WILLING TO TAKE A RISK
1 Kings 17:7-16

Critter County Journal: "Growing up takes lots of courage. Sometimes we have to try to do brand new things we've never done before. This can make us feel scared. It can feel like we have Critter County butterflies in our stomach!... Sugums, knows this feeling. He has to learn to jump from one limb to another. Squirrels have to do this, but learning it seems scary."

Children develop because they are willing to take risks and make mistakes. They learn to walk by falling down and getting back up. They learn to talk by saying things incorrectly, and someone correcting them. They ask "why?" hundreds of times per day.

As we become older, we become less willing to try new things. We fear making mistakes. We are reluctant to ask hard questions. We have fallen down too many times.

We have failed, and felt the pain of failing. We have been hurt too often by our mistakes. We have learned to love our comfort zones. And yet, we seldom develop new skills and abilities without taking risks and experiencing pain.

A few years ago, I decided that if I was going to live on the Wasatch front, I would have to take up skiing. Sometimes that was a painful experience! But stepping outside my comfort zone was the road to enjoying the slopes now.

Jesus continually challenged people to move out of their comfort zone and follow Him into new areas of growth and development.

In our house we have a "comfort zone." —a range from 68 to 72 degrees. When it's below 68 we are too cold, and above 74, it's uncomfortably warm.

We have comfort zones for many things. We can stand just so much company. We can only stand so much work, or so much sleep. We can get too much food. While we have different limits, we all have limits to what we can tolerate.

Sometimes we get stuck inside the walls of our comfort zone.
Growth takes place at the edge of risk.
And so, our comfort zone becomes a confinement zone that keeps us from becoming what God wants us to be.

We need to be willing to break out of our comfort zone and make a commitment to follow our Lord, however great the risk may seem!

Barrier: Getting stuck in our comfort zones

Response: Break out of our comfort zone

At a time of spiritual crisis in the history of Israel,
God raised up Elijah for a prophetic ministry in Israel.
God is about to judge His people.
They are headed for destruction.

While God's curse was on the land in general, He provides for His faithful servant, and a widow who submits to the authority of His spokesman.

We read about their encounter in ***1 Kings 17:7-16***

Her situation 17:7-9, 12

The brook has dried up and there is no water. **7**
Food is becoming scarce. **8-9**

The widow's attitude is significant because she is a Sidonian, a pagan,
God's people have turned from Him and rejected His spokesperson, but the pagan Sidonian woman receives him and is willing to take a risk to help him.

Her test 17:10-11, 13

Elijah is sent to this poor, "pagan" woman, who would be among the first to suffer the consequences of the curse.
He asks for water—which there was little of.
Then he adds a request for food. **17:10-11**
She was about to run out.
She had just enough for one last meal before she and her son starve to death **12**

Elijah has the nerve to ask her to feed him—and worse, to feed him first! **13**
What nerve!!!

Her promise 17:14

He accompanied his request with a promise: give to me first, and yours will be multiplied. God will see to it that you never run out! **14**

In days of telephone fraud, when we're being told, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!" We would be skeptical about such a promise!

She was going to have to risk everything, to experience God's blessing.

How foolish!!! Take the last bit we have and give it to this stranger?!!
Then, of course, "*God will supply!*" *Yeah, sure!*

God promises to supply all our needs, when we give our best to Him.
But we have to trust Him and give it to Him first!

Her response 17:15a
God's blessing and provision 17:15b-16

THE PROMISE IS REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN IN SCRIPTURE:

David is sure that the righteous won't starve:
"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.

Solomon repeats that idea:
"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'" Prov. 30:8-9

Christ makes the promise to those who follow Him (Matt. 6:19-34) :
"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

Paul promises the same to believers in **Phil. 4:19**:
These poor believers have given out of unbelievable poverty.
God promises: *"My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*

We're afraid to give Him what we have, —we're afraid He'll take what we give.
God doesn't promise to give us all we *want*!
He promises to meet our needs.

But that lifestyle requires us to trust God.
It requires us to commit ourselves and our possessions totally to Him.
It requires us to take a risk.

When the widow took the risk, God poured out His blessing on her.
If we want God to bless us, we're going to have to stretch out of our comfort zone and take a risk. We're going to have to trust Him.

Spurgeon makes an interesting observation concerning the widow:
It never got better for her.— She never outgrew the need to trust God for His provision.
He did it once; He had to do it again and again.
Everyday when she went to the cupboard, there was just enough for one more meal and then she had to face the spectre of death—unless God intervened.
There was never any more in the cupboard! —Always a one day supply she had to trust God to replenish.
She took a fresh risk everyday as she shared her food with God's messenger.
But as she took the risk, God supplied all she needed!

Scripture is full of others who made the same choice as this poor widow.
They were willing to trust God and take a risk.

Genesis 12	**Abraham** left home to follow God to *somewhere* "*Where you going Abe? I don't know. I'm headed for somewhere; God will show me the way!*" *"Right. Sure, Abe! Lots o' luck!*"
Joshua 2	**Rahab** took a risk protecting the spies
Joshua 14:6-14	**Caleb** taking the mountain, alone, at 85
Esther	**Esther**—was "bound by golden chains & velvet chords!" Locked into her comfort zone She decided to take a risk: *"If I perish, I perish..."* She broke out and stretched
Matt. 4:18-22	**Fishermen** who followed Jesus' call to leave their nets

Would YOU be excited if God were to say to you, "I have a dream I want you to be part of?" —Or would you turn and run?!!

Living by faith is risky.
God is looking for a few good people
—some who will trust Him and take risks.

Has God asked you to stretch out of your comfort zone and take a risk lately?
What happened? Did you take the risk? What was the result?

Spurgeon's words ministered to me this week:
Now brethren, you have daily necessities. Because they come so frequently—because your trials are so many, your troubles are innumerable, you are apt to conceive that the barrel of meal will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will fail you. But rest assured that according to the Word of God this shall not be the case. Each day, though it bring its trouble it shall bring its help;... though it bring its need it shall bring its supply; and though day come after day, if you should live to outnumber the years of Methusaleh, and though troubles come after troubles till your tribulations are like the waves of the sea, yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a lack.

For three long years the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept the holy tears of dew upon the wicked earth; for three long years the women fainted in the streets and devoured their own offspring for straitness of bread;... but this woman never was hungry, never knew a lack; always supplied, always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you....

The staff on which you lean shall never break; the arm on which you repose shall never be palsied; the eye that looks on you shall never wax dim; the heart that loves you shall never grow weary; and the hand that supplies you shall never be weak.

Do you not remember a time in your experience, not long ago, when you came to your wit's end.... Look back, I pray you. You have gone through the fires; let me ask you, have you been burnt? has there been a hair of your head singed? You have been through the waters—and deep waters they have been—have you drowned?...You have had high mountains in your path, and you have said, 'I can never traverse this road, the mountains are too steep.' But have you not climbed them, and let me ask you, have you not been benefitted by the climb?... Have not your visits to the cold mountains of affliction strengthened you and braced you for more glorious efforts than before? Now, then, let the past console the future. Snatch a torch from the altars of the past, and re-kindle the dying embers of today. ***He that has been with you in time past will not leave you in time to come!"***

What comfort zone has YOU trapped?
For some it may be:

* *Money – Some people have money stored away.*
  Others would see them and envy their situation.
  But they aren't content—they're afraid
  Their main fear is not having enough

Some could give enough to God's work to really make a difference, but they hold on, afraid of what might happen tomorrow

* *Job, profession, or perks – the salary, the house, the retirement plan, the good life you live, the title and recognition you get from it.*
* *Relationships – Maybe you have been burned in the past, so you are afraid to reach out to new people today.*
  You prefer to just stay within the secure comfort of your current circle of friends.
  You're afraid to get involved with a small group of Christian friends that may ask you to expose yourself and reveal some of the pain of your own past.
  Or maybe you're afraid to reach out to an unsaved neighbor and share your faith in Christ with them.
* *Talents or gifts – are you afraid to stretch and to use a gift or ability that God has given you?*
  Are you hiding behind a shield, afraid to fail at something and "blow" it?
  Are you afraid to do what God wants because you don't have time?

Are you going to join the steward that our Lord describes as wicked and lazy, who hid his talent in a napkin so as not to take any risks with it?

Staying in our comfort zone is a trap!
It will keep us from becoming all God wants us to be.

What are YOUR comfort zones?
Is fear of stretching outside your comfort zone keeping YOU from what God has in mind?

David Mains suggests that we define what it is that holds US in our comfort zone, that we identify an icon, some picture, that reminds us of what entraps us: it may be a picture of your house, or of your family, a company, a car, or maybe a clock. For him, the problem is his schedule, so he has taken a page out of his daily planner. Put that icon or picture in your Bible as a reminder of what God wants you to be free from. Allow God to stretch us out of our comfort zone and away from that trap.

God wants people who are willing to commit themselves totally to Him
who are willing to take risks!
who are willing to dream His dreams!

Ruth Senter: "God calls me not to emotional comfort but to obedience. I am to drive back through the woods where drunken men point guns in my face, not out of feeling but out of conviction, not because of the heart but because of the head. Risk is never a matter of the

heart; it's a matter of the will. I do not risk because I *feel* like it. I risk because of what *God wants me to do*.

Are my feelings keeping me from doing things I need to do, things I believe God would have me do? Is a hospitable environment more important than obedience? Comfort more important than obedience?

. . . conviction must always be my criterion. I must obey whether I feel like it or not."

In his classic *Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis, the senior devil counsels his apprentice: "...your job is to make him acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit and gradually become content with it, persuading himself that it is not so low after all. In a week or two you will be making him doubt whether the first days of his Christianity were not, perhaps, a little excessive. Talk to him about 'moderation in all things.' If you can get him thinking that 'religion is all very well up to a point,' you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good as no religion—and more amusing."

God calls us to leave our comfort zones, NOT because He loves to see us squirm, but because He knows that is the only way we can grow.

He desires to see us grow in our walk with Him and we will only grow, as we stretch beyoond the edge of the comfort trap.

Anybody ready to do some stretching?

Anybody decided to follow Jesus, no matter what risk He asks you to take?