

Series: **Aliens 2.0**
Today's Title: **"The Myth of Safety"**
November 21, 2021 – *Selected passages*

Objective: To help people know what the Bible says about safety in this life.

Opening prayer

Next Sunday will be our final message in this current series - and we'll look at Social Justice - define it, and ask, "What does the Bible say about it?"

Throughout December we will focus on the birth of Christ.

Today we're looking at the topic of safety.

The topic of safety, by its very nature, includes other topics: Risk, Fear, and Anxiety.

Today's sermon will require you to examine your own perspective, thoughts, attitudes, and practices in this arena.

The application won't be specific action points - but specific thinking points - points to ponder - reflect upon - to hold up to your life for comparison.

So, let's jump right into it...

The problem: our culture's increasing levels of fear and anxiety and the expanding definitions and diagnosis of what is harmful to us.

Bike ramp? 'Old school' playgrounds? No seat belts?
Western society has become addicted to safety, which is the by-product of uncontrolled fear and anxiety.

It is the by-product of ‘what might’ happen - or ‘what if’ thinking.

This has been happening for many decades, but it has become undeniable - risen to the surface without any disguise - over the past 19 months as the fear of COVID has overtaken a large % of the world.

This ‘*addiction to safety*’ is not simply my observation and opinion - many others have been saying this for several years.

In 2018, one article stated:

“Safety has become a cultural obsession to the point that many institutions and policymakers have adopted the ideal of a “harm-free” world as a realistic objective, a fantasy perhaps most strikingly expressed through intolerance toward risk and accidents.

Thus, America’s emergency medical establishment has been in the forefront of the movement to banish the word “accident” from their lexicon, replacing it with the term “preventable injury.”

[\(https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/\)](https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/)

Writing in 2009 - “The UC-Santa Cruz sociologist Andrew Szasz invented the concept of “Inverted Quarantine” as a way to describe these developments. Unlike a traditional quarantine, which seeks to isolate sick individuals to keep them from spreading disease to the public,

an inverted quarantine represents the opposite impulse of people isolating themselves from the harms that they perceive as threatening. Inverted quarantines constitute a response to the fear that the human condition is inherently unsafe.”

<https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/> - Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

I would say there is truth to the statement, *‘The human condition is inherently unsafe.’*

But this has been true for all human history.

Its less true today with all modern society’s advancements in medicine, medical care, hygiene, improved automobile safety and safety in all areas of life.

Life expectancy is now longer than it has ever been.

From 1500-1800 - life expectancy in Europe was between 30-40 years.

Today - most industrialized countries have a life expectancy of 75 years or greater!

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/longevity-throughout-history-2224054>

As death - what most see as the greatest threat - has been pushed further out, why have we grown more fearful and want to be more ‘safe’ than previous generations?

A good question is:

“...safe from what?” the only logical answer is “potentially anything.”

[\(https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/\)](https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/)

Examples of our addiction to safety.

One of the most obvious examples of our modern addiction to safety is that we have expanded the definition of danger - of threatening things - harmful things - which broadens the safety zone required to keep us safe from these real or imagined threats.

The greatest example of this is the creation of *safe spaces*.

Still citing from the same 2018 article...

“Arguably the most striking example of a demand for an inverted quarantine is the emergence of the ideal of a safe space. Unlike a gated community set up to keep out undesirable outsiders, the purpose of a safe space is to protect its inhabitants from unwelcome criticism and thoughts. A shift in emphasis from gaining physical security from the threat of outside intruders to securing a sanctuary from exposure to unwelcome ideas illustrates the constant expansion of the demand for safety from something physical and visible to something abstract and invisible.”

[\(https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/\)](https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/)

Politics has feasted on creating fear to gain votes.

But now we have the politicization of safety!
Promises are made beyond the very issues of fear - to making impossible promises about increasing everyone's safety - something that is out of our human reach but has become the idol and obsession of modern-day people.

Safety has been deified.

'Zero-risk' living / existing is now the goal.
A goal many believe is a realistic and appropriate expectation in this life.

Consider the market growth in home alarm systems -

2005 = \$27 Billion

2018 = \$114.1 Billion

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/487868/united-states-electronic-security-installation-revenue/>

Increase in home survivalists - food stores for the impending disaster - the 'prepper' movement.
Gated communities - 12 or more airbags in your car - everywhere you look you will see increased safety measures.

This is not all bad - I'm not against safety.

But I'm asking the question - challenging the status quo or common wisdom - that we need to be more safe - that we need to be fearful of so many things.

That our first impulse is fear or anxiety.

Our culture is not only fearful of death, but maybe more fearful of life and the perceived dangers around every corner.

Dangers of our addiction to safety.

In our system of government and the freedoms we are blessed with in this country, one of the dangers is a loss of our freedoms.

Some of our Founding Fathers warned us how a desire for more safety can severely limit or destroy our freedom and liberty.

Alexander Hamilton: "...to be more safe, they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free."

Benjamin Franklin, was unequivocal about the matter: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."

<https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/01/the-paradox-of-our-safety-addiction/> - Hamilton, "The Consequences of Hostilities Between the States," *Federalist 8*)

Safety has become a sacred value.

What is the promise of safety?

Freedom / protection from harm...from death?

Freedom from pain, tears, disappointment, guilt, and shame? From risk, failure, or being average?

My concern is this craving for, and idolizing safety is causing Christians to depend on guardrails, legal disclaimers, and ever-increasing levels of padding on

playgrounds, instead of God's love, provision, and providence.

I'm not against guardrails - I'm against faith in guardrails and any other faith that replaces God and tries to make this life a risk-free, sterile existence with some sort of false guarantee of safety from all things bad and painful.

My concern is multiple generations of Christians who seem to think God's job is to keep us safe - to keep us from harm - to protect us against all injury and illness and if He doesn't, He has abandoned or neglected His duty - His side of the bargain.

My concern is Christian parents who are too fearful to let their kids have non-Christian friends.

Christian parents who eliminate risk and uncertainty from their kid's life - and their kids never learn how to trust God and never learn when they trust in themselves the outcome is never pain-free.

My concern is the church will lose its willingness to take risks for the Gospel. The church will focus more on safe ministry and the elimination of risk and lose its ability to wisely take risks for the Gospel and trust God in the process.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."

Proverbs 1:7

When you remove all fear from life, how do you learn to have “fear of the LORD”?

If Peter’s priority was to avoid fear and risk, he would have never stepped out of the boat to walk on the water to Jesus.

Can we build our faith if we never take a risk for Christ?

What does the Bible say about safety and risk?

It actually has a lot to say.

Let’s look at 3 specific things.

1. Life is uncertain.

“...both the Bible and experience teach us that safety is a myth.

You can’t put enough padlocks on your door and enough bars on your window to keep a heart attack from happening. There is no guarantee that anybody is going to live another breath. In terms of absolute security, all the efforts that we make to keep ourselves safe are ultimately an illusion.”

(John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/safety-is-a-myth>)

There are no guarantees in this life.

No guarantees that you will wake up tomorrow morning.

No guarantees that you will live to or beyond life expectancy.

No promises that you will make it home safely today from church.

Your heart might stop beating - or you could have a massive stroke or aneurism before your next meal.

This life does not come with guarantees.

James 4:13-15

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" -- yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Life is short...and there are no guarantees.

Jesus taught this same truth.

Luke 12:18-20 - parable of the rich fool

"And the rich man said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

Matthew 10:28-31

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Life is uncertain - it is inherently risky.

2. Saying ‘yes’ to God often *involves risk*.

Jesus was clear on this point.

Matthew 10:25

“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of His household.”

John 15:20

“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

We see this all throughout the Scriptures.

A quick survey of people in the Bible reveals the risks they were willing to take - because it was the right thing to do.

In some cases, lives were at stake.

In other cases, it was an issue of obedience to God’s commands.

In other cases, it was an issue of faith.

Noah took a risk - building a huge ship - an ark - years before the flood.

Abraham took many risks.

1. When he left his home, with his family, to go to a place he didn’t know - but had faith God would show him.
2. When he gave his nephew, Lot, the choice of land.

3. When he went to battle to rescue Lot from his kidnappers.

4. When he took Isaac, in obedience to God's command, and was prepared to sacrifice his son.

Moses took risks when he trusted God and being an Egyptian fugitive went to Pharaoh and demanded that Pharaoh release the Hebrew people from their Egyptian slavery.

David took a huge risk when he went out into the valley of Elah to confront and fight an experienced warrior, Goliath, who was also a 9-foot-tall giant!

Gideon took a risk when he sent most of his troops home, and prepared to fight the enemy with only 300 soldiers.

Elijah took a risk when he challenged the prophets of Baal and confronted King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

Esther risked her life to save her uncle and her fellow Jews. She approached the king without an invitation, which depending on the king's mood, was risking her very life.

Esther 4:16

“Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

Daniel and his 3 friends took a huge risk when they determined to remain faithful to God's law even though they were prisoners of war being indoctrinated into Babylonian society.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego risked their lives by not bowing down to the huge golden statue of King Nebuchadnezzar. They remained resolute in their commitment, even when their punishment was to be thrown into a huge furnace.

Daniel 3:17-18

“If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Many of the O.T. prophets - their ministries were risky as they spoke against their fellow Jews who were sinful, idolatrous, corrupt, and evil.

Joseph took a risk when he believed the word of the angel and decided against divorcing Mary and took her as his wife even though she was pregnant.

Peter and John took risks - speaking of the resurrected Jesus even after the Sanhedrin told them to stop - even after they were imprisoned - even after they were beaten.

The Apostle Paul might give us the most graphic examples of the reality of risk in ministry.

He wrote:

Acts 14:22 - after nearly being stoned to death...

“...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

2 Timothy 3:12

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...”

2 Corinthians 11:24-28

“Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

Saying ‘yes’ to God often involves risk.

3. Saying ‘no’ to God often involves more risk.

Kadesh Barnea was the location where the nation of Israel refused to trust God and take a risk.

After about 2 years of travel, they arrived at the border of the Promised Land.

They sent 12 spies for a recon mission.

When the spies returned, 2 of them were full of faith - they were trusting what God had said - and they were willing to risk their safety because of their confidence in God.

10 of the spies had no faith in God's promises. They were filled with fear and persuaded the nation to choose what they thought was 'safety' and avoid the risk of entering the Promised Land.

The parable of the talents is an example that Jesus taught. The parable is found in **Matthew 25:14-30**.

In the parable, a man was going on a journey, so he gave differing amounts of talents (money) to 3 different servants.

2 of the servants put the money to work - invested it - took some appropriate risk - and they made additional talents.

The 1 servant - fearful of any risk - buried his talent - and when the man came back from his journey, he gave the talent back - 'unused'.

In **vs. 25** he even says,

"...so, I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

This did not sit well with the man.

He expected the talents to be used while he was gone
- not protected - coddled - hidden safely out of sight.

Apply it...

Some questions and challenges for us corporately - and individually.

Will we take risks for the kingdom of God?

Will we risk loss, difficulty, and pain for the spread of the Gospel?

Will we be full of joy and contentment without guarantees? Without a certain, safe path forward?

I'm not suggesting for a moment that we jettison wisdom.

We should never intentionally act like a fool.

Proverbs 14:16

“One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.”

I'm not talking about “reckless and careless” risk.

God has not saved us into a safe, risk-free existence.

Christian, the opposite is true.

Our salvation - our identity with Christ increases our level of risk in a Christ-rejecting culture.

But God gives no guarantee of protection - of safety.

When we pray to Him on matters of safety - He is normally silent.

He is silent because He has given us His Word - His Spirit - our brains - and each other.

He expects us to use all 4 to navigate this life.

A challenge for parents...and grandparents

As parents we want our kids to grow up and be successful and prosper.

But what if they choose a path that is too risky for us - a path that is outside of our risk tolerance?

What if God is leading them down a path that is not what you planned and imagined for them?

“Often we want our kids to follow Jesus to a certain extent. We like their commitment to Christ when it means good moral choices and a sense of spiritual fulfillment.

But what happens when they embrace the gospel to a point where life gets financially challenging, or even physically dangerous?

What if our child foregoes a medical school acceptance to serve as a missionary in Uganda?

What happens when Christian conviction leads them to teach in the inner city or attend seminary rather than law school?

How do we feel when God calls our child to become a foster parent or to adopt children of another race—

just when things were socially and financially comfortable with three beautiful biological children?

What happens when God calls kids raised in the suburbs to live in an impoverished, crime-ridden area, or in a predominantly Muslim nation?

I imagine such possibilities generate visceral anxiety for many. We want our kids to be Christians, but let's not take it too far, right?

The tough pill for parents to swallow remains that, just as God's love for our kids comes with no strings attached, His lordship over their lives comes without conditions too.

That the Father offered His Son as a ransom for our children and us means they belong to Him, not us.

The full benefits of salvation come with the full commitment of discipleship."

[\(https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/do-christian-parents-flirt-with-the-idol-of-safety/\)](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/do-christian-parents-flirt-with-the-idol-of-safety/)

Have you made safety an idol?

Do you find your security and peace in life - in being safe - avoiding all risk?

Proverbs 3:5-7

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.

7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil."

Closing prayer