

ENDORSEMENTS

John Maisel is a gifted evangelist who is “ready in season and out of season” to give the gospel. He has dedicated his life to godly principles and he’s laid them out in his book. If you’re looking for the simple truth of Jesus, this book will help you find it.

— **Coach Joe Gibbs**

Founder and Chairman of Joe Gibbs Racing Team

The title of the book is very fitting for John Maisel. He has known for over fifty years that God loves him and as he lives his life, you know for certain whom he trusts. Find a quiet place, pick up the book and enjoy!

— **Norm Miller**

Chairman of the Board, Interstate Batteries

John Maisel has ministered around the world in his lifetime. He has heard the longing of the human heart. In writing this book he has captured the heart of Jesus, who knows our needs better than we do. It is through our submission to trust Him that we find out just how much He loves us and how much He cares. Whether you are a young believer, a weathered follower, male or female, this book is for you. I had to put it down many times to just digest the wisdom John imparts.

— **Sally Meredith**

Cofounder of Christian Family Life with husband Don Meredith

John Maisel is the most courageous ambassador for Christ I have ever known. God has made him an Isaiah for our day, pointing the world to Jesus with boldness and grace. As you listen to his story and feel his heart, the Spirit will use his words to inflame your passion for the King.

— **Jim Denison**

Denison Forum on Truth and Culture

Many people “talk.” Some people, like John Maisel, actually “walk the talk.” Personally, John’s “walk” makes me want the relationship he has with Jesus. John’s “talk”—powerfully conveyed in this book—frees us from the unbearable burden of performance. . . and positions us to receive God’s priceless love.

— **June Hunt**

Founder, CEO, CSO (Chief Servant Officer), Hope for the Heart Author, How to Forgive. . . When You Don’t Feel Like It

It is with great joy that I recommend this book by my longtime friend and ministry partner, John Maisel. You never have to guess what John stands for. He always takes people back to Jesus and to the grace that is found in Him. In this new work, John tells story after story of how God's grace has shown up for him personally, causing his heart to cling to God's love with childlike faith. By relating these personal accounts, John inspires all of us to abandon ourselves to God's sovereign will and perfect love, so as to live boldly with joy and confidence as we abandon ourselves to follow Him.

— **Hugh O. Maclellan, Jr.**

*Executive Chairman of the Board
The Maclellan Foundation, Inc.*

Having ministered side-by-side with John Maisel for over twenty years, I've long known how exciting it is to work with a true hero of the faith. As his successor in the role of President of East-West Ministries, I am learning how incredibly humbling it is to follow in his footsteps. When you read this book you'll appreciate why John feels the grip of God's grace as intensely—and intentionally—as anyone I know. Time and again you'll find yourself saying, "That's the sort of walk with God that I want to have." But you'll also be challenged to "live dangerously" for God in a world where most people are "playing it safe." So be forewarned: John would have us place such tenacious trust in God's perfect love that we laugh in the face of risk and sacrifice for the glory of the Name of Jesus in this dark world and even find ourselves willing to risk our very lives for His cause as we weep over the eternal destiny of others that do not yet know Him.

— **Kurt Nelson**

*President/CEO
East-West Ministries International*

RADICAL TRUST



**THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT TRUTHS
JESUS WANTS YOU TO KNOW.**

JOHN MAISEL

FOREWORD

DR. HOWARD G. HENDRICKS

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EMERITUS, DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Radical Trust The two most important truths Jesus wants you to know.

Copyright © Pending by John Maisel. All right reserved.

Author photo copyright © by Paul Skipworth. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pending

Printed in the U.S.

14 13 12 11 10 09 08

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SPECIAL THANKS

To my wife, Susie, who has been at the forefront of my learning about God's grace by giving me a great deal of undeserved love.

To A'Dina and Harry Smith, my daughter and son-in-law, who have been my greatest encouragers.

To Nicole and Maxson, my grandchildren, who continue to teach me much about Jesus and how to follow Him in childlike faith.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all the East–West Ministries staff, Board, and friends who continue to keep the focus of getting the Good News of Christ’s love to the four corners of the globe.

Special thanks to Bill Hendricks for helping to organize and edit this manuscript over the last year.

All financial proceeds will go to East–West Ministries International to help advance the gospel to the least reached areas of the globe.

CONTENTS

Foreword	xiii
CHAPTER 1 Is There More to the Christian Life?	1
CHAPTER 2 “I Must Tell Others!”	5
CHAPTER 3 Experiencing God	9
PART I “I LOVE YOU!”	13
CHAPTER 4 A New Relationship	15
CHAPTER 5 Discovering God’s Perfect Love	21
CHAPTER 6 The Performance-Driven Life	27
CHAPTER 7 The Shocking Truth about Jesus	33
CHAPTER 8 Are We Really That Bad?	39
CHAPTER 9 What Is Love?	47
PART II “TRUST ME!”	53
CHAPTER 10 God Stops Me in My Tracks	55
CHAPTER 11 Trust Is Tied to God’s Sovereignty	61
CHAPTER 12 Crazy Trust	69
CHAPTER 13 Learning to Obey—the Hard Way	73
CHAPTER 14 Unless God Allows It	77
CHAPTER 15 God Meant It for Good	81
CHAPTER 16 A New Battlefield	85
CHAPTER 17 Fighting for Intimacy with Jesus	91
CHAPTER 18 Abandoned to Love	97
CHAPTER 19 Is Your Cause Worth Your Affections?	101
CHAPTER 20 People Need the Lord	105
CHAPTER 21 God Is Not Bound to a Clock	119
CHAPTER 22 Courageous Trust	127
Appendix: Possible Presentation	133

FOREWORD

As he stood in my office, he was every inch a he-man. His words, his posture, his confidence—all denoted the former Marine officer that he was. Yet something else radiated from him, as well: an intensity, a vigor that propelled his entire manner. Here was a man of purpose, en route to. . .? Well, he was asking me.

John Maisel had slogged through the brambles of Nam to engage the enemies of freedom. But he'd also confronted a force far more powerful than any gun-toting human. He had caught a vision of God, and his heart was on fire. I felt the heat and saw the sparkle. Here was a man on the move!

Nonetheless, John had learned to stop and get his spiritual bearings so as to move in step with the Spirit of Christ. As we talked about his future, I could hear a faint echo in my mind of Jim Elliot. Jim had been assigned to me as my “little brother” when I was a senior at Wheaton College. He became one of the legendary martyrs who gave their lives for the testimony of the gospel a half century ago on the sandy shores of the Curaray River in remote Ecuador. Jim's famous quotation still rings in my ears: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” John seemed to possess that same spiritual maturity far beyond his years.

It is now more than six decades since I began teaching would-be vocational Christian ministers. Very few young men have crossed my path with as much eagerness as John did. Like a diver on the high board, he plunged into the world of Christian leadership, honed his business skills, sharpened his theological acumen, and like an Olympic torchbearer, began traveling the world to bring light into the darkness of sin-shuttered hearts.

RADICAL TRUST

From the battlefield to the college campus to the offices of a ruthless financial world, wherever he goes, John marches on with purpose. He reminds me of the biblical Caleb who, in his ninth decade of life and infused with the passion of Moses, his mentor, cried out to the field commander, Joshua, “Give me this mountain!” In a similar way, John never stops reaching out for the next challenge.

Radical Trust invites readers to journey alongside this remarkable man on his varied path, and hopefully to breathe in something of his exhilaration. Flight-tested in the real world of what Shakespeare called “sharp-toothed unkindness,” John’s message uncovers the essence of winning in life and in death. How does masculine virility square with trust and love? Therein lies the secret of John Maisel’s competence and potency. It’s not really about John at all. This book guides the reader into a treasure trove of truth unlike any to be found elsewhere.

Howard G. Hendricks

*Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Leadership and Christian Education
Dallas, Texas*

Chapter 1



IS THERE MORE TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

“Why should we hear the gospel twice when there are millions who have never heard it even once in their life?” — Hudson Taylor

I was sitting in the lobby of the Hotel National, waiting for my taxi to the airport. The Hotel National has always been one of Moscow’s centers of prestige and power. From the day it opened in 1903, it began attracting the big shots: politicians, dignitaries, diplomats, royalty, business tycoons, celebrities, and the like. When Lenin and the Bolsheviks took over in 1917, they claimed it for their headquarters. Later, in the 1930s, the hotel was updated with spoils from palaces and estates of the former elite—opulent pieces of furniture, masterful works of art, fine paintings, and rare antiques.

RADICAL TRUST

I almost always stayed at the National when I traveled to Moscow in the 1980s, which was often. I liked it there, not because of the luxury and finery—that was certainly nice—but because an international hotel was safer. I was, after all, at the very heart of Soviet Russia. Indeed, there was a great view of the Kremlin from the hotel. But in a place frequented by foreigners, I was less likely to attract attention.

So as I was sitting there with time on my hands, a couple of guys walked into the lobby. They sat down nearby and started a conversation. One of them looked to be an African. But what really caught my attention was they were both speaking English.

Let me tell you, when you've been traveling in a foreign country for several days or weeks, your ears can get tired of hearing languages you don't understand. And even when someone addresses you in English, their English typically has a foreign accent to it. So when someone starts speaking clearly and articulately in Western-style English, that grabs your attention.

Besides, I'm just naturally curious about people. About who they are, what their story is, what they think, what they believe. Especially what they believe about God and about His Son, Jesus.

You see, my reason for traveling to the Soviet Union was to talk to people about Jesus. Many of the people I'd meet had never heard the truths about Jesus. I was the first person who had ever told them who He is. Others had heard about Jesus and became His followers. But for obvious reasons, they had to keep their faith secret. I had the privilege of meeting with them in secret to celebrate our common bond in Christ while encouraging them with prayer and basic Bible teaching.

Divine Appointments

I operated on the belief that every person who came across my path was a divine appointment. Truly, God had brought us together for a purpose. Quite often, the intended purpose was for me to tell that person what I knew about Jesus—if they were interested.

So it was with the English-speaking man from Africa. He and the other fellow had finished their conversation, and now he was sitting by himself. Probably waiting for a ride, just like I was.

A little conversation started up in my head—a conversation that happens a lot for me because of my belief in divine appointments: *Do I say something to him?* Pause. *Maybe I shouldn't say anything.* Pause. *But I really ought to at least see if he's interested.* Pause. *No, what if he's not.* Pause. *I don't want to offend him.* Pause.

Perhaps you've had a similar conversation with yourself when an opportunity comes along to discuss spiritual things. I find a lot of us Christians have little lists we go through for all the reasons why we should keep quiet when the Lord is in fact prompting us to reach out to somebody.

Finally, I just turned to the guy and said, "I noticed you were speaking English."

He smiled and replied, "Yes."

I said, "Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

He said, "No, feel free."

So I said, "Do you have any interest in spiritual things? Or do you ever think much about the existence of God?"

Now I have to admit, these questions are not the sort most people are used to hearing. But then, that's the point. Most people get asked chitchat questions about what they do for work, or where they're from, or what they think of the weather. Those topics are fine. But rarely does anyone ask a person about what is going on inside of them—especially as it relates to what God might be doing in his or her heart.

I've discovered no matter what things look like on the surface, no matter how strong or "together" or self-satisfied an individual may appear, or no matter how angry or hostile they may seem toward God, the Lord is at work behind the scenes in that person's life. If I will trust that, then when I ask people if they would like to talk about spiritual matters, more often than not they would. But usually they don't talk about such things, because no one has bothered to open a door for them to speak about spiritual matters.

RADICAL TRUST

This man turned out to be interested. For a moment he just looked at me. And for a moment I wondered if maybe my fear of offending him had come true. But suddenly he blurted out, “If you had asked me that question two weeks ago, I would have said no. But today, I’m interested.”

With such an opening, I leaned forward and introduced myself. Soon we were deep in conversation. I learned he was from Ethiopia. He was working for the government. He was very intelligent, And, he asked great questions. I never found out what had happened during the previous two weeks that made him interested now in talking about God. But that didn’t matter.

To make a long story short, after about an hour’s conversation, I had an opportunity to explain the gospel to him. I showed him from the Bible how Jesus had come to be his Savior. I told him he needed to trust in what Jesus did on the cross to take away his sin.

After making sure he understood the gospel message, the man finally said to me, “I want to make that decision.” And so we prayed together, right there in the lobby of the hotel. He told Jesus he wanted forgiveness for his sins, and from that point on he was going to be a follower of Jesus.

Just then, my taxi arrived. I hated to break off the conversation. But I really had to go. So I scribbled down my name and contact information and gave it to him. And then I left.

I never saw my new brother in Christ again.



Chapter 2



“I MUST TELL OTHERS!”

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.” — C. T. Studd

Even though I never saw the man from Ethiopia again, I did hear from him. About four or five months after our encounter in Moscow, I received a letter from him. He told me he was writing from prison. The authorities had imprisoned him because of his Christian faith.

To give some background: when Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed as the leader of Ethiopia in 1974, the government degenerated into a series of coups and uprisings lasting for twenty years. Marxism gained a strong foothold, and hundreds of thousands were killed in various acts of terror

RADICAL TRUST

and genocide. The country plunged in political chaos. Worse, it was in a spiritual death spiral.

This man returned to this grim political climate. He knew the Ethiopian authorities hated Jesus. He knew they would probably hate him for receiving Jesus as Savior. Nevertheless, when he returned home, he couldn't stop talking about Jesus. He wanted everyone to know there really is a God. And, He's a God of incredible love. This loving God has made a way for people to know Him, and the only way is through Jesus. Talking about this good news was something he just had to do. It was not something he had to "try" to do. It was something he could not help from doing. He wanted everyone he knew to hear the same gospel message he had heard from me during our "chance" encounter in Russia.

So it was only a matter of time before he was arrested and put in prison. In his letter, he gave me the address of his family and asked if I would contact them to let them know what had happened to him. Of course I followed through with his request. Also, I kept him in my prayers. Beyond praying for him, there was nothing else I could do.

A while later, I heard from him again. He informed me that he might be getting out of prison soon. At least, he thought that was a possibility. But what he most wanted was for me to send him more information about the Christian life and what it means to follow Jesus. I put together a package of materials and mailed it off to him. But after sending the requested materials, I never heard from him again.

Now I don't know what thoughts and feelings come to you as I relate this story, which happened thirty years ago. Perhaps, if you're a Christian from America, the story causes you to admire this man's boldness, courage, and commitment. You might describe him as someone of unusual faith.

But here's what's remarkable: The man's faith was by no means unusual. Bold faith like that was the norm for the people I met who started following Jesus in those Iron Curtain days. Almost without exception, from the moment they trusted Christ, their immediate response was, "I've got to go tell my friends about this." This kind of reaction happened

consistently—I'd say almost every time. Whether it was a person I might have met on the street, or a professor in a university, or someone like a waiter or a cab driver or a salesclerk, it was always the same pattern: within an hour or two of making their decision for Christ, the person invariably had the impulse to say something like, "I've got many friends who need to hear this message!"

I still see the same pattern today. Even in countries like Iran, Uzbekistan, Myanmar, certain districts in India, and other places where it is extremely dangerous to talk about Jesus. I'm sure new believers in those areas consider the risks of going public with their faith. But those risks don't seem to be a hindrance to them. It's as if they've had a spiritual DNA implanted into them compelling them to tell others about Jesus. Maybe they can't do it openly and freely. But even if they have to do it in a whisper, they can't resist telling people around them about the message of Jesus. Such a response is the norm for new Christians almost everywhere in the world—the only real exceptions being Western Europe (the former stronghold of Christianity) and the United States.

Saved, But Silent

In contrast, when I come home to the United States, I find Christians who are mostly silent when it comes to talking with people about Jesus. Does that not strike you as odd? Oh, yes, we have lots of churches in America. Hundreds of thousands of churches, in fact. We have freedom of religion. We also have freedom of speech. And we have Christian bookstores, Christian radio stations, Christian music, Christian blogs, Christian colleges, and Christian organizations. We have lots of Christian things because we've got a lot of Christians. But I don't hear many Christians talking to the people around them about Jesus.

I'm not the only one. Probe Ministries, in the Dallas suburb of Plano, partnered with Barna Research Group in December 2010 to conduct a statistically valid survey of 817 born-again Christians in the United States,

RADICAL TRUST

entitled, “The Culturally Captive Christian Study 2010.” For the purposes of research, Barna defines a “born-again Christian” as someone who answers “yes” to two statements: (1) “I have made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important in my life today”; and (2) “I know I am going to heaven when I die because I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus as my Savior.”

Among the questions these Christians were asked was: “Some people talk about traditional forms of spiritual engagement. What do you do, if anything, that you consider to be traditional spirituality, in a typical month?” A number of activities were listed, and survey participants were allowed to check as many of the activities as they wished. Only 1 percent selected “witness to others” as something they do in a typical month.

Wow! Only 1 percent. Why so low? What accounts for such a small number? And what accounts for the fact that so many Christians in the West tell me their experience as a believer is mediocre at best? The vast majority of them are good, churchgoing men and women. Nevertheless, person after person will express disappointment with how their walk with Christ is turning out. They are fully aware of Jesus’ bold claim that He came to bring life, and an abundance of it (see John 10:10). But somehow that abundance of life has eluded them.

Likewise, they know about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). But they are compelled to admit they personally experience very little love, joy, peace, and so on.

In the end, they often ask me, “What’s wrong, John? There must be more to the Christian life than what I’m experiencing.”

What do I say to them?

