

Taking Gospel Risks

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Date: 29 January 2012

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[0 : 00] at the back and turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and I haven't got a page number but if somebody does they can tell me what it is and I'll shout it out to help you.

It's 12.09, 1-2-0-9 if you're using a red covered Bible. 1-2-0-9 Hebrews chapter 11 and we're going to read verses 1 through to 16.

Hebrews 11, 1 through 16 on page 1209. So as we read, remember this is God speaking to us. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks even though he is dead.

[1 : 31] By faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death. He could not be found because God had taken him away. For before he was taken he was commended as one who pleased God.

And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

By faith Noah when warned about things not yet seen in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance obeyed and went even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country.

He lived in tents as did Isaac and Jacob who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.

[2 : 43] By faith Abraham even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren was unable to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

And so from this one man and he as good as dead came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

If they had been thinking of the country they had left they would have had opportunity to return.

Instead they were longing for a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them.

[3 : 49] And please come and speak and I'm going to pray for you and then you can carry on. So let's just pray together. Father again we thank you for your words.

Thank you that we have it in our language. Thank you that you've given us the ability to read. Thank you that you've given us teachers to explain it to us. But ultimately we need your Holy Spirit and pray that he would be at work through and through us.

So that we can better comprehend and understand that it would change us and bring us more on board what you are doing and change us to be the people you want us to be.

In Jesus name we all pray. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for having us around. It's good to meet up with you again and thank you for your interest and involvement in what we're doing in lots of different ways.

Look forward to chatting with more of you over lunch if you're around and able to stay for that as well. We're going to have a look this morning at some of these verses in Hebrews 11 and 12.

[4 : 58] So if you have that on standby we'll be there in a minute. But as Johnny said at the beginning the Bible is one book isn't it? With one overarching theme. And you know wherever you cut the Bible you find that it's all about the mission of God.

It is one book with one complete message in that way. Sometimes we might think that there are certain kind of mission passages that we think of like Acts 1-8 where it says go in to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth.

Or we might think of Matthew 28 where Jesus tells his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and so on. But one of the things that is important for us to realize is that because God is a God of mission he is on a mission to call and recreate a people for himself to forgive us and to fill us with himself and to have us live with him and glorify him forever in a new heaven and a new earth because that's his vision.

That's what the whole Bible is about. That's his purpose in this world and that's the mission that then as we become one of his people he calls us to join with him on. And so when you look at the Bible through those eyes you realize the whole thing is about mission.

It's all about it. So from early on after the fall in Genesis you get that hope held out of the Messiah who would crush Satan's head and then you get Abraham who's going to have a descendant who would bless the whole world and you've got then the nation that comes from Abraham Israel that is meant to be a light to the nations and then Jesus finally comes and then he dies for the world he is risen again he's ascended into heaven he sends his spirit into his followers who then scatter all over the planet and you can see it all the way through.

[6 : 42] And then when you have all the letters of the New Testament that this is the context in which all those letters are written they're written from people on a mission to other people on a mission about the mission.

That's what it's all to do with. And then we find ourselves in that era ourselves of being in this time where Jesus has gone back to heaven he sent his spirit and we're living in a world trying to spread it as far as we can.

It's our turn now if you like. The baton is in our hands and it's our turn in this generation. And we'll think some more about that later. But the fact is that the need is still massive isn't it?

It's still a big task. When Jesus said go and preach the gospel everywhere there are some pretty large areas of the world that just haven't heard yet. Of course there's many people in our own countries as well aren't there?

But you start thinking around the planet and you look at a website like joshuaproject.net if you've never looked at that you have a look and they reckon that there are over 16,000 different people groups in the world and as they've done their research they reckon that 6,954 of them are effectively unreached.

[7 : 54] So about 40% of the people groups of the world they say are effectively unreached. There may be one or two Christians in some cases but there isn't an established indigenous church in those people groups.

And they represent about 2.8 billion people around the world. And then you think about our own countries that maybe have something of a Christian heritage but they're tough now aren't they? They're tough ground and missionaries are now coming here. And so when you think about our job in the world that we're part of God's people and we're now joining with him on his mission and you start to think well what kind of people then does he want us to be?

What does he want us to be like? And having said that the whole Bible is about mission we could look anywhere in many ways but we're going to look at Hebrews chapter 11 because I think that we're going to find encouragement and challenge in this chapter to live out what I want to call ordinary people taking faith-filled risks for the kingdom.

If you're going to summarise the whole thing this morning you could put that. Ordinary people taking faith-filled risks for the kingdom. And to give you a really quick background to get up to speed on Hebrews at this point this letter is written to a bunch of Jewish Christians who were finding it really hard to follow Jesus.

[9 : 15] They're living in an environment where it was very hostile people didn't like them being believers and they were just finding it difficult so that they were tempted to give up. They were really tempted to jack it all in and go back to how it was before thinking maybe that just would have been

easier.

And this letter is written to say please don't give up. It is worth it. Keep on going. You can do it. Jesus is better. He is worth it.

You can keep on trusting him. And wants them to persevere right on to the end. And so as part of his effort to encourage the Christians not to give up we then get this chapter where he parades all these different people from through the Bible as examples of people who kept on going and kept on following God no matter what came their way.

He's trying to encourage them to say look at these people who did it. You can keep on going as well. And of course there's so much in here that you could spend weeks and weeks going through this chapter.

We're just going to skim over and drop in on two or three examples. And the first one I want us to look at is Noah in verse 7. And have a look at what he has to say about him.

[10:32] He says there in verse 7 by faith Noah when warned about things not yet seen in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

And I know when you get some of these characters from a long time ago you can almost have this feeling like they're not quite real. You know? They're a bit mythical you sometimes can feel.

So I sometimes think how my kids one minute would be playing with a little Bob the Builder and then they've got a little wooden Mr. Noah. And they're sort of, you know, together it's almost like they didn't feel very real sometimes.

But we need to try and get our head around the fact that Mr. Noah was a real man. He was a real bloke who lived in the real world.

And just the reality of what he faced. At the risk of appealing to Hollywood to get us back to reality. I don't know if you've ever seen the film Evan Almighty but it was the follow-up to Bruce Almighty which was a bit more famous.

[11:38] And whilst Evan Almighty probably isn't going to go down in the annals of classic cinematography I found it quite interesting because the idea is that this guy is in 21st century America but he has like a Mr. Noah type experience.

He has to build a boat in the middle of nowhere. And the thing that I thought was interesting about the film was just how ridiculous and embarrassed he was about doing it.

And the ridicule that people heaped on him. And you think about if he actually if God actually asked you to do something like that what that would be like. It was just odd and embarrassing and awful and we can maybe read back on the Noah story and say oh yeah of course he built a boat.

Of course he did. But it was really hard for him. It was really hard and the film kind of portrayed that quite well. It just seemed unfathomably stupid to build a boat.

And the same for the real Noah. It was no different. He was an ordinary man. It was just as bizarre and embarrassing for him to do that. But it says when he was warned about unseen events in holy fear he built the ark and so he saved his family and condemned the world.

[12:52] In other words he feared God more than he feared man and so he basically said to the man around him you're wrong and so became part of the family of God.

I'm going God's way you're not right when you ridicule this I'm going to do what he says. And the whole people pleasing thing is a tough one to overcome for most of us isn't it?

The fear of people. It's one of the reasons that we don't often stick our necks out and say some of the things that maybe we think we should. It's just that basic instinct that we don't want to look stupid.

Most of us have it. We want to be liked. And it's a big thing and that's why the Bible says so much about the fear of other people. It's a theme that comes up quite a lot because God knows that we're wired that way and that it's difficult.

But if you think about Noah's life if he had not loved the affirmation of God more than the affirmation of the people who were around him he would never have filled the boat would he?

[13:53] He just wouldn't have done it. He was more concerned about what God thought of him and seeking his approval than he was about what anybody else said. An ordinary guy with all the same kind of hangups and emotions and life as we would have all the same kind of fragilities he said I'm going to do this thing.

And he says by faith he did it. Then look at another one in verse 8 another example look at Abraham. So Abraham it says in verse 8 when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance obeyed and went even though he did not know where he was going.

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country lived in tents as did Isaac and Jacob who were heirs with him of the same promise for he was looking forward to the city with foundations who's architect and builder is God.

So here's how being a faith-filled risk taker worked out for Abraham. He obeyed God and left his home even though he didn't know where he was going. Again don't just sort of categorise this as a legendary Abraham of course he would do that because he was Abraham kind of classic story. He wasn't superhuman he was just a mere mortal who messed it up at times got it wrong sometimes he lied under pressure we see that in the Bible he didn't always make the right decisions but he trusted God to physically set out on a journey without knowing where the end point was.

[15:25] I mean you imagine doing that you're packing up all your stuff sticking it all in the car pack up your house even stick it all in the back of a lorry and you get in and you're asked the kids say where are we going?

You say don't know we're just setting off. Imagine if they start saying are we there yet? Can you say yeah kids you have no idea. Of course Abraham didn't have any kids so he didn't have that trouble but nevertheless it was it was that weird.

He didn't know where he was going but he trusted God and went out even though he could not see and stepped out in faith. And verse 17 has an even more extreme example of this as Abraham is tested and asked to offer Isaac as he then by this point now has had a son asked to offer Isaac as a sacrifice and you know you read this and for any parent the thought is just gut wrenching so again don't think these people were different to us it would have been just as hard for him but he believed that God had said God had his original plan to say you know I'm going to give you a nation make you into a nation through Isaac and now he's willing to obey God when God says I want you to sacrifice your son and he must have scrambled his brain really to have how do these two things fit together?

So verse 18 it says well starting in verse 17 he who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son even though God had said to him it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

But verse 19 tells us how his mind was working. Verse 19 says Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead and figuratively speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

[17:16] Isn't that great? Abraham had never seen anyone raised from the dead. It wasn't that he thought oh yeah this happened but he so believed what God said he just simply reasoned that if God actually wanted him to sacrifice Isaac and he said that he was going to be the means to make a whole nation God must be planning to bring him back to life.

And although in the end of course God didn't require him to kill him that was where Abraham had got to he trusted God to that extent now I don't think that would have made it any easier to lift a knife but he believed that that God would do this.

an ordinary man though he was he was full of faith in what God said and was prepared to take extraordinary risks there. Let's zoom in on one more as well in verse 24 so verse 24 talking about Moses now it says by faith Moses when he had grown up refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter he chose to be ill treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

So here's Moses there's been the whole bulrushes thing which leads providentially to him being part of the royal household of Egypt.

So remember this is the superpower of the day. This is a seriously good deal he's got here.

Through an unlikely series of events he now finds himself part of the first family of the superpower the most powerful nation of the world but it says he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be ill treated with the people of God instead.

[19:10] Which again on the surface of it seems ridiculous you may sort of spot the pattern here that they're often ending up doing things that seem odd. Why would you give up comfort and ease and applause in order to be beaten up and despised?

Why give up the celebrity lifestyle for the pauper lifestyle? Why would anybody do that? It just seems illogical until you get to the point that Moses got to in verse 26 where it says he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ interestingly it mentions Christ there of course this was before Christ

but effectively his trust was in Christ he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward and that makes much more sense doesn't it?

His reason for making these choices was not that he liked being disgraced but that he wanted something more than pleasures of money or fame or whatever you want to call it he got his eyes fixed on a reward that was so great it made all the treasures of Egypt just look like rubble that was the perspective he had he wanted to have this reward of being part of God's family part of God's kingdom one of his people and so it says he refused to be enticed by sin which sin is so often isn't it what keeps us from living a sort of faith filled life living out our lives for God because sin in our lives in whatever form it comes it often has the effect doesn't it of just sapping our spiritual energy leaves us feeling kind of pathetic and defeated and you know that's my experience I'm sure many of you would be the same that you just you lose the kind of focus and it's a real issue and what Moses did here is actually the way that faith deals with the challenge and temptation of sin what he did is the right thing because it wasn't just about I'm going to try really hard not to do this I try really really hard not to do this actually what he did was he put his focus on something better so this is how faith deals with it it looks up and sees something better than whatever the temptation of the current situation might be and fixes its eyes on that and says this is better than whatever temporary satisfaction or enjoyment or release I might get out of this particular temptation this is better there is something better and that realization in

Moses case enabled him to go and take incredible faith filled risks so in his case standing in front of that leader of the world superpower and saying you're wrong and you've got to let God's people go and verse 27 to 30 outline how the people were released through the Passover and across the Red Sea all stories you could go into themselves we could just keep on going with this what the writer then says in verse 32 is right isn't it you could just go on and on and on what more shall I say he says in verse 32 I don't have time to tell about Gideon Barak Samson Jephthah David Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms administered justice gained what was promised shut the mouths of lions quenched the fury of the flames escaped the edge of the sword whose weakness was turned to strength and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies women received their back their dead raised to life again but it wasn't always positive great glory stuff because then others it says were tortured and refused to be released so that they might get a better resurrection some faced jeers and flogging while others were chained and put in prison they were stoned they were sawn in two they were put to death by the sword they went about in sheepskins and goatskins destitute persecuted and ill-treated the world was not worthy of them one of the songs our kids sometimes sing is um i don't know if you know it god's people aren't super brave superheroes have you ever heard that i'm not going to sing it but um it's great little song god's people aren't super brave superheroes they don't have muscles from their heads to their toes they're not gladiators that's easy to see in fact it's amazing they're just like you and me and there's a bit of shouting and stuff which will be later maybe but it's kids song i actually think that's quite profound though because as i say we we tend to think of these people and put them on a bit of a pedestal and this says god's people aren't super brave superheroes they're just like you and me they're ordinary people and yet they take these kind of risks and and and step out in faith in order to advance the kingdom of god and it's all through the bible and it's through church history and it's around in our own day as well there are many many places where we see this there's a man called um alistair that um some of us know i i'm guessing that you guys would have met him out in kosovo friend of from rose and dan's and others who um he lives there these days but for many years he used to work for open doors uh getting bibles into unlikely situations and one day somebody from uh open doors contacted him with a new project saying that uh he should go to the philippines and uh stay in a hotel and just wait someone would contact him kind of james bond like almost isn't it someone will contact you so he went there and uh he was recruited basically to be part of a team taking a ship into the seas off china and they dropped a million bibles uh under the nose of the chinese authorities doubled the number number of bibles in china overnight and uh some crazy stuff happened along the way like going into the path of a typhoon which diverted miraculously and head off another way and different things like that you can if you google project pearl there's all kinds of stuff on the internet about it time magazine even wrote an article about it but you meet alistair he's a fairly unassuming down to earth little scottish fella who just trust god and put some faith filled risks in some particular way that he was called to do uh you think of uh the team that one of the guys uh is uh from our church is part of out in macedonia they've moved there to start a

business and be a witness in a muslim city uh that has no church and this is a city where a man who did

become a believer a little while ago was tied upside down to a tree and told that's what we do to christians around here but these two or three families have moved out there and amid many heart-searching questions and lots of difficulties and how does it work with the kids and all this sort of thing and it's hard work but they're out there ordinary people just like you and me taking faith filled risks um i was in north india uh a while back and uh i was talking to somebody before about that north india is quite different to south india you think about lots of mission work that's gone on in india most of it was in the south the north was fairly untouched such that people sometimes dubbed it the graveyard of christian missions which of course it wasn't but it was seen sometimes as the place where christianity just couldn't get to people sometimes said um but nevertheless it's really starting to open up and the massive number of unreached people groups when you actually look at some of the stuff that joshua project talks about loads of those people groups are in this big area of north india and there's new churches starting all the time sometimes that such that the leaders of the movements don't even um get to hear about it until after the event you know you normally in our context we think of planning a church for ages we're going to plant this church and this is how we're going to do it and you have lots of meetings and in that context they sometimes these churches just happen there's one girl 16 year old girl i met a couple of times who kind of started three churches by accident it sounds a bit ridiculous doesn't it but she had a demon cast out of her which is very much a reality out there she trusted jesus and she told people in three different villages nearby about what happened to her and a whole load of them decided they were going to follow jesus so very quickly there was about 80 of them and so they all got together in a house and they're saying so um you told us about this so tell us some more and she's like well i don't really know that much more so let me go back and talk to the pastor who told me and then people brought in some support now and so on and effectively uh there's two more fledgling churches started about 300 people all together but a lot of difficulty in that area a lot of opposition so that when i was out there talking to some of the house church leaders we were going through a bit of acts in some training and the subject of persecution came up and i said how many of you have faced persecution and they all put their hands up and looked at me like kind of that's a stupid question why why did you of course we do one pastor i met explained how when he became a christian his own mother and brother tied him to a tree and beat him and his wife was going to divorce him until god spoke to her in a dream and then god did a few things and now the whole family's christians that's the edited short down version but you can see how you look at some of these contexts it's a faith-filled risk to even become a christian in some of these places you know from the outset if i become a christian this is going to mean it's difficulties for me you go into it very much with your eyes open that was true of a baptism that i went to whether they were baptized down in a river it was this remote village miles away from anywhere and they didn't want to draw attention to it at all so that people gathered in this village but then walked in twos and threes so as to not make it obvious that walked about a mile through some fields and woods and so on down to the river i thought this kind of white cloth around my head to try and vaguely disguise that i was a big white guy don't think i fooled anybody really but you know they were very concerned to avoid unwanted attention because sometimes mobs had gathered in the past when they'd had baptisms and so we went along and eventually we got to this clearing where the group of christians were and they went down into the river and 23 new brothers and sisters were baptized in the river with the water buffalo just by in the river with them and the thing that it's just very striking to me that it's the way that for some of these people when you're in a setting where even becoming a

[29 : 49] christian in the first place is risky where there's the threat of suffering and persecution it affects the kind of christian you become so you expect to take risks you expect that you you need to have this kind of faith where you're hanging on to god for everything because you can't do it all yourself but bringing it back to the here and now and into our context you know our societies are quite risk averse aren't they i suspect the uk might be worse at this than ireland but you know we are we have risk assessments coming out of our ears and everything is is is very very cautious and and obviously there are times when if you can avoid a simple accident by doing something sensible then good obviously that there's many good things about that even if the paperwork sometimes gets a bit over the top but i think there's a problem that as cultures in the west sometimes we we're almost in pursuit of the risk-free life we we kind of think we can have you know perfectly safe cars super safe cars super safe playgrounds safe houses safe working environments everything's

covered so this is kind of our right and i think if we're not careful we also want a safe christianity and maybe we don't ever say that out loud but given that it's a mindset that we have for so much of the rest of life i think we can fairly unwittingly apply it to our faith as well and it is actually deadening to faith pursue other things if you want they're fine to a point but please don't pursue safe christianity because you just don't find it in the bible it's not there jesus they take up your cross not your armchair it's not about going out and looking for trouble or difficulty obviously and we thank god that we don't have some of the pressures that people in other countries may have but the truth is that for many of us we will steer clear from anything that will cause us a little bit of discomfort because culturally we just don't do discomfort if we can possibly avoid it and this matters because the era of living on the edge for the sake of the extension of god's kingdom isn't over because as i said before it's our turn now the baton's in our hand and so when you go back to hebrews 11 again these are not the records of great activities of the days of old and they're nice bedtime stories and so on no this faith-filled live on the edge stuff was an era it was the first stage they were the forerunners in a race that is not over yet so you look at verse 39 and 40 that's what this means 39 and 40 at the end of chapter 11 say these were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised god had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect so the reward it's like the end of the race isn't it's not over yet the reward is for us and them together it's not finished if you're watching the 4x400 meters relay you don't leave after three of the runners have taken their turn and say that was good wasn't it okay let's go and get a coffee because there's another stage yet it's not finished and this race image is then where the writer goes if you just go on into the beginning of chapter 12 where he describes this cloud of witnesses looking on and cheering us on and so the idea is that these people that he's been through in chapter 11 the ones that we looked at and all the others as well he's got this picture where he's saying imagine they're watching now they're seeing you they're in the stands watching as now you have it in your turn in your generation the baton's in your hand and they're shouting come on you can do it to these Hebrews there and to us now and so you learn from what they learned so it's like Noah is there shouting to us and saying you don't have to fear what others think

I learned that he's saying you don't have to fear what others think fear God and trust him and Abraham is shouting come on you can trust him with a future that you can't see and you don't fully understand follow him even if you're not sure where you're going or how it'll all work out you can trust him and Moses is shouting it is possible to love God more than you love sin and temptation and be free to go out and serve him and these witnesses are all there as we've got the baton in our hand and so how then do we handle the fact that it's our turn now and we're on the track well two things to close off with from the beginning of chapter 12 as God says chapter 12 verse 1 it says therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us we've got to run but for all of us there's stuff that holds us back that weighs us down and you think about what it is for you because we're all different what is it for you that just dampens your spiritual fervor that just distracts you or cools you down what are the things that weigh you down and our priorities can get twisted and our vision distorted we need to see those things for what they are and say

I'm not going to be seduced by these things I'm going to throw them off I'm going to run the race I'm going to keep on going and then second thing is he says in verse 2 let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith he's the one who gives us our spiritual life he's described as the author and the perfecter the finisher of our faith so he's at both ends of it if you like he's the one we get our faith from and he's also the one we fix our eyes on and if we look away from him we're actually cutting off the supply line of our faith because he's the author of it he's the one who gives us it so we keep our eyes fixed on him and we're sustained by him as we go on and finish it and we follow his example too because he models exactly what we're being called to do because he says the perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame sat down at the right hand of the throne of God and we're told to keep on going consider him who endured such opposition so that you will not grow weary and lose heart you probably can relate to that

I'm sure at different points in our lives you grow weary and you lose heart you just think this is hard but don't drop out of the race remember that's exactly what this letter was all about telling them fix your eyes on Jesus cry out and ask for his help and say I need your help I'm going to keep on going

I want to keep on going with this race and trusting you I believe you even that prayer like the guy said to Jesus in the gospels I believe help my unbelief I want to believe I want to trust you so then we ask how are you going to play your part in God's mission what does it look like for you to take your turn on the track as a church and individually what's next basically lots of great things going on lots of great things you've done but what's next and you think globally I don't know maybe there's things you can get involved with in terms of new initiatives linking up with other churches so like we're going to talk about at the round table maybe there's things that you can get behind as a church maybe some of you might even go and live in some place far from here some place that maybe you won't find in your average travel brochure but where people need the gospel thinking locally maybe you want to go out on a bit more of a limb taking a few more risks in the community around here building some friendships that might just scare you slightly living counter-culturally treating what you own and the money you have in a slightly different way

I don't know there's lots of different ideas I think that's something for you to be praying about isn't it and talk about and think about but whether it's here or whether it's far away for all of us let's not be duped by the dream of some kind of safe sanitized tame Christianity that asks very little of us and that is easily controlled by us may God give us the vision and the faith and the courage to live our lives for him let's pray Lord we want to thank you that you give us the faith that we need that you give us the strength to follow you and thank you that you've opened our eyes to you in the first place that we can know you and follow you and that you've forgiven us and that you're changing us and that we have this great destiny now with you we pray that you'll help us in the day to day living of this life help us to see ourselves as on the track taking our turn in the race and to be inspired by those you've gone before and not least by the example of Jesus and to fix our eyes on him and we pray that you'd help us to be clear about the things that you want us to do and to go out in faith and do them even though it may mean some things aren't as easy as they might be even though it might mean sacrifices in different ways

[39 : 22] Lord we pray that you would help us to be people who are full of faith and prepared to take risks to serve you no matter what that may mean Lord we pray that we would be so so much loving you and loving your glory that our own lives and priorities and comfort and everything else takes second place behind all of that and that it would all be for you so we pray that you'd give us this big vision of who you are that helps us to live and give everything for you pray that for the church here and for the church where I am as well and wherever we might serve you one day in the course of our lives and we ask it all for your fame and for your glory amen you and we arrive to heal that you a of who you are a him