

Are any of you all familiar with someone named Jen Hatmaker?

She's a famous evangelical Christian.

She has written 12 books, she has a show on HGTV, and she used to do the speaking tour circuit with other female Christian leaders.

She would speak to packed auditoriums full of women.

Earlier this year, she came out in support of LGBT marriage.

She started inviting LGBT folks to her events, she started talking about it on Facebook, and spoke about her support of equality in marriage with a television journalist.

Because of this, LifeWay Christian Books, which is a massive supplier of Christian resources, stopped selling her books.

People in the evangelical community cut ties with her.

She wasn't invited on the same speaking tours anymore.

Here's her experience in her own words,

"They would say, "Jen, if you speak into the LGBTQ inclusion in the church conversation and/or the election, then this is career suicide."

I come out of an evangelical space, and there's a party line, more or less, that runs alongside of that.

On both cases, I went against the grain...

And I wouldn't change a thing.

At the end of the day, I'm not here to build a career.

I am here to lead with integrity.

I felt like a fractured human being to have these convictions inside of me that I was too afraid to say out loud because it might damage my bottom line.

But ultimately that tension became too heavy and I couldn't hold it anymore....

I honestly believe that being uncomfortable is a great deterrent of the church in our generation—that, for whatever reason, we have elevated the majority's comfort over justice.

The truth is, those days are behind us.

If we are unwilling to stand by our friends on the margins, then we have no business being leaders."

Jen took a risk, in the name of justice, because she couldn't compromise who she was anymore.

It cost her relationships and support and community, but in return she gained support and love and welcome from a whole other community.

She's now partnering with progressive Christian leaders, and has jointed with other LGBT-affirming folks in ministry.

I tell you this story because it's an example of how we, as Christians, are called to do hard things.

I have noticed this stark dichotomy between Christianity being comforting and Christianity being uncomfortable.

We hear about how we don't have to worry, we can lay our burdens at the foot of the cross.

We can rely on God and lean on Jesus to take all our cares away, so that our burden is light.

But.

We aren't called to be comfortable for comfort's sake.

We are invited to rely on God because we are called to do hard things.

And we need the support of a higher power, and the support of each other, through being in community, so that we have the strength and the fortitude to do things that call us out of our comfort zones, to step out on faith.

A mentor once told me that, as pastors, we are called to *comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable*.

I am not here to literally afflict anyone who is comfortable, but I will challenge you.

I'll ask you, why are you comfortable?

Are you complacent in your comfort?

Is there a challenge that you are avoiding or are not rising to?

Is there something you're being called to do, a gift you have to give, but you aren't giving it because you feel fine just where you are?

If you can say "yes" to any of these questions, then maybe you should think about how you can lean on God while leaning into the challenge that's being asked of you.

A perfect example of someone who left his den of comfort, is Moses.

Now, it might seem unfair to try to compare ourselves to Moses, but he's more relatable than you might think.

Today's passage is one of the most famous ones in the Bible, in which God talks to him from a burning tree in the desert.

But what was Moses doing?

He was minding his own business in exile.

The reason he was in exile was because he was on the run from Pharaoh in Egypt.

Why was he on the run?

No, he hadn't lead the Israelites out of Egypt yet.

He was on the run because he had just killed an Egyptian!

Did you all know Moses was a murderer?

Sure was.

So, he's on Mt. Horeb tending to his father-in-law's flock of sheep.

He's leading a not-so-glamorous life, trying to keep his head down so that the Egyptian authorities won't come after him.

But, God has other plans, and summons Moses to lead his people out of Egypt and to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Moses, in typical reluctant-prophet fashion says, "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*" (Exodus 3: 12).

God convinces him that God will be with him, and that he's the right man for the job.

God has a way of finding us in our moments of vulnerability, maybe when we are trying to run away from God, or run away from something else in our lives, as Moses was trying to run from his past.

But it's in those lonely places that God calls out to us and invites us to do hard things.

To take a risk.

To say yes when it would be much easier to say no.

Maybe Moses felt like he wasn't fit for leading God's people because of what he had done.

Maybe he felt like he was too morally compromised, after all, he had killed a man!

Maybe he felt like someone with a stronger moral compass needed to lead God's people out of slavery.

Surely he wasn't the right fit.

But he was. That's the thing.

Maybe Moses' storied past, his connection to the Hebrews as one of them, and the Egyptians, being raised as one of them, and the fact that he killed an Egyptian...

maybe these things added up to make him the perfect person to relate to both the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and thus lead the Hebrews out of Egypt.

I don't know, but I do know that what we see as our problems, our deficits, our shameful parts, maybe the lessons that we have learned from those experiences are just what the world needs from us.

After all, we are not called to be comfortable, but to rest in God amidst our discomfort as we try to serve the world faithfully, radically and whole-heartedly.

And you can't do that from inside your comfort zone.

You can't do upset the status quo and improve the world from the sidelines.

As one of my favorite theologians, Dr. David Lose said,

“To know God, you have to go with God.

Faith is a full contact, participation sport.

You just can't sit back and expect to really know God,

you have to get up off the couch and get in the game, take a risk,

try something marvelous,

reach for something you thought unachievable,

*step out onto the winding road the end of which you can't see
from your doorstep.”*

(“Get off the couch and into the game!”, WorkingPreacher.org, Aug. 20, 2011.)

The world is waiting to be changed, right beyond your comfort zone.

Amen.