

GET OFF THE COUCH!

Meet the Jesus who calls you to stop playing it safe!

John 14:12 English Standard Version (ESV)

12 “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.

There is a new idol in America. It's not one of the usual suspects-sex, drugs, or materialism. This new idol is so powerful and pervasive that it can dominate your decisions and determine your destiny. People who cave in to it see their dreams discarded, their hearts shrunken, their faith diminished, and their growth stunted. Its victims live with shriveled souls.

What is this idol? The idol of safety. Americans have grown up obeying signs posted everywhere: Safety First! Over the last thirty years, we have created the most risk-averse society in history. We are the most seat-belted, bike-helmeted, air-bagged, kneepad-wearing, private-schooled, gluten-freed, hand-sanitized, peanut-avoiding, sunscreen-slathering, hyper insured, massively-medicated, password-protected, valet-parked, security-systemed, inoculated generation in history-and all it has done is make everyone more afraid of everything.

I'm not talking about taking risks for risk's sake, but I believe this new safety idol is destroying our faith. Many Christians don't serve. Why? It might not be safe.

Most Christians don't dream big dreams. Why? It might not be safe.

So many Christians don't share their faith or take a stand.

Why? It might not be safe.

Often Christians don't tithe or give sacrificially. Why? It might not be safe.

Most Christians don't break habits, take risks, build relationships, or have adventures...Why? All for one reason: IT MIGHT NOT BE SAFE.

ILLUSTRATION: YOUR INVITATION TO ADVENTURE

I saw the envelope and immediately I thought what's in here? A trip down the Amazon? A Hang-gliding lesson? A real invitation to the Oval office? A safari in Africa? I opened the envelope and discovered that my "invitation" to adventure was-wait for it-a packet of coupons to University Town Center.

Now if you're looking for more out of life than a trip to Wal-Mart...if you refuse to believe that the ultimate goal in life is walking slowly up to your grave and falling in safely...if you want more on your tombstone than the phrase, "What a Relief-Nothing Bad happened"... then today's message is for you.

Let's take a look at the price tags of playing it safe and then listen to what Jesus had to say about dismantling the "safety first" idol.

1. PLAYING IT SAFE LIMITS OUR IMPACT

Illustration: Give the plane to Moody!

2. PLAYING IT SAFE SHRINKS OUR FAITH

Try to turn to a passage, any passage in your Bible, where God calls someone to something safe. Abraham leaves the familiar. Moses goes to Pharaoh. Ester puts her life in danger to persuade the king. David takes on a giant. Joshua crosses a river. Peter gets out of the boat. Jesus goes to the cross.

Authentic faith is developed only when we respond to the call of God and take a risk. That's because, when we take a risk, we learn that God can come through. We learn that God can do what we can't do on our own. I can't find a single verse in Scripture where Jesus says, "Come, follow Me. Play it safe."

3. PLAYING IT SAFE STUNTS OUR GROWTH

Some time ago, a father in the church where I pastored took me aside. He said, "I'm thinking about letting my sixteen-year-old daughter go on the mission trip to Mexico." He said, "I have one question. Can you guarantee me it's going to be safe?"

What would you tell this Dad?

For several years we had transported, served alongside of hundreds of students on our annual mission trip to El Coyote, Mexico.

My reply to him was this, “No, I can’t guarantee complete safety.” But I can guarantee you this: It’s going to be much safer for your daughter to go to Mexico, learn to trust God; go public about her faith, serve the poor, develop a heart of generosity for other people, and live where she actually has to depend on God, than it ever will be for her to grow up in our community without stretching her faith or learning to take risks, and much safer than following the same routine every day where she thinks he doesn’t need God.

So many times Christians stop serving because it might not be safe. They stop tithing and giving because they think it might not be safe for their finances. They stop sharing because it might be embarrassing. They stop risking, they stop asking God what He wants them to do, and they slowly develop an apathetic, boring, “safe” faith.

When you take a risk and God comes through for you, then He becomes real to you. That fires up your heart and starts you on the path to rediscovering a faith that is alive.

4. PLAYING IT SAFE SHRIVELS OUR HEARTS

If you are a Christ-follower, Jesus is going to challenge your faith by asking you to do what seems impossible...

He is going to say,

- I want you to go on a mission trip..."I can't spend the time, God!"
- I want you to start tithing. "Lord, I can't afford it!"
- I want you to go and talk to that person about me. "I'm afraid of that, God!"
- I want you to ask forgiveness from that person. "I can't do that, God."
- I want you to lead a small group Bible study. "I don't know how, God."
- I want you to work with middle school students. "You've got to be kidding!"

So how do we break free from the Idol of Safety? Matthew 14:28-29 English Standard Version (ESV)

28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

You also know the rest of the story. Peter has taken flak for two thousand years for taking his eyes off Jesus and starting to sink. In my book, he's a hero. Why? The other eleven

disciples stayed in the boat and never gave it a shot. They missed out on their once-in- a lifetime chance to walk on water. Why? They were playing it safe. The only way to break the grip of fear is to get out of the boat.

Quickly let me give you five steps that will help anyone who want to dismantle the idol of safety.

1. **Stop saying no to everything just because it's scary!**

Almost thirty years ago I started going to Cuba, but I almost missed the best thing God would ever do with me, for one reason-fear. Fear is the darkroom where negatives develop. Fear will cause you to miss the best thing God wants to do with you.

2. **Start praying some dangerous prayers!**

The most dangerous prayer you will ever pray is, "Thy will be done." Jesus prayed this prayer. You and I need to learn how to pray dangerous prayers more often. Once we pray it, we need to start listening for the call of God in our lives and then act on what God tells us.

3. **Get out your wallet!**

Gratitude is one of the healthiest human emotions. The Apostle Paul said, "God loves a cheerful giver" Somehow joy and giving are connected. Giving breaks the grip of materialism in life.

4. **Stop Watching-Try Living!**

5. Realize What's at Stake

The four most depressing words in the English language are these: “It’s just too late. For Moses it looked like it was.

Moses killed a guy trying to do God’s work his own way. He ended up a fugitive hiding out in the wilderness, a runaway murderer, an escaped felon-a has-been.

Thinking he was washed up, Moses saw God in a burning bush, heard the call, and eventually went back up to Egypt. After a ten-round prize fight, Pharaoh let the Israelites start marching out, only to run straight into the banks of the Red Sea. They were trapped. So Moses stopped going forward and prayed.

I love what happened next, because it’s the only time in the Bible that I can find God telling somebody to stop praying. God said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me?” Tell the people of Israel to go forward” (Exodus 14:5 esv) God said not to stand still or move sideways but to go forward. He said, “Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground” (Exodus 14:16) Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and all that night God drove the sea back. The next morning, the Israelites were able to walk over on dry ground, with a wall of water on the left and on the right. The Egyptians

pursued, so all of Pharaoh's horses and chariots followed them into the sea. Then God told Moses to stretch his hand over the water again-and the entire Egyptian army had to learn to tread water.

Look at what happened...

- The minute Moses said yes to God, he experienced the unlikely but commanding performance before Pharaoh.
- After he said yes, two million people were freed from hundreds of years of slavery.
- After he said yes, he watched the Red Sea part and two million people escape onto dry land.
- After he said yes, he received the Ten Commandments, wrote the first five books of the OT and experienced the miracle of the manna, Mount Sinai, the Promised Land, and the Shekinah glory of God!

The best years of Moses' life happened only after saying yes! None of these experiences would have happened had Moses not stopped wallowing in self-pity and finally started to say yes to God.

When you say yes to God, incredible things happen

On the other hand, nothing much happens to people who always say no.

So which are you going to be?

You want adventure? You want a sense of purpose? Say yes,
and then hang on for the ride of your life!