

## ***The Leap of Trust***

***By Cathy Virgilio***

This past fall, as a birthday present to myself, I decided to literally jump out of my comfort zone by skydiving more than 13,000 feet from an airplane. This may sound a little insane to most people, but for me it was a symbolic act of completely surrendering myself to the Lord's care like never before.

At the time I decided to take on this challenge, I had been enduring a difficult situation. I was counseled that the Lord was allowing this hardship in order to kill the "self" in me so He could form His character in me. I was encouraged to press in and wait on Him and His directives. I was told that He would provide whatever I needed to get through this. I was basically told to trust the Lord! Of course, this was all wise, godly council that sounded great, but I needed more!

The Lord was faithful to confirm the council I received through dreams and Scriptures. Nonetheless I often rationalized my inability to cope by thinking; *Jesus already died on the cross, so why do I have to have a "cross" experience too!*

I finally got desperate and broke before the Lord. Only then was I able to face my deepest feelings of anger, disappointment, and fear. I realized it was the Lord I didn't trust!

For many years skydiving had been something I only dreamt of experiencing. With my birthday soon approaching, I began to plan how I would celebrate it. I usually take off from work to spend the day with the Lord in my favorite spot in the Catskills. It has always been an intimate day of reflection for me. This year I knew it had to be different. I needed to take action. I needed to step out in faith. I needed to truly abandon myself and everything I had been holding on to. I needed to put my life where my mouth was. It was time to truly surrender my past, present, and future to the Lord. It was time to jump!

Fifteen miles away from my favorite birthday spot was the Blue Sky skydiving ranch. I went there one early autumn morning with my husband in tow for moral support to follow through with the decision I'd made. I was excited about it, but began to be swayed as logic pled with me. *This is crazy! What are you doing? You just signed a waiver that warned you that people have died from doing this. Have you lost your mind?* But I had to do this because I truly desired to go all the way with the Lord so that His plans and purposes would be fulfilled in my life, and this was a symbolic yes to Him from me.

Next thing I knew, I was girded up in a pair of harnessed overalls and given a two-minute crash course on how to bend like a feather. I was encouraged to slug down some water so I wouldn't puke on my instructor. Then I joined the rest of the "nutcases" and entered what looked like one of those dilapidated planes you see in old war movies. The engine was so loud, the only way I could express to my fellow passengers that we were all crazy was by using sign language. I decided to keep that thought to myself.

One by one they all courageously jumped. It seemed effortless, as if they had done this many times before. I found out later they had!

When it was my turn to step toward the exit door of the plane, all I could feel was my heart sink down to my toes and all I could see was layers of clouds. (The closest thing I'd ever had to this was a view through a window seat on a flight to Miami Beach. But now there was a sharp propeller inches from my head!)

At that moment I had to choose between faith and fear. I listened carefully to the instructor as I braced myself to jump. He said, "On three!" I counted. One ... two ... three! As I leaped, I shouted out to Jesus with everything in me.

From the second I jumped to the time I pulled the parachute cord, I could not hear anything but a peaceful silence. I felt like a soaring eagle. I felt completely safe. I felt freedom and exhilaration like never before.

When it was time to release the parachute, I came into a whole new dimension. Sounds and sights returned as I entered into breathtaking views of God's amazing creation. I saw my favorite mountain, from a much higher perspective, covered with the richest autumn hues I had ever seen.

My instructor told me I was a great student with the right attitude and heart, so I could be trusted to take on the responsibility of steering the parachute. He showed me how to perform twists and turns that only advanced students do. It made Great Adventure theme park seem like chicken feed.

As we got close to the ranch, I listened carefully to the instructions on how to glide into a safe landing. And I did it!

Little did I know how much this experience would change my life. It has brought me to a whole new level with the Lord. I learned that I can either remain in my comfort zone and operate out of my limited natural understanding or surrender everything and take an extraordinary leap of trust into the fullness of His Spirit. ■

