

THE GREAT EQUALIZER

John 14:12-14

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

The Father is not looking for spiritual professionals to join Him in His work. He's not looking for people of a certain age, hair color, language, or economic status. He's looking for people willing to take a risk.

Some of the most exciting stories of people learning to take risks in praying for others are those of little children!

In many Vineyard churches, you will see young children, along with adults, praying for people who need to experience the Holy Spirit in action. These young ones often have faith and an ability to hear God speak that isn't filtered by fear or years of avoiding risk (and calling it faith).

Anyone, at any age, at any stage of spiritual maturity, in any location, can learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and to partner with God in seeing people healed and restored.

In the Vineyard we say that "Everyone Gets to Play", meaning that all of us at some point need to take a step and "Do the Stuff".

When you work a sound board, like I do on Sundays, we use an equalizer like the one in the picture to de-emphasize certain frequencies and emphasize others in order to get a pleasing result to the ear. The Holy Spirit is the Great Equalizer. God will take what you have to offer, and He will fill in the gaps by strengthening your weak points.

Bill Parcels used to say, don't tell me what a player can't do, show me what he can do and we'll work around that.

IS THERE A RISK-INVITATION FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

1 Cor 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Is there a risk that God is inviting you to take right now - regardless of your age, background, or experience? If so, what is holding you back?

Give that burden to Jesus, then trust Him as you step out in faith.

Earlier we noted that the motto, "Faith is spelled R-I-S-K" is a synthesis of mystery and reality that very simply shows how the Kingdom breaks into our everyday lives when we embrace Jesus' model of love, justice, signs, wonders, inclusion, and more. A big part of what it means to be Vineyard is to want His Kingdom to break into the here and now and see signs and wonders take place. We won't ever see that happen if we don't partner with Him by taking a risk.

Remember how we talked about John Wimber's testimony being titled, "I'm a fool for Christ, whose fool are You?" This passage fits right in.

When we are listening, humbly listening, to the Holy Spirit all sorts of powerful things can happen through us. We can be used by God to heal someone who is dealing with a long-term, chronic illness, or we can be used by God to encourage a neighbor.

MANY WAYS TO HEAR & OBEY

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

Your neighbor doesn't need to be chained up in spiritual bondage one more minute - they may not even know that they are waiting for you to obey God by taking a chance and asking if they need prayer!

But even with that possibility in front of us, sometimes we hesitate, draw back, and hope the feeling that God wants us to step out on a limb will simply go away.

It helps to be a part of a community of people:

- who take risks together,
- who love the Scriptures,
- who love Jesus,
- who are compassionate toward people,
- and who are moved by a faith on fire to do the stuff of the Kingdom of God.

Practicing with others who have a track record of hearing God's voice can give us confidence to take our next steps of faith.

We can have insight into a situation of injustice, and instead of speaking our own words, find that we are speaking with an uncommon authority by the Holy Spirit.

We can act compassionately to include someone who is on the fringes and experience the Holy Spirit helping us to love them despite their rough edges.

There are all sorts of ways we can practice a risking faith when we put Jesus in the lead rather than ourselves.

Just as an example: the next time you go out to eat, tell your server that you are going to pray for your meal and ask them if there is anything that they would like you to pray for.

FAITH IS SPELLED R-I-S-K

Jesus declared that those who believe that God will do what He says He will do, and then back up that belief with actions - praying for the sick and ministering to those in need - will experience the same kinds of miracles happening through them.

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:17-18, selections).

Risking in faith means a few things:

- We must first believe that God wants to do miracles that show people how much they are loved, affirming God's presence and glory
- We take action on the belief that God wants to do miracles, signs and wonders, through His people who love and serve Him
- We affirm that we are all invited to participate in praying for miracles of healing (the body, mind, and emotions), miracles of provision, miracles of relational healing, and so much more
- We are willing to pray for someone to be healed, and to risk feeling silly if God does not back up our action in that moment
- We are continually learning to hear the Holy Spirit's voice in our heart, ready to obey what we hear and to step out in faith to share it
- We are ready to risk giving someone a word or Scripture we believe the Lord has put on our heart to give to them
- We actively trust God to speak to us for others, and we take action when we believe He's spoken something to us
- We learn to listen to, and hear, the Holy Spirit's voice - by practice, and by learning from others who have learned before us
- We practice taking risks with God in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces

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So, now we are going to do exactly that.