

Characteristics of a Kingdom Revolutionary

Session #6 - Take Risks

Session Intro: Many of our young people, many people in our churches live their lives in the shadows. If you are a fan of Star Trek – you will remember that the greatest technological advance in Galactic warfare was cloaking – the ability to make your warship invisible. Many Christians unfortunately do the same thing. But rather than it being an offensive move, it is a defensive move – to hide in the shadows of culture, to not make a wave, to not be seen. But Jesus said, “I have come to give you life, and life in abundance” – an abundant life seems to me to be a life with great meaning. But anything worth having requires risk.

An important part of adolescent development is the ability or the space to take risks. It is really an important part of human development. So a goal of your youth ministry must be to provide space for risk taking...and as a result, provide a safe environment for people to fail. Even more important for the local church, is providing a place for people to take spiritual risks – because it is in risk taking that we stretch and grow. This is one reason why BCOQ YOUTH believes short-term mission opportunities are so important. How has your ministry made space for spiritual risk taking? And just as important, is your youth ministry a place where young people can take a spiritual risk and fail? To put this into balance, young people must also learn to take acceptable risks. By pushing acceptable boundaries they will grow in safety, by pushing boundaries that lead to danger, they can be scarred for life. Reckless driving is an unacceptable risk, particularly with a car full of friends. Drug use is an unacceptable risk – it leads to crime, addiction, and irreversible consequences. In youth ministry, we must pray for the wisdom to provide acceptable risks in a safe environment for the sake of our young people.

Session Objective: This week's lesson is all about risk taking. Students must understand - Wherever there is risk taking there is failure. “You learn more from falling than you do from staying up, and you aren't really being stretched if you aren't crashing sometimes.” This is not in the area of morality or ethics, but in the area of taking God-risks.

Preparation: Preparation this week is the same for both basic and extended. Read through Chapter 5 in McManus, and prepare these questions and your dialogue. There is more “sermon” in this session, partially because this topic requires teaching...it is likely a new concept to the students in many ways. There are a number of shorter scripture passages you can prepare for this week's lesson.

Session Outline

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Share with the group the riskiest thing you have ever done. How did it make you feel?**
- 2. Have you ever taken a spiritual risk? What was it? How was taking a spiritual risk similar and different to other risks you have taken in your life?**

Leader Say: *It seems to me that the life of faith is really a life of risk. I truly believe that many of us do not experience life, and life to the full, because we back away from risks. In an earlier lesson we asked the question: What do you think happens if you hear the voice of God and don't respond? I believe the answer to that question is – you eventually will stop hearing the voice of God. If you are not willing to be a follower of God, I don't believe that God will continue to lead you.*

Leader Note: Can you think of a story about taking a spiritual risk in your own life – responding to the small still voice of God in your life? Be careful how you do this...too many Christian leaders start with “God told me” – explain that! Otherwise the 14-year-old boy will expect to hear the voice of God – probably something like James Earl Jones, speaking to them in a strong and audible voice. I haven't heard James Earl Jones speak to me, but I do know what the leading of the Spirit is all about in my life. You may be amazed at the stories your students will tell if you begin to share your adventure of listening to God...it may and likely does include failures, and mis-steps. Sometimes we fail because we hear God and don't respond, sometimes we fail cause we think we hear God, act in response, and discover it was really just last night's pizza talking!

If you need help - share McManus' story from page 134-137. It is a long story, and your own story even if not as glamorous is more relevant to your young people!

- 3. What happens when you repeatedly take the same risk over a period of time? Think about your first time taking a risk – riding a roller coaster, sharing your faith....and then think about something that you do regularly?**

Leader Say: *This question is all about training. When someone is in training, they take risks to improve. But over time that which was once a risk becomes routine. In fact, if you are learning to play the piano, and after completing grade 8 your teacher would only let you play gr. 1 material...what would happen? Extreme boredom!*

The same is true in our spiritual lives. God has called us to take risks... to listen to the voice of the Spirit and to respond. If we do, we move from one level of spiritual maturity to another, if we don't we stagnate. Stagnation stinks....and regression – playing gr. 1 stuff when you are capable of playing gr. 8 stuff is boring!

- 4. How have you discovered this to be true in your own life?**
- 5. Do you think it is true that “whenever God is in something, there is no chance of failure?” Why or why not?**

Have your students look up a number of passages:

II Corinthians 4:7-10

-Does this read like a resume of success?

II Corinthians 6:4-10

- 6. If Paul was an apostle, following the leading of God – based on his reports in the passages we just read, why wasn't he successful?**

Leader Note: The question is misleading, he was successful, but it wasn't easy. There was pain, and torture, shipwrecks and beatings, imprisonment, hunger and sleeplessness, but through all of it, God was at work in Paul's life! (Read pg. 139 in McManus for more material).

- 7. “Failure is a part of God's environment for shaping our character.”
Do you believe this to be true?
Can you think of any Biblical examples?**
- 8. Has God ever used failure in your life to teach you something, you likely wouldn't have been open to learn?**

Leader Say: *Risk that God respects is fueled by a passion for His purpose and a willingness to subjugate our lives to His mission. Prayer moves from “God, what is Your will for my life” to “God, what is your will for my life, and how can I give my life to fulfill it?”*

- 9. We have asked this question before, but now let's talk about it again:
How do you think those two prayers are different? What happens when we add the second part to the prayer?**
- 10. Based on our study today of Paul's life, how do you react to the Christian cliché “the center of God's will is the safest place on earth”?**

Leader Note: This is making the statement in the opposite way that McManus does on Pg. 147 when he says: “The Centre of God’s will is not a safe place, but the most dangerous place in the world.”

Play this truth out with your young people.

Leader Say: *The 20th century saw more Christian martyrs than all other centuries combined. More people are dying today because of their faith in Jesus, than have ever died in all of Christian history. Does that mean these people are not living in God’s Will? Just because we are in the center of God’s will does not guarantee our safety – it didn’t guarantee the apostle Paul. In fact of all the apostles, history indicates that only John died of natural causes...all of Jesus’ followers were killed because of their faith.*

Trusting God is not safe – it is risky. Our God is not a safe God, but he is a good God (C.S. Lewis – The Chronicles of Narnia). One author has said: “God fears nothing and no one. God moves with intentionality and power. To live outside God’s will puts us in danger, but to live in His will makes us dangerous” (McManus)

I want to be a dangerous risk taker for God...will you join me?”

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.