

Take a Risk!

A monthly publication from Risk Takers *for Christ*

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The Making of a Minister

by Rev. Dale M. Glading, President

For 24 years - from 1987 to 2011 - I served as executive director of an athletic prison ministry in New Jersey. God led me to start that ministry with just a few close friends and a small handful of dollars. And yet, by the time I left five years ago, it had grown into one of the largest ministries of its kind in the country... if not the world.

What followed was an almost carbon copy of 1981, the year I graduated from college. Back then, my Bachelor's degree couldn't get me a job, even with Summa Cum Laude honors. And the engagement ring I had purchased did me no good once its intended recipient dumped me without warning.

That's right... brokenness. Emotionally, financially and especially spiritually. And you know what? It was one of the best - or at least the most constructive and instructive - times of my life!

How can I possibly say that? Am I some kind of masochist? No, not at all. Truthfully, I hated the entire process because it was one of the most painful experiences - and lowest points - of my entire life. But it was necessary for my future spiritual growth and so, I look back on that excruciating episode with a deep sense of gratitude.

Fast forward to 2011 and I relearned the lesson of brokenness once more. Devoid of my title and forsaken by more than a few friends, my income fell by more than \$55,000. And yet, through that tempest, God remained not only faithful, but extremely real.

Today, I have a new title, a decent income and a better handle on life. More importantly, I am a more mature believer, better able - and better equipped - to minister to others. Indeed, God knew what He was doing all along!

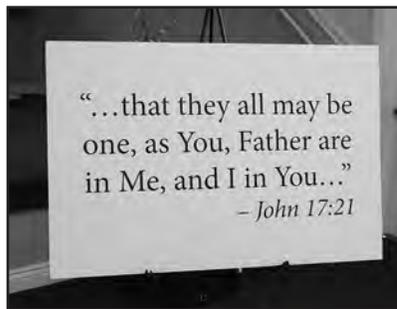
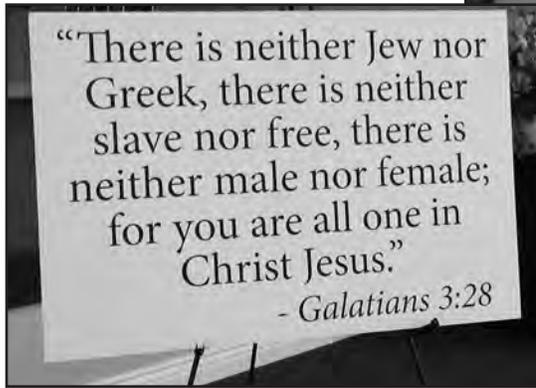
In closing, let me share two brief, but very profound thoughts from Os Hillman. Os is a Christian businessman and writer whom I have had the privilege of meeting on several occasions. Each month, he gives us permission to reprint one of his daily devotional messages in *Take a Risk*. This month, we have chosen to share two of them, because they speak so well to the winnowing process I described above.

In "God Leads Us Into the Desert," Os reminds us that the word "desert" comes from the Hebrew word "dahbaar" which means "to speak." Yes, it is in the dry, dusty and deserted times of our lives that God usually speaks the loudest... or at least the clearest... minus all of the distractions.

And in "The Valley of Baca," Os points out that Baca means "to weep." It is derived from the Hebrew word "bakah" (baw-kaw') meaning a primitive root; to weep; or to bemoan. More often than not, it takes times of deep sorrow for us to learn the valuable life lessons that God wants to teach us. Not only so we can become more like Him, but also so we can lead others to Him, ministering in His name.

To summarize what Os is saying, broken people who have experienced true heartache in their lives usually make the best ministers. Simply put, there are no short cuts to spiritual maturity.

Photos from our Racial Recognition Conference



Soaring Balloons

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Our Lord in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire.

You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant of grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valor, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage.

The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus it is well that Jehovah trieth the righteous, for it causeth them to grow rich toward God.



God Leads Us Into the Desert

by Os Hillman, TGIF Today God Is First Volume 2

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1).

There is a common teaching going around today that says if you do all the right things in your Christian life, you will be blessed and never experience problems in your life. This teaching is heresy. The Bible says that we will encounter many problems during this lifetime. Just read Peter's epistle.

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Why would God lead His Son into the desert to be tempted? Why would God lead you and me into the desert?

The desert is a place to learn something about ourselves. It is the place where we determine if we will truly live by every Word of God, not by bread alone. When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, Jesus responded to every temptation by citing what the Word of God said about

that temptation.

This is also the way you and I must respond to the temptations that are brought our way. We must have the Word of God written into our hearts in order to know how to respond to given situations. The Bible says, "the truth shall make you free." It is knowing and doing the will of God that allows us to live free from the temptation of evil.

The desert is often the place of silence. However, it is also a place where the devil will speak loudest because you are in a place of weakness and the comforts of your normal life are not to be found. It is a place where God is often silent but can also be a place where God speaks loudest. The word desert comes from the Hebrew word "dahbaar" which means "to speak."

If God has placed you in the desert, meditate on the Word of God so that you will withstand the temptation that comes in the desert place.

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The Valley of Baca

by Os Hillman, TGIF Today God Is First Volume 2

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion" (Ps 84:5-7).

There is a spiritual law in the Kingdom of God. Every great leader in the Kingdom will pass through the Valley of Baca. Baca means to weep. It comes from the Hebrew word, bakah (baw-kaw'); a primitive root; to weep; generally to bemoan.

However, Baca is also a place of springs. There is nothing better on a hot day when you're thirsty and weary than to drink water from a mountain spring. It refreshes. It renews. It gives you a second wind to continue your journey. Those who commit themselves to a pilgrimage with God will experience the Valley of Baca. But in the midst of Baca they will discover that in this valley they

will also drink from a very special spring that refreshes with a different kind of living water.

It becomes the source of "secret things in hidden places" described by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 45:3) reserved only for those willing to journey on the Great Pilgrimage with God. Once you drink from this spring you will be energized in your spiritual man from strength to strength. Each Valley of Baca will result in a new spiritual spring from which you will drink. It is handmade just for you by God. But know this? it will be used to provide a refreshing drink for others you will encounter who are also on their pilgrimage.

Ultimately, Baca leads to the presence of God. There is something about being in a place with God that results in our weeping and crying out to Him. Do you find yourself in this place with God today? If so, know that His springs are also available to you. Ask him today to give you a drink from His spring only available in the Valley of Baca.

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Praying for Prisoners

by Judy Morgan, RTC Prayer Partner

Have you noticed when fruit is first picked how green the stems are, like the strawberry? And when the strawberries stems begin to wither and die the fruit begins to not taste so good. Often times it has to be thrown out when this happens.

This reminds me of Jesus' words in John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it will be even more fruitful." Jesus tells us in verse 4, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." Verse 5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing."

We are like the strawberry, so to speak. When it is picked and doesn't remain on the vine it begins to wither and die.

Are you praying for the lost souls in prison and beyond that they will know the "true vine"?

May this be so of all of us. As Christ followers, Jesus has chosen us and appointed us to go and bear fruit... fruit that will last (John 15:16). Maybe you can't go with the Risk Takers into the prisons but your prayers can go.

Will you support them in prison and those who go, in prayer?

Our Staff & Board Members

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"As men go, so goes the family. As the family goes, so goes the church. And as the church goes, so goes the country... and the world."

- Rev. Dale Glading

Book a Dare 2B Daring men's conference for your church today! Call 772.539.1826 or email dale@risktakersforchrist.org.

Notable Quotables from the "Gipper," President Ronald Reagan

"Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged."

"There are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right."

"We seek a constitutional amendment to permit voluntary school prayer. God should never have been expelled from America's classrooms in the first place."

Upcoming Risk Takers Events:

- ◆ November 7: RTC board meeting
- ◆ November 12: Basketball at Putnam CI, East Palatka, FL
- ◆ December 10: Softball at Lake CI, Clermont, FL
- ◆ January 9: RTC Board Meeting
- ◆ January 14: Basketball at Marion CI, Lowell, FL
- ◆ February 11: Softball at Sumter CI, Bushnell, FL

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