

THE
SPOTLIGHT
OF
FAITH

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OF
FAITH

WHAT IT MEANS
TO WALK WITH GOD

BILL CROWDER



Discovery House Publishers

Books, music, and videos that feed the soul with the Word of God

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To my wife, Marlene,
who has always been worthy of the spotlight,
but content to stay offstage.
Thank you for living the drama of life with me.

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INTRODUCTION

Andy Warhol, pop artist and cultural icon back in the 1960s and 70s, said that “in the future everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes.” If that is true, then in August of 2000, Bob May got his fifteen minutes. In the 2000 PGA Championship, Bob, a largely unknown journeyman golfer, took center stage alongside Tiger Woods, the greatest golfer on the planet. In one of the most dramatic tournaments in years, Bob stood in one of the game’s brightest spotlights and played Tiger shot for shot, putt for putt, and hole for hole. At the end of the regulation seventy-two holes of play, they were still deadlocked.

The battle lasted late into the evening as they had to play an additional three holes before the match was won, and the greatest golfer in the world had finally defeated a man who was “nobody from nowhere.” Following that tournament, Bob May drifted back into golfing obscurity, but for his “fifteen minutes” he was one of the best in the world.

Similarly, in 2003, another relative unknown, Hilary Lunke, battled the best and best-known women golfers in the world at Pumpkin Ridge, Oregon, to finally win the prestigious U. S. Women’s Open in a Monday playoff that was filled with drama, tension, and clutch putting. To this day,

Lunke's only win on the LPGA tour is the most significant tournament in women's golf. In fact, prior to her win at the Open, she had never even contended for a tournament title—and has not contended since. Though a steady, solid player, Hilary has not again risen to the level of greatness she enjoyed that sun-splashed day at Pumpkin Ridge. As one wire story put it, “Her only goal when she joined the tour in 2002 was to win one tournament, to have one week that would always be special no matter what happened the rest of her career.” It was her moment in the spotlight.

Others may be fascinated and even infatuated with Tiger Woods and Annika Sorenstam, but I'm intrigued by Bob May and Hilary Lunke, with their brief moment in the sun, because there are many more of them in this world than there are superstars. The Bob Mays and Hilary Lunkes of this world are less publicized, but they have fascinating stories of their own to tell, if for a moment we would divert our gaze from the supernova stars who spend their lives on the front pages of the papers, or as the lead items on SportsCenter.

In our study of the Bible, we often do the same thing. We focus on the Peters, Pauls, Daniels, and Davids, but lose sight of the fact that the Bible is a book that records the stories of many, many other people. Though they appear on the biblical stage for only a moment or an event or an episode, there is an enormous amount that we can learn from their lives. We can learn lessons about relationships, character, defeat, and failure. We can gain insight on obedience, rebellion, sacrifice, and selfishness.

This book proposes to bring some of those lesser lights to the center of the stage, shine the spotlight on them, and see what we can learn from their experiences. Some were

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men and some were women. Some lived in the Old Testament era and others in the days of the New Testament. Some were pillars of faith, while others were disobedient. But in each instance, these are the stories of real people, flawed and imperfect, sometimes failing and sometimes succeeding greatly . . . like us, perhaps? As “regular” people who spend more of our lives in the shadows than we do in the spotlight, these are our kind of folks.

It is perfectly appropriate to admire the skill and athleticism of the Tiger Woodses of the world, but most of us really are a lot more like Bob May and Hilary Lunke. So in the following pages let’s explore some of these lives and see the profound lessons that are tucked away there for us. All we need to do is redirect the stage lighting and look at the persons who are off to the side or in the wings, instead of in the middle of the stage.

1
Andrew

THE OTHER BROTHER

Bobby (Robert F.) Kennedy was one of the more remarkable people of the twentieth century. Born into a family of power, privilege, wealth, and influence, he graduated from Harvard, completed law school, and became the silent, serious force behind his brother John's political rise. Serving as John F. Kennedy's close confidant, Bobby supported him in his role as senator, masterminded his presidential campaign, and then (reluctantly) served under him as Attorney General of the United States, leading an aggressive fight against organized crime and against racial bigotry in America. After his brother's assassination in 1963, Bobby left his position as attorney general and began looking for his own place to make a difference in the world. He became active in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, worked tirelessly against poverty in America, and in 1966 was elected senator from the state of New York. Then, in 1968, when he was the lead-

ing candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, Bobby, like his brother before him, was assassinated. He was only forty-two years old.

By any normal standard, Bobby Kennedy lived a remarkable life. Yet the standards he faced were anything but normal. Why? Because he wasn't Joe and he wasn't John. His oldest brother, Joe, Jr., was a war hero who, before being killed in combat in World War II, had been handpicked by their powerful father, Joseph Sr., to be the "Kennedy president." His older brother John was also a war hero, and he actually did become the president. Bobby was the third son, and although he was a talented, accomplished, and powerful man in his own right, he never seemed to be good enough. He could never be the giant that he had helped John to become—a fact that biographers say was a sore point between Bobby and his father. At the same time, it seems that Bobby Kennedy also carried the weight of his own expectations, feeling that he could never quite measure up to the lofty standards established by his older, taller, more handsome, more heroic, more charismatic brothers. His relatively short life was lived in their long and substantial shadows.

Anyone who has older brothers or sisters can probably relate to Bobby Kennedy's experience. Being the younger brother or sister gives true meaning to the term "sibling rivalry," especially when you hear comments like, "Why can't you be like Jim?" or "Aren't you Amy's kid sister?" or "Your brother Sam is an honor student—what happened to you?" or "Did Sarah get all the good looks in your family?" As one cynic has said, "The dream that all men should live as brothers is held by men who have no brothers."

It can be difficult, and more than a little exasperating, to follow in another's footsteps, or to be continually compared to someone else. Perhaps it was this kind of experience that prompted the rock band, the Guess Who, to sing about "no hand-me-down shoes . . . no hand-me-down clothes . . . no hand-me-down love." Being a younger sibling can be tough.

No one knew this better than Andrew, Simon Peter's younger brother. So let's allow him to step out of the shadows and onto center stage where we can see him more clearly.

"Behold the Lamb!"

Andrew is first seen as a disciple of the desert prophet John the Baptist, who was preaching a message of repentance and kingdom hope unlike anything ever heard by the people of Israel who were living under the occupying forces of the powerful Roman Empire. Mark's gospel pictures John as a throwback, more reminiscent of the Old Testament than the New. He fascinated people with his simple lifestyle and his dramatic proclamations against sin. When he spoke, people were electrified. They listened and then responded with obedience and a submission to baptism, symbolizing their repentance. Crowds followed John everywhere. His charismatic ministry brought hope to the common people and became a threat to the leaders of the nation—a threat that would ultimately cost John his life. Among the followers who hung on his every word was Andrew, a young man from Capernaum, and his friend John.

When John the Baptist stood in the muddy water at the southern end of the Jordan River, baptizing his followers and preaching to them about the coming Messiah, the line of

people waiting for baptism extended as far as the eye could see. One by one, people responded to John's powerful message by accepting baptism, which acknowledged their need of spiritual rescue and symbolized the forgiveness of their sins. Though this baptism carried no inherent saving power, it was viewed as an act of spiritual cleansing for the repentant.

As the line of people snaked its way forward into the water, John's mood suddenly changed. He had spied a familiar face in the waiting crowd. "Behold," he called, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). After introducing his followers to Jesus of Nazareth, John pronounced these compelling words: "This is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God" (vv. 33–34).

The young man from Capernaum must have been stunned. He had seen the power of John the Baptist's ministry up close and personal; he had watched the multitudes respond to his message. But now, when John baptized Jesus, Andrew and the others saw and heard something even more astonishing: "Behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, said 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17). Something unusual was happening in the waters of the Jordan that day!

Andrew had just been introduced to the Son of God. The Messiah long foretold. The One who would offer mankind a relationship with God based on divine love and forgiveness instead of religious ceremony and ritual. The One who had come to become the Lamb of sacrifice.

Andrew did not hesitate. He immediately believed John's declaration that Jesus was God's offer of salvation and began

to follow Him (John 1:37–40), thus becoming part of the apostolic band. In fact, Andrew and his friend were the first two disciples Jesus called (although Andrew’s friend is not named, scholars have always believed that he was the author of John’s gospel).

The depth of Andrew’s belief and commitment would be expressed in his very first act as a follower of Jesus, and confirmed in the ongoing pattern of his life!

Andrew’s Passion for People

As a pastor, I often said, “I never cease to be amazed at the things people choose to be passionate about.” From the color of the Sunday church bulletin to the color of the carpet. From the temperature in the sanctuary to the choice of flowers for the front of the church. From the importance of choir robes to a staunch conviction that choir robes are unscriptural. I once had a lengthy conversation with an irate church member over the communion bread. The cause of his distress was that we had switched the communion bread from broken crackers to unleavened bread. No matter how many different ways I tried to explain that, while there was nothing wrong with using the broken crackers and we simply wanted the congregation to experience the Lord’s Table in a manner similar to the experience of the early church, this person would not be calmed or convinced. He wanted his crackers back! It never ceases to amaze me what people choose to be passionate about.

You can learn a lot about people by identifying what it is they are passionate about, and Andrew is no exception. He was passionate about the eternal destiny of human beings.

This was not just a concern for people in general; it was concern for individual persons and where they would spend eternity. Andrew expressed this passion immediately after he began following the Savior when the first thing he did was to find his own brother and tell him about Jesus.

HIS BROTHER

Most of us who know Christ often feel inadequate and more than a bit nervous when it comes to sharing our faith. Yet Andrew's first act of discipleship was to share his faith. And the difficulty of that declaration was intensified by the object of his outreach, because Andrew was trying to share Christ with:

- The one closest to him, his older brother.
- The one who may have been most unreachable (remember Peter's legendary temper!).
- The one whose shadow he had lived in his entire life!

Our family members can be the hardest people to reach with the message of the gospel. Why? Because they know us so well. They have heard or borne the brunt of our unkind or inappropriate words and they have seen our selfish acts. They often know about our secret desires and have witnessed our private anger.

When I became a Christian in 1973, it was after a number of years in which my personal faith could best be described as "churchianity." I claimed to be a person of faith, went to church, was active in church activities, sang in the choir, and was quite proud of my religiosity. In fact, I was so

good at religion that almost everyone who knew me was convinced that I was “a good Christian.” Well, almost everyone.

My brother Rob, who is two years my junior, saw through my act and recognized my hypocrisy. So when I did come to Christ, it was virtually impossible for me to share my faith with Rob because he had seen the reality of my life in contrast to my previous religious claims. At one point, the friction between us became so intense that when I would enter a room, Rob would leave. It was a long time before my brother could accept my claims of being a follower of Christ—and then it was only after he saw enough genuine change in my life as evidence of it. Now, years later, Rob also is a believer and we have a wonderful relationship. But those early days of my faith journey created a tension between us because he knew me so well.

As a man with a newfound faith, Andrew could have chosen a much easier target for his first proclamation of the gospel. Yet he began with the most difficult: the person closest to him, his brother Simon. Andrew wanted so much for his brother to know Jesus that he went to him with the message that every Jew had longed to proclaim for centuries, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41).

The results of Andrew’s proclamation were twofold:

- A great apostle was born. (Remember, you never know what will become of one life and the difference that life can make.)
- A great example was begun. (Here we see the first true New Testament example of evangelism: someone bringing someone else to Jesus Christ.)

When Andrew reached out to Simon, he had no idea what the future held for his big brother. He did not know that Simon would become Peter, and that Peter would become the apostle who would be Christ's principal instrument in giving birth to the church. Nor did Andrew have any idea that his brother, an uneducated fisherman, would someday write two books that would be part of the scriptures that became the New Testament. Andrew simply wanted his brother to know Christ.

Remember: the toughest to reach (our own family) still need to be reached! But Andrew did not confine his evangelism to those closest to him.

A CHILD

Anyone we bring to the Savior could become like Simon Peter—a true spiritual diamond in the rough. Each new believer has the potential to become a powerful instrument in the hands of a powerful God. This is probably most evident in those who come to faith in Christ in their youth and immaturity. As someone once said, an older person who comes to the Savior has only a soul to give to Christ; a child who comes to faith has not only a soul but a life to give to the Lord.

This is why I have always had such great appreciation for people who are passionate about children's ministry or youth work. I love my own kids, but I must confess that other people's kids can easily drive me a little nutty (actually even my own can do this at times). I have no doubt that my personality and gifts are geared toward adult ministry. Yet adult ministry is no more significant than ministry to children and teens. In fact, few things are quite as exciting as youth min-

istry, because we cannot predict what form these unshaped lives will grow into or how God might work in them and through them. The possibilities seem almost as infinite as God Himself. And it would seem that, at some level, Andrew may have recognized this, as evidenced by the event recorded in John 6:1–14.

At this point in Jesus’ ministry, a huge crowd, perhaps as many as 25,000 people, had been following Him to hear Him preach and watch His miracles. They were so captivated by Him that they even forgot to pack their picnic lunches, and after several hours these folks were getting hungry. Unfortunately, there were no Burger Kings or fast-food falafels on the Galilean hillsides. So for Jesus’ fledgling disciples, this offered a wonderful “teachable moment.”

Jesus tested Philip by asking him where they could buy enough bread to feed such a crowd (John 6:5). Philip’s response seemed to be half-despair and half-sarcasm: “If we spent 200 denarii [a year’s wages for a day-laborer], it wouldn’t be enough to give each of them even a taste!”

Then Andrew entered the scene. And I find it interesting that, even at the moment that Andrew steps to center stage to “save the day,” the writer feels compelled to remind us that Andrew was “Simon Peter’s brother.” Even in the spotlight Andrew was still in his big brother’s shadow (John 6:8).

Andrew had a hungry multitude and an ill-prepared group of disciples, and what he did must have seemed laughable to anyone who understood the scale of the problem. He brought a boy and his sack lunch to Jesus (John 6:9). “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish,” he

said. Yet even to Andrew this seemed woefully inadequate: “But what are these for so many people?”

Now came the teachable moment, and it was a lesson the Twelve needed to learn. As the hymnwriter put it, “Little is much when God is in it.” Jesus took the meager lunch of bread and fish and multiplied it to feed the entire crowd! He not only fed them; He gave them all they could eat (John 6:11). He not only gave them all they could eat; He provided so bountifully that they had twelve baskets of leftovers (John 6:12). Upon seeing this miracle, the people could not help but acknowledge, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14).

All of this happened because Andrew brought one small, seemingly insignificant boy to Jesus. How many others had overlooked this boy, even ignored him? But Andrew took him to Jesus. Amazing.

Once again, Andrew’s solution to the problem was very simple: bring someone to Jesus.

- He went after someone insignificant.
- He engaged a child to help.
- He watched Jesus take something small and bless it, multiply it, and use it.

Even as a young follower in the faith, Andrew seems to have learned something that all of us need to remember. We reach people not because of what they can do for Jesus, but for what He can do in and through them! This means:

- We must reach the insignificant as well as the mighty.
- We must be committed to reaching children.

- We must see the multitudes through the eyes of Jesus and allow Him to take our weak efforts and bless, multiply, and use them to reach people.

A GROUP OF GENTILES

By now, among the disciples, Andrew seems to have been regarded as the one who understood bringing people to Jesus. We see this clearly when Jesus and His men were in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover.

Passover was one of the three “high feast” times of the year for the Jewish people (along with the Feast of Weeks and the Day of Atonement), and they made pilgrimages from all over the world to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate those feasts. As a result, the city was filled with people who had come to worship. Many Gentiles also had heard of this new rabbi and wanted to see and hear Him for themselves, but Gentiles were barred from entering the teaching place of the temple. When Gentiles visited the temple, they were allowed only in the outer court; the inner temple court was reserved for Jewish men. As a result, the Gentiles were cut off from the teaching of Jesus, the healer from Nazareth (John 12:20–22).

The Gentiles asked Philip for an audience with Jesus, and Philip then turned to Andrew to get the job done. Perhaps Philip felt uncomfortable or even uncertain about the appropriateness of bringing hated Gentiles to the Christ. What he was certain about, however, was that Andrew would know what to do. So Philip took the Gentiles’ appeal to Andrew, who did not hesitate to take their request to the Lord.

This adds a new wrinkle to Andrew’s ministry, for here we see that Andrew has moved beyond his own family, and

even beyond his own people to reach across racial and cultural barriers. Andrew responded with compassion and concern for those outside his comfort zone, outside the scope of the conventional thinking of his day, outside what was considered “proper.” Andrew was not afraid to take a risk if necessary to bring people to Christ.

This is the heart of missions: taking Christ to every tribe, tongue, nation, and people. As messengers of the gospel we are called to reach out to every ethnic group, to stretch across every cultural barrier. We don’t minister just to the people who look and talk and think like us. This is not a terribly complicated concept, but it is an eternally important one—and it was Andrew who blazed the trail for us. It was Andrew who modeled a passion and compassion for other people to know and find what he had embraced in Jesus.

Andrew’s Opportunity to Grow

Baseball is a great game, filled with strategy, drama, and action. Baseball is also considered “the great American pastime.” One of the things that makes baseball so “all-American”—at least in my opinion—is the number of brothers who usually are playing in the major leagues at the same time. When I was growing up, the Boyer brothers (Ken and Clete) were part of the game. Both were excellent players with outstanding careers, but Ken played for the Cardinals—in the pinstriped shadow of his brother’s vaunted New York Yankees dynasty.

I imagine them as kids playing catch in the backyard, pretending to be playing together in the seventh and deciding game of the World Series. I also imagine that these guys ratcheted up the intensity and competition level as brother tried

to surpass and outdo brother. Who would hit the most home runs? Who would hit the longest home runs? Who would be drafted first, sign a contract, make it to the major leagues, win a playoff? Sibling rivalry at its best and worst. Best, because there is nothing quite like the friendly but intense competition between brothers. Worst, because inevitably one brother will surpass the other in ability, success, and acclaim.

Recognizing the volatility of sibling rivalry, we must also recognize the great potential for friction between Andrew and Simon Peter, even though both were disciples of the Master. Andrew was the first to come to Jesus, and he lost no time in bringing his brother Peter to Jesus; yet he was excluded from the inner circle of the Master's disciples (Peter, James, and John). This inner circle witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter from the dead, the Transfiguration of Jesus, and the agony and horror of the Gethsemane experience. The inner circle saw it all.

James and John also were brothers, but both of them were included in the circle. Peter and Andrew were brothers, yet Andrew was excluded.

Only once in the gospel records do we find Andrew included with this intimate group of three, and that was a time when they began to question Jesus regarding His teaching. The result was what would become known as the Olivet Discourse, second only to the Sermon on the Mount in its length and significance among the sermons of the Lord. In being included at that one special moment of opportunity, Andrew was allowed to hear some of the most significant things the Savior taught.

- He heard about Christ's return.

- He heard about the coming judgment, its consequences, and the need for the world to hear the message of Christ.
- He heard about the trials and triumph in the sufferings of God's people and the victorious return of the Savior.
- He heard about the integrity and trustworthiness of the Word of God.

Andrew was allowed to see the curtain drawn back and privileged to hear teachings that remain critical to our own faith experience today. Knowing the hope of Christ's return promises us a better day ahead, while the reminder of the consequences of sin and judgment urge and motivate us to share with others the message of Christ's forgiveness. The truth of the enduring Word of God gives us foundation for all of our thinking and living.

Andrew got to hear these powerful truths from the lips of the Savior Himself! He had been faithful in sharing the message of Christ, the message of hope, to everyone who crossed his path. Now, the Master honored that faithfulness by telling him something powerful: what he, Andrew, was doing and modeling in his evangelistic efforts would ultimately be multiplied into a global mission, all for the purpose of doing what Andrew did—bringing people to Christ before it is too late!

Peter and John shared the truths Jesus taught them by writing letters that would become part of the New Testament. "As for Andrew," writes Herbert Lockyer, "we can be confident that, as one whose ministry was personal and not public, his lips were not silent as to what he heard and learned during that wonderful teaching session" (Herbert Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972], 53).



After the Olivet Discourse, Andrew appears only one other time in the pages of Scripture, and that is in the list of the disciples present in the upper room, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1). Then, after these brief moments in the sun, he quietly returned to the shadows as his big brother, Peter, stepped back onto center stage. According to early church tradition, Andrew gave his life for the message of the cross; it was his passion. After spending his days preaching in Jerusalem, Andrew reportedly was hung on an X-shaped cross, known ever since as St. Andrew's Cross (Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958], 49).

Andrew is, undoubtedly, an overlooked individual in the message and ministry of the church. But he was not, and will not be, overlooked by the Master he loved, served, and proclaimed. No, Andrew was not the Billy Graham of his day. That role went to his brother Peter. Instead, Andrew was more like Edward Kimball.

Edward Kimball, a young Sunday school teacher in Boston, had a burden for boys to come to the Savior. One day he shared Christ with a young shoe salesman named D. L. Moody, who was used by God to touch two nations, England and America, with the gospel as he preached in powerful evangelistic campaigns and founded the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Under Moody's ministry, Wilbur Chapman, who became a great evangelist in his own generation, turned to the Savior, and God used Chapman's preaching to reach a wild young Chicago White Stockings baseball player named Billy Sunday. Sunday became a believer and gave his

life to serving Christ as an evangelist. Under Sunday's ministry, a young man named Mordecai Hamm came to Christ, and Hamm's ministry of evangelism was greatly used by God in the southeastern part of the United States. In one of Hamm's evangelistic meetings a youth named Billy Graham met the Savior. All because of Edward Kimball, an Andrew who shared his faith with one young man who crossed his path. (Adapted from Joseph Stowell, *Following Christ* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1996], 130–131.)

For every Simon Peter, apostle Paul, Martin Luther, and Billy Graham, we are grateful. But we should never underestimate the impact of the Andrews—or the Edward Kimballs—who work quietly behind the scenes to reach one heart at a time. They may never be in the spotlight, but great will be their reward in heaven.

PRINCIPLES FROM THE LIFE OF ANDREW

- ◆ Sharing your faith begins with a desire for other people to find what you have found in Christ.
- ◆ Sharing your faith displays concern for those closest to you, as well as for those who are viewed as insignificant by the world.
- ◆ Sharing your faith requires that you be willing to call anyone and everyone to the knowledge of the Savior.
- ◆ Sharing your faith requires an understanding that Jesus came to die for the world, and you, like Andrew, must live to reach the world.