

A culture of risk

1. Risking with God	
Teaching:	<p>Risk is a central part of any relationship, especially our relationship with God. If we have grown stale in this relationship, it is probably because we have ceased to trust and take risks. When we take a risk in God and it pays off, there are multiple benefits: we gain a testimony that enlarges us, our confidence in him grows, we enter into his joy, we are released into greater realms of spiritual power and responsibility (Matt 25:14-23). Conversely risk avoidance reflects an unwillingness to trust him, and results in alienation (Matt 25:24-30).</p> <p>From God's perspective of course the risks we take are no risks at all – it looks simply like trust. His desire for us is fruitfulness through a trusting relationship (John 15:1-8), which will include moments of pruning. Sometimes what we experience as “failure” actually turns out to be a success. Ultimately, whether things go right or wrong, God is the source of our dignity and glory.</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am called to the impossible (Mk 10:27) • Setbacks are temporary (Ps 37:23-24) • God is the lifter of my head (Ps 3:3) • I am on an adventure with Jesus (Heb 11:8)
Testimony:	Has anyone had an experience in God that looked like failure, but turned out to be a success?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We honour risk-takers, whether or not they succeed • We look for opportunities to go beyond our comfort zone
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: Break shame and fear of failure off one another's lives • SHARE: Some stories of glorious failure and celebrate each other • BELIEVE: Add the 4 beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have met several people who seem to have stepped out in a significant risk • BADLY: When I took a risk and it turned out badly, no one seemed to appreciate the courage it took

2. Risk and anxiety

Teaching:	<p>Most of our anxiety around risk centres not on the question, “What if I fail”, but rather “What will people think if I fail?” When we start to take seriously the identity, power, authority, calling, gifts that he has given us (Matt 14:28, Acts 3:6, 1 Sam 17:26), it can cost us our dignity, reputation, approval of others. No one enjoys being laughed at. It can even cost us some friendships. We need to make a decision that the approval of God is more important than the approval of people (John 5:44, Matt 5:11-12, Luke 9:23-26).</p> <p>Often people will actually honour us for handling failure well. If we allow shame to rest upon us, then people will feel awkward around us, but if we can laugh off our failures, others will warm to us.</p> <p>The risks we take can cause anxiety for other people too – people we are ministering to, or people who care about us. We can be so self-conscious in our risk-taking that we are oblivious to their discomfort. Love always trumps faith (1 Co 13:2,13, Gal 5:6). We need to ask, “How can I take this risk in a way that results in people around me feeling loved?” If our risk goes wrong and causes a mess in someone else’s life, we do need to own our responsibility towards them.</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What God thinks about me matters more than what people think about me. (Prov 29:25) • There is no shame in honest failure (Ro 5:5) • Love is more important than risk (1 Co 13:13)
Testimony:	Does anyone have a story of overcoming the fear of man?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We honour destiny before performance • We celebrate the art of failing well • We clean up our own messes
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: Break the fear of man off one another’s lives • SHARE: How can we help people we minister to experience less anxiety? • BELIEVE: Add the 3 beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have seen someone handle failure really well • BADLY: I have seen someone walk away from the mess (physical or relational) they made with no attempt to clean it up

3. Risky dreams

Teaching:	<p>God’s dream is of a world with no tears, death, mourning, crying or pain, a world where he lives in intimate relationship with his people (Rev 21:4). He invites and challenges us to participate in his dream, and dream with him (Eph 3:20, Matt 28:18-20). But every dream comes with risks attached. The reason many people never realize their dreams and in fact become jaded is simply their unwillingness to embrace the risk and step out.</p> <p>Pursing dreams can cost us financially, relationally and emotionally, But often the greatest perceived risk is the loss of opportunity – by going after this dream, we close down other attractive possibilities. Maybe we didn’t hear God right? In fact this fear of missing the right opportunity can paralyze us so that we end up doing nothing. Instead of being a shaper of history, we become a mere observer of history.</p> <p>We are all called to take strategic risks, but we do so secure in the knowledge that our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven (1 Peter 1:4). In the light of eternity, we have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.</p> <p>We have a duty to consult with others who will be caught up in the strategic decisions we take. God has also set us among wise counselors who can give us advice (Prov 15:22). But ultimately we are answerable for our own lives (Ro 14:12, Matt 25:19).</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am more powerful than I imagine (1 John 4:4) • God’s love casts out every fear (1 John 4:18) • I have nothing to lose (Phil 1:21)
Testimony:	Who has taken a strategic decision recently in pursuit of a dream? How did that go for you?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We sow wholeheartedly into our own dreams • We support the dreams of others • We seek perspectives from people we respect about our decisions
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAY: For people who feel paralyzed by the decisions they face • SHARE: The dreams that scare you the most! • BELIEVE: Add the 3 beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELL: I have been impressed by seeing people sow into the dreams of others • BADLY: I have seen some people fail because they never sought wise counsel

4. Kingdom dreams

Teaching:	<p>God is the original dreamer: he dreamt the whole creation out of nothing. He seeks sons and daughters who will share his dream, who will be like David, a man after God's own heart (Ac 13:22). God's dream is expressed in his kingdom coming to earth. He longs for the day when, "He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."</p> <p>The possibility of dreaming with God starts with learning to see the world through his eyes, and believing as Jesus did. God's dream is always about more than our own personal success: it is about a transformed world.</p>
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have a purpose to fulfill in this generation (Ac 13:36)• The kingdom of God is at hand (Mk 1:15)• Kings and presidents will bow before Jesus (Phil 2:10)
Testimony:	Does anyone have a testimony of turning down a great opportunity (in the natural) because they were gripped with a greater kingdom dream?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We seek first the kingdom knowing that our personal needs will be met• We live in expectation of the power of God• We choose to look at our world through Jesus' eyes
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PRAY: For a revelation of God's purpose in our lives• SHARE: Who are your heroes of the faith?• BELIEVE: Add the 3 beliefs above to your daily declarations
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WELL: I have been inspired by the scale of people's dreams• BADLY: I find people generally have a short-term perspective