volleyball I was able to better connect with other Christian homeschoolers, and together, we built lasting friendships around Christ.

The fruit of breaking out of your comfort zone is often quite rewarding, but after studying the examples of my parents, the principle I have come away with goes deeper than merely “branching out.” God doesn’t desire for us to always stay within our comfort zones. He wants us to branch out and strive for something better. If we truly want His best for our lives, we must continually push ourselves beyond what we define as “comfortable.” Striving for His best will inevitably cause us to break out of our comfort zones on a regular basis. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7).