

Security Brief 5 Script – Biblical Principles of Risk Part 1

Ed Nye the Security Guy here with another Security Brief.

The last couple of episodes we focused on how biblical values should guide our understanding of biblical principles about risk. But what are those principles? What does Scripture teach us about risk?

Well, it turns out, quite a lot. Biblical narratives about risk are found throughout Scripture. For those interested, we've put just some examples of these narratives in this episode's show notes. Today we'll talk about just a few of the principles that we can glean from those narratives.

The first principle is that **risk is stewardship**. Risk requires us to make decisions about what God has asked us to steward. Author Anna Hampton points out that sometimes God asks us to take calculated risks as seen in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. Note that the stewards who took calculated risks were commended while the one who took no risks at all was not. Sometimes, however, our stewardship requires not preserving resources, but pouring them all out as did the woman with the alabaster vase of expensive perfume in Matthew 26. Hampton writes, "Sometimes it seems when we risk for the Lord and lose everything, including precious lives, the Lord receives the risk as a fragrant offering that is honoring to him."

Another principle is that **we must make courageous decisions in the face of risk**. Courage is not the absence of fear. When God told Joshua to be strong and courageous, he did not say fear would not be present. To fear is to be human. But believers can face fear with courage and trust God to guide their decisions. Courage may require facing a seemingly overwhelming enemy as Joshua did. Sometimes we may need the courage to retreat as Paul did in Acts 9:25.

Finally, we see that Scripture shows us that **avoiding or mitigating risk is not unspiritual**. Even though God leads some of His followers into high-risk situations, that does not mean He intends them to take every risk they encounter. There were times when Jesus hid himself and times when he boldly stepped into risk. In an earlier episode we already talked about Nehemiah. It should be noted that, in Luke 14, Jesus taught about the cost of following him but then followed it up with two parables about strategic planning. Clearly Christ when Christ asks us to lay everything down for him to follow him and to trust him in all things, he did not mean that we should never mitigate risk.

So, to sum up, there are many examples of risk narratives in Scripture which teach us biblical principles of risk. Three of those are the understanding that risk is stewardship, that we must make courageous decisions in the face of risk, and that mitigating risk is not unspiritual.

Now you know.

We'll talk more about biblical principles of risk in the next Security Brief. See you then.

Risk Narratives in Scripture

The following is by no means an exhaustive list of risk narratives in the Bible, but it can give us a good survey of some of the ways that we can think about risk as guided by Scripture.

- **God** took the first risk in creation (Genesis 1–3). He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, and although He told Adam and Eve not to eat from it, He left them the choice (2:17).
- **Abram** took a risk responding to God’s call in Genesis 12:1–3 to leave his native country.
- **Abram** encountered potential threat in Genesis 12:10–20. His response revealed much about his character.
- Later, **Abraham** obeyed God’s command to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22. Even if Abraham reasoned that God could resurrect this son (Hebrews 11:19), he couldn’t be sure.
- Exodus 1:15–21. **Hebrew midwives** defied Pharaoh’s order to kill all newborn Hebrew boys. Because of this, God protected the midwives and made them fruitful.
- Joshua 2:1–21, Matthew 1:5. **Rahab** risked her life and likely her family’s by harboring Israelite spies. She and her family were saved, and she became an ancestor of Jesus.
- 1 Kings 17:9–16. **A widow** gave Elijah the last food she and her son had. The Lord miraculously provided for them.
- **Esther** chose to face potential death: “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16) with pressure from Haman on one side and Mordecai on the other.
- **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**’s response to King Nebuchadnezzar is one of Scripture’s most powerful statements of faith in the face of risk (Daniel 3:17–18).
- **Nehemiah** took risks though they placed him in dangerous situations because he believed he was accomplishing God’s will for Israel. However, he mitigated some risks (cf. Nehemiah 2:15; 4:9, 16–23; 6:3–4), constantly praying for protection and deliverance from (and judgment on) his enemies. He chose risks carefully, recognizing his enemies’ strengths, all while obeying God.
- Like the tremendous risk God took in creation, **Jesus**, in obedience to the Father, risked all to redeem creation from its fallen state. The life of Jesus clearly demonstrates He took some risks (John 2:12–22) but avoided others (John 11:53–54). Yet He “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51) and the cross that awaited Him. Jesus made it clear when He rebuked Peter in Matthew 26:52–54 that He chose to live His life to fulfill Scripture and the Father’s will.
- Matthew 14:1–12. **John the Baptist** kept telling the truth about Herod’s adulterous relationship and was martyred.
- Matthew 14:25–32. **Peter** stepped out onto the waves when Jesus beckoned him but began sinking when fear took over.
- John 9:18–22. **The parents of a man who was healed** would not acknowledge Jesus’ part in the miracle because they feared being thrown out of the synagogue.
- John 19:38, Mark 15:43. **Joseph of Arimathea** followed Jesus in secret because of fear; later, he dared to ask Pilate for Jesus’ body.
- Acts 12:1–2. **James** assumed a leadership role in the Early Church and was martyred.

- **Paul's** journeys and ministry in Acts reveal his varying responses to risk. At times, he escaped danger (9:22–25), was forcibly relocated (13:50–51), was sent away by believers while others stayed behind (17:13–14) and went back to face a threat but later left (14:19–20). Perhaps most memorably, Paul hurried to Jerusalem (20:16) despite warnings of hardships and persecution (20:22–23) and later, imprisonment (21:10–11). His purpose, like his Savior's, was to “finish [his] course and the ministry that [he] received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (20:24).
- Hebrews 11. **Heroes of the faith named and unnamed** took risks, received God's favor, and experienced different outcomes (victories, miracles, and persecutions).