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- [Archive](#)
- [Contributors](#)

Faith or Insanity?

August 2, 2010 By [washadmin](#) [12 Comments](#)

What separates the great heroes of the faith from those who got it wrong?

by **Nadia Bolz-Weber**

Old Testament Reading: [Genesis 15:1-6](#)

For Sunday, August 8, 2010: Year C – Ordinary 19

It can be difficult to think of our beloved Bible characters in new ways. I mean, once they are emblazoned into our imaginations in their flannel-graph, or Bible coloring book or children's sermon form, they become calcified. And not just in that "Oh...you mean Mary Magdalene wasn't a prostitute" way. Abram, for example, is a hero of the faith. We all know this, but talk about emblazoned!

Hold that Pose

In the high school musical TV series [Glee](#), Sue, the pernicious cheerleading coach, often repeats a demeaning question, changing it to suit circumstance: "You think holding that painful pose for 15 minutes is Hard? Try living with hepatitis. That's hard!"

So you think asking "what if Abram wasn't really faithful?" is hard? Others besides Abram have believed beyond reason. Other people have also held on to some sort of trust in a promise despite there being no indication whatsoever that its fulfillment is even within the realm of possibility. Other people have also had a faith in something despite the reality surrounding them, despite every indication otherwise. Some of these people become heroes of the faith and great prophets. But try asking "what if Abram's faith is not any different than David Koresh's faith?" That's hard.

Crazy Like?

Abram looked with his elderly eyes to the multitude of stars in the sky and believed God's promise of progeny. But some of these people who believe crazy stuff with all their hearts die castrated in Texas bunk beds [wearing white Nikes](#) while the [Hale-Bopp](#) comet streaks by a sky filled with countless stars.

How can we know if we are crazy like Noah, or crazy like Jim Jones? Well, you say, Noah was right. Fine.

But what separates the great heroes of the faith from those who got it wrong? Chance? Accident of history? Truth? The fact is that both Noah and David Koresh claimed that God had given them special instructions for the future of humankind. On this side of history one guy is a hero and one guy is a whacko.

The Hardest Question

Perhaps we preachers of the Word might do well to realize that these questions are real and addressing them is not the same as endorsing them. Asking the question, this hardest question, is critical: *Is it faith or insanity?*

The faith is crazy. I just think there's something beautiful and redemptive and true in owning up to it, rather than trying to pretend this thing is a perfectly rational thing to be a part of. It's not.


Thanks be to God.



Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber is the founding pastor of [House for All Sinners and Saints](#) in Denver, Colorado. She is the author of [Salvation on the Small Screen? 24 Hours of Christian Television](#) (Seabury, 2008) and blogs at [www.sarcasticlutheran.com](#) and Jim Wallis' [www.GodsPolitics.com](#). Nobody really believes she's an ordained pastor in the ELCA. Maybe it's the sleeve tattoos or the fact that she swears like a truck driver. Either way...she's fine with it. Nadia lives in Denver with her family of four.

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Comments

-  Bryan says:
[August 2, 2010 at 8:48 am](#)


...and blogs at <http://www.sarcasticlutheran.com> and Jim Wallis' <http://www.GodsPolitics.com>. ...

The links above do not work.

Regards

Bryan

[Reply](#)

-  Bryan says:
[August 2, 2010 at 8:50 am](#)


Interestingly, the links in my comment above do work. What's up with that?

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-  Peregrin says:
[August 4, 2010 at 6:45 pm](#)

So what was the craziest part for Abram? Walking the first mile out of Ur? Admitting to Sarah that he nearly killed their beloved son? Recognizing that while he had seen much "from afar" he, too, would die before all the promises he was so keen on came to fruition? There's more than one kind of craziness to this Christian way. What's the biggest crazy: the first step of discipleship, truth-telling in community, or mortality before we are done with our dreams? Thanks for your good work.

[Reply](#)

-  Pastor Nadia says:
[August 5, 2010 at 7:52 am](#)

@Peregrin,

"The Biggest Crazy" should be a new reality show. Perhaps of church planters.

[Reply](#)

-  Peregrin says:
[August 5, 2010 at 8:35 am](#)

Like the idea. Talk sparkhouse into sponsoring. Couple of 24/7 webcams and the whole world will be watching.

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