

# RISKING WITH GOD

Chapter Four of ***From Addiction To Adoption*** in its entirety,

Which includes an example of each chapter's study guide questions and an end-of-chapter prayer.

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**W**e stood among acres of nothing but wild Nevada desert sagebrush, imagining the placement of every building and corral of the ranch that I'd sketched prophetically several months before. Kneeling down on the dusty soil, we prayed, "Lord, we believe this is the land for the ranch so we ask you, please give us this place."

But because of my business collapses ten years earlier, I carried a bankruptcy on my credit report and as Teresa and I returned to the real estate office that had directed us to this property, we began to wrestle with doubts. Our present net financial worth was a mere two paychecks. We had great jobs, but no money for a down payment and no investors, and the only 'treasure' we held was a sense that God had placed this desire in our hearts.

Having been involved in the business world, we both knew how to properly establish a financially successful enterprise. If someone had approached us and said, "*Um, hello, we would like to buy a manufactured home and place it on a ten acre property, but we have no finances. Oh, and once we move here, we won't have jobs either, but we are trusting God to provide for us:*" as investors, we would have thought this kind of attitude was crazy! Yet, this is exactly how we were operating.

We could have established an addictions recovery center more easily by accepting federal, county and state funding. But even while the ranch was still a dream I'd sensed God leading me not to tie it into governmental regulations. Instead, we were to function autonomously in order to create a place where the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the power for each resident's freedom from addiction. I also sensed we were not to charge a fee to the men who were entering our program: in every way, we were to trust God to provide.

## ***Walking On Water***

Surprisingly, we were quickly approved for a mortgage to purchase both the land, *and* a manufactured home. But now what? Even with mortgage approval, how were we to live? We needed wise counsel. Contacting Kay Peterson, the pastor at

Silver Springs Christian Center, we asked if we could meet and discuss with her our concerns about the financial risks involved with the whole ranch endeavor. Kay was a personal friend and as she listened later that day, she looked straight at us and answered “Rick, Peter had to *get out of the boat* before he could walk on water.”

In the Bible, Matthew wrote that Jesus walked on top of the water across an angry sea, to meet his disciples in their boat.<sup>1</sup> Peter, one of Jesus’ bolder followers, heard the Lord invite him to walk on the waves. He jumped out and walked on the water toward the Master, figuring “If Jesus invited me, that’s all I need” and by *risking* he performed the impossible, alongside of His God!

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Kay’s comment hit me squarely in my heart. She was encouraging us that it was finally the right time for Teresa and me to jump out of the comfort of our ‘boat’, leave our careers, walk away from our present means of provision and step onto the foamy sea of faith and adventure in following God.

Having no idea how the finances would work out, we made the decision to resign from our jobs and through a family member, borrowed the \$13,000.00 necessary for a down payment. In short order, we became the new owners of a manufactured home set humbly in the middle of the Nevada wilderness, on ten acres of gray earth and stubby sagebrush.

### **One Step At A Time**

*New Hope Recovery Ranch*, the name we’d created to embody our vision, now existed. As we began to share our personal testimonies and laid out our plans to help others find freedom from addictions, generous believers started contributing financially toward the work. Before long, we’d received enough provision for our first month’s mortgage payment and even had some money to spare.

Praying on the property one day shortly after we’d moved there, I asked God, “What do you want us to do first to establish the ranch?” He answered, “Build the fences.” We’d brought our two horses, Maggie and Pokey, away from their lush California pastureland and they needed to be able to run freely rather than being harnessed and tied.

Taking another step of obedience and risk, we figured out how many posts, how much wire, staples, railroad ties and additional supplies we’d need. Then, using every single dime that remained after making our first mortgage payment, we drove to the local supply store and placed an order.

A few days later the delivery truck dumped a whole pile of goods onto our front yard. I was thrilled that our ranch was about to take shape and form, but Teresa was anxious. She couldn’t possibly imagine how we were going to dig all those fence post holes or string all that wire, especially since snow still covered the winter desert’s floor and the temperatures were frigid enough to make working outside a challenge. The task seemed entirely daunting.

I walked outside after hearing her apprehensiveness. “Lord, Teresa needs a sign. Please show her you’re with us and that you’ll help us.” Praying for a while longer, I finally walked back into the house to encourage her. As we were sharing together I casually glanced out the window and there in the middle of a bright, cloudless desert sky was a large rainbow stretching over the road near the entrance of our new

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<sup>1</sup> *Matthew 14:22-34*

property. Seeing no rain anywhere on the horizon, all of Teresa's fears melted away when she realized God had created His sign of *covenant faithfulness*, in an absolutely sunny sky.<sup>2</sup> God confirmed our steps prophetically and we knew that somehow, our fences would be built.

Soon the youth group of Silver Springs Christian Center arrived on our property with tools and lots of energy, ready to string wire. Pastor Kay had suggested making the whole day fun by throwing a barbeque into the mix. When everyone left that evening with full stomachs and sore muscles, we'd made progress but still had a long way to go. Since we'd rented a post-hole digger for seven days at a great price, time was of the essence: we needed more help if we were going to finish the fences before returning the digger.

### ***Fulfillment Of A Dream***

In the middle of our fencing dilemma, the phone rang. Dallas Ramsey, the director of Center Street Mission in Reno, asked if we could help a young man who needed to get clean from his addictions. Hal<sup>3</sup> lived in a nearby city and had been raised by alcoholics in an abusive home. He'd become an alcoholic like his parents and now wanted out of his destructive lifestyle. Dallas was calling to ask if the ranch was ready to receive residents.

We agreed to invite the young man into our home and hopped into the car to go and pick him up from the mission. While there, Dallas gathered up a collection of canned goods, pastas, cereals and more from the mission's food pantry and tossed them into our vehicle. Driving home with Hal in the back seat and groceries filling the trunk, Teresa noticed a birthday cake with one candle had been placed next to her in

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the passenger's seat. Sensing there was some significance to the candle, she quietly asked, "Lord, what is this? Are you saying something?" Immediately the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit responded, "Today is the beginning of the ranch. *Happy birthday!* Hal is your first man."

We arrived home and the phone rang a second time. Kay Peterson was on the other end of the line. "Hi Rick, I've got three hitchhikers who need a place to stay. They slept outside at the lake last night and came to the church hungry and looking for food and money. I told them about your ranch. They could help you with your fences and I think you will probably be able to help them with their alcoholism." Several hours later we sat around our dining room table with four famished alcoholic/addicts, a stash of food and a birthday cake to celebrate the very first day of our recovery ranch!

*The spiritual fulfillment of our own visions and promises had snuck up on us while we were following God with fervent hearts.* Our long awaited recovery ranch had quietly arrived in the form of four needy men. After years of hoping and praying, our dream was actually coming to pass without fanfare, formality or even much experience on our parts. Hal and the three hitchhikers, Devin, Tim and Willy, needed our help and we simply had it in our hearts to answer their needs and bring them to their Divine Helper.

Dreams, prophetic words and answered prayers are an interesting phenomena. While we wait and pray

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 9:13-16

<sup>3</sup> We've changed names of the men who joined our recovery ranch and whose stories are recounted here, for the sake of honor and privacy

for their fulfillment, we tend to create images and expectations of what that fulfillment will look like. Yet when brought to completion, heaven's release of these things will often look different from our previously imagined outcomes. This is one good reason to hold our prophetic words *firmly* before the Lord in confident prayer, but *loosely* when forming perceptions of *when* or *how* we think they should play out!

Even before we had any outbuildings in place, the men who had come to live with us represented the small, instantaneous start of New Hope Ranch. They were *also* God's answer to help us build the fences. Good, old-fashioned work quiets the soul during the first weeks of sobriety, so Hal and the others gladly pitched right in. With coffee breaks to come in out of the snowy cold and a few extra community hands pitching in here and there, we were able to install the fence posts and string all the wire before our deadline of seven days had passed.

Our newest residents had food to eat and a warm, dry place to stay, and felt great about their contribution to the project. For our part, we were grateful that now Maggie and Pokey almost had a place to stay. I say *almost*, because we now had a fence, but no gate enclosures. Asking God about the next project for the ranch, He directed me with this word: "You need four gates that encircle the house, to set it apart as a tabernacle of meeting. The house is to be protected and separate from the ranch. You're not finished with the fences until you set the gates in place."

We had no money to buy gates. The purchase of the fencing materials had drained our finances and since I was still new at understanding God's supernatural supply, I took a walk along our dirt road, kicking up stones in frustration and wondering how in the world we could work out their purchase. Just then a silver-toned pick up headed my way and stopped by my side. The driver rolled down his window and asked, "Is this New Hope Ranch?" I answered with a nod and he continued. "I heard about you guys and, well, I have a little extra tithe money and I was wondering, is there anything you need?" My heart leaped into my throat and I answered honestly, "Yes sir, we need four gates to complete our fences."

Within three months of purchasing New Hope Ranch, the fences were completed with four gates surrounding our house, and Maggie and Pokey could now run freely within their corral. But more profound than the building of fences or gates was the work that happened in the hearts of our first four men. Each one successfully completed six months of detoxification and invited Jesus to be their Savior before heading off to build new lives. Tim and Willy, who had been running from the law, returned home to clear up their outstanding warrants. Hal moved to Colorado to begin a new life away from old influences and Devin was able to get a job locally and live a normal and productive life.

### **Anointing On Risk**

Obedience almost always involves *risk*. Had Teresa and I decided to act according to our natural inclinations, we certainly would have chosen to stay in our well-paying jobs, living in the comfort of our home near the ocean, playing golf and experiencing a life of relative ease. Without risk, we would never have stepped out in obedience to pursue our vision. But counsel from other wise believers and the peace we sensed in our hearts were confirmation enough for us to see the ranch as God's direction for our lives.

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We've since learned to pay attention to the *favor of God* on our risks. ***As we move ahead step-by-step, we can usually sense whether our plans are God's plans by observing His anointing on our forward progress.*** God's *blessing* and *favor* on our steps gave us faith that we were 'on track' with Him and the encouragement we needed to move ahead. Favor came in the form of supernatural provisions, answered prayers and through finding support from people in the community. These things enabled trust that God's way was being established in our lives.

A word of clarification about hindrances that rise up when we risk: they don't necessarily mean God's not in a thing. Sometimes these roadblocks are a call for *redirection* and we only need to make a course correction in order to get back on track. Or, maybe our *timing* is wrong for plans we've initiated and we simply need to wait. The third possibility for understanding difficulties we experience is that the enemy could be creating some *harassment* to try and derail the work of the Kingdom, and we need the mind of God to know how to dismiss his interference. And finally, we may need to simply press toward God intently in prayer, to cry out for the breakthrough we are longing for.<sup>4</sup> If we're hitting obstacles, then the Spirit of wisdom will help us discern their source.<sup>5</sup> We only need to ask, and Father will clarify for us as we wait for His answer.

### ***Divine Healing***

After the gates were hung and our first four men had gone on to reenter society, we received another phone call. A twenty-

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<sup>4</sup> *Micah 2:13, NIV*

<sup>5</sup> *Ephesians 1:17*

something alcoholic was being discharged from the hospital after a bout with pancreatitis and was already detoxing because of his hospital stay. Dallas asked if we could help him. We picked Jack up and brought him into our home, but by the next morning he was back in the hospital with another severe attack on his pancreas.

The doctors weren't certain he would live. I stood over his gurney in the emergency room and compassion for this lost young man washed over me. Pain wracked his body and fear clouded his soul. Laying hands on him, I prayed for the healing of his pancreas, then spoke kindly and wiped the hair from his face. "Jack, I love you and God loves you too. You're gonna' be okay and when you get well, call me and we'll come and get you and bring you out to the ranch."

Four days later, the phone rang and it was Jack. We met him at the hospital later that day and brought him back to the ranch, where he continued the program for a complete detoxification. After prayer and sobriety, his pancreas was healed and never bothered him again.

Added to the sobriety of Hal and the three hitchhikers, Jack's freedom from addiction was the beginning of more than a decade of liberating addicts and alcoholics by the discipling power of the Holy Spirit. Jack's physical healing also represented the first of many healings we would see in years to come.

### ***A Good Start***

We'd only begun. Barns and lean-tos, landscaping, horse stalls, a tack room and much more were still needed to make New Hope a working ranch where men could come and find release. Gradually stepping out in each new aspect of our venture, the Spirit's affirmations helped us understand the ranch wasn't just our dream, it was also *God's dream*, and He would continue walking with us to establish each step.<sup>6</sup> Lessons of risking with Him continued as we became more established, and the answers we received from heaven enlarged our capacity to believe God for greater and greater things.

Living a supernatural life has its challenges. Every single need we have is meant to be approached with confident trust in the *goodness* and *faithfulness* of Father God. But as directors of New Hope, reliance on God's moment-by-moment provision was often unsettling to our natural minds. Honestly, I don't want to ever relive some of our close-call situations! On the other hand, I wouldn't exchange for *any* earthly prize the faith we developed by watching God's miraculous supply and provision.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

### For Further Reflection

1. Why do you think Rick and Teresa's dream of a recovery ranch took years to come into being? From what you've read so far in this book, what did you sense God was doing through their years of waiting? How did those years turn out to their benefit? Ask God to help you grasp what He's doing in your times of waiting for answered prayers and dreams to come true.
2. Have you ever received a prophetic word or a prophetic sign like the rainbow and birthday cake Rick and Teresa received? Ask God to increase your prophetic understanding. If you've never received a personal prophetic word, ask Him for one and wait patiently in assurance that He'll answer!
3. Why is it a good idea to hold loosely to the way we imagine our dreams will be fulfilled? On the other hand, why is it essential to continue to pray about our dreams?
4. Read about *obedient (listening) risk* in the lives of these people in the Bible: Paul, in Acts 16:9-15; Peter, in Matthew 14:25-31; the Israelites in 2 Chronicles 20:2-27. How did God anoint their steps and favor their willingness to risk in listening obedience? What was the result of their obedient risk?
5. How did Rick and Teresa keep their eyes on God in their present circumstances? How can living in the past, *or* living in the future, cause us to miss out on what God is doing *today*?

### Prayer:

*Father, thank You that Your heavenly plans for my life are fulfilled as we walk together, day by day. Shape all my dreams to agree with Your purposes in the spiritual realm. Help me risk in listening obedience, that I can experience Your favor and anointing. Take me by the hand and build in me the heart of a trusting child. Thank you, Papa God. Thank you, Jesus.*