

Government (2): Risk

Scripture

Gen 12.1-4; Ex 14.10-14; Jdg 7.2-8; 1 Sam 17.41-47; Est 4.9-16; Ps 77; Isa 50.4-9; Jer 1.4-10, 14-19; Dan 3.13-18; Mk 10.28-31; Lk 9.23-27; Act 4.23-31; 1 Cor 9.19-23; 2 Cor 6.1-10; Phi 4.11-14; 1 Thess 3.1-5; Heb 12.1-3; 1 Jn 4.16-21.

Graih

1): In Graih's early days we were looking for accommodation as we had lots of people staying with us. At the same time the government were discussing homelessness and seeking a response to it. There arose a possibility of Graih running its drop-in out of government premises. Discussions were entered. It soon became apparent that there would be problems. Graih wanted the guys to be able to decorate the premises; decoration could only be done by government-approved contractors. Graih wanted the guys to participate in making tea and food; food and drink provision could only be carried out by those with food health and hygiene certificates. Graih wanted to preserve its trust-based unconditional welcome; lengthy written risk assessments would be required of everyone coming through the doors.

It was obvious that Graih operated on a very different framework from government. These two frameworks were mutually incompatible. It was decided that it would be inappropriate for Graih to inhabit government premises.

2): Graih works with a risky and vulnerable group of people. They are on the margins of society and they are often distrustful of anything that is perceived as authoritative or institutional. To build meaningful relationships of trust with this group Graih has intentionally worked in a risky way. Our focus on trust and a relational model of working has borne much fruit and has allowed us to engage effectively with the people we seek to serve. Our risk-taking is not cavalier or unconsidered but springs from a commitment to taking risks for the sake of the guys.

In many discussions over the years Graih has found that its approach is not often shared or understood. Government, as custodians of public resources, has a naturally cautious and risk-averse mentality. This mentality is often found in all statutory services, in larger charities and in other institutions (the church?). In many contexts a strong risk-averse culture is desirable (one thinks of most of the health service). In other contexts, however, it is precisely in the acceptance and practice of risk that fruitful work can take place.

Questions

1. What risks have you taken? What happened?
2. Throughout scripture we see God inviting people to take risks, large and small. How does this affect your view of risk?
3. Risk aversion is often linked to fear. What are you most afraid of? How might 1 John's emphasis on love casting out all fear affect you?
4. What is your response to Graih's 'risky' model of work? Are there other areas of work where an explicit acceptance of risk could be fruitful?
5. What do you think the church's response to risk is? What should it be? If it needs to change, how can that happen?
6. Risk naturally entails failure. How should we respond to this?

Ideas for further action

1. Identify specific risks you as an individual or as a group can take in the pursuit of the

- kingdom. Support one another and hold each other accountable.
2. Invite people to talk to you about the risks they have taken, and the successes and failures involved.
 3. Become ambassadors in the church for a risk-embracing life, rooted in the freedom of God's love.
 4. Identify a cause or a group of people with whom it is risky to engage. Then do so.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the love that casts out all fear. Hold us in such love that we may be able to risk all that we have for your kingdom.

Jesus, we are so often beset with half-hearted tensions, doubts and ignorance. Thank you for your grace and gentleness. Take us by the hands and lead us in your fearless paths.

Spirit, thank you that you brook no opposition in your work of new creation, flooding our lives and our world with new life. Break our fragile 'security' that we might find a liberating love in you.

Amen.