

## Be a Risk Taker

*Presented by Mary Lowman*  
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### Day One

Are you a risk taker? Some people would tell you not to ever take a risk, because it's risky! Play it safe would be their motto.

Taking risks is not always a smart thing to do. But if you were to talk to any successful person in any field, no doubt they would tell you about some time in their life when they took a risk. They exposed themselves to failure and maybe even ridicule, but that's what it took for them to be successful.

As we live our lives for Jesus, there will be times when we need to take a risk, move out of our comfort zones, attempt something that looks difficult, and even run the possibility of failing. For example, maybe God has been prompting you to share your faith with a coworker, but you've been reluctant to do so because it's risky. You think: That coworker may react negatively, or I may botch it and say all the wrong things, or maybe it's against the law to share my faith on the job! And so fear keeps you from taking the risk.

Have you ever thought about how many times you've missed out on so much of what God wants you to do and the blessings that come when you obey, simply because you were not willing to take a risk? Obviously, you should always proceed with prayer and caution, but if you're afraid of any risk, you will simply never do all the good things God has put you here to do. You'll miss so much of God's blessing in your life.

In his insightful booklet, *Risk Is Right*, John Piper says his aim is to explode the myth of safety and deliver us from the enchantment of security, because it's a mirage. It doesn't exist. None of us know what the next moment holds, not to mention tomorrow. God never takes any risks because he knows the end from the beginning. We don't know the end, and God doesn't tell us. He intends for us to live by faith not by sight, and so our lives are risky.<sup>1</sup>

Fear of risks keeps many of us paralyzed. Bonhoeffer wrote: "To delay or fail to make decisions may be more sinful than to make wrong decisions out of faith and love."<sup>2</sup>

I'm exploring people in the Bible who took great risks, and I hope you'll be inspired to step out on faith and take whatever risks you need to in order to follow Christ and his plans for you.

### Day Two

Be a risk-taker! The Bible is full of stories of risk-takers. Esther took a great risk to rescue her people from annihilation. This young, inexperienced woman literally took her life in her hands and approached the king. Before doing that, she asked all the Jews to pray and fast for her. That's a good principle. We don't go headlong into some risk without being fortified in prayer, knowing God is leading us. But once

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<sup>1</sup> Piper, J. (2013). *Risk Is Right*. Crossway.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Metaxas. (2010). *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*. Thomas Nelson.

Esther knew she had to take this risk, she said, "I will go to the king even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther was a meek, humble young woman. She was not equipped for such an assignment. She could have given any number of legitimate excuses why she just could not take this risk of approaching the king to save her people. But she knew it was a unique opportunity, and she knew it was the right thing to do. She did face the possibility of failure; she knew the extent of the risk she took, but she knew she had to do it. She said, "If I perish, I perish."

Many are very willing to serve Jesus as long as it's comfortable and not terribly demanding. They have their life plan in place, and they've put Jesus in the schedule. Yes, they love him, but they think things like: We're not all called to be missionaries, right? They go so far but no further. Would that describe you—maybe in part? Do you see some people who are taking risks for Jesus and doing amazing things, but you rationalize and tell yourself that it's just not your thing?

God is looking for believers who are so in love with him—soul, heart and mind—that the risk doesn't scare them. Or if it scares them, they go ahead anyway! When God is opening a new door and I know he wants me to take the next step, I usually feel very overwhelmed, inadequate, and just plain scared. Scared of the risk of failure, scared I won't be able to do it, scared I'll make a fool out of myself. But I just tell God I'm scared, give my fear to him, and take the next step.

John Piper says, "Doing nothing needs forgiveness as much as doing the best you can and erring." It is right to take a risk for Jesus.

### Day Three

Do you know the story of Deborah, who was a judge in Israel? Deborah was a risk-taker for the Lord.

This woman was way ahead of her time. She had to take an enormous risk—and that was to go herself and lead her army into battle. Barak was the leader of the army, but he said, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." Maybe he thought she never would agree to go into battle and that would get him off the hook. If so, she fooled him. She said, "Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours..." Obviously she recognized he was not the brave leader he should be. So, she took a risk. You can read her story in Judges 4—an amazing story of how God gave her and her army victory over their much larger enemy.

I wonder what it is that makes one person willing to take a risk for God and another is not. Isn't it true we are prone to trust those we know, but if we don't know someone too well, we're less willing to trust them? No doubt our trust in God has a lot to do with our willingness to take a risk for him. It's at these times—when there is some risk involved—that we find out just whether we trust God or not—or how much we trust him. God wants us to take risks as he leads us and allow him to do through us what we could never do on our own. We should attempt something so great for God that only he could do it.

*You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way (Psalm 18:36).*

Ron Hutchcraft tells the story of how he had to overcome a fear of walking across a slippery pipe to cross a stream so he could see an incredible waterfall. He was afraid to do it and was ready to back out, but his friends encouraged him to walk across the pipe so he could see this beautiful waterfall. He finally took the risk and made it across. And he reports the risk was more than worth it because the view was awesome. When we start across a pipe that looks risky, that "faith pipe" that will take us to new territory for Jesus, the pipe becomes a broad path, and our ankles don't turn! Jesus broadens the path beneath our feet. I love that image.

Walk across the pipe today. Don't miss the view. Don't miss what Jesus wants to do in you and through you. Don't stay where it's comfortable. Be willing to be an entrepreneur for Jesus. That's where the abundant life is—doing what only he can do through you.

## Day Four

Do you know someone who has taken a big risk for Jesus? We've looked at two women in Scripture who took great risks—Esther and Deborah. But what about a contemporary risk-taker?

Let me tell you about my dear friend, Donnita Travis, who left her very successful career in marketing to begin an after-school ministry for under-served children in the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago. In 2001 she began with 16 children, coming three days each week to our church for tutoring, teaching, and nourishing. Now there are over 1,200 children involved in By the Hand Club in four different locations in our city, and it is absolutely mind-boggling to see how God is using this ministry to bring children hope and love and help them reach their potential. These children not only improve in their schoolwork, but they also hear the gospel clearly and are loved by the staff. The success stories are abundant. You can learn the whole story by going to [bythehand.org](http://bythehand.org).

I look at Donnita and think, if only I had faith like she does, or if only I had her management and marketing skills. And of course, she is uniquely gifted. But it's much more than that. Donnita heard God's call on her life, and she simply said, like Esther, "God has put me here for such a time as this." She took enormous risks and for over twenty-five years has boldly moved forward with ever-growing impact on our city.

But let me tell you one more thing: It's been loads of hard work, long days, many serious safety and legal issues to resolve. It's not an easy road. There are days I see her and know she is simply tired to the bone. But she keeps doing what God has put her here to do, and God is blessing.

I know God doesn't call all of us to such highly visible tasks, but I know he calls each of us to step out on faith, take a risk, and be willing to let him do through us what he alone can do. Are you standing on the brink of a new challenge? Does your heart tell you this is what God wants you to do?

*The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).*

Don't miss the great thing God has for you to do because you're not willing to take the risk.

## Day Five

Are you a risk taker? Jesus asks us to take risks for him. He challenges us to lose our lives for the sake of the Gospel. He warned us our lives might incur hard times and persecutions, just as his did. But you can be sure of this: It is better to lose your life than it is to waste it.

Let me quote from John Piper's booklet, *Risk Is Right*:

"Therefore, it is right to risk for the cause of Christ. It is right to engage the enemy and say, 'May the Lord do what seems good to him.' It is right to serve the people of God, and say, 'If I perish, I perish!' It is right to stand before the fiery furnace of affliction and refuse to bow down to the gods of the world. At the end of every other road—secure and risk-free—we will put our face in our hands and say, 'I've wasted it!' But at the end of the road of risk, taken in reliance on the blood-bought promises of God, there will be fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore."

The kind of risk-taking we should do for Jesus is not the impulse of being a hero, or the lust for adventure. If our motives are to heap praise and glory for ourselves, we are doing it for the wrong

reasons. And we don't take risks for Jesus to earn his acceptance or gain his approval. It has to be about doing it for the love of Christ—nothing more, nothing less.

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).*

When the love of Christ compels you, then the risk is a no-brainer. You just have to do it because Jesus loves you so much, and he has redeemed your life and given you hope and purpose. And now you have the privilege to do something risky out of love for him.

Regardless of what God is leading you to do, I can promise you it will be bigger than you are, and it will be risky. It will require you to live by faith and not by sight. It will test you and frighten you, but that's where the blessing is, where the abundant life is. Don't miss it. If God is for you, who can be against you?