

In the Zone

By Cindy Powell

Have you ever been in “the zone” in your service to the Lord? You know what I mean—those times when it all just seems to click. Those times when you know you’re in the right place at the right time, doing exactly what God has called and created you to be doing. Those times when you enter into the flow of heaven—“dancing” effortlessly to the rhythm of His heart.

I experienced one of those moments on a recent trip to Cambodia and Thailand. I’d love to say the whole trip was characterized by that divine “flow” but, for me anyway, that simply wasn’t true. In fact, there were some decidedly awkward times—times when *nothing* seemed to click. That happens a lot when you allow the Lord to lead you out of your comfort zone. But if you really want to enter into “the zone”—you’ve got to be willing to leave the safety of the familiar.

For me, leaving my comfort zone wasn’t a matter of visiting a foreign culture. I’d lived in Thailand for a couple of years as a kid, and had also traveled internationally in recent years. The comfort zone stretcher for me was traveling, living, and breathing in close (very close!) quarters with 24 other people—most of whom I didn’t know at all—for over two weeks. And, to make things even more interesting, a couple of weeks after signing up for the trip, I was asked to be one of the team’s co-leaders!

I often joke that I’m just about the most introverted person on the planet. A prayer meeting is pretty much my idea of a party! If it were up to me, I would probably be quite content hiding out in a prayer room for the rest of my life, but the Lord seems to exercise His sense of humor by frequently putting me into much more visible roles. Over the years, as I’ve allowed Jesus to stretch me, some of those roles didn’t fit half bad—but this wasn’t one of them!

Despite my misgivings, I sensed it was God’s leading, so I said ‘yes.’ I’m so glad I did! If I hadn’t, I may have missed a far greater blessing. When we’re willing to put our own comfort on the line, God honors our obedience and often does far more than we could hope or imagine.

For me, one of the “far greater blessings” occurred at an AIDS hospital in Phnom Penh. About half of our group went with a local pastor to pray for patients who were in the final stages of the disease. This pastor was a regular at the hospital and made weekly visits there. Normally his presence was welcomed, but apparently this wasn’t a “normal” day.

We knew something was wrong the minute we walked into the foyer. We were met by a very stern looking—and very unhappy—hospital administrator. She took one look at our large group and began a heated exchange with Pastor Bien. It didn’t take a lot of spiritual discernment to sense the heavy oppression hanging over that place. A few of us began pray discreetly while the pastor tried in vain to convince the administrator that our intentions for being there were honorable.

After awhile, Pastor Bien motioned for us wait outside while he went to search out a doctor friend. Several of us gathered and began praying more fervently. As we did, a few of us felt compelled to do a prayer walk around the perimeter of the hospital. I cleared it with one of Pastor Bien’s associates and set out with two of the other girls.

What happened next is hard to put into words. That’s how it is in “the zone.” When you’re moving in such sweet harmony with His Spirit, there really aren’t any words to adequately

express the feeling. I knew that the Lord was really stirring the hearts of the two girls with me and, since I'm passionate about seeing people go deeper into His heart through worship and intercession, it was one of those times when the role I found myself in *did* fit. In that moment—I knew that I knew—God had called and equipped me to be in that exact place, at that exact time.

As we walked down the first side of the hospital the sense of spiritual warfare was great, but the sense of God's presence was greater. In fact, His presence was so powerful, that I lost most of the inhibition I might normally have had in a public setting and was able to pray with a level of boldness and passion that I don't often have outside the privacy of my own home! As we walked across the back of the grounds, and then headed up the other side, it seemed that heaven moved in response to our prayers. A couple of children—likely family members of patients—were playing outside. I had some stickers and one of the other girls had some treats that we offered to the kids. Before we knew it, additional family members and even some of the less sick patients themselves, began streaming out of the building. They all wanted candy and stickers! Of course we had to touch them to put the stickers on them and, as we did, we were able to proclaim God's love and salvation over each one of them. Not coincidentally, the stickers were butterflies. It would be hard to imagine a more appropriate symbol to signify the new creation in Christ we believed God to make of each one.

It may not sound like much—touching the hands of the sick and needy and “decorating” them with simple stickers. In my heart, though, I knew God was doing much more. In the natural realm, it may have seemed to be the merest whisper of His love, demonstrated in the form of some silly westerners with big grins and a seemingly endless supply of stickers. But in heavenly realms, His love thundered over these precious souls and I just know that in those few minutes of contact and prayer, God dealt a tremendous blow to Satan's grip on their lives.

We never did get inside the hospital. And we didn't see any miracles that day—at least not with our natural eyes. We didn't witness anyone coming to Christ, and we most likely won't know the fruit of our prayers this side of heaven. But what we did see was the hand of God at work. He knew the people He wanted to touch that day and He brought them to us. We saw His mercy and love in action ... making a way to reach out to the patients and family members even when it seemed there was no way... providing hands-on combat training for a couple of “prayer-warriors” in the making...and affirming and refining His purposes for my own life.

For me, that day wasn't a matter of walking in an area of ministry that was comfortable—it was a matter of walking in my *calling*. That's serving in “the zone.” But in order to step into that eternal “zone,” sometimes we first need to step out of our comfort zone. We need allow the Lord to lead us into unfamiliar territory so we can be positioned for greater revelation.

For most of us, those moments of consciously entering into the perfect rhythm of heaven are just that—moments. But they are defining moments that mold us and shape us toward our destiny. In many ways this trip was difficult for me—at times things *were* uncomfortable and often the role I was in truly *didn't* fit—even so, I count it as one of the greatest blessings the Lord has allowed in my life. For years I had tasted God's heart for the nations and had regularly prayed for, and given toward, missions. I even work for a missions organization! But I always felt there was yet another part for me to play in His plan. I just wasn't quite sure what it was. Because I said ‘yes’ when He called—even though it involved some uncertainty and sacrifice—I put myself in a position to gain greater revelation from His heart. As a result, He birthed a new vision in my heart and showed me a way to partner with Him that I had never even considered before.

We *all* have different roles to play in God's plan for humanity. Some of us will have more traditional roles; some not so traditional. Some parts will be seen; some will remain unseen. Some will serve in tangible, practical ways; others in less tangible ways. Some of those roles will fit comfortably; some won't—at least for a time. But each and every one of us has a vital part to play.

As for me, I'll "go" again—in a heartbeat. But next time I'll be more certain of my purpose and of my role. And, in His timing, I hope to be taking some groups of my own—small groups of women who are specifically called and equipped to pray down strongholds in dark, distant places.

What about you? When you hear His call, will you go? Will you allow Him to lead you out of the land of the "familiar" and position you to catch a greater glimpse of His heart? Will you let Him reveal your part in His plan? Will you let Him lead *you* into "the zone?"

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. –1Corinthians 12:27

I hope the answer is 'yes.' No one can play your part ... but you.