

## Guided Risk-Taking

Three or four years of study are now history. Graduations will be celebrated. An important milestone in life has been reached. Some graduates have secured a full time position. They know where they are going to live and work. Most graduates must strike out across uncharted seas. Many find steady employment in their chosen career hard to find. But whether one has a job or not, all must take risks. Playing safe may fit our culture of dependency, but one cannot live without taking chances. The choices we make involve risks. Whether we make a marriage commitment: raise children, run a business, take a vacation abroad, or become a missionary, we take risks. Canada is a nation populated by millions of people from many different cultures and backgrounds. Their ancestors, parents, or they themselves took great risks. If they had not been willing to take risks, no immigrants would have come, no frontiers explored, no entrepreneur-ventured capital, no farmers settled, no churches and schools built.

Throughout the Bible there are many instances of risk taking. When the Lord led the Israelites out of Egypt, He neither gave them a roadmap nor did He promise a smooth journey. Their major obstacle was the Red Sea. What a predicament they were in: hemmed in by mountains, desert, and sea, they were pursued by the Egyptian horsemen. Yet it was at this juncture that God miraculously delivered His people by leading them across the dry seabed towards the Promised Land. We are challenged by the images of Daniel and his friends standing firm for truth in the courts of Babylon. It could have cost them their lives. We are inspired by the exploits of a young Gideon, David, or Esther. Stories of great risk taking in God's service.

Real life is never free from risk taking; but it does not mean that recklessness is a virtue. God has created us with the burden of freedom of choice and responsibility. We have to decide on a career, a marriage partner, etc. How do we use our freedom of choice? Christians seek God's guidance. He gives it through the Bible. With this type of guidance the Holy Spirit is very much connected. The Bible is full of instructions on what to do in many and varied circumstances. "All Scripture ... is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may thoroughly be equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). For example, the Bible teaches quite plainly that believers are not to marry unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). Yet I frequently have met young people who insist that "I have prayed about it and I know that our marriage is God's will." But it does not matter how much one prays about it, God will not put His stamp of approval on it. God gives guidance through the Ten Commandments, the teaching and example of Christ, the instruction of the apostles to the churches. Thus, the Holy Spirit does give clear-cut guidance for man's life situations. But the Bible does not give us explicit directions regarding career choice, place of residence, or the kind of car we should buy. We lay our needs before the Lord in prayer. The smallest and largest events in life are in the hands of God. God keeps track of us. He keeps account of the hairs on

our heads (Matthew 10:20, Luke 12:7). And we ask pertinent questions: "What does God want?" "How does He want to use my life?" And "How can I advance His Kingdom?"

In our decision making we must use our minds and common sense. And we consult parents, pastors, elders, and Christian friends. Dare to take risks, honour God by seeking His guidance, desire to follow His leading, and He will bless you:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will direct your paths  
(Proverbs 3:5,6).