

WHEN GOD ASKS US TO DO THE CRAZY STUFF

You Want
Me to Do
WHAT?

WHEN GOD ASKS US TO DO THE CRAZY STUFF

You Want
Me to Do
WHAT?

D.J. Andrews



© 2014 by D.J. Andrews. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336).

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-173-2 (Print)

978-1-63232-174-9 (ePub)

978-1-63232-176-3 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2010910766

.....

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Chapter 1: A Willing Participant. 1
A fresh perspective on faith
Does God operate the same today as in the Bible? Does He still make requests that are seemingly outlandish, uncomfortable, or unorthodox? How do we live God's way in this world?

Chapter 2: Discovering Faith 19
What is it like to receive a life-changing "assignment" from God? Instructed to bring God's love through music to the masses, D.J. Andrews agreed, with little notion of what His music was, no evangelistic experience, and only basic provision.

Chapter 3: Holding Onto Faith. 39
Learning to keep faith alive
In spite of trouble, persecution, lack, and sickness, we are encouraged to live victoriously. Having faith doesn't remove the trials but it does give us the hope, grace, and fortitude to persevere through them.

Chapter 4: Growing in Faith. 63
Opportunities to stand strong for God are a gift
If we trust and obey, we are assured that as God grows our character, He will expand our faith and prepare us for even greater things yet to come.

Chapter 5: Trouble With Faith	87
<i>Being “uncomfortable”</i>	
<i>A walk of faith requires a denial or “death” of self. This isn’t very attractive to a people and a world that espouses the opposite. This sacrifice, however, offers one incredible benefit – the freedom and opportunity to walk hand in hand with God as a friend!</i>	
Chapter 6: Faith That Overcomes	111
<i>The miracle of Scotland</i>	
<i>An “ordinary” family sent on a uniquely radical faith-based mission from God. Amidst the incredible twists and turns associated with this journey, D.J. Andrews walks triumphantly, conquering criticism, misunderstandings, discouragement, loneliness, and despair.</i>	
Chapter 7: Reality of Faith	135
<i>God writes the best stories</i>	
<i>When God is in control our stories become testimonies that inspire, challenge, and change us. His stories, His plans, will always be better than anything we could create for ourselves.</i>	
Chapter 8: Active Faith	159
<i>The assembling of an international “dream team”</i>	
<i>A group of over-the-edge, out-of-the-park, outrageously committed followers are subsequently blessed with the opportunity to watch God at work, up close and personal.</i>	
Chapter 9: Life of Faith	181
<i>“Going,” “doing,” and “following” without sight or understanding</i>	
<i>This is faith! God desires our obedience. It’s necessary that we look beyond ourselves, our world, and our circumstances and remain focused on God and His Kingdom work.</i>	
Appendix I: The Gospel ... a Love Story.	203
Appendix II: The “Sons Of Thunder”	207

.....

INTRODUCTION

FAITH COULD EASILY be one of the most misunderstood topics of all time. Now more than ever, I see gifted, anointed, capable people with a call of God on their lives, sitting idle and indifferent on the sidelines. Many have lost their zeal to walk out their faith, some due to offense or wounding while for others it's weariness, apathy, or simply because they've become disillusioned or disheartened. These are the consequences of religion, *not* the result of faith. Pain, discouragement, cruelty and empty works are *not* what the Father had in mind for His people when He sent and subsequently sacrificed His Son. He provided us with this undeserved gift, that you and I might be rescued from all that is evil, so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Imagine what this world would look like if every Christ-follower was fully committed to a life of passionate faith – willing to surrender all, casting their cares on Him, knowing and trusting that their Heavenly Father would lovingly guide and direct their every step. Picture a life in which we would be liberated from sickness, pain, rejection, bitterness, negativity and mediocrity. Consider a life of freedom, a life in which the enemy's chains that seek to bind us would be forever broken, enabling us to fulfil our destinies with passion and conviction. In this world we would be empowered

and released to live a life of significance, a life that matters, a life with purpose and power – Holy Spirit power! Supernatural power!

You know what? We can do it. This life is available and accessible to each one of us right now! We just need to step into it. Dreams such as these may seem lofty or elusive, but my story will prove to you that with faith, all things are possible!

After all, I am an ordinary person,
who has been blessed with an out-of-the-ordinary life,
because I have faith in an extraordinary God.

While there are those who do not understand my life and this walk, there are others who are fascinated and view it as an adventure. And really, that's what it is – an adventure in faith. Living this way is never boring. The “highs” are unlike anything you could ever imagine; they are exhilarating, inspiring and rewarding. The “lows” are painful and difficult but *all* the time there is joy because when in this place, I am living for and in complete surrender to Christ.

I've heard it said that this “ride” resembles that of a roller coaster. Although many prefer the merry-go-round, I have somehow chosen the roller coaster. While the carousel is a charming, gentle and predictable ride, I wouldn't want to stay on it for long, fearful that I'd be lulled into a state of complacency that could, potentially, thwart my eagerness and readiness to serve when and where I am called. Despite the sudden and unforeseen bumps and heart-stopping jolts associated with this ride, I've found the thrilling ones, those that take my breath away and bring life, easily overshadow the challenging twists and turns that come my way!

When asked how I ever mustered up the courage to choose this path, I have to respond by saying it's been a fairly gradual process. I didn't jump into the deep end of the pool my first time out but started at the shallow end building skill, knowledge and muscle so that over time, my faith had increased. As time has passed I've grown stronger and closer to the Lord, making it easier for me to say “yes” to God, before anything is even asked of me! It hasn't always been this way, though.

There are still occasions when I've been known to respond to requests from the Almighty with a somewhat incredulous, "You want me to do WHAT?"

But after I've had a moment to collect myself, I'm usually able to get back on track with an enthusiastic, "Yes, thanks for using me!" I can only do this because I completely and utterly trust my Lord. I want nothing more than to serve Him, love Him, and worship Him. Although there's been some rough terrain to negotiate along the way, there has also been a distinct sense of peace and freedom on this path that's challenged me to question why I wrestled so long with the decision to live this way.

Saying "yes" before knowing the assignment may sound impulsive and unwise, but it's precisely what Isaiah did when he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go ..." He replied, "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). By responding in this fashion, he was fully submitted to the will of God, regardless of what was required of him. My desire is to do the same.

It's about choosing to be a willing and obedient participant in the life God has ordained for me. Nothing less will do.

Although my calling and journey will look different from yours, I'm convinced that as we share what we've learned with one another, iron sharpening iron, we will grow deeper in our relationships with Christ, more rapidly. Every walk of faith, every person and every calling is unique. So while there may be differences, the same Kingdom of God is being built through our lives, which are intricately woven together according to His master plan.

It needs to be said, though, that this decision to walk by faith requires both an unwavering commitment to Him *and* a compliant and flexible approach to life. It means operating outside of our comfort zones and it expects a wilful "death" to self. Once we have postured ourselves in this completely deliberate position of humility, we need to accept the fact that we will experience

discomfort. This is a “given” when choosing to live in a manner that is completely contrary to the way of the world.

Despite the many trials and obstacles that have attempted to distract me, as long as I hold tightly to God’s promises while maintaining a sense of humour, I am usually able to triumph over the adversities that come my way. I’m so very thankful to know the joy of the Lord. His joy manifests itself by giving me the ability to see that which is terrifically funny in what might appear to others as being catastrophic. It’s when these precious moments present themselves that I am reminded of what a blessing it is to be on this journey.

So many times when I should have been crying I have instead, found myself laughing. I have to remind myself that just as God didn’t bring the Israelites through the desert for death to overtake them, neither did He direct us in the paths He has, without a purpose and a plan. Once we are able to grasp the fact that God never changes, the more easily we are able to work through the challenges that threaten to destroy us.

God remains the same,
regardless of what is going on in our lives or in our world.

It’s easy to lose sight of the big picture and allow our circumstances to dictate our beliefs. We need to acknowledge that we are living in an exceptional day and age. I believe it’s a time when God wants to do a new and fresh work on the earth. He is calling His followers to a higher level of obedience, to a heightened degree of faith and He requires that we be prepared to act when called. He is asking His people to serve in unusual and what might appear to be, “outlandish” ways.

As He shakes the earth and wakes us up to a fuller knowledge of Him, His will for our lives and His plans for this world, we should make every effort to be prepared. I don’t know the role that you will be asked to play, but I hope if you are called to something that’s out of the ordinary, you’ll be encouraged in the knowledge that you are not alone. If you know people who are called, envelop them

in love and empathy. Stand with them in prayer and support them in whatever way you can as they embark on their journey of faith.

As we transition into this new era of God's dealings with mankind, an abundance of supernatural faith will be required of those who are serving outside the proverbial church or missionary "box." This is both exciting and exceedingly frightening. We will need to stand strong, united, firmly rooted in the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, determined to bless and encourage one another as we go, ever and always listening to the voice of our Heavenly Father as we yearn to see His will done here on earth as it is in heaven.

After all, if God really is beginning a new work and people are being called to unique, peculiar and even curious works or destinations, then wouldn't it make sense that a God who loves you like crazy would want you, and those around you, to be prepared for what's ahead? Whether you acknowledge this shift or not, there *will* be a "shaking" and we *will* need to come to terms with living in and with a new "normal." My hope is that in hearing my story, you will be strengthened and encouraged to walk out your own destiny, living life to the fullest, completely sold out to Jesus!

The cry of my heart is also to see an increase in kindness, mercy and love toward one another within the body. Our community of faith must move beyond its current doctrinal prisons and into a place of compassion, freedom and love. As I share these personal insights and experiences, I pray it will produce a deeper understanding and appreciation of what it is to embrace and live your own faith adventure! Please, won't you join me for the ride of a lifetime, living on the edge, for Him?

"Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

—Psalm 1:12b

Chapter 1

A WILLING PARTICIPANT

Reflections

AS I BEGIN to share my journey of faith with you, I am in the “valley.” You probably know, understand and have experienced the valley. It’s that place where things are *not* going as planned. Life isn’t progressing the way we’d hoped, and we can see that for a time we’ll be residing in that dreaded place of pain, growth and disappointment.

Typically, one wouldn’t venture out and share their story *while* in this condition. It would seem ludicrous to even attempt to impart words of wisdom or encouragement amidst personal pain and turmoil. After all, how can an average person with troubles of her own have anything of significance to say? Well simply put, it’s not so much about what *I* have to say but rather about what *God* wants to say to you, through me. Although I haven’t realized absolute victory, apparent in having climbed the highest mountain, followed every rainbow—gotta love “The Sound of Music”—and ... you get the picture, but for some reason, He has chosen to use *me*, just as I am, to encourage *you*!

God wants me to share with you, from this place of humility and brokenness, what it is to have faith in the difficult days.

He wants you to hear His truths from someone who isn't currently jumping for joy in a mountaintop experience. He wants you to know that He loves you and He will never leave you or forsake you from one who must remind herself of this very same thing every day.

Sometimes it can be challenging to believe these promises are true but I've come to know that despite my circumstances, God remains the same. So it is in Him, and in His Word, that I place my trust. I cannot trust my feelings. I can only trust Him.

Sadly, I have found there are very few people who understand this journey of faith, and so it has been an excruciatingly lonely walk. As a result of each and every faith step that my husband Kevin and I have been asked to take, we have lost very dear friends. These are people who didn't understand what God was asking of us and definitely didn't want to walk the road with us. Through it all, though, I've had an undeniable sense of purpose and determination that has propelled me upward, onward and toward the goal. I've been able to run the race set before me.

Hopefully, it won't be long before I emerge from this valley but in the meantime there is apparently still a great deal that I must learn while here. So, I'll do the only thing I know how to do which is to fix my eyes and heart on the Lord, seeking His face, and remain on my knees. There have been tough days before and there will be difficult days ahead. There are numerous people with stories that are far more troublesome than ours and some that aren't nearly as bad but the bottom line is this, when you're in the valley, it's really not fun.

Pain is pain. Heartache is heartache. Loss is loss.

Trying to judge another's pain is futile at best and cruel at worst.

January 1, 2008. Typically the first day of a new year is a day of new beginnings, fresh determination and hopeful anticipation for all that the future holds but today, for me, it is a day of utter desolation. Broken and crying out to God, I feel as though my heart has been shattered into a million little pieces. Our financial resources are nil. We literally

have absolutely nothing with which to live. Our teenage children also have nothing because they've contributed all their savings in order to pay our rent.

I am sickened to the core by this new "low." Without a vehicle, the five of us walk, take the bus, or accept rides from generous folks. Attending meetings or functions is challenging and grocery shopping, when we have the funds to do so, is downright painful especially when considering the arduous trek home, usually executed in a rainy clime.

Our furniture, dishes and clothing are "tired," and we're continually fighting issues of mould in our home, something that's particularly challenging, given that I suffer from an auto-immune disease and a vast number of allergies. We live in a foreign country because just over three months ago, God sent us away from our homeland, family and friends, to a nation half-way across the world, to a place we'd never been, where we didn't know even one person, and He hasn't informed us as to why – yet .

Just over four weeks ago, my very precious dad—a hero of the faith and a hero of mine—passed away after having been diagnosed with cancer only two days after we arrived in this new land. Our days and nights have been filled with mourning this loss and coping with the pain of leaving my mom. Our surroundings are unfamiliar and we frequently need to battle the depression and oppression that permeates the country to which we've been sent. We have our faith and we have one another and that's it. God has stripped us, emptied us, and removed us.

Although today is a difficult day, I am clinging to the hope of tomorrow. I know that with God leading me in His gentle and compassionate way, I will eventually find my way up the rocky terrain, joyfully breathing in that mountaintop experience – having grown and experienced a fresh wind of God in my life by way of a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

For some reason, today, God wants me to share with you in this place of brokenness, what it is to have faith in the difficult days. He wants you to know the possibilities that lay ahead of you and that although you, too, may be in the valley, it's possible to move outside the confines of your own pain and add value to the life of another. This is something that I hope to do for you through my story.

As I look back on my walk, I am able to see how and why God has led me down this path in the ways and means He has. I can see how blessed I've been to live a life of purpose and passion. Naturally, we have those moments when we observe our lives through a more "worldly" lens and from that perspective, things may appear quite grim. This is why we ought to view our lives as God does – pleased by the people we have become and filled with hope by all that we are yet to become. He sees the potential and the possibilities that lie within us, not the flaws and culpabilities.

Like the gentleman He is, He patiently waits for us to discover who we are, in Him. He stands at the gate like the father of the prodigal son, in anticipation that soon we will be home - not perfect, not rich but with a renewed understanding of His strength and how desperately we need Him in order to accomplish anything of significance.

Right here and right now, we can do mighty exploits for Him,
knowing that in and of ourselves, it was impossible
but with God ALL things are possible.

Choosing a life of faith can prove challenging, especially for those who need to overcome an opposing spiritual background, upbringing, or training. It may even require a major overhaul in one's thought life in order to release incorrect teaching or legalistic beliefs from the past and open ourselves to a new way of thinking. In allowing Christ to rule and reign in our hearts, it's imperative that we also give Him access to our heads, our minds.

By nature, we humans are generally resistant to change and uncomfortable with looking at life and faith from a new perspective. Sometimes we become trapped or entrenched in teaching that binds us and makes it next to impossible for us to break free. What amazes me is that we Christians expect agnostics, scientists, Muslims, Buddhists, or even our own unsaved friends, to look beyond and outside their teaching and yet we ourselves, refuse to seek God and Jesus beyond that which we have been taught. Ouch! That one may have stung, but it needed to be said.

Rest assured, although we may not have all the answers and we may not know what tomorrow holds, we do know *who* holds tomorrow. With that in mind, I am certain God, the maker of heaven and earth, is more than able to accomplish what concerns us today.

While remaining firm in Christ and in the Word of God, we must also endeavour to remain “open” to the possibility that we may have gotten some things wrong. While one church or ministry leader could espouse a certain belief, that same “core value” might be completely dismissed by another institution. Who is right? Usually we believe the truth resides with the one we are following, which is why we are following or have “bought in” to that particular body of believers. However, this can also prove dangerous.

We should only follow Christ. We should only align ourselves with Christ. This way, even if our leaders are off-track or go astray, we are still hearing from, and in line with, our Lord. The truth as I understand it today is simply that, the truth that I know *today*. Tomorrow I may have additional revelation and understanding and so, as a result, things may look a little different.

I stand before you, not as an “expert” or one to follow, but as a regular woman with some undeniably real experiences. My understanding is based simply and solely on the Word of God, revelation as I know it today and guidance as given by the Holy Spirit, and the wise counsel of those on similar journeys.

As I said before, the ride has sometimes been rough and there have been occasions when it seems as though my Lord, my knight in shining armour, hasn’t arrived on time or in the ways and means I was hoping but in actuality, He always has come through for me. Not only that, but the results are usually a whole lot better than anything I could’ve ever imagined.

I’m also reticent to share my age, concerned it may provide a bias.

Because this is a story of faith and lessons in the faith,
I hope it will resonate with many, irrespective
of age or gender, nationality or denomination.

We recognize that much of what we've been asked to do is prophetic. We are pioneers. Our story is simply a foreshadowing of what is to come – a way to provide insight and encouragement to those who will follow. We actually identify more closely with a group considerably younger than ourselves. My hope is that our story will give this group a road map of sorts and provide their circumspect parents with knowledge and understanding.

Although we appreciate and acknowledge the reason for this “call,” it doesn't change the fact that I am nearly 50, my husband is nearly 60 and we are in the position of “starting over.” Our peer group seems to be continually shaking their heads and rolling their eyes whenever our names are mentioned. The emotional roller coaster associated with this life of faith and my personal battles with illness have also taken their toll. While things from a worldly perspective look a little ominous, surprisingly we have remained optimistic. We still possess a youthful drive, determination, willingness, passion, and hope for all the future holds.

Once again, though, the key to having achieved this attitude has been in continually reminding ourselves to *not* look at our situation with human eyes. While this can be extraordinarily difficult to accomplish, I am determined to measure my life based on how my Heavenly Father views me, rather than through the eyes of those who judge me. It's when I see things with fleshly eyes, as the world would view me, that my life appears bleak at best. This is the key, though! I need to remain focused on “things above.” I need to maintain a spiritual perspective.

It requires a lot of work and discipline to see things from God's perspective, especially when the earthly vantage point is continually before me.

It should have been a relatively simple task and yet, as a result of the heavy grocery bags lining my hands and arms, welts and a distasteful array of rashes had begun to emerge on my skin. I was trying to keep my mind off the obvious discomfort when my thoughts inadvertently meandered back to a simpler time.

These memories did not serve to placate me but merely reminded me of the insanity of my current situation. It was strange to me that I was finding solace in recalling films I'd seen of African women carrying buckets of food and water on their heads for miles and miles in the hot sun. I reprimanded myself for thinking such thoughts and wondered why it is that we must focus on someone worse off than ourselves in order to be consoled? Ah, the human condition in all its complexities.

I was shaken back into reality as one of my plastic bags broke and a package of strawberries tumbled across the sidewalk. I put everything down, scrambling to pick up as many of the berries as possible, all the while re-organizing the shopping so that it would fit into one less bag. I pushed aside thoughts of how I must appear to passers-by. No matter how you sliced it, this was highly unusual – a skilled, career-oriented, mature North American woman carrying food for a family of five, all alone, via bus and then up a steep and seemingly never-ending hill in the pouring rain to home, with so little money that not one bit of food could be lost! I couldn't recall signing up for this. Still, the physical part of the escapade had been the easy part.

The trying times had been the countless hours and days previous to this, spent in desperate and anguished prayer, waiting and believing for our empty cupboards to be filled. My heart hurt and the tears flowed freely.

So, how did I get to this place? Well, let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start – “The Sound of Music” again?

My story is unique, just as your story is unique. That, in and of itself, is incredible to me; our stories can be so different and yet, as long as the destination is Christ, we all end up at the same place, living for Him, seeking after Him and His righteousness, and enjoying His blessings! Growing up in a Christian home, I learned early on I was loved and special and protected. I learned to pray, to read the Bible and to obey the commandments. As I grew, I discovered many others did not share the same kind of life I did. They didn't have a supportive, encouraging mother and a

gentle, prayer-filled father. Their lives were, in some cases, tragic. This pained me, and out of compassion I was able to “share” my parents with others who needed at least a taste of what my brother and I had in abundance. Although we weren’t financially wealthy, we also never seemed to be in need.

Days before turning age twelve, I made the decision to follow Christ, with a resolve to serve Him for the rest of my life. Of course this would not always be the case as I, like so many, would find myself at various stages in my walk, stagnant, floundering, or simply off-track. Meeting my husband Kevin is what really started to bring me back to God. The more I shared the goodness of God with him, all that I had learned while growing up and what I knew to be true, the more this faith inside of me was renewed and began to bubble up again. I realized how much I missed this relationship with my Saviour and began to thank Him for never giving up on me.

After marrying, Kevin and I began to faithfully attend church, raised a family, worked, lived and generally felt called to be salt and light, which I believe we were. Over time though, I began an even deeper journey of faith and what I encountered and learned along the way is what I would like to share with you here.

This walk has taken some staggering twists and turns
beginning with seven significant words
that forever changed my life.

With those words, God plucked me out of a stable job with the culture department in government and into an amazing adventure with Him. Since that time I have been passionately committed to, and captivated by, the power of worship evangelism – be it organizing, managing, singing, producing or directing large outreach concerts, events and festivals. I’ve been blessed with opportunities to do prison ministry, street ministry and uniquely mission-minded endeavours. It’s been a phenomenal ride that’s taken me to new depths and dimensions of this wondrous thing we call “faith.”

What is Faith?

So, what exactly is faith? How is living *by* faith unlike living *with* faith? What is the difference between faith and religion? Why live a life of faith in a world that expresses such contempt towards those with a resolve to follow Christ? These are just a few of the many questions that could cause a person to shrink back in fear from choosing such a life. From my perspective, I can tell you, with all assurance, that faith in Christ is life-changing, world-changing and a decision that I would highly recommend.

A person of faith is one who is grounded in something much bigger, deeper, and more profound than self. The very word “faith” propels my thoughts to a place of peace, strength, power and conviction. It motivates me to look beyond myself, my environment and my circumstances.

When I speak of my faith to non-believers, they’ll often revert to an assumption that I am “religious.” But I am not “religious.” I am filled with faith. This, to me, is considerably different. My faith isn’t about law, system, structure or traditions but rather, it’s about relationship. My relationship with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit is as real as any other relationship I have. My confidence, my trust, is in my Lord. Yet while this faith is about relationship, its very foundational principles are based on the Word of God, the Holy Bible. So what does the Bible say about faith? The most common definition is found in Hebrews 11:1 which says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

This is a concept that can be difficult for us to get our minds around, but essentially it’s saying that faith is about hope and beliefs and not about anything concrete or of this world. It’s not something we can see or touch in the natural. It’s spiritual. This is reiterated in 2 Corinthians 5:7 with Paul’s simple explanation that,

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”

Although seemingly straightforward, it’s a concept that is lost on many. If I were listening to a comedian speaking on this subject, I would picture him wryly but comically cajoling into his

microphone, “What part of *not by sight*, do you not get?” And when you think about it, he would be absolutely correct. Somehow, some way, a large percentage of the Christian community in particular has missed out on understanding what faith is all about. I think we’ve somehow come to believe that when we live by faith, it simply means we have a nice relationship with God, our family and our church family, yet pretty much live the same way that everyone else in the world lives. Of course we may attend church, do our best not to sin and we try to do nice things for others. But on a day-to-day basis, we don’t look too much different from the world, and what’s worse, people who do are considered to be strange and might even be subject to ridicule.

If faith is belief in and for something we cannot see and that is clearly scriptural, then why is it we have such difficulty understanding our brothers and sisters who are called to do something out of the ordinary – something that may not be clearly defined or may not seem “realistic” as we understand reality to be?

We’ve confused *having* faith with living *by* faith.

When folks witness a true walk of faith, it doesn’t necessarily “fit” with their understanding, ultimately making them feel very uncomfortable. This would explain why those who criticize feel that not only should God’s request make complete sense to them, but that a comprehensive plan should be attached to that request. This, to me, sounds more like a business transaction than a call to action by the Almighty! But, this is the way many have been taught to envisage faith. Because of this lack of understanding, not only are people often repelled by the very thought of what a person of faith is doing, but in some cases, they are even repelled by the actual person. I believe that what makes people so uncomfortable is the “unknown.”

It’s the “not being able to see” part of
the equation that bothers folks.
But faith actually means not seeing.

As soon as we can see, it's really not faith any more, is it? Let me repeat that ... once we can see, we're no longer operating in faith because it's not only evident to us, but to everyone around us. When that happens, it's about seeing in the natural and there's nothing supernatural or faith-like about that! This doesn't mean, however, that when that which we've "believed for" becomes visible to us, we no longer *have* faith. Hopefully that kind of faith is with us continually, as we navigate our way through life.

What's interesting, though, is that when God asks us to do something in faith that others find strange and difficult to comprehend, there is almost always an undeniable certainty and a conviction that comes within our spirit. There is a "knowing" that accompanies the request.

Now in saying this, it doesn't require the "calling" be something huge and earth-shattering. It could be anything. It could be a nudging of the Holy Spirit to take some time to pray awhile or help someone in need. It could be that you are prompted to initiate spending time with a young person who is going through a difficult time or to help an elderly or disabled friend. Maybe God is asking you to do something even more radical, like volunteer at the prison or go speak with someone who needs your forgiveness or your apology. Any of these things could strike fear into the hearts of those whom God has called out of their comfort zone. The issue is this – if you know God has asked you to do or say something and you don't know why, you have a choice. You can:

1. Listen to what He's asking of you and then do it.
2. Seek further confirmation and once received, do it.
3. Hear Him and ignore Him *or* run from Him (didn't work for Jonah, so it likely won't work for you).
4. Put yourself in a position that makes it difficult for God to speak to you. This can be accomplished by separating yourself from Him either through unbelief, sin, disobedience, lack of knowledge, understanding, faith or any number of other ways, ultimately, ignoring Him and His request or even potential requests, of you.

If you really know in your spirit that there has been a request made of you, are you going to refuse to be obedient because the reasons are not fully laid out for you? Are you concerned that you don't yet have a full understanding of the plan or, are you just going to do as you are asked? If you are a parent, then you will understand that there are many occasions when what you require of your children is simple obedience.

Sometimes there may not be time to fully explain yourself, or perhaps they don't yet have the maturity to comprehend the reasons for your requests. Bottom line, you expect that they will obey you. You need them to trust that you're not going to ask them to do something that will cause them irreparable damage. You need them to have faith that you would never, purposefully, hurt them. If they are hungry and you ask them to wait fifteen minutes until dinner is ready, you are aware that it will cause them a degree of discomfort, but that waiting won't mar them for life.

It's the same with God, who quite simply wants us to trust Him and do what is asked of us, whether or not we fully understand. It needs to be said though, that instructions from God carry with them more complicated ramifications in relation to our knowing or not knowing the whole picture. If we knew the entirety of His plans and could see what we were getting ourselves into, there's a strong likelihood that we would say "no." On the off-chance that we agreed, it's probable that we'd have the humanly arrogant tendency to attempt to "refine" the plan to suit us and our purposes.

Jesus was remarkable in so many ways but what truly blows me away is the fact that, although He was the Son of God, He was also the Son of man, having the same emotions and temptations as the rest of us.

He not only *knew* but had to *live* with the fact,
that His entire sinless life and existence would end in a
horrible, painful, unjust death by crucifixion.
He had to live with the knowledge that He would visit Hell!

I can't even comprehend what it would be like to live with this sort of knowledge and still go on with life. Although we may find

it frustrating, the times when we are *not* able to see, it's likely what God knows is best. After all, if it was good enough for those great men and women of faith who have gone before us, then it should be good enough for us.

Would Moses have embarked on his forty-year journey had he known all that he would endure? I somehow doubt that many of us would have jumped to the front of the queue, hoping for this assignment. And yet, although the trials he faced were agonizing, he also witnessed miracle after miracle first-hand. He spoke with God and God spoke with Him, unlike any other. He was on the roller coaster before any such invention had been manufactured! The highs were high and the lows were low.

I've also learned that what may appear to us as our having been obedient and sacrificial is ultimately still about God providing us with a gift. When doing "our part" and things get difficult, it's tempting to pout and remind God of all that we've done for Him. Yet in the end, it's about God choosing to bless us.

When opportunities arise to "give until it hurts,"
we are provided with the chance to prove our faith.

This not only pleases Him but in the end, blesses us! We still win!! Others have been used mightily by God and we can be, too. It's got nothing to do with what we've done for Him and has everything to do with what He's done for us, knowing that in the end, without faith it is *impossible* to please Him.

If you find this thinking to be confusing or foreign to you, then I implore you to sit down and have a conversation with God. Ask Him to open your eyes, ears and heart to His perspective. Ask Him to reveal Himself and His ways to you, in a manner in which you will know without a shadow of a doubt that you have heard and understood.

For those who are deeper in this walk and are still grappling with "faith," then you'll likely need to re-examine your beliefs. Lay aside worldly or religious views and immerse yourself in God's. Perhaps somewhere along the way you received incorrect teaching or simply misunderstood a lesson. Ask God to help you to learn

and receive His truths. It's important that you know you're not alone. It's because there are so many who don't understand faith that I was motivated to share my story.

When Jesus said to His disciples "follow me,"
they didn't know where they were going
or what they would be doing.
They simply went!

When Moses wandered through the desert, he was unaware of the challenges he'd face, let alone the destination or how long it would take to get there. By faith, Abraham laid his beloved son Isaac on the altar when asked. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down and because of faith, kingdoms were subdued and folks were raised from the dead. Now, that's pretty incredible stuff! I definitely want to be a part of these kinds of adventures. To do so, however, means refusing to allow misunderstandings or fear to stand in the way. We must be continually available, seeking after Him with a willingness to "act" when called.

I could feel the presence of the Lord in a way unlike any other. It was as though I had been transported to another place and time. My heart was bursting as I worshiped with complete abandon, captivated by His love, declaring His truths with a confidence and boldness like never before.

I wasn't in a church but in a prison. We were leading a number of incarcerated youth in a time of passionate, vulnerable, honest, transparent worship. It was one of the first times I could ever recall being completely unencumbered by formality and religious expectations. I was anointed with a freedom to sing and speak of God's goodness in a way unlike any other. Surely, this was heaven and not prison!

I was jolted back to reality as I recalled an earlier comment from one of the younger band members who jokingly inferred that these teens would not be able to relate to someone my age. Insecurity bubbled to the surface and I began to believe the 'lie.' Not many minutes later, though, a number of these same teens rose to their feet, making commitments

to follow Christ. I was overwhelmed and unable to conceal my joy. I erupted with, 'I'm so proud of you!' It was out of my mouth before I could stop it. I realized what a "mom" thing it had been to say.

As I internally reprimanded myself, the Lord whispered into my ear, "That's the first time many of these boys have heard that." I was greatly comforted and could see He was using me, uniquely, and that each of us has a role to play. My focus needed to remain on Him and His plans, not the thoughtless words of others.

Fear, Faith, and Love

Fear can greatly hinder us in our walk with God. What many do not realize is that faith requires courage, and courage is not the absence of fear just the ability to control it. Think of it this way:

The definition of faith is essentially the
same as the definition of fear.

When we live in fear, we believe that something we can't see (but fear) is going to happen. When we live by faith, we believe something we can't see (but hope for) is going to happen. Fear and faith have the same definition but they come from very different sources. They also both find a way of being fulfilled. Wherever our focus lies, and on whatever our eyes are fixed, usually dictates what comes out of our mouths and eventually what becomes of our lives. It's far better to hope and have faith for that which is good, than to live in fear over that which is evil. We need to keep our focus on Jesus.

It can get complicated though, because we are also instructed to fear the Lord. This, however, is a healthy fear. "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10). The Fear of the Lord brings: knowledge (Proverbs 1:7), confidence, safety and protection (Proverbs 14: 26, 27), riches, honour and life (Proverbs 22:4), longer life (Proverbs 10:27), and those who fear Him are watched over by Him. (Psalm 33:18). In fearing the Lord we realize that our very salvation is wrapped up in His judgment of

us, of how He sees us. If we don't fear Him, then there is a chance we may not know Him as the Sovereign I AM. There is a chance we are living according to our ways and not His.

If we don't fear the Lord,
we might be relying on our own strength and that is pride.

It's startling to note that pride (excessive self-esteem; conceit) is a dangerous sin because when in this mindset, we don't see ourselves as needing the God of the universe. We don't realize that within the blink of an eye our lives could be over, because in actual fact, everything is *not* within our control. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Pride sets us apart from God by lodging a nasty wedge between us and Him. God desires that nothing would separate us from His love.

Even so, He has provided us with free will. He wants us to know Him because we *want* to know and serve Him. When swaddled in a blanket of pride, we have made it very difficult for Him to pierce the thick covering we have wrapped around ourselves. This is not a good place to be because when in this position, we don't have a teachable spirit. We think we either know it all or have it all. Of course, one earthquake, a massive heart attack or an economic crisis, and that theory is quickly obliterated.

So rather than waiting for a tragedy, the solution is quite simple. We just need to open our hearts to the One who created us and allow His Son, our Saviour, into those parts of us that are resistant to Him so that He can love us, teach us and heal us. We need to seek His face, knowing and trusting that bit by bit, day by day, our hearts will be softened and our faith will grow.

I've noticed that some denominations focus on revering God and His sovereignty, while others emphasize Jesus as friend. Both are correct, but on one hand there's a chance that in being overly familiar and casual, we could potentially diminish His magnificence, while the other perspective could cause us to view Him as distant and out of reach. While it's true that our Lord is loving and forgiving, He is also a just and righteous judge, and as

the Great I Am, deserves our love, respect, admiration, reverence and obedience.

How can we both love and fear the Lord?

Allow me to share some compelling revelation. If we fear the Lord, then we care about what He thinks and what He says. We love Him and we love His ways. We are focused on Him and on listening to Him and on pleasing Him. If we fear people and care more about what they think than what God is saying, then we have chosen to love people above loving our Lord. We have chosen their way and not His. Even if we fear something evil or demonic, we have inadvertently given it power over us. We need to give all the love and power and focus to our Lord and Saviour. We need to concentrate on God. If we take our eyes off God and instead, place them on a person or an organization whose input has taken a priority, we are expressing adoration towards them. In essence, we are saying that the person or organization is correct and God is wrong. Whoa, that's a heavy but it is truth.

On one hand, conquering this may sound quite easy but in reality, it can actually be a difficult process, especially for those who are given to "people-pleasing." I know a little about this because, although not an extreme victim of this group, I did need to triumph over this issue and still struggle with it from time to time. I started the healing process by way of a *lot* of pain and rejection. I needed to overcome caring about the way I was perceived or judged while still caring for the people who were rejecting me. This is an entirely different subject, so I won't digress. Suffice it to say, though, getting past this whole area of pleasing, fearing or loving man brought freedom but it also required discipline. We need to have God's heart and be wholly surrendered to His ways.

In scripture, when fear is mentioned in association with the Lord, it is coupled with love and reverence.
Fear outside of the Lord is connected to and with anguish.

John 4:18, 19 says “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment ...”

Before we leave this subject, I just need to say that in discussions of this sort on faith, there are some who might feel this is simply too much to attain and they will never “get there.” Others might feel a little boastful, especially those who have heard, listened and acted on promptings from the Holy Spirit. So, to clarify, let me just say right here and now that even our faith is not about us! Although people who live by faith might be admired, they must not be elevated to a place of awe. Yes, work and discipline are required but even our faith comes from above.

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith and so He receives all the honour and all the glory. I am well aware of how imperfect I am, of all the renovations that took place (and those that still must occur) in my life to bring me to a place of faith that is pleasing to the King. I'd be in great error and sin to take any credit for what I have learned or experienced. It is God! He is the one who transforms lives. All glory belongs to Him.