

Isn't It Worth the Risk to Obey God?

I once enrolled in a sewing course at a community college. The first night the class was held, the teacher instructed us, "Be thinking about why you are here."

Before the second class was over, that question was burning in my mind. Had I come to learn how to sew—or to thoroughly embarrass myself in public?

That night when I had gotten up to join my fellow classmates on a break, I had noticed that I couldn't get out of my seat. I was stuck! I glanced down at the sewing machine and to my horror, discovered that the blouse I was wearing was stitched to the piece of cloth under the needle!

"Great, Sandra, "I blurted out loud. "How did we do this?"

Naturally, my question attracted the attention of my mercy-motivated instructor, who came over to help me out of my predicament. Unfortunately, her indiscretion outweighed her gift of mercy. In a high, falsetto voice that could have filled a stadium, she exclaimed, "Oh, Sweetie, *what did we doooooo?*"

I'll tell you what I DIDN'T do. I didn't go back. I know perhaps I should have stuck it out—gotten back up on that proverbial horse after I'd fallen—but my desire to avoid doing something the wrong way outweighed my desire to learn to do it the right way. So I played it safe.

My loss; I could have learned something.

My response was similar to that of the gifted students I taught some years ago in senior high honors English. Often, when given a choice in selecting a writing topic, they would

pick up something with which they were comfortably familiar. They were playing it safe—not just for the grade, but to avoid the risk of failing they faced when tackling the unknown.

It was their loss because they could have grown.

The Word of God is full of stories of men and women who, in order to accomplish God's plan for their lives, had to risk failure. Ruth chose to follow Naomi into foreign territory where, because of their Moabite background, she would not be welcome. But despite the odds stacked against her, the outcome of her choice was victory. God had Boaz waiting for her. (See the book of Ruth.)

Consider the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her perfume and tears, wiping them with her hair. She risked public scorn. The outcome: Jesus Himself praised her actions (see Luke 7:44-47).

And what about Rahab, who risked her life to help the soldiers scout out the Promised Land (Josh. 2)? Or, how about Esther, who risked her life when she approached the king for a favor—and ended up saving her people (Esth. 4-5)?

Jesus risked public scorn when He sat and dined with sinners and tax collectors (Matt. 9:10-13), and He opened Himself up to condemnation when He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9-14).

The tasks God gives us generally require risk. If we fail, His purposes are not accomplished. If we succeed, others may be threatened. In either case, if we turn our eyes toward man, we lose. It is only when we keep our eyes toward Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith that we stand to gain.

I seriously doubt that if had I risked further embarrassment by continuing to attend my sewing class, I'd pose any great threat to Martha Stewart today. But in walking away from failure, I also walked away from potential success and

blessings.

Today, as you contemplate the odds stacked against you in carrying out God's plan, ask yourself: Isn't it worth the risk to obey Him? He has so much in store! More than you can even ask or think (see Eph. 3:20). Make a commitment to doing your best for Him who gave His best, Jesus, for you.

Prayer Power for the Week of November 10, 2014

Pray that as the Holy Spirit empowered the early disciples with fearless boldness, believers everywhere would be given a new boldness in Christ to do His work for the kingdom. Pray for our persecuted and abused believers around the world and ask the Lord to give them supernatural strength to withstand what lies ahead. Continue to pray for our leaders to seek God for His wisdom, mercy and continued protection. Ask the Lord for faith to obey Him in all areas, regardless of the risk. Pray for worldwide revival and remember Israel in the mix (Eph. 3:20).