**The Reckless Love of God**

Show video of Alex Honnold

This guy’s crazy! Why would anyone take a risk like that?

* The old line from movies and TV is: *Because it’s there*. Of course there’s more to it than that. There are a lot of things that are “there” but he doesn’t climb them.
* He wouldn’t do it for fame. It’s a very limited audience that will ever know.
  + How many people here know who he is?
  + How many have even heard of him before now?
  + Who will remember much about him other than that you saw this short video?
  + Besides, he was already known among climbers as one of the best in the world.
* He wouldn’t do it for money. No one pays someone to climb El Capitan,
  + Honnold has found ways to make money for example doing lectures. And National Geographic made a film about this climb entitled “Free Solo” for which I imagine he got paid. But that’s not why he did it.
  + By the way, “Free Solo” is scheduled for release September 28. If you want to go with me to see it let me know.

Why would a man take on a risk of that magnitude? If he fell after more than a few feet up that wall he would be seriously injured, perhaps paralyzed, or worse, killed. Because he had arranged National Geographic to film the climb, if he were unsuccessful he risked wearing the label of “failure“.

Someone might suggest that climbing El Capitan free solo is rather reckless. More than 3000 feet straight up with no ropes, no harness, no help of any kind.

Honnold said he didn’t do it for the thrill, although I’m sure that had to be a thrilling experience. The best explanation, according to Honnold is that he did it for sport. In other words, **he did it because he wanted to**. Any other reasons are known only to him.

Alex Honnold risked his life not to make a statement or to show off, but simply because he wanted to.

The first time I ever considered the word “risk” in association with God was when I was writing a position paper for one of my Doctoral courses. My assignment was to define a position on the providence and sovereignty of God. Does God control each and every event of our lives, both the good and the bad?

* Does God take the life of a little baby?
* Does God give someone AIDS?
* Does God cause a family of four to be killed by a drunk driver?
* During the American Civil War both sides believed that that the outcome was God’s decision and He would cause their side to win.

The gist of my paper is that God chooses to risk. Rather than exercising exhaustive control over all things, specifically selecting every birth or death, wedding or war, famine or windfall, God chooses not to control. He risks that some things will go contrary to His desire.

I think that’s why the song we introduced today speaks to me so profoundly. God’s love is overwhelming, never-ending, and ultimately reckless. I don’t mean that in a negative way. His love is reckless in that He risks that we’ll not return His love.

It’s what we call “freewill”. God created us with the freewill to believe Him or deny Him, to accept Him or reject Him, to love Him or hate Him. He could have decided that He would create only people who will love Him. He chose instead to risk that we live always for ourselves and never for Him.

You have the freewill to choose for yourself. You may choose to consider God or ignore Him. You may choose to recognize God as the intelligent designer of the universe, or you may choose to believe in a world governed only by chance. You may choose to love God, or you may choose to hate Him.

You have freewill to return God’s overwhelming and never-ending love. You also have freewill to ignore anything or everything about Him.

That’s why it’s reckless love. Alex Honnold, although he was confident in his ability to climb El Capitan, had no guarantee that he wouldn’t fall. By His choice God has no guarantee that we will love Him. He risks that even though He loves us and gives Himself for us, we may choose to spurn that love.

He risks that instead of returning His love we might hate Him. Instead of accepting the salvation and eternal life He promises, we could choose to believe with the late Carl Sagan that the physical universe is all there was, all there is, and all there ever will be, that there is no eternal life and no salvation.

God chose to take that risk. I think He knew that many if not most would choose against Him. One of Jesus’ earliest teachings included that the way to eternal destruction is wide and easy and “many” will choose it, but few will choose life. (Matthew 7:13f)

Knowing that we might very well reject Him, and in fact that many of us already have, “*while we were still sinners*” (Romans 5:8) He loved us and died for us.

Why would God, why would anyone take such a great risk? Why would God choose to risk it all without certainty that His love will be returned?

Lisa and I are enjoying what many of you know, being grandparents.

* Show pics

We began investing in these babies long before they were born. We were praying for them. Lisa was buying baby clothes. I was planning the things I would build for them.

I can’t think of anything I wouldn’t do for them. I have no guarantee that either of them will ever say “*I love you, grandpa!*” I willingly choose to risk my love. I don’t do it for fame or fortune. I do it because I want to. I want to love them, and I want them to love me.

* Before you were born God was already loving you.
* Before you took your first breath He was investing in you.
* While you were truly an enemy He fought to save you.

One time Jesus was loving on people like us, sinners all. The religious leaders “muttered”. διαγογγυζω carries the idea of talking about someone loud enough for him to hear you. Have you ever overheard someone talking bad about you? They were talking about Jesus intentionally that He could hear.

* *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*
* *“Have you seen the people he has around himself?*
* *“How can he stand to be around tax collectors and prostitutes?”*

*Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.* Luke 15:2-5, 7

Like the shepherd in the parable God searches for you. He risks everything for you. You can’t save yourself. You don’t deserve this love. Is that reckless? Yes it is in a way. There’s no guarantee that you will reciprocate.

Why does He do it? He does it because He wants to. He wants to have a love relationship with you. He wants you to choose to say “I love you.”

* God didn’t take this risk so that He could show off His power when He condemns those who refuse Him.
* He certainly didn’t do it for money.
* He didn’t do it for fame. Everybody already knows Him. *What may be known about God is plain…because God has made it plain.For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.* Romans 1:19f

God exercised reckless love because He wants us to love Him. Let me do a Tommy Oaks: Everybody say, “*I love you, God*”.

* “*I love you, God*”.
* “*I love you, God*”.
* “*I love you, God*”.

Did you say that because I told you to? Or because you love Him and you want to say it?

I’m looking forward to hear Malachi say, “*I love you, Grandpa*”. I want him to say it because he loves me, not because Rachel and Keith helped him memorize the phrase.

Jesus explained very simply in what is perhaps the most memorized and quoted verse in all the Bible, *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16

Paraphrase: Here’s how God loves us. He gave His Son to die for our sins. It’s reckless love because there’s no guarantee that any of us will return His love.

Let’s go back to the quote, *God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.* Notice, this love was expressed before any of us chose how we will respond.

Notice also, Jesus didn’t say God’s love is for those who live an altruistic or philanthropic life. It’s not for the people who play by the rules and are kind to strangers. Jesus mentioned no limits.

When God looks at you He doesn’t see a liar or a cheater. He doesn’t see a sexual whore or a prodigal. He see a daughter or a son that He’s willing to die for. He sees a child He will sacrifice everything for, because He loves you, overwhelmingly, unendingly, and recklessly.

God recklessly loves us all. And so He gave His Son promising that whoever will believe Him will enjoy eternal life. As Jesus’ disciple John wrote, *to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.* John 1:12

We can’t earn it. We don’t deserve it. Still He give Himself for us. That’s the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God.

Now my friend, you get to choose. You have to choose. Your choice is between two loves, God’s love or the world’s love.

Let’s go to a statement where Jesus explained this. The setting is the room where the Last Supper was held, referred to as “*The Upper Room*”. Jesus is preparing His followers (that includes us) for living in the world holding to Christian faith. That includes being hated and persecuted by the world. He said,

*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.* John 15:18f

If you believe God the world will hate you. But if you choose the world it will love you. An interesting difference – God’s love is αγαπη, overwhelming, never-ending, and reckless. The world’s love is φιλεω, limited love that ultimately serves not the one loved but the one who loves.

We choose. We choose either the world’s love or God’s love. God’s love is overwhelming, never-ending, even reckless. The world’s love is sinister, seductive.

I’ll be clear. “The world” is personified in Satan, the prince of this world. While Jesus warns of the hardships of Christian faith Satan offers flowers and sweet songs that make you feel good, as if you’re the only one he loves.

He doesn’t really love you. He wants you to be like him. *Love the world and you will be loved. Why put up with adversity for being a follower of Jesus? Can’t we all just get along? You can still like Jesus, just don’t be a fanatic.*

All you have to do is assimilate into the culture, conform to the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2), compromise just a little. Every new generation of Jesus followers experiences the same temptation dressed in different garb. *If you’ll just compromise and conform to our way, we’ll love you*. And who doesn’t want to be loved?

* *Yes the movie is a bit raunchy, but it’s entertaining and funny.*
* *Come to the party. Yes, there will be a lot of alcohol and probably some questionable behavior, but we’re all friends.*
* *I know it’s not exactly kosher, but this investment will make you rich.*
* *Sure worship is important but family first. God will never fault you for spending time with your family.*
* *It’s just a fib, a white lie. The consequences of telling the truth are serious. You can easily avoid them.*

We’re confronted with temptations to love the world every day. We must choose one or the other. Choose God’s love or the world’s love. We can’t choose both. There will be no negotiations, no détente. *Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.* James 4:4

Which love do you choose?

I’ll address two questions and then I’ll quit here:

1. Why would anyone who has any understanding of God choose to love the world?

I think the answer is this. People choose to love the world because it’s comfortable. It feels good to be like everyone else. It feels good to fit in. In Proverbs 27:7 the wise man wrote, *He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet*.

As long as the world fulfills my basic desires I’m happy, I feel good. Why would I want to put myself in a situation where the world will hate me? I know the world doesn’t really love me. I know the world wants to control me and use me, but it makes me feels full.

As long as I’m satisfied I don’t need or want the love of God. I certainly don’t want to surrender to anyone, not even God.

Understand this, when the world is through with you it will throw you aside like a bag of kitchen garbage. Then the love of God, even if it comes at the cost of bee stings will seem sweet.

1. Why does the world hate Jesus and His followers?

The world hates Jesus and His followers because He stands in opposition to the culture. His lifestyle is about sacrificial love, obedience, humility, surrender. The world can’t handle that. The world is all about “me”. Jesus is all about God.

Jesus didn’t belong to this world and neither do we. He loves us recklessly. He invites us to choose His love.

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God. It chases me down, fights ‘til I’m found. I can’t earn it. I don’t deserve it, still He gives Himself for me. And you.

**The Reckless Love of God**

1. When you first heard/read God’s love referred to as “reckless”, what was your immediate thought?
2. Do you agree that “God chooses to risk, rather than exercising exhaustive control over all things, He chooses not to control”?
   1. Why or why not?
   2. How far does “freewill” go?
3. Read Matthew 7:13f. How does, “many will choose destruction” sync with God’s love for everyone?
4. If Jesus is willing to “leave 99” to look for a single lost person, what must He expect of the 99?
5. How do you respond when someone challenges, “A loving God (John 3:16) would never allow ‘many’ to go to Hell instead of Heaven? Has He not put a limit on His love?”
6. What might it look like for someone to “love the world”?
7. Why would anyone choose to love the world instead of God?
8. Discuss some explanations for Proverbs 27:7, *He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.*
9. Why does the world hate Jesus and His followers?