



Episode 24: Myths and Truths of Risk in Missions Show Notes

Anna Hampton is from Minnesota but currently lives in the Middle East. Anna has dedicated a lot of time to studying what the Bibles says about risk and lives out this understanding each day in her current context.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be passionate about missions and about the risk involved?

- I gave my life to full time missions when I was fourteen. When I married my husband Neal, we both felt called to Islamic countries. We served almost 10 in Afghanistan, arriving before 9/11. We've spent the last five years in the Middle East and so the topic of risk is something I've focused my life on, particularly as a mother of young children in risky areas.

How do we define risk?

- I define risk as that point in time when you ask yourself, "Should I move towards an environment of safety?" or "Should I continue to move towards an environment of danger?"
- We've had increasing bombs happening in our city and we're asking this question ourselves – do we let our children go to the mall or keep them at home?
- It can be a moment by moment evaluation as well as on a grand, or strategic scale.
- It is clear in the Bible that all Christians are called to suffer. However, not everyone is called to put their life at risk for the Gospel. We all need to be ready, but the big issue is, "Are we chosen?" and "Are my children chosen?"

How do North Americans think about risk?

- We are impacted today by the past generation's view of risk. If you think about how we are brought up in a risk-adverse society, it impacts what risk we are willing to take for the Kingdom as grownups.
- If you're brought up with playground safety, or nowadays you have to wear helmets for things we never wore helmets for in the past. If you get coffee from a fast food shop, the cup will say, "Caution: Hot," because they've been sued for burning their customers.
- There are a lot of people who say no to God's calling because they don't view risk as something they want to enter into for the Kingdom.



- Something I've taught my children since they were young is that courage is doing the righteous thing even when you're afraid. It is the opposite of being paralyzed by your fear.
- The Kingdom of God is never pushed forward when we don't take risks. It is pushed forward by people who are courageous even in the face of fear.

What are some myths we believe about risk?

- *You're never safer than when you're at the center of God's will* – it is a common myth because from a North American perspective, safety is one definition, but we've had over 20 friends who have been killed when serving God in Afghanistan. I wouldn't view that as safe and yet I believe they were in 'the center of God's will.'
 - It also has to do how we define success – is safety an indicator of success?
- *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church* – The blood of Christ is the seed of the church and those martyrs are used by Christ. There are contemporary examples of the church being annihilated in certain areas or countries even. How do we do church growth then? It's not always based on the blood of martyrs.
- *Freedom means security* – I recognize that when we were in Kabul under the Taliban we were afraid and yet the Talibs were protecting aid workers. After the Taliban fell, we felt safe and free and yet it was after that that we were robbed at gunpoint and my husband was almost killed by them in our own home. As I reflected on this experience, I had held this belief that when I feel free I feel secure. Security is not a feeling.
- Download the full list of myths here.

How are these myths and how we think about risk, how is it affecting the mission endeavor?

- I've had many people in our partner churches ask me if I'm safe and they are shocked when I say "No, we're not safe." Parents are reluctant to bless and let their adult children and grandchildren go to unsafe places.
- When missionaries go overseas they don't realize that they have some of this wrong thinking and it gives them more of an unstable soul that makes them less resilient. God doesn't play by our manmade rules. We want to help people through our book and workshop wrestle through their thinking and expectations on risk and base their beliefs more on scripture.

Are there key passages from Scripture that would begin to re-inform us in our response to risk?

- There are three Greek words used for Risk in the New Testament in three passages. As I worked through these words, they point to idioms that point to risk as an act as a priestly service or an act of worship, they point to risk as warfare and they point to risk as stewardship. As I studied through these Greek words, they really overlapped with Exodus 17 where we see three major concepts:



- Priestly service – We see Moses holding up his hands in priestly service during the battle of the Amalekites. We see Epaphroditus risked his life for Paul in the New Testament.
- Joshua had to choose certain men for that battle the Old Testament and in Acts 15 we see the elders choose men from the early church to send out. If you are chosen for risk, you’re going to have more endurance and resiliency in it.
- The word for risk in Romans 16:4 where they ‘laid their necks down on the block to be killed’ is the same word for placing the stone that Moses sat on and we view God as our foundation stone. We’re passionate about helping people work through their thinking and what they are thinking incorrectly about God and the risk we take for Him.

What are some of the questions that a mission committee or mission worker should ask as they consider the possibility of working in a higher risk situation?

- Am I called into risk or a high risk environment? Am I chosen? This is a question to wrestle with in each stage of life.
- People will say, “Do I have enough faith?” Often times the answers I’ve read are, “Have faith.” It would be good for committees to work with people and ask, “What are you doing to cultivate and develop your faith?”
- We need to cultivate a heart attitude of awe of God.
- We often ask human-focused questions, rather than God-focused questions. I would ask, “What is God calling me to do to join him in the risk situation?”
- Don’t give a suffering answer to a risk question. A theology of suffering is very different than a theology of risk when it is often thought of the same thing. A better way is to give both a truth-based answer and a situation-based answer that is empathetic. We need people back home that are going to be encouraging and empathetic.

When we think of those who remain at home as the senders, how can we pray for our workers in high risk situations and how can we see to support and encourage them there?

- We often pray that people will be safe and that bad things won’t happen. I think that’s a natural and human thing to pray.
- We really want people to pray for our endurance, for our joy, for our perseverance and to be faithful to the end.

Are there things we can do or say from home that are encouraging?

- I always appreciate the newsy emails from home of normal life. When you are in a high risk environment, you forget what is normal.
- It is helpful when people write in and normalize what you’re doing – who recognize that we are persevering in a hard situation.
- Honest, encouraging and empathetic emails are always helpful.



In light of the current news of bombings and attacks, many people are fearful and feel unsafe. What advice do you have for us?

- I get it, I understand it and I agree, it is a really scary time.
- What we don't read in the news and on the internet is that we are living in a time that is unprecedented in the number of people who are entering into God's family.
- There have been more former Muslims baptized in our church than any other time in the history of our church.
- We are living in a broken world and we need to put on our spiritual eyes to see how God is working in our world today. When we see the attacks happening, we know that a spiritual battle is happening and we must hold onto the truth of what God is doing to bring people to himself.
- Let us fix our eyes on what is unseen, rather than what is seen."

What resources do you recommend on the topic of risk in missions?

- [Visit my blog!](#)
- My book will be available in September – Facing Danger: A Guide Through Risk
- You can also email me at

