

Simple Faith

By Cindy Powell

Have you noticed how complicated life has become? So much of the technical gadgetry and systems designed to make our lives function more efficiently have, in fact, made things more complicated. Anyone who has recently purchased a new electronic gadget, tried to correct a banking glitch, dealt with a software bug, or, heaven forbid, had to deal with a medical insurance discrepancy, won't need to be convinced of how complicated our society has become!

Unfortunately the trend toward complication also long ago infiltrated the church. A very quick internet search will unearth volumes written on obscure theological nuances, as well as complex multi-layered debates about the most basic tenets of our faith. And, of course, with the availability of online forums and bulletin boards—anyone and everyone can easily chime in with their opinion. Those looking for simple answers to sincere questions often find themselves buried in a confusing avalanche of information overload.

Of course, it's not all bad. Some of it is even necessary. It's the *excess* that takes us away from the original objective that becomes "bad." In Christianity our objective—or rather the object of our faith—is Jesus. And whenever an excess of information, or the latest church trend, or the latest experience, or whatever, takes our gaze away from Jesus—our faith has become too complicated.

I recently returned from my third trip to Israel. The political, social, and spiritual dynamics in Israel are among the most intense and complex on the planet. As always, there was much going on, much to take in, and much to do. It is easy to get caught up in the overload. Many come to the land with sincere motives but end up confused or discouraged because there are so many opinions, not to mention so much division and disagreement, even within the church. In politics, in preaching, and sometimes even in prayer, when it comes to Israel there's no lack of voices clamoring to be heard!

Sometimes I join in. I never mean to, but sometimes I just start thinking too much. Sometimes I want to be heard. Sometimes I even fancy that I know something. Sometimes I really think I have something to say, or more likely something to prove. So I add to the clamor and when I do I complicate my own faith and maybe even the faith of others.

But it doesn't have to be that way. I was reminded of this fact one day as we traveled to the Negev. I have friends who own a house in the town of Omer, just outside of Be'er Sheva (Beersheba). The house is used as a place of prayer and worship for local believers and for others who come to the land to pray. The couple who live in the house welcomed our little team warmly and Steve offered to take us out to Tel Be'er Sheva—the place believed to be the location of Abraham's well (see Gen.21).

I won't soon forget my trip to that well. Since Be'er Sheva is quite far from most of the popular tourist destinations, it isn't a typical stop on the itineraries of most travelers to Israel. Yet there was a profound sense of peace and a sweetness of God's presence in that place that is absent from so many of the touted "biblical" sites that the tour buses frequent. But it wasn't just the place itself that God used to grip my heart so deeply, I was also touched by a poignant and very timely reminder from our host.

Steve was talking about some current trends within the church and, though he mentioned these things with the utmost respect for those who are sincerely seeking God in these ways, he paused and contrasted them with the simple faith of Abraham. "Abraham *believed* God and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Abraham, the friend of God and the father of our faith, simply *believed* God. He didn't understand it all and I'm sure many people didn't understand him. He made mistakes. He didn't profess to have it all

together, nor did he have a heavy duty strategy or divine agenda clearly mapped out for him. In fact Scripture tells us Abraham set out “not knowing where he was going” (Heb.11:8). He simply believed God and followed Him wherever He led.

And of course God *did* lead Abraham. The Lord faithfully protected Abraham’s interest at that well, just as He was faithful in fulfilling *all* His promises to Abraham. Today that well stands as a testimony of God’s great faithfulness to His people—and also as a testimony of our forefather who was simply willing to believe that God was who He said He was, and that He would do what He said He would do. To me it was a necessary encouragement to remain steadfast in the simple roots of my own faith. I could hear the Lord sweetly whispering reassurance to my heart that He simply wants *me* to be who I already am—a simple person with simple faith who also happens to be His friend.

For years the Lord has impressed upon my heart the value of simple, child-like faith. Most of the time I get it—but sometimes I forget. When people ask about my trips to Israel I have often struggled to find the right words to express why I go and what it is I’m trying to do while there. I think I’ve complicated things by trying to meet what I assume to be others’ expectations. The simple truth is that I go because I believe God. I believe He is who He said He is, and that He will do what He says He will do. I believe He *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that He *will* fulfill His plans and purposes for His covenant people and His covenant land. Even more, I go simply because I love Jesus and the more intimately I come to know His heart, the more I have come to love what He loves. *He* loves Israel ... and so do I. No politics. No agenda. Just simple faith that says “yes” to the desires of God’s heart.

I do hope and pray that as I go on God will give me greater revelation and a greater ability to express the things of His heart with clarity. But I would rather fumble and bumble over words birthed from a sincere heart and simple faith, than write, speak or pray with eloquent excess fueled by the complexities of my own misguided thoughts. More than anything I just want simple faith that pleases God.

“But I fear lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” –2 Corinthians 11:3

Keeping things simple is a battle. Our intellect fights for control. The Apostle Paul was an absolutely brilliant man, yet despite his substantial intellect—or maybe because of it—he made a purposeful determination not to allow anything to sway him from a simple, single-minded focus on Jesus. He fixed his eyes on the prize and wasn’t moved by anything or anyone else. I need to do the same.

I’ve never been one to function well with a lot of complicated electronic gadgets. I get really overwhelmed, really quickly. And I *really* don’t function well with complicated faith. Life is overwhelming enough without adding unnecessary complexity. I’m content to leave the trends, the debates, the controversies, and even the big strategies, to those who wish to engage in them. I’m also content to be unnoticed or misunderstood when I fail to enter the fray. Mostly, I’m content to simply believe God.

... And to be His friend.