

# No Fear

## Holy Moments series week 3

by Chris Famisaran

As you were listening, pondering, reflecting, imagining all of these characters, what came to mind if you were them? Would you have done the same thing? Or would you have maybe hesitated at first? If an angel were to miraculously tell you that you are going to carry and birth the Son of God, how would you feel? Would you be hesitant? If an angel were to appear to you and say, you are to father and care for this child even though it is not your own, would you be hesitant? Would you feel comfortable knowing that your child and even your own life is threatened? Mary and Joseph took risks. Of course. We can see the beautiful risks that they took. And even Joseph on his part had some hesitation. But today I want to encourage us to go boldly, to go courageously, to maybe take a risk.

Let's pray. Father in heaven. Lord, as we are close to winding down our series on holy moments, Lord, be with us. Especially as we ponder the story of the shepherds today. Be with us in Jesus name. Amen.

Do you like to take risks sometimes? Maybe. Absolutely not. The truth is, we take risks every day. The older I get, sometimes I realize I'm taking a risk getting up out of bed. What if I'm going to turn my neck the wrong way or throw my back out? I'm scared for that day if I ever do that. You take a risk when you get in your car and you drive off, because you never know. You cannot control how people drive, especially on the 605, the 405, the 10, the 210, the 57 and the 91, and all of the freeways and all of the streets. You take a risk crossing the street. You take a risk ordering something new at a restaurant. When I find something good, I tend to stick to it. And especially as prices increase, I tend to stick to it even more because I want to know that my dining experience will be fulfilling. Maybe if somebody else is paying, maybe I'll try something different. Right? You want to get your money's worth. We take all kinds of risks every day. What was the last risk you took? Think about that now.

Ernest Hemingway once wrote, hesitation increases in relation to risk in equal proportion to age. The older I get, sometimes I'm not inclined to want to take a risk that I took when I was younger. In particular when I was 15, 16, 17.

Especially if it's a physical risk. Recovery was much quicker back then than it is today. Amen. Yes. The older I get, the more risk averse I sometimes get. To be fair, though, I think those of you who've known me long enough know I tend to enjoy taking risks, maybe questionable decisions, as some, you know, you may have learned.

You know, earlier this year I took a risk and I said, I want to read two books every month for 2024. I didn't meet that goal. Unfortunately, I exceeded it. I read 52 books this year. I should say not read, but I also listened to a lot of books I read as of yesterday. I finished up my last book, 52, and as I pondered that, I realized, what did I gain? There's a lot that I gained, I experienced and I tried to read different types of books, books with history, with drama, some to help me grow in leadership, to help challenge me personally. It's been quite a journey. I'm better for it. And yet sometimes the risks that we take. What kind of risks are you willing to take? Are you willing to take a risk and challenge yourself? One of the books that I read was called the Comfort Crisis by Michael Easter. And in it he shares a story of where he does something, I think every year where there's a 50, at least a minimum of a 50% chance failure rate. And I had to think about that. Am I so comfortable or challenged to want to even try that? And his 50% means taking on an arduous journey. Not sure there's at least a 50% chance that not going to complete it. In the book he shares a story of how he went out with a biologist, Donnie Vincent, into the north. I think they were in the Arctic for over one month. And before he had to train for some time to be able to pick up a heavy pack and walk every day in the cold, eating freeze dried meals every single day. You see, he wasn't dealing with just a physical battle, a mental battle. How comfortable are you wanting to deal with cold? The same meals over and over. Or maybe sitting in a tent for multiple days because it is snowing. Is there one moment that changed the course of your life? When you think back, did you take a risk or a step or an action that changed the course of your Future?

It was August 2, 6:45am the staff went to go meet with our boss. And I told my boss I wanted to talk to him a little bit afterwards. Just want to run something

by him. You see, that day was a very important day that would change the course of my life. I got ready, I made sure that I had my best green corduroy pants on, the nice polo with a black belt, my airwalk shoes, and I did my hair. Some of you know where I'm going with this. And I walked up to the room. I remember distinctly the lights weren't on. It was kind of. It was still early. The sunlight was coming in. I said, sure, yeah, we'll meet. Got through the meeting, and he said, oh, I gotta meet with some other staff first. I'll talk to you later. And my heart sank because I had gained a lot of courage to get to that point to ask him if I could meet with him, because I had a very important question for him that, again, would change the course of my life. So I had to wait, I think, maybe 45 minutes. And in my heart, it was just pounding, and my stomach had butterflies. Because 45 minutes earlier, I had the courage. Now I still wanted to ask the same question. But I was scared to death. I literally was physically scared of this man because he put the fear of God into me. Literally. Well, later on, I'm in the dining hall. I get the stuff. I go to take and dump the trash. And he's there collecting the trash. You want to speak to me? I said, yes, sir. And I said, sir, I very much respect you, but I care very much about your daughter. May I go and take her out on a date? And he said, yes. Not gonna lie. Top three. If not the scariest moment of my life. I took a risk, and I was rewarded greatly. That day I asked her father if I could take her out on a date.

Now, my arrogance at the time assumed, of course she's gonna want to go out on a date with me. That was question number two. I was pretty confident. But you know what could have been a risk break. She could have just said, no, I hate this guy. I don't want to go out with him. She didn't hate me. That was August 2nd in the morning. August 4th was the last day of summer camp. I kissed her goodbye, and I met her again on Tuesday, or I think it was Tuesday or Thursday, later that week, because I wasn't going to wait. I wanted to take her out on a date. I knew I wanted to marry Lisa before we even started dating. Imagine, though, if I never asked her father.

Now, I didn't, I guess, you know, I didn't have to ask her father, but I respected him enough, not only as a boss, but also as her father. I wanted to let him know that my intentions were very clear. I didn't want to just date his daughter. I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

Intentionality, moments, risk can be very scary sometimes. What's the last risk you took. You know, great things sometimes have humble origins. All of the big companies and all the so called respected people started out usually very small. All the tech companies, where did they start? Usually in a basement. All of their humble founders started out very small, but they had a vision and they sometimes took risks. You could not hesitate. You had to move forward.

Sometimes I have to ask myself, what does God think about risk? Does God care? Does God give us courage to make decisions, not hesitate in some ways, maybe take a risk? I want to go to Luke chapter two. Okay, Luke chapter two. And let's go to verse eight, Luke 2:8. And I want to look at the story in the perspective of the shepherds. Okay, Luke 2:8. And it says, and there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks. At night, an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were what? They were terrified because everything that they saw, they'd never experienced something like this before. They were shepherds, and yet the glory of God goes to them. And an angel of the Lord, verse 9 appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were terrified. But the angel said to them, do not be. What? Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people today in the town of David. A savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Now, if you look at the context of this, okay, a shepherd. A shepherd. A shepherd's job was not a desirable position. Why? Because, number one, it was not a lucrative job. It was not a very well-paying job. You really couldn't make enough to even have property. They had to go from area to area to, to feed the sheep and water. They were looked down upon because they could never be with their families to care for and nurture and protect their spouse, their children. They also were considered ceremonial unclean. They couldn't even go to the temple to worship. They were social outcasts. Everybody resented them. They were put in the list of tax collectors, the dung sweepers, the prostitutes. They would be ignored. They would be looked down upon. And also they weren't even allowed to testify in court. Their witness, their ability to speak what they said did not matter in most of their society.

So of all the people for God to tell the good news, why does God go to the shepherds? I do believe that God was revealing the good news. The shepherd shows that salvation is not just for a select group of people, but salvation is for all, for everybody. Salvation is available for all of all the people. Why not go to the academic, the person who has been studying? Why not go to the Pharisees? But if you read the rest of the New Testament, you'll realize why, because they were pretty hardheaded.

Let's go back to chapter chapter two, okay, says verse 13. Suddenly a great company of heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those in whom his favor rests. When the angels had left and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that happened and which the Lord has told us about. They experienced something so new they could not contain themselves. They left their flocks and go to Bethlehem. As we learned, Bethlehem is a very small area. But they go and confirm what they had seen. And it's not that they had just confirmed, because if you continue reading it says, so they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they'd seen this, they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child. They experienced something so glorious, they didn't care.

They didn't hesitate. They took a risk and told everybody that they knew. Their families, their friends, their neighbors, their bosses, whoever it may be. Because they were so convicted and so inspired, they had seen something and wanted to share it with others. I love this because God does the unexpected. God does the unexpected.

God makes the incapable, capable.

These were shepherds. Were they articulate speakers? I don't know and I don't care. They were able to get the point across. When you find something that is so awesome, do you want to keep it to yourself? And sometimes if you're selfish, right? If I found this perfect wave in some part of the world and it broke like that every day, yeah, I would want to keep it to myself because I want it from me. I'm not going to lie. But I want to share with those I love the most because I want to be able to enjoy that together. Now that's me being selfish.

Unselfish means would say, hey, this needs to be known. And the shepherds knew this was something that they had been waiting for. As said, the Messiah had come into the world. In some respects, God had in a sense been silent with Israel for a while. And here it's been told to shepherds, God has come into this world in the form of flesh. As it says in John, the word became flesh in the form of a baby. Talk about risk. And hesitation. The Son of God coming into this world as a baby, what can a baby do other than be vulnerable? You have to feed the baby, you have to clothe the baby, you have to protect the baby, you have to burp the baby. You have to sometimes lay awake because the baby will not want to go back to sleep. Jesus, in a sense, took a big risk for us. Amen.

God made the incapable capable.

When you hear the word good news, you focus on that which is good. Good stands out. Jesus was born, they rejoiced. The Messiah had come into the world. And God again used the unlikeliest of those for God's work. If God can use shepherds, surely God could use us. Shepherds didn't care what people thought. They went. And I love how it says they, not one person, not a singular shepherd. They. They did it together. And I think in our work with God, we shouldn't be doing it alone. We should be working together. Jesus himself also taught, hey, when you guys go out, go two by two. Why? Because sometimes, hey, maybe when the shepherds went to go and tell their family members or friends, you had that obstinate uncle or somebody who said, you're crazy. Well, would you want to go and hear that by yourself? Or would you at least want to hear it with somebody? And maybe you can kind of talk about and make yourself feel better. Okay, let's go to the next person. We do it. We do life and we do ministry together.

Again, the shepherds didn't care. But yet sometimes in our lives, we also have to make a decision. We have to take an action, and it could come with some risk. We don't always know the way things will pan out. You can have a plan for everything, but yet there's always a possibility things may not go the way you expect it to. And in our daily lives are we praying, God, help us to have the courage to not only take a stand for you, but everything in our lives. Help us to be faithful witnesses for you.

As I look back, there are points where I reflect, and I'll be honest, I have some regrets. I have regrets because as I get older, there are some things that I'm not going to be able to accomplish that I wanted to accomplish so much as a child. But I also have some regrets on things that I didn't do in action. And one of the things that I don't want to have happen as I get older is I don't want to have regrets for things that I did not try. And when you try something, sometimes you take a risk. You take a risk of maybe even offending somebody by saying something, but you don't know if you can. If you don't try anything, that is going to be awesome. Sometimes you might feel hesitant, but sometimes life requires taking a chance.

There are times in my life where I said something and I realized, oh, I shouldn't have said that. There are times where I didn't think about the consequences and I hurt somebody and relationships were harmed. And while I try not to live with regret, there are moments I'm even more regretful of things and opportunities that I didn't even try because I was too scared. There are times where we're going to mess up. There are times where you take a risk. Your knee might get skinned up, your ego might get bruised. You might be humbled, and you might be wrong.

But you know what's also one of the biggest teachers in our lives? Failure. How many of you have learned more from failure than doing things right? Okay. I think it's okay sometimes to fail because you're gonna learn so much more. Let's learn not to do it that way. Let's not repeat that. And not just from your own failures. Learn from also the people around you. Hey, let's not repeat what that guy did, okay? Don't go also saying, oh, hey, don't be like that person. Be kind about it, all right? But we can learn from our perspectives.

It also, I've also taken from this story of the shepherds, is that God's love is way far bigger than we ever could have imagined. Remember, God went to his shepherds. And obviously there's also imagery. I love how Luke incorporates the fact that he went to shepherds because Jesus was the ultimate what? Shepherd. He puts shepherds in a context that is positive, not negative. Much like Psalm 23, the great shepherd Jesus also shepherded his people.

So the shepherds, they experienced the holy moment, a moment that stood apart in their lives, and their lives were changed forever. And as we go through

life, continue to learn, there are going to be times where you're going to have to take a chance. Do not hesitate. Maybe take a risk. I'm not saying be ridiculous, risk takers, though, either. Okay, let's be clear on that. Use your head. Use common sense. But the shepherds, they went out together. Life will sometimes require us to take bold, courageous actions to take a risk. And this doesn't just apply to our spiritual life. It applies to our whole lives. There may be a time where maybe if your employer asks you to do something that you know is on the edge of, I don't think that's legal. Is it moral? Is it ethical? You might have to say, I'm sorry, I cannot do that on principle alone. My ethics and most importantly, my integrity and my faith will not allow me to do that. That might be a risk that you have to take to where you may have to put your livelihood on the table. It may not have to be that grandiose, a little decision that we make every day informs our thoughts and our actions and who we are.

So are you ready to take a stand? Are you ready to take a stand for Jesus? And going back to the shepherds, did the shepherds know the 28 fundamental beliefs? Did they know Genesis all the way through Malachi? They had a probably a good understanding of it, but not everything. The shepherds told what they had experienced. Some of you are wondering, what do I have to offer to share with God? You have your own story of how God has interacted with you. Come into your life, share that story. You can share that story. You know that story. People want to know how God has been real in your life. Was God real in the shepherd's life? Absolutely.

So let me ask you this. What fears hold you back from taking a courageous stand? Not be hesitant. Take a chance, take a risk. What fears hold you back from taking a courageous stand?

This week, pray and ask God to make you courageous. Mmm. Ask God if you want to be bold. God, give me an opportunity to be a witness for you to be a blessing to somebody today. And I promise you, if you pray that prayer, God will give you an opportunity to be able to preach. And if you have to, God will give you words. You may not even have to say something, but a kind word. Being kind, being a blessing to somebody will be far more greater. The world needs that. The world is a very dark place. So let's bring some light. My friends. Go forth with courage. May you have a wonderful merry Christmas.

God, we thank you for your love and your grace. Lord, help us not to be hesitant. Help us to be strong, to be bold, to be courageous. Much like the shepherds, where they had experienced something so magical, a holy moment that stood apart in their lives. And they were fearless in wanting to tell everybody because they saw with their own eyes. Lord, help us to have that same fire, that same courage to move forward. Help us, Lord, to not be hesitant. And Lord, help us to be the hands and feet that you've called us to be here in Downey and wherever we go in Jesus' name Everybody said amen

Grace and peace, everyone. Merry Christmas.