

# **DANGER CALLING**

**TRUE ADVENTURES OF RISK AND FAITH**

**YOUTH EDITION**

**PEB JACKSON  
JAMES LUND**

  
**Revell**

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## Introduction

This isn't your typical Bible study. We're going to take you on a high-adrenaline ride to places few people dare to go—the thin air at the peak of Mount Everest, the black waters at the bottom of the Atlantic, the steaming jungles of the Philippines, and the frozen floes of the Antarctic. We'll also take you to a few other places just as dangerous and exciting—the depths of your heart, life, and faith.

*Danger Calling* is a book of true stories. It features people in extreme situations, often brought on by their own extreme choices. Some stories will be familiar. Some have never been told before. All will keep you in suspense, with lives hanging on every decision.

This is also a book of questions. We're going to challenge you to think about your response to each story and what it means to you. You'll find no pat answers. We'll explore four primary themes—courage, sacrifice, perseverance, and leadership—with questions such as these: *Would you give up your life jacket to save another person on a sinking ship? How much are you willing to risk for fame and glory? What is your source of strength in a crisis? Could you lead a friend out of danger after a plane crash in the mountains?*

Especially when you're young, it can be hard to know where you fit in and what you're supposed to do next. Part of our

goal is to help you with that—to enable you to discover who you are. But we also want you to find out who you’re meant to be. We see this as a matter of faith, and we want you to know where you stand. Through this book, we’re asking: *Do you have a relationship with God? Are you a little too comfortable in your faith? Is he calling you to a life of greater risk and deeper meaning?*

We are a couple of guys who are fascinated by the often-hidden benefits of risk and danger and how they connect to faith. Peb is the true adventurer. As a boy, he scaled the ten-story water tower in his hometown of Haviland, Kansas (unroped). He’s been testing his limits on mountains, bike trails, rapids, and jungle safaris ever since. Jim is the writer who can’t decide which he loves more—a great hike in the wilderness or a great story about one. We had a good time joining forces on our first book of adventure stories, *A Dangerous Faith*. We wanted to go further, to reach into people’s hearts and lead them to their calling. Inspired by conversations with our agent, Bill Jensen, we began talking about a new project that would challenge people to think about their lives and faith. We want to invite you into an adventure that’s as old as our existence: “Seek me and live” (Amos 5:4). The result is in your hands.

How you approach *Danger Calling* is up to you. The sixteen stories and follow-up questions are designed for talking over with a few friends, but you can certainly tackle them in a larger group, with just one friend, or on your own. The idea is to read one story before you meet with your group and then go through the follow-up material for that story. *Would You? Could You?* features probing questions and relevant Scripture passages. Use it to think about what you want to say to the group. As you go through it, write down other verses to share and discuss. *Reporting In* is your invitation to connect with the Lord through prayer, either as a group or individually. *Hitting the Trail* is a section just for you, an opportunity to write down and apply whatever you’re learning.

*New Territory* lists more questions and books, videos, and other resources to explore when you want to dig deeper.

When you meet with your group, be honest and open about your ideas and doubts. You won't get much out of this book if you say only what others want to hear. Remember to give everyone a chance to share, and encourage each other to tell your own stories of danger and faith. Allow time to thoroughly discuss each question. Feel free to take on more than one story in a session. And once you're done with *Danger Calling*, don't just throw it away. Wait a few months or a year, then go through it again. You may be surprised by how much your life and faith have changed.

You won't always be comfortable with the questions in this book—or your answers. That's okay. You're starting a daring adventure, and risk and adventure are never easy. The Lord designed it that way. He uses our struggles and our proximity to danger to draw us closer to him. We find him on that precarious ridge between the comfortable and the unknown. It's where we need to be. It's the place where we discover that the more we risk and trust God, the closer we move to his heart and the higher calling for which he created us.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Are you ready? It's time to dive deeper into danger and nearer to the Author of the greatest adventure of all.

PART ONE

# COURAGE



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## Back on Board

Be strong and courageous . . . for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

**A** blustery wind and the sound of waves crashing onto the sand greet blonde-haired, thirteen-year-old Bethany Hamilton as she gets out of the van. A short walk down the trail and a quick inspection of the beach confirm everyone's hopes—it's a great spot for surfing.

Originally, Bethany had planned only to watch. She was going to just sit in the sand while her friends rode their boards. But the water, the waves, and the perfect conditions are too tempting. After all, her dream has been to become a professional surfer. She's already been successful as an amateur on the National Scholastic Surfing Association (NSSA) circuit and even has a sponsor. She has to try it.

She has to know, after everything that's happened, if she can still surf.

It was just a month ago that Bethany's life changed forever. On Halloween morning 2003, Bethany was doing what she loved most, what she'd been doing every chance she had since she'd first tried surfing at the age of seven. She and her best friend, Alana Blanchard, along with Alana's brother, Byron, and dad, Holt, were surfing at Tunnels, a beach on the north shore of the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The waves weren't spectacular, but that didn't matter. Bethany didn't want to be anywhere else.

After about half an hour in the water, Holt and Byron were on their boards and farthest from the beach. Alana trailed behind them in the water, and Bethany was about fifteen feet behind her friend, a quarter mile from shore. Bethany was lying on her stomach on her red, white, and blue surfboard, looking out to sea. Her right arm rested on the nose of her board. Her left arm, the one with a shiny, light blue watch, dangled in the crystal clear water.

*I hope the surf picks up soon,* Bethany thought.

There was no warning, no sound or change in the pattern of the calm water. Just a sudden, unexpected presence at her left—something large and gray.

At the same instant Bethany registered the presence, she felt pressure on her arm, a jiggling, and a tug.

By the time she could fully turn her head to look at the blur of movement, the shape was gone. The water was turning bright red. There was a huge crescent-shaped hole in the surfboard. And all that remained of what should have been Bethany's left arm was a three- or four-inch stub.

Bethany's voice was loud yet surprisingly under control: "I just got attacked by a shark!" She began paddling toward shore.

*Get to the beach,* she thought. *Get to the beach.*

A minute later, Holt and Byron appeared at Bethany's side. "I can't believe that this happened," Bethany said.

Holt's face was white, his eyes wide, as he took in the sight of Bethany's bleeding stump and shredded board. "Oh my

gosh!” he said. He began pushing the tail of Bethany’s board to move her faster.

*Please, God, help me, she prayed. God, let me get to the beach.*

Fear began to enter Bethany’s mind. *I could die.* She pushed the negative thoughts aside. *I’m in God’s hands.*

At a shallow point, Holt stood up, took off his gray rash guard, and wrapped it tight around the stub of Bethany’s arm. It was a makeshift tourniquet.

Fifteen minutes after the attack, Bethany, Holt, and Alana reached shore. Byron had already paddled ahead to call 911.

Holt lifted Bethany off her board and onto the sand. Bethany blacked out for a time. Alana ran for help and located a vacationing paramedic named Paul Wheeler. When someone produced a first-aid kit, Wheeler slipped on gloves and explored Bethany’s wound with his fingers. Then he took her pulse.

Wheeler shook his head. “She’s lost a lot of blood,” he said in a low voice.

An ambulance finally arrived. As they pulled out of the parking lot with Bethany inside, a paramedic whispered in her ear, “God will never leave you or forsake you.”

At that moment, at Wilcox Memorial Hospital, Bethany’s father was on an operating table preparing for knee surgery. An emergency room nurse interrupted before the procedure could start. “Just a heads-up, Dr. Rovinsky,” she said. “There’s a thirteen-year-old girl coming—a shark attack victim. We are going to need this room right away.”

Something in Tom Hamilton’s heart told him the girl was either Alana or his daughter. The doctor left to investigate and returned a few minutes later. There were tears in his eyes.

“Tom, it’s Bethany,” he said. “She’s in stable condition. That’s all I know, I don’t have any other information. Tom, I’m going to have to roll you out. Bethany’s coming in here.”

Not long after, Bethany lay in the same room while the doctor prepared for the unexpected surgery on a different

member of the Hamilton family. “Do you want anything?” a nurse asked Bethany.

“Just to go to sleep,” she said.

“Okay, Bethany,” the nurse said. “Close your eyes and sleep.”

Later that day, after the surgery and after the anesthesia had worn off, an exhausted young teen began dealing with the new reality of her life. Bethany told her dad, “I want to be the best surf photographer in the world.” It was her way of saying that she understood her surfing dreams had ended.

By the next day, however, Bethany was already starting to feel a trickle of hope. So many people were saying positive things, cheering her up. Her doctor said that the list of things she could no longer do would be short. Was it possible her dream could stay off that list—that she could still surf competitively?

When she thought about going back into the ocean, Bethany didn’t feel any deep fear of another shark attack. She was more scared of having to let go of her passion.

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Now, just a few weeks after the attack, Bethany is standing on a beach at Kilauea, ready to face her fears and discover her future. She’s selected her nine-foot board, which is easier to catch and maneuver than shorter ones. “You can do it,” she says to herself on the beach. “You can paddle and get up with one arm.”

A voice inside her head yells a rebuttal: *Forget it. You’re going to fail.*

Bethany tries to ignore the voice and steps into the water.

She’s far from alone at this critical moment. Her brother Noah is swimming out with Bethany, holding a video camera. Her dad is there too, taking time off work, shouting, “Go, girl!” Alana and many other friends are also on the beach.

As they have so many times before, Bethany and Alana walk deeper into the refreshing Hawaiian surf. Bethany revels in the warmth of the water and the taste of salt on her lips. It's like being home again.

She decides to begin by riding some "soup" (rolling white water). It's different paddling with just one arm; Bethany feels like a beginner. When the wave starts to pick her up, Bethany places her right hand in the middle of the board and tries to get on her feet.

It doesn't work.

A minute later, she tries a second time. Again, no luck.

Bethany's getting discouraged. She thought it would be easier than this. She can't even stand up.

"Bethany, try it one more time," Tom Hamilton shouts from the water. "This one will be it!"

Another wave tumbles in. Bethany positions her hand on her board and pushes up. She finds her balance. She's standing! She's surfing!

Joy and a sense of gratitude well up inside Bethany. With that one wave, all the doubts vanish. Tears begin running down her face, mixing with the ocean water. Everyone in the water and on the beach cheers.

Now Bethany believes anything is possible.

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That first day back in the water marks the beginning of an impressive return to competitive surfing for Bethany. She finds ways to compensate for the loss of her arm and refines her technique. The next year, she is presented with a special courage award at the Teen Choice Awards sponsored by FOX and wins a Best Comeback ESPY award from ESPN. More important to Bethany, in 2005 she wins an NSSA amateur national championship.

Three years later, Bethany starts competing full-time on the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) World Qualifying

Series. She's achieved her dream—she is a professional, at this writing just one step away from qualifying for the pinnacle of the sport, the ASP World Tour. In Bethany's first competition against many of the world's best surfers, she finishes third.

At five feet ten inches, Bethany has turned into a statuesque, even imposing, figure on a surfboard. She also appears fearless in the water.

"She's really aggressive," says one competitor. "Bethany catches really big waves. Like, gnarly waves."

She's not always as fearless as she seems. She admits that sometimes her heart pounds when she's in the ocean and sees a shadow in the water.

Bethany sometimes asks herself why the shark attack happened at all. There was no record of a shark ever attacking a human on Kauai's north coast. But when Bethany asks, "Why me?" it isn't usually a negative question. She's not asking, "Why did this horrible thing have to happen to me?" For Bethany, it's more about wondering, "Why did God choose me and what does he have in mind for me?"

Some of that question may have already been answered for Bethany. On the day of the attack, a family friend said that God had given her a message from the Bible for the Hamilton family: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jer. 29:11).

Despite her natural shyness, Bethany has taken advantage of her unplanned celebrity to tell her story to the world through interviews, a book, and a documentary, lifting the spirits of millions through her courage. She's also used the opportunity to explain her faith in Jesus Christ. She has written, "I don't really want people looking to me for inspiration. I just want to be a sign along the way that points toward heaven."

For Bethany, the sign pointing to her future is as bright as a Hawaiian sunrise and as inviting as her beloved Pacific surf.

## Would You? Could You?

(Share your answers if you're reading in a group)

David Rovinsky, the doctor who first performed surgery on Bethany Hamilton after she was attacked by a fourteen-foot tiger shark, described her as “cool as a cucumber” at the hospital. That coolness may have saved her life. Bethany lost nearly half of her blood volume; it would have been more if she hadn't stayed calm in the minutes after losing her arm. Her heartbeat stayed slow enough to prevent the severed artery from rapidly bleeding out. She understood she had to fight off the surging feelings of fear and panic. That skill, whether innate or acquired, brands Bethany a survivor.

Laurence Gonzales, in his book *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*, writes: “It is not a lack of fear that separates elite performers from the rest of us. They're afraid, too, but they're not overwhelmed by it. They manage fear. They use it to focus on taking correct action. Mike Tyson's trainer, Cus D'Amato, said, ‘Fear is like fire. It can cook for you. It can heat your house. Or it can burn you down.’”

So what's your “cucumber” rating? If the tiger sharks circling in your life suddenly attack, is your reaction closer to ice, or are you about as cool as a puddle of melted butter? The answer may mean the difference between becoming a survivor or just another victim.

- How about it—if you were in the ocean on your board and your arm had just disappeared into the gaping jaws of a sea monster, *could you* keep it together enough to stem the blood loss and paddle to shore?
- What do you think is the source of Bethany's courage and coolness? Was she born with it? Did she develop it by riding killer waves and challenging herself in surf competitions?
- Read the account of Jesus and Peter walking on water in Matthew 14:22–36. Does this imply a link between

courage and faith? Was faith a factor in Bethany's courage? Is it in yours? Do people of genuine faith have an advantage in crisis situations?

- Courage can take many forms. Bethany showed hers when she returned to the water and surfing. *Would you* be back in the ocean less than a month after a shark had ripped your arm off? *Could you* overcome a devastating loss to renew your passion?
- What about Bethany's willingness, despite her natural shyness, to talk about her love for Jesus in print interviews and on national television—is this also a form of courage? How is it the same as or different from her coolheaded response after the attack and her return to surfing?
- Have you ever made fear work for you in the way Mike Tyson's trainer described? Is there such a thing as good fear? What kind of fear was Jesus talking about when he said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28)?

## Reporting In

Is the Lord calling you to act with greater courage in any area of your life? Take time now to talk with him about it.

## Hitting the Trail

**(This is just for you)**

Not everyone is a world-class surfer or the victim of a shark attack, but we can all find ways to test ourselves and measure or develop our courage. And like Bethany Hamilton, aren't we most useful to God when we are ready to act with strength and courage on his behalf? Maybe it's not

coincidence that you're reading this story today. Maybe the Lord is encouraging you to move boldly into the purpose he's designed just for you.

- Make a list of your greatest fears. What does this say about your courage? What does it say about your faith?

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- Do you think you could take steps to decrease these fears and increase your courage? What would have to change in your life to make that happen? Is prayer and time in the Word part of the equation? Write down your thoughts here.

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- Imagine how God might use you if you had more courage, whether that would involve making friends with someone you barely know, ending a relationship, leaving a party where people are drinking or doing drugs, speaking up in class about your faith, or doing something else. Write down what that might look like. Ask the Lord if this is part of his plan for you—and if so, what you should do next.

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## New Territory

(For those who want to explore further)

Watch *Heart of a Soul Surfer*, the documentary about Bethany Hamilton, and check out the Discovery Channel's internet shark guide at <http://dsc.discovery.com/sharks/>.

- What do you admire most about Bethany's life since the shark attack?

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- How has your opinion changed, if at all, on the connection between courage and faith?

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