



**A Spiritual Encouragement Message  
February 18, 2021**

**If You Want to Walk on Water . . .  
You Have to Get Out of the Boat**

By Randall Jarrell

A Faith Without RISK is No Faith at All

While preparing for a series of sermons, I ran across this rather alarming statement.... An inordinate desire for safety and security can be a sign of mental illness. When I first read it, it sounded like a lot of other psycho-babble we hear these days. But upon further reading it began to make perfect sense. It was talking about those people who are so fearful and frightened that they never take any chances at all. They never stick their necks out, they never go out on a limb, they never try anything new, they live their lives doing the same things over and over again. They are stuck in the rut of a predictable, boring routine. When they die their tombstone will read, "He died years ago, but we didn't get around to burying him until now."

There is an important additional statement to all that. It goes like this: "The ability to intelligently choose risk and danger is one mark of mental health." The key word here is "intelligently." Healthy people aren't afraid to take reasonable chances in pursuit of their larger dreams. They take on jobs that seem too big for them. They make investments that have an element of risk. They dream big dreams. They refuse to be intimidated by the word "impossible." They will go ahead with a project while other people walk away from it because they refuse to be paralyzed by the possibility of their failure. They fail more than the average person simply because they attempt more than the average person. And since they attempt more than most people, they usually end up succeeding more than most people.

When you bring this observation over into the spiritual realm it looks something like this: The life of faith is inherently a life of risk. The men and women of the Bible who did great things for God were all - without exception - risk-takers. They were people who weren't afraid to lay it all on the line for God.

Consider Noah, who built an ark when it had never rained in the history of the world. People thought he was crazy, but here's old Noah with his three boys cutting down that gopher wood and nailing the planks into place. Not only that, but he had to wait 120 years for the rains to finally come. In the end, he was saved and his family along with him, but it wasn't easy waiting for the first drops to fall from the heavens.

Consider Abraham, who at the height of his prosperity was called to leave Ur of the Chaldees. Taking his wife with him, he set out for regions unknown because God had promised to show him a better land. Although he had it all from a material point of view, and although he was well-liked and well-respected, when God called, he left it all behind. He said goodbye to safety and security, setting out across the trackless desert in search of a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).

Consider Moses, who led the nation of Israel to the shores of the Red Sea, then across the Red Sea, then into the Sinai Desert. He was 80 years old at the time! At an age when most men are cranking back the La-Z-Boy and reading the sports page, Moses is up on the mountain having a discussion with God.

Consider Joshua, who after 3000 years is remembered primarily for the walls of Jericho. For seven days he marched around the walls of that impregnable city. For seven days the people inside laughed at that lunatic Jew and his lunatic followers. For seven days it appeared that he had lost his mind. But then Joshua told the priests on the seventh day, "This time march around seven times." After the seventh time around on the seventh day, the priests blew their trumpets and Joshua called out, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city." With a mighty roar, the people shouted ... And the walls came down.

Consider David, who walked into the Valley of Elah to face the mighty giant Goliath. Stopping at the stream, he picked up five smooth stones. When no one else in the whole nation would go down into the valley, David walked in alone. It was a suicide mission, a hopeless cause. How could a teenager do what brave men were afraid to do? But he did, and the rest is history.

Consider Esther, who was queen in Babylon. Although her life was at stake, she risked it all by going in to see the king. If he didn't extend the scepter, she would immediately be put to death. But taking her heart in her hands, she went to see the king in order to save her people. Risky? Yes. Crazy? Perhaps. But she did it anyway because she believed it was the right thing to do.

Consider Nehemiah, who left a prosperous career in Susa to return to the rundown city of Jerusalem, there to rally the dispirited people of God to rebuild the Temple. Rousing the nation from its stupor, and overcoming hostility at every turn, the walls were rebuilt in only 52 days.

Consider Daniel, who when he was thrown into the lion's den, feared not for his own life, but turned the lions into pillows and slept like a baby all night long.

And then consider the one-talent man who was given opportunity to increase his master's wealth and was so paralyzed by fear that he was considered UNfaithful.

When we read the Bible, we discover that the men and women who accomplished great things for God were also great risk-takers. They weren't content to accept things as they were. They thought that more could be done if only someone would lead the way. And when no one else stepped forward, they volunteered. Often no one followed. And sometimes they suffered greatly for their actions. It was rarely easy, and often cost them their own reputations, but they did what they did because they weren't afraid to look foolish in the eyes of their countrymen. A Faith Without Risk is *No Faith At All*.

Here is a fact worth noting. When our little children come to their Bible Classes, what stories do we tell them? The very stories I have just mentioned to you. We tell them about the great heroes of the faith -

Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and Daniel and all the rest. We don't talk about the ordinary men and women; we talk about those brave souls who laid it all on the line for God. These are the people we hold up before our children. These are the models we want them to follow. That is only right and proper because the life of faith is inherently a life of risk. If you are personally unwilling to take a chance, you will never discover what living by faith is all about. If you have to have all the answers before you make a decision, if you're afraid to take a step unless you know things will work out to your advantage, faith will always be a mystery to you.