

Take a Risk!

A monthly publication from Risk Takers *for* Christ

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The Core Four

by Rev. Dale M. Glading, President

If you are a diehard baseball fan like me - and a Yankee fan to boot - you are very familiar with the phrase, "Core Four." That distinctive label was given to the four main building blocks of the Yankees dynasty of the late 1990's and early 2000's.

Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Jorge Posada, and Andy Pettitte were all drafted by the Yanks or signed as amateur free agents in the early nineties. They played together in the minors, and each of them made his Major League debut during the 1995 season.



The greatness and success of these four players cannot be denied. Together, they led the Bronx Bombers to five World Championships - including four in five years - as well as seven American League pennants and 11 AL East division titles.

Andy Pettitte was the first of the "Core Four" to retire in 2010, leaving behind the "Key Three." Posada did likewise in 2011. Pettitte then returned to the Yanks for two more seasons before retiring again in 2013, along with Rivera. Jeter followed suit in 2014.

Jeter and Rivera are sure-fire, first-ballot Hall of Famers, and may actually be unanimous selections. A strong case could also be made

that Pettitte and Posada deserve enshrinement in Cooperstown. Time will tell.

The point I want to make in this article is that Risk Takers for Christ has its own "Core Four." No, that nickname doesn't belong to a group of players, staff members or volunteers. Instead, I am referring to the four core outreaches of our eight-year old ministry.

The first outreach - and the one many people associate Risk Takers with - is our ministry to prisoners through sports. Since our inception in 2011, we have taken basketball, softball, soccer and power-lifting teams into dozens of correctional institutions in three states and two countries. As a result, tens of thousands of inmates have been exposed to the gospel message.

Our second outreach, which is almost as well-known, is our Living H2O Initiative. This program involves the use of basketballs, free water bottles, and evangelistic literature to reach at-risk youth for the cause of Christ. Our Living H2O staff also does its best to provide positive male role models to these young men in their teens and twenties, many of whom are from broken homes and dysfunctional families.

The third outreach that Risk Takers for Christ is involved in is racial reconciliation. Because a large percentage of inmates are minorities, you cannot be involved in prison

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It Never Gets Old!

by Rev. Dale M. Glading, President

OK, to be honest, I could do without having to wake up in the wee hours of the morning, but that's about the only thing I don't look forward to on the second Saturday of each month. As you probably know, those dates are reserved for our monthly prison ministry trip, which is something that I've been doing for 31 years and counting.

On this particular Saturday, we got to sleep in until 4:30 a.m. because Polk Correctional Institution is an easy two-hour drive from Vero Beach. After a quick breakfast stop, our eight-man basketball team arrived at the institution right on schedule. We were met at the front gate by "Big E," a Christian correctional officer who was assigned to be our escort for the day.

"Big E" made sure that we passed through security quickly and efficiently, and soon we were warming up on the outdoor court. Then the head referee approached to inform me that we would be playing TWO games that morning against TWO different inmate squads. I nodded in agreement, notified our players of the change, and before we knew it Game One was underway.

It couldn't have been any more exciting, with the score being tied at the end of regulation. The 150 spectators stood riveted - and cheering loudly - as our Risk Takers team won in overtime. Our tired players immediately went into "ministry mode," distributing Gospel of Johns and evangelistic literature as I introduced our team.



Matt Parris then shared his personal testimony and I preached the message that God had laid on my heart earlier in the week. The inmate crowd was extremely respectful to both of us and we collected a bunch of response cards before the whistle blew, signaling the beginning of the second game.

We won that game too, and then left the institution for a bite to eat at a nearby restaurant. Then it was back to Polk CI for Games Three and Four. That's right... I said Games THREE and FOUR!

Because Polk CI is divided into two different compounds, there were two more teams that wanted to play us. Teams that hadn't seen - or heard - us that morning. And yes, teams that were fresh as daisies.

Somehow, our players dug deep and pulled out a one-point victory in Game Three. Scott Coffey then shared his testimony and Matt stepped up again to do the preaching. As before, the spectators - 200 in number - were very respectful.

Due to time constraints, Game Four was going to be abbreviated. And so, we knew it was critical that we "come out firing." Our tired team did exactly that and earned another hard-fought victory. Four games, four wins... and 350 inmates being exposed to the gospel!

On the way out of the institution, one of our players was so overcome with exhaustion that he dry-heaved into a trash can. Thankfully, he revived fast enough to enjoy some pizza and wings on the way home.

The Finger of God

by Os Hillman, TGIF Today God Is First Volume 1

"When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."

(Exodus 31:18)

Throughout the Bible, the word testimony is used in many ways. Testimony comes from the Hebrew word *eduwth*, which means "witness." The Ark of the Covenant contained the Ten Commandments, written and inscribed personally by God and given to Moses on

Mount Sinai. These became known as the testimony. The ark was a divinely inspired structure that was to be used as a witness to the people of Israel and the whole world of God's power and majesty. These divinely created tablets were a witness of God's activity on earth with man.

Throughout the Bible, God looked to create testimonies with His people. At the Red Sea, He created a testimony through Moses. God created a testimony through Joshua when He parted the Jordan River and allowed the people with the Ark to cross on dry land. When Lazarus lay

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Can I Pray for YOU?

by Rev. Dale M. Glading, President

We were nearing the completion of our second basketball game at Polk CI - with two more scheduled that afternoon - when an inmate spectator approached me on the bench. His name was Billy, and he spoke in a quiet and respectful voice.

"Can I pray for you when the game is over?" he asked sincerely. "You guys come in here and minister to us," he added. "I'd just like a chance to return the favor."

"Of course, you can," I replied. "We'd be honored."

Once the game ended and we had given out a few awards to the opposing team, our players gathered beside our bench and I introduced Billy to my teammates. Before he prayed, another inmate joined our small circle. His name was John, and he was scheduled to go home in a few months.

Billy prayed his heart out, asking God to bless our players individually and collectively. As he closed, I asked Scott Coffey to offer a prayer for John to have a smooth transition back into society. As he did so, we all laid hands on this soon-to-be-free man.

After returning from lunch, we bumped into John again and he had another prayer request. John told us about his father, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It is John's desire for his dad to live long enough to see him when he gets out of prison. Unfortunately, before we could pray for John, he received a "chapel call."

A "chapel call" generally means that something serious has happened to an inmate's family. The news is rarely good, and the job of sharing that information usually falls on the shoulders of the facility's chaplain.

We suspected that John's chapel call wasn't pleasant and the tears in his eyes when he got back confirmed our suspicions. "My dad isn't doing well, but he's still alive," he told us. "The hospital said that they will let me know if anything changes."

Our hearts sank along with John's as we gathered in a prayer circle for a second time. Choking back tears of our own, we lifted up John and his dad in prayer, and then exchanged hugs and words of encouragement.

As you can see, our prison trips involve a lot more than playing a few basketball games.

The Core Four

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ministry without developing a real heart for racial unity in America, starting with the Body of Christ.

Fourth and finally is our Dare 2B Daring men's conferences. Once again, prison ministry - and working with at-risk youth - points to the importance of training men to properly lead their homes, their churches and their communities.

We are always looking for new volunteers, prayer partners and financial supporters for each of these four critical outreaches. You may not get a plaque in Cooperstown for signing up, but I can guarantee you a heavenly reward that far surpasses the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Please contact me at dale@risktakersforchrist.org if you are interested in joining one of our ministry teams or supporting our evangelistic and discipleship efforts.

Risk Takers for Christ 2019 Prison Ministry Schedule

- ♦ **January 12:** Basketball at DeSoto CI, Arcadia FL
- ♦ **February 9:** Basketball at Tomoka CI, Daytona Beach FL
- ♦ **March 9:** Basketball at Putnam CI, East Palatka FL
- ♦ **April 13:** Basketball at Hardee CI, Bowling Green FL
- ♦ **May 11:** Basketball at Okeechobee CI, Okeechobee FL
- ♦ **June 8:** Basketball at Lake CI, Clermont FL
- ♦ **July 13:** Basketball at Sumter CI, Bushnell FL
- ♦ **August 10:** Basketball at Marion CI, Lowell FL
- ♦ **September 14:** Basketball at Avon Park CI, Avon Park FL
- ♦ **October 12:** Basketball at Polk CI, Polk City FL
- ♦ **November 9:** Basketball at Zephyrhills CI, Zephyrhills FL
- ♦ **December 14:** Basketball at Martin CI, Indiantown FL

The Finger of God

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dead for days, Jesus came and created a testimony of His ability to raise the dead.

Jesus is still looking for those who are willing to have a testimony created through their lives. One of the major characteristics of a God-ordained testimony is for something to happen that cannot be explained in the natural. In other words, if you can make it happen through your abilities, it is not a testimony about God, but about you.

One time, I was invited to go to South Africa to a major conference, but I did not have the funds to go. I sensed that I was to attend this conference, but refused to use a credit card to fund the trip. I waited and waited. Finally, on the day of the registration closing, a man came to my office and said I was to go to this conference and he would fund the trip. He took out his checkbook and wrote a check for \$2,500. That has become a testimony of God's activity in my life.

God wants to create a testimony in every aspect of your life - your family, your work, your church, and in your community. He is waiting to put His finger on your next endeavor to reveal His power through your life. Look carefully at the events where God might want to create a testimony out of an impossible situation. He delights in using His children for this purpose because it brings Him glory.

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BANG for Your Buck!

Risk Takers for Christ appreciates every person who partnered with us this year. Here is what God accomplished through YOUR prayers and YOUR financial support.

Prison Ministry: Our RTC basketball team played 26 games in 10 different correctional institutions throughout Florida, sharing the Gospel with an estimated 2,655 inmates.

Living H2O Initiative: We conducted 95 Living H2O Initiatives, 50 of them indoor and 45 of them outdoor. As a result, several hundred at-risk youth were exposed to the Gospel and mentored by positive male role models.

Publications: We published 12 newsletters and 260 devotional messages that are read by hundreds of people across the country.

Additional Outreaches: Risk Takers conducted a 3-day Bible conference and a 2-day basketball clinic. We also preached seven times at a local homeless program, and seven times at area churches. RTC representatives also attended a national corrections conference, a national racial unity conference, a missions fair and a Vacation Bible School.

Please join us in praising God for His favor in 2018. And if you haven't already, please consider making a generous New Year's donation so 2019 can be even better!

Upcoming Risk Takers Events:

- ♦ January 7: RTC Board Meeting, Vero Beach FL
- ♦ January 12: Basketball at DeSoto CI, Arcadia FL
- ♦ February 9: Basketball at Tomoka CI, Daytona Beach FL

**Take a Risk! is a publication of Risk Takers for Christ, PO Box 651421, Vero Beach FL 32965-1421.
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