



RISK TAKERS

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL SERIES
VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

vineyardyouth

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

| RISK TAKERS |

WELCOME!

to Vineyard Youth Curriculum

Hello, friends. What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. As youth leaders in the Vineyard movement we believe that the work we do with students will have much influence on what the movement will look like over the next 10–20 years. We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Understanding the diversity within the Vineyard movement, we purposefully designed curriculum that can be utilized by groups of differing sizes led by either paid or volunteer leaders in any geographical setting or location. Easy, right? We believe we accomplish this by offering a buffet of activities that allow you—the in-the-trenches leader—to choose what works for you and your group. We're pretty sure no one will use all of the material proposed, but we're confident some of it will be a good fit for your group.

Each lesson will include:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles.
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to live and reveal the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions with age- and gender-specific items.
- Times for you as the leader to tune into what God is doing in you and your students' lives.
- Times for students to hear from God for themselves.

This curriculum is written by youth leaders for youth leaders. If you would like to join the team and contribute your voice to the conversation, we would love to hear from you.

You may not hear this enough, but thank you for what you do. It's important, it's needed, and it's laying the foundation for a new generation of leaders to continue the good things God has already done in the Vineyard movement. Keep up the good work!

Did You Know This is On Video?

This 4 week curriculum is ready to be used in two ways! First, you can just teach it straight from here if you'd like. Second, if you'd rather let US teach it, you can just show the video and then run the application and discussion questions! We have the full teachings on the website for you - for free! The video will provide space in the teaching for you to discuss as a group as the lesson is being taught. To take advantage of this feature, visit vineyardyouthusa.org/curriculum and you can view the video right there FOR FREE!

Why This Topic?

In the Vineyard we believe that faith is spelled R-I-S-K! Whether it's praying for healing, sharing our faith, or volunteering to feed the hungry, acting on our faith often requires a level of risk. Left to our own comfort zones, we tend to mostly take care of ourselves and avoid challenging situations. However, being a follower of Jesus requires us to be stretched and to put others first! In this series we will tackle several obstacles that stand in our way when God asks us to step out in faith.

Connecting to Vineyard Values

We intentionally connect our curriculum to Vineyard Values and Distinctives. Being a risk taker flows from our value of Partnering with the Holy Spirit. As we open our hearts to his leading, we invariably will be asking to take risks! You can read more about Vineyard Values here (<https://vineyardusa.org/about/core-values-beliefs/>). Being a risk taker also aligns with the Vineyard Distinctive "Faith is spelled R-I-S-K" for obvious reasons. In the Vineyard we believe that faith motivates us to action and getting outside of our comfort zones. You can read more about our Distinctives here (<https://vineyardusa.org/about/vineyard-distinctives/>).

Helpful Reminders For You, the Youth Leader

In working with this curriculum there are a few ideas we'd like to keep in front of you:

Plug in your stories wherever you can. These are bare bones here. You add the meat!

Experiential learning lasts. We've tried to make this as experiential as possible, rather than just providing head knowledge. We encourage you the leader to try it out—take some risks!

Humor is key. It's hard for us to artificially add this from a distance, but we encourage you to find all chances you can to connect through humor.

Context matters. We don't know what's going on in your group right now, but you do. We encourage you to pray and think about how this message applies to the new ones in your group, the veterans, and the seekers. How does this tie into the message of salvation through Jesus?

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE



BIG IDEA

**Jesus sees more in you than
you see in yourself.**

YOUTH LEADER
SOUL CARE

Today I wonder if you know that God sees you. Do you know that? Do you know that your Heavenly Father doesn't just see what you do, or how hard you work, or how faithfully you prepare, or how much you sacrifice, but that he also just sees YOU? Often we run through life not being seen, and not seeing. You know what I mean? Everything is so fast paced—we have so many to-do lists and so many errands—that we often just miss actually seeing people. We miss seeing their needs, and their hearts, and even their dreams and aspirations. But not Jesus. And he doesn't miss you either. Jesus sees you. Take some time before we get started and pray and allow yourself to realize that God is with you, he sees you no matter what is happening in your life, and he is caring for you right now.

STARTER

Print out some “magic eye” art, and hand them out to the students. Have some fun staring at them and trying to find them. You can look at the website <http://www.magiceye.com/> or others.

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

LESSON

Set up and Engage

Spend some time sharing the following concept in your own words: If you think about it, pretty much everything in life that ends up being something you love, or will remember, or makes an impact, requires some level of risk to get into. As a teen it could be trying out for a team or a play, or asking that girl or boy out, or going to pray for someone or sharing your faith.

But often what stands in the way of taking risks is this nagging question, do I have what it takes? Do I have what it takes to pray for that friend? To talk to that girl? To try out for that show? To speak in front of youth group? To sing on the worship team?

Open up this time by sharing a story or two from your life about times you felt called to do something for God, but self-doubt got in the way. Did you overcome or not? Then move into discussion.

DISCUSS

Talk about a time that you had a risk to take and you also had to struggle with self-doubt.

Did you take the risk or not? What happened?

MAIN POINT

There's a story that one of Jesus' disciples wrote about. The disciple's name was Matthew, and he wrote about one amazing adventure they had with Jesus. I want to use this story to draw out some encouragement for us all.

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Matthew 14:23–33 (NIV)

Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

So many of us are one step away from taking a risk. What got Peter out of the boat? Jesus said he could do it!

The lesson is that **Jesus sees more in you than you see in yourself.**

The problem is that we frequently don't listen to Jesus calling us out of the boat, and we don't hear how he believes in us. Instead we often listen to a multitude of OTHER VOICES in our minds telling us that we can't do it.

What other voices do you hear when you want to take a leap of faith for God?

- Self-doubt?
- Accusing thoughts from the enemy about your past mistakes?

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

- Others who have said you can't do it or you can't measure up?
- Even the "potential" that others might make fun of you or see you fail?

Some of us even have "Wrong Jesus Voices" in our minds:

- The negative Jesus, who always points out your failures
- The religious Jesus, who never seems satisfied with anything you do
- The easily frustrated Jesus, who causes you to live in fear of failure

Peter probably struggled with all those same thoughts. Who walks on water, right? That's crazy!

The point is that Jesus believes in you, so don't allow doubt to stand in the way: of your dreams, your vision, or your relationships.

You can listen to what Jesus is saying about you rather than listening to the voices of self-doubt!

The Big Idea:

Jesus sees more in you than you see in yourself.

DISCUSS

What negative thoughts do you have about yourself that get in the way of taking risks in life?

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

APPLY

NOTE: You can run this part as a discussion or just share from your heart.

What if we began to listen to Jesus and tune out the self-doubt and other negative voices in our heads?

Let's apply this to our lives. Take each of these and discuss them as a group. Come up with some ideas of how believing what Jesus says about us rather than believing the doubting voices in our minds can change our daily lives.

- How could this work in school?
- How could this work in sports?
- How could this work in youth group?
- How could this work in church?
- How could this work with friends?
- How could this work at a party?

RISK TAKERS /// MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

PRAYER

Break into groups of three and share one area in which you really struggle with self-doubt, or struggle to see yourself like Jesus sees you. Then take turns praying for God to break you free from that self-doubt, and to fill you with his Spirit in that area of your life.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① What is one "lie" about yourself that you struggle with?
- ② What do you think Jesus thinks of us? Of you? What if Jesus walked in and told you what he thought of you? What would he say?
- ③ What is one area you feel called to (either ministry or not) that scares you enough to make you doubt yourself?

OUTREACH APPLICATION

In the spirit of overcoming self-doubt and taking risks for Jesus, challenge each student to think of one person in their lives who is kind of marginalized or an outcast. Challenge them this week to do one thing nice for that person

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE



BIG IDEA

Face your fears with Jesus.

YOUTH LEADER
SOUL CARE

Today you'll be talking to your teens about overcoming fear. As a youth leader, we have fears too don't we? Depending on your life stage there could be all kinds of personal fears. Fears about your future. Fears about relationships. Fears about whether you've got what it takes. Fears about finances. Feeling better yet? Today just chose one. Chose one fear, and take it to Jesus. Spend 5 minutes with this fear and Jesus. Open up a word doc and write to God about your fear. Be honest, and allow him to speak to you about it. Write down what you feel/hear him saying to you about this fear.

STARTER

This lesson is about overcoming fear. If you have time, you can do this really funny intro. Put two tables next to each other (in a line) with space between them. Then you take the bottom of a cardboard box and lay it on top of each table in the space between; tape down both sides to the tops of the tables, and cut a hole in the cardboard. Hide someone under it with their head sticking through. Put tablecloths on the tables, enough to fully hide the person beneath under them.

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE

LESSON

Here's how it works: Put four boxes on the tables. Under the boxes you put bowls filled with noodles, rice, dry cereal, or whatever, along with some sort of "prize" (like a small piece of candy) that they need to look for. You pick three or four kids and have them all go somewhere so they can't see or hear each person who goes before them.

Before each person's turn, you say, "This is a race to see who can go through the four boxes and find the prizes the fastest." You start a timer and say GO! They lift up the first box, revealing a bowl with whatever in it, and they sift through as fast as they can until they find the prize. Then they quickly move on to the second box, with the same result. Then they move to the third box, lift it up, and SURPRISE! It's not a bowl, it's the head of the person hiding! And "the head" yells at them. It's really funny.

Set Up and Engage

The setup of this lesson is contrasting the American "ethic" of safety at all costs, with the Jesus "ethic" of living a fearless life of risk taking. We are obsessed with safety in America these days. A lot of these advances are good, but a lot has changed. From mulch that's not made of wood anymore (why does it have to be rubber!) to Purell that we use every chance we can to people wearing protective headbands to play soccer. It's everywhere!

Following Jesus, however, is not meant to be a life of "safety at all costs." If you read the accounts of the early followers of Jesus, they were anything but people who 'played it safe. These were people who risked life and limb—literally—to tell others about the saving love of Jesus.

You could intro by telling a funny story of a time you took a risk, or a time you played it safe or were fearful.

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE

DISCUSS

We all face different kinds of fears, don't we? What are some things we fear as followers of Jesus? (Use a whiteboard and brainstorm together.)

Here are some examples:

- Fear of the future—no matter how old you are, there's always a next step that's kind of scary, whether it's high school, college, getting married, living on your own, etc.
- Fear of what people think of us
- Fear of stepping out for Jesus and failing
- Fear of failure in general that keeps us from taking risks, like trying out for teams or plays, asking that girl or guy out, or trying a new experience with Jesus
- Fear of pain and sacrifice
- Fear of starting that new ministry that's on your heart
- Fear of volunteering at that ministry

MAIN POINT

Big Idea: Face your fears with Jesus.

We aren't looking for an absence of fear. We are talking about not letting fear dictate our lives. In order to do that we need to face our fears with Jesus. Jesus won't leave us alone to deal with fear. He promises to walk with us and help us to overcome.

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Don't be afraid, for I am with you.

Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you.

I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

This is such and powerful and encouraging verse that we can apply to our lives right now.

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE

God is with you.

(Don't be afraid, for I am with you.)

This verse doesn't just say, "Don't be afraid—suck it up, loser!" It gives us a reason to overcome our fear. Jesus is with you! No matter what it is—whether you are stepping out to talk to someone about Jesus, or pray for someone at church, or try out for a sports team—God is with you!

Did you ever go somewhere scary when you were little, but you weren't scared because your parents were with you? This is the point. God doesn't ask you to do this alone. He is with you wherever you go.

God is God.

(Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.)

Not only is God with you, he's GOD! Get it? He says, don't be so worried—I am your God! Your God isn't weak, or scared, or stupid, or unreliable. He is saying, you can be bold because the God of the universe is on your side.

This is like challenging two older guys to a two-on-two basketball game, but your partner is LeBron James. If God is for you, you've got some serious help on your side!

God gives what you need.

(I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.)

This is a great promise. In the moment God will strengthen us and lift us up. Again this doesn't mean we won't be afraid. It means we can face our fear with Jesus. It means he will give us peace, he will give us love, he will give us boldness. He gives what we need in the moment we need it.

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE

APPLY + DISCUSS

Let's apply this to our lives.

Leader, can you share an example from your life when God was with you, strengthened you, and enabled you to face your fear with Jesus?

We can apply this truth:

- When we feel afraid to step out for Jesus to pray for someone
- When we feel afraid to step out for Jesus to talk to someone
- When we feel afraid to step out for Jesus to volunteer, serve, or go on that trip
- When we feel afraid to step out in everyday life to try something new

Ask: What is something you'd like to do for God sometime in your life that you know will require you to overcome fear?

RISK TAKERS /// ESCAPING THE COMFORT ZONE

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

PRAYER

Have a call forward to pray over people who struggle with fear. You can pray for God to break the power of fear in their lives, and for God to give them a spirit of boldness so they will truly know Jesus is with them.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① Would you describe yourself as a fearful person, or as someone who just dives right into challenges?
- ② Share a time when you felt God calling you to do something (like pray for someone, share your faith, etc.) you had to face your fear in order to do it.
- ③ When you think about what you'd like to do for God with your life, what is one idea/dream/ministry you'd like to do? Would fear be something you'd need to overcome?

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET



BIG IDEA

YOUTH LEADER
SOUL CARE

**Forgiveness releases you from
the weight of regret.**

I can remember being in my early twenties and getting ready to speak to a group of teens. As I was praying beforehand I was overcome with shame and guilt at some of my recent mistakes in my personal life. I began to wonder if I was a fraud, and what right I had to talk to other young people. As I worked through this journey with older and wiser mentors in my life, I began to see that I was allowing sin to get a second victory in my life. The enemy would love to not only trip us up in sin, but then keep us from fulfilling our destiny. Do you ever struggle with this? Maybe this week in your preparation time, take a few minutes to bring to the Lord any regrets, guilt, or shame that you may be carrying. Allow his forgiveness to touch your heart. If any of these burdens are persistent, consider getting prayer or counsel from a trusted friend or mentor. Jesus bought our freedom, so that we would be free. My prayer for you today is that you can live in his freedom as you continue to give your life away to these young people.

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

STARTER

The goal is to introduce the idea that life is harder when you are weighed down. One idea is to have a relay race. Set it up like a normal relay and then at the last second introduce a 25-pound weight for each team to carry. Or make ONE team carry it. It's not fair, and they will probably lose, but that's the point.

Set Up and Engage

We've been talking for the past two weeks about Peter getting out of the boat and walking on water with Jesus. Maybe, however, when you read this story you identify more with the eleven disciples who stayed in the boat than with Peter. Have you ever thought about them? They had the same opportunity that Peter did. What kept them in the boat? We've talked about two things already: self-doubt and fear. This week we are going to talk about how the weight of regret can keep us from taking risks for Jesus.

LESSON

Leader, can you share a time when regret, shame, or guilt has held you back from doing what God has called you to do?

What do we regret?

- Things we should have done but didn't
- Things we shouldn't have done but did
- Things we should have said but didn't
- Things we shouldn't have said but did

Do you have any of these regrets in your life?

- Dated that guy or girl
- Went too far with that guy or girl
- Made poor choices at that party
- Said something to that friend, or to your parents
- Felt called by God to step out but didn't

There are so many ways the enemy can get us with regret

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

DISCUSS

Regret is like a weight, and carrying that weight affects us in many ways:

- It can consume your thinking. You may obsessively roll it over in your head, wishing you could get a second chance or fix the past.
- It can block you from doing what God is calling you to because you don't feel worthy.
- It can suck the life out of you.
- It can make it harder to take risks.
- It can make it harder to have intimacy with other people.

Share something you regret—either something you've done or said that you wish you wouldn't have, or something you haven't done or said that you wish you would have!

MAIN POINT

Somehow we need to learn to lay down our regret. Somehow we need to stop letting it weigh us down, and keep us from what God has for us. The question is how to do that. Let's look at a time later in Peter's life in this lesson.

Luke 22:54–62 (NLT)

So they arrested him and led him to the high priest's home. And Peter followed at a distance. The guards lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!" But Peter denied it. "Woman," he said, "I don't even know him!" After a while someone else looked at him and said, "You must be one of them!" "No, man, I'm not!" Peter retorted.

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

About an hour later someone else insisted, "This must be one of them, because he is a Galilean, too." But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.

- Can you imagine how Peter felt at this time?
- Clearly Peter is weighed down by his regret.
- How would this affect his future in God?
- How would this affect how he saw himself?
- Can you imagine if this was the last time we ever heard from Peter?
- What if his regret and shame and guilt stopped him from becoming who God intended him to be?

So what happened? Let's look to another story after Jesus rose from the dead.

John 21:15-17 (NIV)

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

What is happening here?

Jesus is publicly forgiving and reinstating Peter. He could have done this in private, but he needed Peter and everyone else to know that Peter was forgiven. He knew Peter couldn't do what he was called to do if he thought he was somehow a second class disciple.

Jesus called out Peter's calling—three times: “feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep.” So often regret and shame can block our calling. Jesus is saying, “I forgive you. Now go do what I've created you to do!”

It is also powerful to consider what Jesus doesn't say. He doesn't say, “Peter, never do that again,” or “Peter, that was really a bad thing, you really messed up,” or “Woe to you Peter, who denied the Son of God three times when I was in my hour of greatest need.” Instead Jesus affirmed Peter. “I love you. Do you love me? Go do what I've created you to do!”

Big Idea: Forgiveness releases you from the weight of regret!

There are three kinds of forgiveness we need to seek:

1. Forgiven by God

Some of us are stuck because we can't accept God's complete forgiveness. We think, “I've fallen short—so far short—how can God really forgive me?”

When we don't receive the forgiveness God has provided, it allows regret, shame, and guilt to grow.

1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (NKJV) Can we embrace this? Can we believe this for ourselves and not just for others?

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

2. Forgiven by Others

Some of the regret in our lives could be healed if we took the step of going to the people we've harmed.

Leader: Tell a story of a time you needed to seek out the forgiveness of others.

Working out relationships is so important that Jesus once talked about leaving your "gift at the altar" and going back to find the person you had wronged and working things out with them before making your gift at the altar (which would make things right with God). He was prioritizing our relationships with each other even over making sacrifices for our sins!

James 5:16a (NIV): "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

3. Forgiven by Ourselves

This may be the hardest one! Often we are harder on ourselves than anyone else.

We know Jesus was forgiven us, but we still feel like we are unworthy, second-class citizens who don't deserve to be used by God anymore.

We need to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing, and choose to forgive ourselves as well.

Once again, remember: Forgiveness releases you from the weight of regret.

Break into small groups and spend some time sharing one area in your life where you struggle to feel forgiven by God or yourself and pray for each other.

APPLY + DISCUSS

RISK TAKERS /// THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

PRAYER

This will take some leadership and maybe some more adult oversight than other ministry times. During the application discussion, this is a great time for some Holy Spirit ministry. Allow people to pray for each other, to break off the power of sin and regret and shame, and to pray for healing and cleansing. This may become a pretty raw time, so that's why it may be good to have extra adult hands on deck.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① Have you ever struggled with feelings of unworthiness—like you aren't good enough to be used by God? How did that affect your relationship with him?
- ② Do you find it hard or easy to receive God's forgiveness?
- ③ What's the hardest one for you to receive: forgiveness from God, others, or yourself?

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP



BIG IDEA

Risk opens the door for God to surprise you.

YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

This doesn't really have anything to do with this week's topic. However, I have found that a great way to take care of my soul is gratitude. Take a moment and think/pray about one or two people who have made an impact on your life and helped pave the way for you to work with young people. Spend a few minutes thanking God for them and praying for them; then take it a step further by texting or calling to say how grateful you are for their impact on your life.

STARTER

Blindfold Buddy Race! This works best if you can play it outside, but inside can work too. Place a prize somewhere outside or in another part of the building, and tell the teams the general vicinity of the prize. Have the teens pair up. One person of each pair is then blindfolded, while the other is the guide. Using only voice commands, the pairs race to see who can get their blindfolded buddy to the prize first. The point of the game is trusting God for each step, and how you never know which step will be the one that leads to the prize.

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP

LESSON

Set Up and Engage

Let's go back to the story we started with in Week 1:

Matthew 14:23–33 (NIV)

Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

We've been talking about three things that stand in our way from stepping out like Peter.

- Self-doubt
- Fear
- Regret and shame

Once we've begun to deal with these in our lives, all that is really left is taking that step. At some point Peter had to step out of the boat and onto WATER. He had to shift his weight—think about this—from the security of the boat to the insecurity of water (which, by the way, you can't stand on!).

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP

To experience this a little have the students stand on chairs, and then slowly step off into the air—and feel that sensation of leaving a place of security and falling, ever so slightly, to the ground.

Peter's one small step was pivotal, but Peter had no guarantee about what would happen when he did it! And that's the thing to notice: we often wait for everything to be perfect before we want to step out.

But what if God meets us with a miracle when we step out? What if God does something unexpected and we get to experience something we never would have if we hadn't taken that step?

Big Idea: Risk opens the door for God to surprise you!

Leader: Tell a story or two about a time when you stepped out, unsure of the outcome but trusting God, and he surprised you with something more than you could have guessed.

DISCUSS

Are you a risk taker or are you risk averse? How does that play out in your life?

MAIN POINT

We don't like to take risks because we don't know what will be on the other side. That is the point sometimes.

Risk opens the door for God to surprise you. If you stay in the boat, you are guaranteed not to see something miraculous.

You could be one decision, one prayer, one phone call, or one text away from seeing God's miraculous breakthrough in your life, or the life of someone else.

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP

Solomon was an incredibly wise man and a lot of his writing is based on observations of how the world works. Check out this wisdom:

Ecclesiastes 11:4, 6 (NLT)

Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest....Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don't know if profit will come from one activity or another—or maybe both.

What if something miraculous is right around the corner? We could look at what Solomon is saying like this: "If you wait for all the conditions to be perfect before you take a risk for Jesus, you NEVER WILL!"

Peter didn't know for sure how it would work out, did he? You can't know if that miraculous thing is going to happen unless you step out and take a risk.

Just try it: take that chance. It won't always work out, but sometimes it will. Here are some examples of what can happen when we take a risk for Jesus: answers to prayer, divine appointments, open doors, and providential relationships.

Leader: tell a story of a time you took a risk for Jesus and it worked out.

Ephesians 3:20–21 (MSG)

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Here is what is amazing about this: It is not about you. It is about the miraculous, life-giving God we serve! It's not that YOU are amazing when you take a risk, but that when we take a risk, we open the door for God to do something amazing! God can always do more than we think he can.

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP

When we play it safe, we squeeze God out of the formula. If we only go where we know and do what we're certain will succeed, we remove our need for God. Whenever we respond to God's invitation, our need for God becomes heightened. Whenever we take on a God-sized challenge, self-sufficiency is no longer an option.

—Erwin McManus, *Chasing Daylight*

What risks are available in your life? What miracles could happen if you took those risks?

- A risk of being generous financial miracle?
- A risk of being vulnerable in small group miracle?
- A risk of putting yourself out there and using your gifts miracle?
- A risk of reputation—what will people think of me?—miracle?
- A risk of saying yes to Jesus miracle?
- A risk of talking to your friends in school miracle?

Remember: Risk opens the door for God to surprise you. You never know what he's going to do until you step out!

APPLY + DISCUSS

What if we started looking at our daily lives with an eye for the potentially miraculous?

- How would that change how we live our life?
- How would that change how we relate to people?
- How would that change how we pray?

Talk about some things in your life right now that you could say yes to God in.

RISK TAKERS /// ONE SMALL STEP

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

PRAYER

Break into groups (or have a classic call forward) and spend some time praying for God to fill you with boldness. If you have specific risks you feel God is calling you to make, pray in groups for them! If you feel a calling to pray for healing more, have people pray for healing power in your life! If you feel a call to talk to your friends more about Jesus, pray for boldness to share your faith! And so on...

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① Who is one person you respect in your life that you feel like regularly takes risks for Jesus? Share a time you saw them, or heard of them, doing something that inspired you.
- ② Have you ever taken a risk for Jesus? What happened? Did you feel that God met you in that risk?
- ③ What is something you are passionate about for God? Are there any ways in which you could step out in that area? (For instance, worship team, sharing a teaching, sharing faith with a friend, volunteering with a nonprofit, starting a club, going on a missions or ministry trip, etc.)

WELCOME TO VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

Hello friends. What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. The Vineyard movement is at a crucial place, and we believe that the work we do with students will have much influence on what the movement will look like over the next 10-20 years. We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Understanding the diversity within the Vineyard movement, we purposefully designed curriculum that can be utilized by groups of differing sizes led by either paid or volunteer leaders in any geographical setting or location. Easy, right? We believe we accomplish this by offering a buffet of activities that allow you – the in-the-trenches leader – to choose what works for you and your group. We're pretty sure no one will use all of the material proposed, but we're confident some of it will be a good fit for your group.

Each lesson includes:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles.
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to reveal and experience the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions with age and gender specific items.
- A devotional for the leader to help them grow in this area.
- Planned activities to help students hear God for themselves.

Why Risk Takers?

In the Vineyard we believe that faith is spelled R-I-S-K! Whether it's praying for healing, sharing our faith, or volunteering to feed the hungry, acting on our faith often requires a level of risk. Left to our own comfort zones, we tend to mostly take care of ourselves and avoid challenging situations. However, being a follower of Jesus requires us to be stretched and to put others first! In this series we will tackle several obstacles that stand in our way when God asks us to step out in faith.

About the Author

Christian Dunn

Christian and his wife Mandy live with their four amazing kids in Pennsylvania. He has worked in youth ministry for 20 years and has had the pleasure of serving as the leader of East Region Youth Task Force of the Vineyard for 10 of those years. He is currently serving as the National Youth Leader for VUSA, and recently planted CityLight Vineyard Church in Newark, DE. He is the author of "Finding the One: How Dating Prepares You For Marriage" and is excited about imparting to young people a passion for following Jesus, discovering their gifts, and pursuing their ministry callings.