

## Facing Your Fear

In his book, *Living Beyond The Limits*<sup>1</sup>, Franklin Graham tells how the Lord led him to war-torn Angola in the early eighties. At that time, Angola was a country in the throes of a vicious, ugly civil war. It was the African focal point of the Cold War – Marxist and supported by thousands of Russian advisers and their Cuban proxies. The U.S. Government was warning people to stay away. Hostages were being snatched around the world with frightening regularity. Anyone going to Angola would be on their own with no assurance of getting out alive. The U.S. State Department would not come to rescue anyone detained or in distress.



After meeting Dr. Steven Duncan – a skilled surgeon – at a conference in Florida, Graham was taken a little by surprise when Duncan invited him to come along to Angola on a missions effort in the next year. Out of politeness, Graham agreed, never thinking Duncan would remember his offer.

About a year later, Graham received a letter postmarked "Luanda, Angola". It was from the doctor saying, "I'm here....when can you make it?" He threw the letter into a heap on his desk along with other mail, and tried to put it out of his thoughts.

All day Graham fought the idea of going, attempting to rationalize how he could turn down the offer. But as the day wore on, to his surprise, he found himself formulating a possible plan to go to Africa. In his mind he played out all the logistics – a week of hard travel just to get there, war-zone conditions, no hope of support from anyone – except God. He began to pray that God would lead him. Finally, a 'still, small voice' made it clear to him that God was calling him to join Dr. Duncan's efforts in Angola.

All the time Graham was making preparation for the trip, he had the nagging, ominous sense that he may never again plant his feet on American soil. The battle within became intense, and in one last effort to receive confirmation from God, he held out his fleece.

The concept of holding out your fleece comes from the Bible, when Gideon, an Old Testament hero, used two fleeces to "check" the will of God when he knew he was being called to lead an army to battle. The first time, (Judges 6: 37) Gideon placed a wool fleece on the threshing floor. He prayed to God, "If there is dew on the fleece

only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said."

The next morning, Gideon was able to squeeze enough water from the fleece to fill a bowl.

Still not convinced, he laid out a second fleece the next night and prayed (verse 39) that it would be dry in the morning, but all around it would be wet with the dew. When morning came, it was just as Gideon had asked. He could no longer deny that God was specifically leading him into battle.

Graham felt a lot like Gideon. Only he laid out three fleeces. "Just in case," he said to himself, "I'm going to give God a chance to close the door and keep me home."

The trip to Angola involved days of travel with connecting flights in New York and Paris. Graham began praying at the first flight, that if he was not meant to go, he would miss his flight. In spite of delays at the onset and a very tight connection in New York Graham got on the next plane in plenty of time. Approaching New York, which is notorious for bad weather and thunderstorms that time of year, Graham prayed that if he was meant to remain home, the flight would have a delayed landing due to weather. But as they descended into New York, the weather was excellent, and there were no problems. Finally, approaching Paris, Graham once again asked that if the airport was fogged in – a common occurrence there – he would be delayed and miss his connection, and it would be a sign from God. Approaching the airport he looked out into the most beautiful, cloudless sky he had ever seen. Even at night, Paris, and all the runways were in clear view. Conditions could not have been better for landing.

The rest of the trip was not easy and not without hardship, misgivings, and trepidation. But Graham knew he had God's approval, protection and leading each moment. If God put him there, he was willing to face his fear of the unknown in the days ahead with peace.

God continues to use Franklin Graham for great things. He spent his earlier years as a rebellious thrill-seeker who thrived on the kind of excitement and danger most other people steer away from. That kind of experience proved crucial to surviving in Angola.

What are your fears? Do you sense God's calling but are afraid of what that means, or where it might lead? That's normal. But God wants us to live our lives to the fullest without fear. Knowing God and being in "sync" with His perfect will through a personal

relationship with Jesus Christ is the key. Like Gideon and Graham, and millions of other followers of Christ, we can have the confidence and peace that what God does, He does for a purpose, and He does it well.

<sup>1</sup> Graham, Franklin, [Living Beyond the Limits](#), Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers 1984