

Reaching Forward

Study Guide #2 The Risk of Reaching Forward

"SECURITY IS MOSTLY A SUPERSTITION. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing." – Helen Keller

Although there are times when we have failed to take a risk and trust God, there are other occasions when we decided to just go for it, even when it seemed crazy. The fact is, we take risks everyday. Statistics tell us that getting married is a risk. Having kids is a risk. Few people ever feel ready for this, but at least you get nine months to prepare! Starting a business is risky. Some might say that relocating Lafayette Street and launching Greystone Church was a risk. As the pastor, I knew it was something that God lead me to do. And though it has been the most difficult and challenging season of my life, I do not regret this season. From this experience, I have seen two types of people emerge – those who like the safe road and those who understand the value of taking risks; they are critics or they are creators. Which are you?

With that in mind, we should carefully note the outcome of those who play it safe and those who take the risk in this study. Those who took risks found eternal joy in the presence of the Master, followed by increased responsibilities in the kingdom of heaven. Those who held back and played it safe found condemnation and an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness, away from the presence of our Lord. The result of the parable was to show that the alternative to risk is even more frightening than the risk itself. We must embrace risk in order to what abundant life really is.

You are invited to begin your time with God this week with prayer:

*I belong to you, O Lord,
because when I was still a sinner,
You reached forward for me.
As a continued response to your grace in my life,
help me spend my time and my energy
focused on reaching out to take hold of all that you
have called me to.
This time is Your time,
so use this time of devotion and discussion
for Your glory. Amen*





Focus Scripture

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)

14"Again, it (kingdom of Heaven) will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21'His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 22" The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23'His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 24" Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28" Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Thoughts From The Text

-  Look at the first sentence of verse 14. Jesus tells why he is telling this parable. What is he teaching about?
-  Who are the characters in this parable? (vs14)
-  Where was the master going? - When did he return? (vss 14,19)
-  Who in the Bible do you know that was going to go away for a long time and then return?

- ✚ So, if the master represents Jesus, who do the servants represent?
- ✚ What was the Lord's reply to those who took a risk with the Master's possessions? (vss 21, 23, 26)



- ❖ What is the most risky thing you've ever done (that you're willing to tell us)? How did you feel afterward?
- ❖ What do you think is the most risky mission or service our church could do?
- ❖ Why does the Lord add the phrase "each according to his ability" to verse 15? (The Greek word used for ability is *dunamin*, from which we derive the term dynamite. It means power, strength, or inner resources given by God).
- ❖ After Jesus tells this parable, Matthew goes straight into another parable. Someone read Matthew 25:31-46 out loud while everyone else reads along. Taking the context of these two passages together, how do you think these two parables tie together and what do you think Jesus is trying to teach us?
- ❖ Why do you think the master became angry with the servant who hid his talent?
- ❖ Did you know that in his new kingdom, there will be jobs to do? In this parable, the servants who did good things for the master while he was gone were rewarded and given bigger jobs when he returned. What kind of person do you think will be given important jobs in God's kingdom?
- ❖ What talents has God given you?
- ❖ How are you currently investing your talents? Are they safe investments or risky investments?
- ❖ What are some other areas where you could invest your talents?

THE RISK OF REACHING FORWARD

1. THERE IS RISK IN BEING CHRIST'S DISCIPLE

The story of told of the little farm boy who always wanted to be a sailor on a tall-masted sailing ship when he grew up. One day, he got up enough nerve to slip away from home, made his way to a port city, and enlisted as an apprentice sailor. All was well until the third day out to sea when the captain told him to assume the watch in the crow's nest. The boy climbed halfway up the mast and then froze. He selected an option that was not an option. He feared the ridicule of the seasoned sailors if he came down, and he feared the heights awaiting him in the crow's nest. He froze between the options and took neither. He

discovered that the call of a sailor brings with it risks.

 Read Matthew 14:25-33

Two of the devil's greatest weapons are fear and discouragement. While these often appear as we are deciding whether or not to take a risk, they are often present after the decision has been made. This is especially true when we step out in faith and obey God. Criticism will often come. Suffering will often come. Obstacles will often come. Some have the mistaken notion that if we just follow God, everything will fall into place and we will glide through life. But before you buy into that, remember that Jesus followed the Father to death!

2. THERE IS RISK IN WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER

Jesus never said that the kingdom of God was like a man reclining in his easy chair. Rather, in this parable and others like it, Jesus compares the kingdom to those willing to take risks. In the following verses, a risk is taken in order to obtain the more perfect gift.

 Read Matthew 13:44-46

In these two parables, a decision to be a part of something of such greater value than what one had was set before them. It tells us that stewardship of what God has provided will have opportunities to take risks that are guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit for such divine appointment. We will face obstacles. We will confront discouragement and fear and every reason not to participate in such a moment. We will be driven to our knees, desperate for God. Remember, though, that God calls us to be faithful, not successful. Whether in this life or the next, all of our risks FOR God will be honored.

3. THERE IS RISK IN TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

At some time or another, we, too, encounter situations where uncertainty and practical thinking collides with the principles from Scripture. While this encounter might not have as much at stake as the passage below indicates, the risk of acting or not acting were just as real. The parable of the talents teaches the same principle we see here - the cost of playing safe can sometimes be too costly.

 Take a moment and read Esther 2:1-4:14.

Esther faced an uncertainty as to her role as the queen. This uncertainty was impacted by her knowledge of what would happen to her if she took the risk of appearing before and challenging the king of Persia. On the other hand, if she had taken no risk and sheltered in the safety of doing nothing, others would suffer. The risk we face probably will never have such dramatic consequences, but anytime we choose to take the safe position in God's kingdom plan, someone God is attempting to impact through us will, nevertheless, be effected.

Personal Reflection

📖 Read Matthew 25:14-18. In verse 15, notice that the master gave each servant different amounts of money “according to their ability”, which must be understood as their ability of stewardship. One lesson to derive here is that God never will give you more than you can handle according to your abilities, as well.

🔗 What are some of your God-given abilities, treasures or resources that God may be asking you to take a risk for His kingdom through the Reaching Forward campaign?

Thinking Ahead

A capital campaign is a divine appointment to take a risk for God because the very nature of the campaign asks for equal sacrifice among everyone. The Jesus made this plain when he gave to each servant “according to his ability”, not according to the amount. The same was true when the accolade and celebration was extended to the faithful servants for the risk they took, not for the amount they brought in.

The intent of this lesson was to show the impact of indecision and safe thinking in the eyes of God. To become a simple spectator with the resources God has provided is not what He intended for his children. There is joy in extreme steps of faith.

The Reaching Forward capital campaign is not about the amount given, but the faithful stewardship that hears God’s guidance and risks what God has given in order to receive a greater return. May God richly bless you as you spend time over again with our great Lord.