

## “Don’t Be Afraid to Pull the Trigger”

By Jason Vanderlaan

I put the butt of the .44 rifle against my shoulder and leveled the barrel at the target. Closing my left eye, I lined up the sights. My finger curled around the trigger, pulling ever so slightly. I checked my aim one more time and squeezed. BANG! The rifle kicked back into my shoulder as the bullet hurled over the ground and obliterated an orange juice carton, propelling pieces of cardboard shrapnel all over the forest floor.

I smiled. I was really enjoying mid-term break in North Carolina at my uncle and aunt’s house. Good, home cooked food. Relaxing with friends and family. And shooting guns out back. Yes sir, it was a good time.

But all good things must come to an end, I suppose. Part way through our target practice, one of the neighbors came over to complain. He was an elderly gentleman from Florida who lived there part time and just happened to be in our neck of the woods that wonderful weekend. And he felt it was his duty to give us some safety instructions on guns (which we were already aware of) before returning to his house.

Apparently, though, that wasn’t enough for him. About ten minutes later a cop showed up. It turns out our neighbor just didn’t want us shooting at all and had called in a complaint. The police officer, however, informed us that there wasn’t anything he could do since we were shooting on my uncle’s property. In order to keep the peace, though, my uncle decided that we’d finish up a last few shots and call it a day.

I admit I was a bit disappointed. I always enjoy learning and practicing new and exciting things. Similarly, as Christians, and especially as Christian youth, we are eager to try new and exciting things (in ministry and in life in general), including things that involve quite a bit of risk. But sometimes there are other Christians, like the man from Florida, who are afraid of what they don’t understand. This is especially true when what they don’t understand seems dangerous. And unfortunately, many people like this also feel the obligation to stop others from doing what they don’t understand.

You may try to implement a new (fill in the blank) at church, only to have fellow Christians frown down upon you. Or you may try to do something new to bring some life back into a dying church and, instead of being supportive, they sit you down to explain the rules of safety. “That’s just too risky,” they say.

Sure, it’s risky. Dangerous, even. But so are scalpels, if used improperly. When used correctly, however, they can be used for great good. And just like guns, if you never try them out, you’ll never learn how to use them properly.

What I’m trying to say is that just because something involves risk



doesn't mean it's bad. Don't be afraid to move forward with your dreams, even if others might be uncomfortable with the risk you're taking. You can't learn and grow without trying, and the best things in life are always gained when you're willing to risk losing everything to gain them.

But at the same time, be considerate of those around you. By "keeping the peace" temporarily, you may prosper much more in the long run. Who knows, maybe the Floridian man will gain respect for my uncle since he was considerate. And maybe one day he'll come over and shoot with my uncle and all will be right with the world.

And maybe, just maybe, if you're willing to go forward with your dreams in a risky yet considerate way, you will inspire others to move forward with you. Just don't be afraid to pull the trigger.