

*a 40-day journey  
to saying **yes***

# Reckless Faith

BETH GUCKENBERGER

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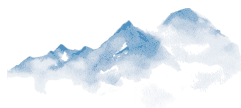
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# Rest is a Weapon

*Yes to Still*

## EXPERIENCE:

I was asked by my pastors to teach one Sunday in a series called “What Jesus Invites Us To.” I readily agreed. Then they said my Sunday would cover “Jesus Invites Us to *Rest*,” and I laughed out loud. I have never been good at rest. I accepted the challenge and jumped into the study, immediately looking up “rest” in the original language. *Heschazo* (to rest, to be quiet, to be still) is all over the Old Testament, but when I found it in Genesis 4, my mind raced to understand. I was familiar with the passage, having used it to teach on generational sin, but had no idea of its complete meaning.

*Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”*

– GENESIS 4:6-7 (EMPHASIS MINE)

I historically have taught this passage as: we all have sin crouching at our doors, based on our individual experiences and childhoods. Exposure to sin at a vulnerable age or stage makes the sin at our own doors appealing. But when I found *heschazo* in the middle of this passage, it hit me in a fresh way. It translates better, “If you do what is right/*heschazo* (if you are resting, if you are quiet, if you are still), will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right (if you are not resting, are not quiet, are not still), then sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

Suddenly, the idea of rest shifted from a “time-out” (which I have never liked) to being a weapon I could use in my war against sin. Could God be inviting me into a rhythm where *He* is my deep breath? Could time in rest fortify me for the world I am fighting against and the life *He’s* called me to? Could rest in Him be a sign not of weakness or tapping out but of strength and gearing up? Could rest be about not a lack of activity, but instead a still heart?

The week I was writing the sermon, I sat at my son Aidan’s basketball game. I watched the time-outs, quarter

breaks, half-time, and subbing in and out of players. I realized if the players didn't come out of play and rest, their performance would get sloppier over time. The coach saw intermittent rest as a way to strengthen and sustain them in the game. Could it be the same with God?

I love studying the Bible and all its nuance and complexity, but, in the end, it's pretty much summed up in two words: *come* and *go*. God has invited us into a relationship with Him, "Come to me" (Matthew 11:28), "Come to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1). The Spirit says "come" over and over again, and we are to come. The second word is "go." "Go into all the world" (Matthew 16:15), "Go, stand and speak" (Acts 5:20, KJV). There's a rhythm of coming and going, and if we just come and don't go, we miss the opportunity to fulfill God's will through our lives, but if we just go and don't come, we miss the opportunity to be filled by God and know Him. Rest and renewal is an invitation to fully experience all He offers us.

Our sins are different, but what we have in common is, without rest we are more at risk of being overcome. Healing from sin, pain, injury, wrong thinking, all happens in the margins, and I am increasingly aware of the critical role that rest plays. When I am living without rest, I risk burnout and lack motivation to stay in step with the Spirit.

One afternoon, I was having a hard moment with one of my sons. He was a newly adopted teenager and his will and mine were at odds. I called a friend, wanting some

piece of magic advice to turn around my attitude and make him do what I wanted. Instead of advice, she said to me, “Take a beat, sit down, breathe . . .” She understood this principle: resting would strengthen me for the conflict I was facing and the sin that desired to overtake me.

Filling up is important, because then it allows us to pour out. We can give away what we just received (mercy, grace, wisdom, joy, love) because we know how to tap into the unending source. Isaiah 32:2 says, “Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” That “each one” means us! We can rest in His shelter, under His wing, and in His shade. He gives us rest, because He knows what we are going through and wants to be the place we run. Retreating in Him prevents us from escaping from life. Escape leads to disconnection, whereas retreating in Him leads to growth. Then, He asks us to extend to others what He has given us. From the rest we receive, we serve and we give to each other and to a world lost without Him.

Activity is my default, but activity without direction is just harried. I want to say *yes* to still, which isn’t the same as “stop.” It’s a *yes* to purpose and priority, over bustle and busy.

REFLECTION :

*Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from  
the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the  
shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.*

– ISAIAH 32:2

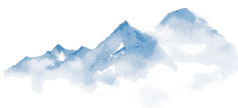
*What does this truth tell you about yourself? Others? God?*

CHANGE :

How do you view rest? Who has provided shelter for you  
in the past?

ACTION :

Find a tree or an overhang that provides shade and stand  
underneath. Say a prayer, thanking God for who He has  
used to shelter you.



## A Long Way from Sunday Lane

*Yes to Questions*

### EXPERIENCE:

*I am a long way from Sunday Lane.* I stifle a laugh. There is nothing funny about where I am now, but laughing makes me less fearful. On my childhood street, I learned how to climb trees, how to make chocolate chip cookies, and how to drive. Riding down that street on my bicycle, I had a hunch not everyone lived like my family did, but I never could have imagined a street like the one I now find myself on.

I was now standing on a multi-lane roadway in Tirana, Albania, with every vehicle imaginable rushing by.

I see a little boy. What causes me to notice the little boy, I don't know, but there he was, seemingly lifeless, lying face down on the cobblestone. As I reach down, I see he is a toddler, but before I can lift him, a soldier points a machine gun at me and orders me to back up.

My fiancé, Todd, says “Beth . . . listen to him. I'm going to get the translator.” He walks backwards, never breaking our gaze. It's 1994, and we are serving with Campus Crusade for Christ over our college spring break. I haven't even learned how to ask for water in Albanian, so negotiating with this officer seems impossible. I *do* know the key phrases of the Four Spiritual Laws, but he doesn't look receptive.

The officer seems relieved when the translator arrives. “The boy is property of the gypsies,” the translator explains what the officer is saying. “They keep him awake all night so he'll sleep in the streets all day. People walk by and throw money at him, which the gypsies collect when they come to get him at dusk.”

*Why do the authorities allow this? I wonder. Does the officer know the boy's caretaker? Perhaps he shares in the spoils?*

“It's too dangerous for him to be just left here.” I say. Then I ask, “What stops me—or anybody—from picking him up and walking away with him? What stops me from doing something to help this child?”

...

*Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.*

– ISAIAH 1:17 (NASB)

This passage moves me. The rest of what you have in your hands is how these truths have played out in my life. For a long time, I hesitated even writing this book, wondering whether I could really make it worthy of a subject that's so important to me—the subject of reckless faith. While I long to love and give recklessly, I admit there are days when I don't. But the idea captivates me.

What I don't want is a “refined faith.” Refined can mean “purified” but that is not the definition I am talking about. *Refined* can also be defined as “cultivated” and “fastidious.” This “refined faith” is the opposite of the reckless faith I am writing about here. It's predictable and resistant to change. It pretends to know what God will do a hundred Sundays from now. It's more comfortable with rules, consequences, and baby steps. It likes control and people who agree. It fears what it can't see.

A truly reckless faith expects change and uncertainty and, as a result, it is eager to risk *more* and fear *less*! It knows there is more to the story, more than I experience now. A reckless faith always has one foot in eternity. It measures people by their actions and not their belongings. It believes when there is no evidence, and hopes in what is promised. It does not make sense to the world, and yet, the world of-

ten seems fascinated by it.



The Albanian officer keeps looking at me as I eye his machine gun. Through the translator, he finally answers my question: “Well, first, if you took the child away, you’d be taking him away from his legal caretaker; she’d probably just place another child here. Nothing would change. Second, it’s the only life he has ever known. What else would he do?” He shrugs and turns around, dismissing me. He has bigger concerns than the boy and this curious tourist.

Todd and I sit on a park bench nearby and watch the boy sleep for the better part of an hour. *What else would he do?* keeps rolling around in my mind. I pray for the child, and his mother, I pray for my questions and the anger I feel. I pray for his country and the other children like him, certain to be lying on their own street corners. And then I pray I might have a hand in helping children like him.

Todd and I take a picture of him and talk about what we can do. Something shifts inside us. It’s as though the wind is blowing, and we aren’t sure from where it is coming but we can see the leaves kicking up. Something is rising in us, but we don’t have the words to express it.

The next day, we visit our first orphanage, filled with children like the boy in the street. I sit on a concrete step on the second floor with a child on each knee and I feel as though the wind has stopped. There’s a stillness I feel that’s

hard to explain. It isn't the stillness of inactivity, it is the calm of peace. I have more questions than answers, but in a place as foreign to Sunday Lane as I could've imagined, I feel as though I'm home.

## REFLECTION :

*Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. **In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.***

*If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you'll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment's notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me.*

– JOHN 12:24-26 (MSG, EMPHASIS MINE)

*What truth does this tell you about yourself? Others? God?*

## CHANGE :

What situations have you seen or heard about that leaves you uncomfortable or with questions? When and where have you felt most spiritually “at home?”

**ACTION:**

Find a picture of a person or a place you feel drawn towards. Hang it where you can see it every day and begin praying for clarity on what might be next.