

When Obeying God Is Risky

The late John Wimber is credited with having said, "Faith is spelled 'r-i-s-k.'" The first time I read that, I thought, what a relief! Over the years I've struggled to get to the place where my ability to walk by faith would be, well, perfect. To hear someone of Wimber's stature and influence confess that faith involves stepping out despite apprehensions, really helped me.

Have you ever received a word from the Lord, but you dragged your feet before acting on it because you're afraid of what the outcome would be? Some of us may have to admit that we're not always waiting on God.

We can spiritualize our hesitation, but often at the root is a paralyzing fear that God is not going to come through as we hoped. And whatever would we do then? Will we be able to accept any other outcome? And, will we be found passionately in love with Him, if things don't go as we thought they would?

What do you think? Is your relationship with the sovereign Lord strong enough to allow Him to rule in a way that may be disappointing to you?

Several nights ago, I was rehearsing several of the paths I've walked with God that appeared to me, frankly, as dead ends—immensely disappointing failures. In every case, I thought I was faithfully following along. Yet I was horribly devastated by the outcomes.

When that happens a time or two, you question your spiritual discernment. Everything that has to do with your relationship to God becomes subject to intense analysis.

When things seemingly go awry, we wonder what we did wrong. But we also question what this outcome reveals about God. What does it mean in terms of our relationship with Him?

I wondered how I could have been so mistaken after all my praying and seeking Him? Why didn't He stop me? When I paused, I sensed the Holy Spirit asking me, "How do you know you failed?"

Truthfully, I was measuring the success or failure of my efforts based on the degree to which things turned out as I believed and hoped they would. I thought that if they went against me, I just wasn't getting it.

This kind of thinking is hardly conducive to living the abundant, faith-filled, spirit-led life. It makes it very difficult to trust God and step out on His Word.

In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were about to be thrown into the furnace because they took a stand (i.e. risk) for God and refused to honor the idols of King Nebuchadnezzar. When they were told what their sentence would be, they said: "We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up (3:16-18, NIV).

They believed the outcome to be victory, even if they lost their lives. We don't need a defense, either, for having taken what appeared to be a risky step for God.

We're tempted to believe that everyone else is more discerning than we are and that everything always goes according to plan for them. But what does it matter? We should be content knowing that we've honored the Lord as best we could and that we surrendered our agendas to His will. In the future, when the opportunity presents itself to take another faith risk, with God's help, go for it and leave the outcome of your obedience to Him.

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