

Taking Risks

By Dr. Gregory Wiens



Last week, my son and I went skydiving. No, it wasn't on my bucket list, but it was on Colin's and he asked if I would go with him. We tandem jumped from 11,000 feet which allows about 50 seconds of free fall and then about 9 minutes of floating with the parachute. It was quite an experience. Jumping out of an airplane really isn't that bad, but somersaulting out one makes it a little more exciting. The earth looks a lot different falling at 120 mph. Believe me, I was prayed up before I stepped out of the door because once I was airborne, though a lot of things went through my mind, prayer wasn't one of them.

God asks us to trust him; this is what faith is all about. Hebrews 11.6 tells us "And without faith it is impossible to please God..." and Colossians 2.6 says, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him..." From these two verses we clearly understand that we must live by faith on a daily basis. I have found that it is easy for followers of Christ to think that we must accept Jesus Christ as our Lord by faith, but then we are off the hook of trusting beyond ourselves.

We must take risks as leaders. I have heard it said that if you are not currently involved in something that exceeds your ability, then you are not walking by faith. Paul says it like this "For we live by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5.7). He draws a clear dichotomy between seeing the next step (living by sight) and not knowing exactly what the next step will be (living by faith).

So, what are you currently pursuing that if God doesn't show up, you are likely to look a little ridiculous? We must be continually pushing the envelope beyond our comfort zone. There must be intentionality toward this action because as I age, I tend to gravitate toward those things that will work. Let's face it; you look much better when your work succeeds.

If you never fail, you are probably not living by faith enough, only attempting those things that are sure wins. To encourage my faith, I have learned to have people around me who stretch me; people who cause me to be better than I am or maybe can be. I will never know my limits until I reach them. Too many people never reach their limits.

Jesus very clearly tells us that some of us are five-talent leaders, others are three-talent leaders and still others are one-talent leaders (Matthew 25.14-30). The question isn't how many talents you have (so stop comparing), but how are you investing what

you've been given. Start by pushing and investing what you do have to get the maximum return. You might discover additional talents through this process. I see too many one-talent leaders who simply don't push and trust God to do the impossible through them. That is clearly what Jesus was illustrating through this parable. The only way you will know your limits is to trust God to show up and do something in you that you didn't think was possible.

Now I find a very interesting corollary of this parable, which is, you are called to walk by faith and invest *your* talent, not others. What I mean by this is often I find leaders who are ready to walk by faith with others' talents and trust God to do great things when others' money is involved. This isn't faith; it is managing someone else's assets.

Jesus clearly said he gave each of these servants talents to use and multiply. So when you step out in faith and risk for God in your leadership, make sure it is you taking the step. Your faith must be stretched first. I fully appreciate that others' faith will also need to be stretched. As is always the case, a leader must first pay the price before they ask others to do the same.

Will I go skydiving again? Probably not. But the principle of taking a risk to experience something and see the world from a different perspective will follow me the rest of my life. Was it worth the risk? You bet. Life is short and so is our time in leadership. Please don't waste it doing what is reasonable. Lead in something where trusting in God is a requirement.