

Risk

I'll readily admit to being a risk taker, albeit somewhat of a calculated risk taker. I like to weigh everything carefully before sticking my neck out and yet, for all of that careful planning, sometimes my neck goes out a little too far and it gets chopped; not chopped off, mind you, but chopped nonetheless. The irony of being a risk taker though is that the more challenging the risk, the more one wants to take it and the more a risk taker falls, the more he wants to get up and try again. It makes life interesting anyway.

The matter of risk taking finds a place in the spiritual realm as well as the physical. There are certain risks that one can and is even encouraged to take. On the other hand, there are those risks that are destructive.

One spiritual risk is daring to invite a non-Christian to study the Bible or come to worship. Fear is public enemy number one when it comes to taking any type of risk, including speaking to others about Christ. We fear what they'll think of us or say to us. We even fear that they might ask us a question we can't answer. We play out that losing scenario in our mind before we even approach someone about the Lord and, as a result, we just don't say anything. The answer to this fear and thus to taking more risks in speaking to men and women about their souls is found in the faith that God's Word is right (Psalm 33:4) and the love that we should have for others for, as I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

Again, regarding those risks that can actually benefit us spiritually, taking a risk means engaging in service to God that you have not yet tried. Congregations of God's people are always on the lookout for Bible class teachers, especially among the faithful Christian ladies for the small children's classes. Opportunity abounds for the faithful Christian men to lead publicly in prayer, singing, scripture reading, presiding during the Lord's Supper and even in preaching and teaching. While these tasks might be a little unnerving at first, experience lessens the nervousness and you'll be glad that you learned how to lead.

While these are two benefits of risk taking that can produce tremendous results in personal and spiritual growth as well as in the growth of the body of Christ, there is one area of one's spiritual life in which risk taking can be destructive. Governor Felix best demonstrated this ill-advised risk when, upon hearing the Gospel of Christ, he said to the apostle Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." (Acts 24:25). As far as we know, his "convenient season" never arrived. He had the opportunity to obey the Lord and yet he risked his soul on the belief that he would have plenty of time to respond to Paul's message of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

We sing two compelling hymns that should cause each of us to carefully consider the danger of risking our souls by delaying obedience or by not obeying at all. One asks, "Why Not Now?" and urges, "Do not risk another day." The other asks, "Why Do You Wait?" and reminds us that "there's danger and death in delay." The Bible says, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (II Corinthians 6:2).

Yes, risk has its values and its rewards. No accomplishments have ever been made without a risk factor involved. Let's not be afraid to stick our necks out and take risks, but let's keep in mind that there's one risk that should never be taken. We must never risk losing our souls.

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