

**Leaders Must Be Risk Takers**  
**Blog by Thom Rainer, President of Lifeway**

I believe ~~church revitalization leaders~~ **Small Group Leaders** should be consummate students of risk taking and change leadership.

1. There is no such thing as a status quo church. Here is the harsh reality in today's culture. Churches are either headed toward greater health or they are declining in health. Many of the declining churches are dying. There are no churches "holding their own" or "hanging in there." We need risk-taking leaders to lead church revitalization because the alternative is dying and death.

2. ~~Churches that need revitalizing~~ **Small groups that make disciples** must be led by change agents. That path is risky. Change can be painful. Change is often resisted. Change can be three steps forward and two steps backwards. But if the revitalization leader does not lead change, the church will not become healthier.

3. Criticism is a constant for risk-taking leaders of revitalization. Thus, many leaders in these churches revert back to behaviors of risk aversion. To use a sports metaphor, they play defense instead of offense. ~~Church revitalization leaders~~ **Small group leaders who change the way things have always been done** must be willing to endure the criticisms that will come their way.

4. Revitalization will take place when a leader points to the discomfort of an untraveled future path rather than remaining in the comfort of a well-worn present. It takes a leader willing to take risks to look to the future. It is not fully known. It is not the way we've always done it. It is downright uncomfortable for most people.

5. In the past, we often saw the established church as a place where leaders could move so slowly that progress was imperceptible. And that was okay, because the churches of the past offered stability and sustainability. Such is not the case today. Leading ~~a church~~ **a small group** toward revitalization is risky business. But it is a necessary business. And risk is really the path all leaders should take. There is a word in the Bible that reflects this leadership disposition more clearly. The word is faith.