

What Happens
When Women
Walk in Faith

LYSA TERKEURST



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Emphases in Scripture quotations are added by the author.

Cover by Connie Gabbert Design + Illustration

Cover photo © Rawpixel.com / Shutterstock

Backcover author photo by Amy Riley Photography

What Happens When Women Walk in Faith

Copyright © 2005 by Lysa TerKeurst

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN: 978-0-7369-7264-2 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-0-7369-7265-9 (eBook)

The Library of Congress has catalogued the earlier printing as follows:

TerKeurst, Lysa.

What happens when women walk in faith / Lysa TerKeurst.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-1571-7

ISBN-10: 0-7369-1571-0

1. Christian women—Religious life. I. Title.

BV4527.T464 2005

248.8'43—dc22

2005001912

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 / VP-CD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To my two beautiful sons, Jackson and Mark.
Through you, God has made my feet walk paths
that I never knew could be so amazing
From the first night you called me “Mom,”
my heart and life has never been the same.
I lovingly dedicate the words penned here to you.*

Contents

Introduction	7
Phase One: Leaving	
1. The Map	13
2. A Line in the Sand	21
3. God Has a Plan	29
4. Loving God More than My Dream	37
Phase Two: Famine	
5. The Adventure Our Souls Were Made For	49
6. God's Extraordinary Invitation	57
7. God Is with You	67
8. Refusing to Get Bugged Down in Bitterness	75
Phase Three: Believing	
9. A Most Unlikely Path	85
10. Roadblocks and Reassurances	93
11. God Will Make a Way	103
12. Learning to Lead	111
Phase Four: Death	
13. Death Does Not Mean Defeat	125
14. Pressing Through the Pain	135
15. God Isn't Surprised by Death	143
16. God's Portion, Position, and Promise	151
Phase Five: Resurrection	
17. God's Dream, God's Way	165
18. A Promise Made Is a Promise Kept	175
19. God Brings Dreams to Life	185
20. Every Promise Fulfilled	193
Notes	203

Introduction

I BELIEVE GOD GIVES EVERY WOMAN a dream. Not the *same* dream, of course, but a dream that is especially tailored for her talents and His purposes. Each woman receives a dream that only she is destined to fulfill.

But just as the Israelites were promised a land flowing with milk and honey only if they had the faith to move ahead and *take* the promised land, so too does every woman with a dream face obstacles that would keep her from God's best for her. The Israelites had to overcome giants in the land. Those giants struck fear in the heart of those to whom the promise was given. Some drew back as a result. Discouragement set in. Fatigue, impatience, unbelief...all of these were common to those men and women who spent 40 years in the desert because they simply couldn't walk in faith toward the destiny God had called them to.

I meet many women who *know* in their hearts that God has great things for them. But with every advancing step, they meet obstacles. Giants are in their promised land. And they experience those same feelings of discouragement, fatigue, and unbelief.

I know these feelings not only from the women I meet but because I've experienced every one of them myself. I *still* face obstacles as I pursue what God has called me to. But in the past several

years, as I've been willing to move ahead in spite of the obstacles, God has given me my dream.

Let me ask you this: What is the dream God has given you? Maybe you can't quite put it into words except to say that you know that God wants to use you. But *how* that's to happen...you're not quite sure.

Not knowing exactly how God wants to use you is okay. When a woman begins to walk in faith toward God, He will give the dream. For me, the dream has resulted in public speaking, writing, and the birth of Proverbs 31 Ministries. Your dream—the way God wants to use you—will probably be totally different. But though the dreams we have may be different, I've discovered that the path is very similar for most women. And walking that path by faith is what *What Happens When Women Walk in Faith* is all about.

In the following chapters, I want to talk to you about the five phases I've identified in the Bible common to people who have stepped out with God in pursuit of their dream. Throughout this book we'll see how different biblical characters weathered those five phases, and we'll learn how to recognize these phases in our own faith walk. I'll also be sharing with you many of my own adventures as I've progressed through these stages time and time again. I hope that as you better understand these phases of faith, you'll avoid the discouragement and defeat so many of us have gotten bogged down in along the way. You'll be able to press through, walk confidently, and avoid doubting God.

The five phases of faith go hand in hand with five fundamental truths of God:

1. God has a plan for me.
2. God is with me.
3. God will make a way.
4. God isn't surprised by death.
5. God brings dreams to life.

Keeping these five vital truths in mind will sustain you as you pass through the five phases of faith. As you'll soon discover, Satan will oppose you as you begin to fulfill your dream. He will suggest some lies that are in direct opposition to the five truths above:

1. God couldn't care less about you.
2. God is too busy with the important people to be bothered by insignificant you.
3. God isn't to be trusted.
4. Death means defeat.
5. Dreams only happen by chance.

These are the lies that Satan will use to kill your dream. The better we understand the difference between truth and lies, the freer we are to walk with God through the phases of faith and not get side-tracked.

These are the five phases of faith you'll pass through to achieve your dream:

1. Leaving: In order to go to a new level of faith with God, you've got to leave the old behind.
2. Famine: In this new place, you'll realize your comfort zone is gone, and you'll learn to depend on God like never before.
3. Believing: You've always wanted to really believe God, but now your experience of Him becomes too real to deny.
4. Death: Coming to the end of your ability to make things happen seems like death to you. But to God, this is the only way to new life with Him.
5. Resurrection: In a way only He could, God makes your dream come true. Only then do you understand

that real joy isn't in the dream itself but rather in the richer faith you acquired along the way.

So get ready, my friend. Strap your most comfortable walking shoes on. You've got a basic understanding of where we're headed, and now it's time to go. At the end of each chapter you'll find a Personal Bible Study. You'll find it helpful to get a notebook to record your answers and thoughts along the way. Take time to read the Scriptures, think about the questions, and record your responses in your notebook. Are you excited? I am. Indeed, walking with God takes you to amazing places!

PHASE ONE

Leaving

One

The Map

I FELT SO INSIGNIFICANT. So small. I made my way up to the speaker in the front of the room. She was surrounded by women of all ages. Some just wanted to give her a tearful hug. Others held her book in their hands, looking for a note of encouragement and an autograph.

I just wanted to ask her *how*?

How do I take a broken life and allow God to use it for His glory? Is it possible that a girl rejected by her earthly father could actually be chosen and set apart for a divine calling? Could God really have a purpose for *my* life just as He had for hers?

I waited in line for my turn. Then, as I opened my mouth to speak, my throat tightened, my eyes filled with tears, and all I could squeak out was an emotional “*How?*” I wanted her to take me home with her and teach me. I wanted her to pack me in her suitcase and whisk me away from my meaningless life and into the life of one making a difference. I wanted her to share some quick and easy answer, three easy steps to the life you dream of, all for the low price of attending the seminar. But this speaker wasn’t a magician, a slick salesman, or a woman looking for a new houseguest. She was a woman who had experienced deep hurts and bitter disappointments and who had chosen to surrender her life—with all its failure

and pain—to God. Now she was being used by Him in a truly wonderful way.

She did not give me the quick and easy answer I was looking for. She didn't give me any profound wisdom or direction. We only had time for her to simply tell me how she got started, and then I found myself making my way back to my seat. But I wasn't heading back empty and without hope. What this speaker lacked in words, she more than made up for in example. I had seen Jesus in her. I had seen living proof of God's redemption. I thought to myself, *If God could do that with her, I think there's hope for me after all.* And something new and big and God-directed was born in me and confirmed in my heart in an undeniable way that day.

God Will Fill in the Gaps

Though I still didn't know *how* God could possibly use me, I knew He could find a way. Though I didn't know *when* God could use me, I knew the timing was in His hands. Though I didn't even think I had much to offer, I knew God would fill in my many gaps. I simply knew God was calling me, inviting me, wooing me to something with His fingerprints all over it. And that was enough.

My life certainly didn't change overnight. I experienced a waiting period, a time of growth, development, and perseverance as God prepared me. Lessons on patience, trust, surrender, and learning to take hold all preceded my stepping out. But even in this seemingly unimportant time of pruning and trials, God was preparing me for the next step. This "getting ready period" was not a waste of time. It was an important part of fulfilling my calling. Though I couldn't see much fruit, God was getting my branches ready and healthy enough to hold all He knew was coming.

So I left the conference that day excited, only to be hit with a shocking dose of reality back home. There were still dishes to be washed, clothes to be folded, bottoms to be wiped, and everyday life

to be dealt with. To be completely honest, I didn't like my mundane life. And yet what we call mundane is, in some very important ways, significant in God's school of preparation.

Dreams and Despair

I can remember as a young girl looking out my bedroom window, dreaming of the man I'd one day marry and the children I'd one day hear call me Mommy. I counted the years on my small hand and delighted as each one ticked away. With each passing birthday, my anticipation grew. Like most other girls, I had other goals and dreams, but the fairy tale of my heart was being a wife and mother. I could hardly wait!

Then all of a sudden I was an adult woman, and God had indeed blessed me with both a loving husband and wonderful children...and I was miserable.

How could this be? What kind of terrible joke was this, that the very thing I dreamed would bring me ultimate happiness had actually ushered me into a deep despair? How ungrateful I felt. I had asked, begged, pleaded for God to give me these gifts, and now I was desperately looking for the return policy.

Was I missing something genetically? As I looked around at church and the mall and the grocery store, I saw other women who seemed delighted to be the June Cleaver of my generation. They'd walk by me, giggling and cooing at their baby as if they were in a romantic movie. They mentioned offhandedly that their husbands were whisking them off to New York that weekend. These women were, of course, all skinny, and their well-ordered shopping lists gave evidence that their homes were no doubt tidier than mine.

What was wrong with me? I felt like a failure as a woman. And most disturbing was the fact that I didn't like being a mother. I was a gold-star member of the Mommy Guilt Club almost from the moment my child exited the womb. Can you imagine feeling this way and then considering that God was calling *you* into ministry?

Who do you think you are? Do you really think God could use a woman like you to help others? Satan's whispers were relentless. Sadly, to be honest, I agreed with him. At the conference, I had felt such assurance of God's calling, but back in the midst of everyday life, I began to doubt.

My only recourse was prayer. I got down on my knees and cried out to the Lord for His assurance. And as He always does, God met me there at the point of my need. He assured me that He doesn't call the qualified, but He qualifies those He calls.

Surrendering Inadequacy

My friend, I don't know where you are as you read these words. I don't know the circumstances of your life. I don't know the dream God has given you. Perhaps you don't either...yet. But I do know you have this book in your hands for a reason. God has a plan for you. A dream perhaps you can't even imagine, an assignment you can't figure out and wouldn't even dare to consider as being for *you*. I pray that as I have honestly shared the misgivings I had, you will find great hope that God really can use any woman who surrenders her inadequacies and circumstances to Him. I've seen Him do it time and time again in the lives of women who were willing to walk in faith. But most powerfully I've seen it in my own life.

Though it started small and happened slowly, I'm now able to live the dream God has given me. But also, and more importantly, I'm now a very happily married mother of five kids. I wake up most days excited about my life and can't wait to unwrap the blessings of serving, loving, and enjoying those whom God has entrusted to me.

Now don't get me wrong, I still have days when I feel like a failure, but they are fewer and far between. My circumstances haven't really changed since those early mommy days (except I have a lot more kids!), but my perspective certainly has.

Perspective is the key. If I'd never had the husband and the kids

that I have, I'm convinced I would be incredibly self-centered and seriously lacking in character. God uses different things in different lives to shape and mold them, and my family was God's perfect tool for building my life. God used many everyday life experiences to shape and mold me for ministry. I learned so much by being faithful in little, everyday responsibilities, and eventually God was able to entrust larger responsibilities to me. Any woman who wishes to be used by God must be willing to honor God no matter what.

Honoring God

During those early years, God was asking me, "Lysa, as you start to feel overwhelmed with doing the laundry and caring for the kids and cooking meals and handling life, *will you honor Me?* Will you do it with a grateful heart? Will you see the blessings hidden in the long to-do lists? Will you surrender your plans of convenience and ease and accept My plans for your growth and maturity?"

When I aligned my perspectives with God's and I decided to honor Him in all things, big and small, I was finally ready to step out in ministry. My circumstances were not perfect, but I knew whose face to seek when I fell flat on my own. So I declared in my heart I was a woman in ministry, dedicated to serving God, and I started to watch for His invitation to join Him.

Trust me—those first steps were the furthest thing from lime-light ministry. They were everyday choices to honor God right where I was: spending time in God's Word even when the items on my to-do list seemed more urgent. Getting filled with Him first so I could love and give and serve out of an overflow rather than relying on my own strength.

Honoring my husband even when he'd said something that hurt my feelings. Choosing to keep a good attitude even when the grocery store clerk overcharged me and took longer than necessary to remedy the problem. Having patience with my children and handling a

problem calmly when I really wanted to yell and send them to their room. Graciously serving other people without calling attention to my service. Honoring Him in these ways was a vital part of getting my heart ready to serve Him in larger ways.

God wants us to honor Him. He wants us to put personal conveniences aside, lay our own ideas down, and get past our stubborn will to have and do things our way and in our time. God wants our obedience, not just lip service. It's one thing to say we'll honor Him but another thing entirely to actually do it. Don't wait for the perfect day to start honoring God. Make that choice today. Don't think you're not doing what God called you to do just because things don't seem as glamorous as you thought they would be. *If you are a woman who honors God right where you are, you are in ministry.* Keep being obedient, keep looking for the next open door of opportunity, and above all else hold closely to our Lord.

Personal Bible Study

1. Read Job 1:6; Luke 22:31; 1 Peter 5:8.

These verses show us how active Satan is in our world. His very name means “one who separates.” His chief purpose is to separate us from God however he can. He wants us to chase after other things—even good things—so we miss God’s best. He wants to keep us busy. He wants to fill our heads full of lies so that we can’t hear God’s truth. Too many times I have allowed his tricks to steer me down the wrong path. What about you? What tactics is he using to try to defeat you right now?

2. Read Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7; John 10:10.

Satan uses the same old bag of tricks, but we have God—who is infinitely creative—on our side. We can turn to Him as our support, wisdom, and way out under temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). God gives us the strength to stand and the armor to protect ourselves from our enemy. Satan comes to steal our joy, to kill our spirit, and to destroy our hope. He masquerades as the angel of light, deceiving us with his false beauty (2 Corinthians 11:14). We must be aware of how he works so we can guard our minds, hearts, and steps as we set out on our amazing journey. Make no mistake, this is one trip Satan does not want you to take, and he will pull out every trick in his bag to try to stop you. Just remember the scriptural paradigm: Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). Draw close to God and He will draw close to you (James 4:8).

In your notebook, list some practical ways to resist Satan.

List some practical ways to draw close to God.

3. Read Hebrews 10:35-36.

As we set out on our journey together, I want you to really ponder

these verses. Copy them down in your notebook. This book is written to enable you to journey with confidence wherever God is leading in your life. Your journey will not look the same as mine—it is as unique as you are. But the same basic truths described in these verses apply to us all. Circle these words after you have copied down the verses: *confidence*, *perseverance*, and *promised*. My prayer is that you will find the confidence you need to persevere until you have received whatever God has promised you. Press on, my friend, and prepare to be amazed at what God has to show you through this study!