No Guts, No Glory
(Exodus 16:1-4 / Faith)
By Win Green

A friend of mine is in business. The business is doing well, and he wants to take it to the next level, but he is cautious, if not afraid of the risk. He is afraid that if he tries to go too far too fast that he will over extend himself, and that it will all come crashing down around him. But then again there’s the old wisdom, “no guts, no glory.”

This June we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of Bobby Kennedy’s assassination. I liked Bobby Kennedy’s attitude toward risk. He said, “Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.” In other words, no guts no glory.

To think that we can succeed without risk is at best naive. But this doesn’t stop many of us from trying. We con ourselves into believing that if we make enough money, live in a certain neighborhood, and send our children to certain schools that we will be safe from the risks. But this kind of thinking is naive. Bad things do happen to good people. No one is free from risk, and those who only consider taking the safe rout to the mountain top will never reach the summit. This is true in business.

It’s also true in relationships. I’m amazed at how many student are afraid to express their interest or affection for another person for fear of rejection. In other words, some have more fear of being turned down than they do of being turned on… and they allow their fears to dictate their romance. But I’ve got news for you fellas… no guts no glory. Most women I’m familiar with like confidence in a man, someone who is confidence in himself to risk failure in the hope of love.

The no guts no glory principle applies to sports, investing, and every other aspect of life, especially the spiritual life. If you want to grow spiritually, you need to take risks. You will have to learn how to walk by faith and not by sight. You will have to enter into the arena of the unknown and trust that God will lead you to where you need to be. This is hard. It was hard for the people of the Bible like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and it is hard for us today. Allow me to retell one of the great risk and reward stories of the Bible. It’s the story of Moses leading the people of Israel out of their slavery and into the Promised Land.

After 400 years of brutal slavery Moses led the people of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. The Pharaoh of Egypt didn’t want to free his Israelite slaves because they were his source of cheap labor, but God sent ten plagues upon Egypt to persuade pharaoh. God turned the Egyptian water to blood, He sent frogs, gnats and flies, plague and boils, hail, locusts, and thick darkness. Last of all God sent the angel of death to kill the first born of every Egyptian, and Pharaoh finally gave
in and set the Israelites free. But a few days later Pharaoh changed his mind and chased the Israelites to the edge of the Red Sea, where God parted the waters for the Israelites but drowned Pharaoh’s soldiers. The people of Israel were at last free. But even after all God had done for them, it wasn’t long before the people of Israel began to grumble against Moses in the wilderness. No plans had been made for feeding the great number of people, and there was of course no food to be found in the desert, and so the people complained,

“Oh, that we were back in Egypt, and that the Lord had killed us there! For there we had plenty to eat.” (Exodus 16:2-3, LB)

The risk that the people of Israel faced in the wilderness was just too much for most of them. Rather than face the risk of hunger they preferred to return to their slavery in Egypt where at least they had enough to eat. After all that they had seen God do, the miracles, the plagues, and the parting of the Red Sea, they still felt insecure about their circumstances. Like most people, they preferred the certainties of slavery to the uncertainties of freedom.

51 years have taught me that when given a choice most people will choose the predictably bad over an uncertain good. This is just as true today as it was 3,500 years ago. People prefer the hell of the predictable to the uncertainty of the future. Let me give you an example.

Did you know that it takes a battered wife an average of eight tries before she finally leaves her abusive husband? She will leave him, but return eight times before she finally leaves for good. Even when she knows her marriage is over, and that her husband is out of control, still the anxiety of an unpredictable future is just too much for her. She will leave and come back, leave and come back. And some women never make it. They are killed before they can screw up the courage to face the unpredictably of an uncertain future.

Many if not most are risk adverse. Security is more prized than freedom. Again and again I have seen people choose the predictable hell over a potential heaven. Their fear of failure is more profound that their hope for success.

God wants us to take a chance on Him. He wants us to risk it all for His glory and for the sake of others. When Moses took the people out of their Egyptian slavery he had no idea how he was going to feed them. God told him to do it, so Moses figured that God would take care of the details.

When this Church, the Nassau Christian Center, was making the decision in 2005 whether or not to take a chance and start this new 9:45am campus and community worship service they frankly didn’t know how they were going to pay for it. It costs $2,000 /week to produce both the worship service and the lunch that
follows. The service is offered 33 times a year which adds up to $66,000. They didn’t know how they were going to pay for it. But they sensed God encouraging them to take a chance, and so they took a chance. They stepped out in faith, and they are now so grateful that they did, because your presence here gives them hope for the next generation, and its hard to put a price tag on hope! What’s more, some of you have experienced Christ personally for the first time here, and you have put your trust in Him, and its impossible to put a price tag on life! And because of this service some of you have met your life’s love and you’re going to get married. It’s hard to put a price tag on love! And some of you have established life long friends here, or you’ve come to pray your heart out about studies you’re discouraged with, or your progress on your sports team, or your romantic life, and in your prayer you’ve sensed God’s comfort and consolation. It’s hard to put a price tag on such things. This Church made the decision to take a chance on God, and it has paid off handsomely in souls won and lifted. Like I said, “go guts, no glory.”

The promised land the Bible speaks of is not a risk free land. The Promised Land is where we learn to trust God through all the risks that challenge us. I don’t know about you, but I would rather take the risk of doing something great with God and failing, than playing it safe and doing nothing special.

**Three Principles:**

Let me share with you three principles for taking on risk. Let me be clear, taking a risk is not the same as being irresponsible. Being irresponsible is to taking chances without first preparing and making specific plans for success. Risk without readiness is foolishness. Let me share with you three principles for taking on risk.

**FIRST,** “Real security is nearness to God, not distance from danger.” (Kenneth Hendren)

The security industry has become a multi billion dollar industry. Everything from alarm systems for our homes, to miniature mace for our pocketbooks, to security guards for our neighborhoods have been employed to secure our lives, and yet still we feel threatened.

The United States is wealthier than any other culture in the history of the world? Over the past fifteen years we’ve been through the greatest economic expansion in the history of the world! But even with all our wealth, greater wealth than any other nation ever, let me ask you, how many of us feel financially secure? Real security does not come through our distance from danger, but from our closeness to God.

When the men and women of Israel complained to Moses about having no food in the wilderness Moses did not try to distance himself from the danger, instead he turned to God in prayer. He did not try to figure it all out himself. He did not take an inventory of the food that was left in camp. He did not send out a
scouting party for provisions. He did not consider leading the people back to their slavery in Egypt. Instead he approached God and allowed God to draw near to him, and in that prayer he heard God make this promise, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.” (Exodus 16:4) God does not promise us a life free of risk and danger, but He does promise to provide for our needs. God will secure our lives. He loves us more than we love ourselves. He has our best interests at heart, and when we obey his leadership He will secure our lives with whatever we need.

Many of you have read C.S. Lewis’ book The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. In this child’s fairy tale the lion named Aslan is the character who represents Jesus. Here is how Mr. Beaver describe Aslan to young Lucy and Susan.

“Is – is he a man?” asked Lucy

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the –Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion – The Lion, the great Lion!”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe?”

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King I tell you!”

The message here is quite simple. Jesus Christ isn’t safe. He is good, but He isn’t safe, and He doesn’t lead us down easy street. What does the scripture say, “Ye, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death…” When you follow Christ you are in for adventure and challenge of your life. There will be times when you will be called to risk everything. But if following Christ isn’t safe, it is also true that Christ is good. “Ye, through I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for THOU ART WITH ME!” Again and again the scripture strives to remind us that real security is not about being far from danger, but being close to Christ!

The SECOND principle for taking on risk is this, “Sometime you must go out on a limb, because that’s where the fruit is.”

The person who succeeds in business is not the person who does what everyone else is doing. Success comes to that person who is willing to take a chance on some thing better than what everyone else is doing.

One of my most exciting classes in college was a small seminar course entitled the “American Entrepreneurial Experience”. In that class we had the opportunity to meet with Ray Kroc, the founder and owner of McDonald’s. The story of how he founded the McDonalds empire is fascinating. In the 1950’s Ray Kroc was a milk shake mixer salesman based in Kansas City. One day he received an order from a small restraunt for six milkshake mixers. Ray was intrigued. He
wanted to know what kind of eating establishment would be doing so well that they would need six milkshake mixers! He decided to take a chance and fly out to San Diego and visit the restaurant, and was amazed with what he found. He was so impressed with their new fast food business that he scraped together every dime he could get his hands on and bought a share in the restaurant, and the rest is billions and billions of dollars worth of history.

The fruit of life is out on the edge. Certainly you can get some of the low hanging fruit safely enough by standing on the ground, or just by waiting for what falls, but that’s not how you reap the great harvest.

The greatest part of the Christian Gospel is that God takes all sorts of risks to reach out to you. On the Cross God stepped out on a limb. He knew it would mean his own life, but God doesn’t play it safe when it comes to saving you. He will go anywhere; do anything if only you will respond to Him. God had the guts so that you could enjoy the glory!

The THIRD principle for taking risks is this: “You have not tested the resources of God until you try the impossible.” (F.B. Meyer)

One of the most familiar verses of scripture comes from the book of proverbs:

> Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
> and lean not unto your own understanding,  
> In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
> and He will make straight your paths;  
> (Proverbs 3:5-8)

God does not want you to rely on your own resources alone. That’s far too limiting for what He wants you to experience in life. He wants you to put all your trust AND MORE in Him.

There is a story about Robert Schuler and the building of the Crystal Cathedral. He went to the greatest architect of his day, I.M.Pea, and asked him to design a cathedral made entirely of glass. As Dr. Schuler described his vision for the building the architect said, “Dr. Schuler, a cathedral of glass is impossible.” Schular’s reply to the architect was to hand the architect his dictionary as say, “Mr. Pea would you please look up the word impossible for me?” Mr. Pea did, but when he came to the page in Scholar’s dictionary where impossible was to be found he found the word impossible cut out. The architect looked up at Schuler, and smiled. Schuler then quoted Jesus, “All things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27)

Here is the deal, God does not what you to do what you think you can do; He wants you to do what you believe God can do. God does not want you to limit
yourselves to your own puny abilities and capacities. He wants you to trust Him to do the great and wonderful things that only God can do.

When God called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of their slavery, Moses first reaction was to say that he couldn’t do it. He said to God, “But who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Pharaoh’s slavery?” Moses was looking only to his own resources when he asked that question. But God’s reply was, “I will be with you.” God wants us to glorify Him by attempting to do those things which we know we cannot do, so that we will be forced to rely upon His power and resources to get the job done.

When you are faithful to God you will attempt the impossible. You will attempt to turn men and women’s’ hearts away from selfishness and onto Jesus. You can’t do that without God’s help. You will attempt to share life with people around the world: in Cuba, in Jamaica, in Haiti, in China, in South America, In Africa, in India. This is absurd if you count only on your own resources. But this is just where God wants you to be, attempting great things for him that are impossible on our own. Only then will you experience for yourself the height and depth, width and breath of God’s love. Too many of us have mistakenly turned Christianity upside down into believing its all about avoiding the bad, when it truth it has more to do with taking a chance on the good! Someone once said that God isn’t looking for great people, but for people willing to trust in His greatness.

New oceans cannot be discovered without the courage to lose sight of the shore. To accomplish something great in life will always require the courage to take calculated risks… risks that will require us to place the full weight of our trust on God. Some of us would rather not live a life so vulnerable. We prefer a more predictable life. But like I’ve said, no guts no glory.