

Uncertainty

All the young people on a Thursday night call me Joyce. It drives me up the wall, I know it's silly but my name is Joy- there is no more to it- and being called Joyce makes me feel like Joy isn't enough- like, I shouldn't stop there- that somehow the name I was given isn't finished properly.

I do know it's silly, but my name is a big part of who I am and I don't like the idea that who I am can be messed with by a group of young people!

The thing is- often the person, who messes with who I am most, is me. I do this in one of 2 ways. Sometimes I make myself out to be way more than I am, sometimes I make myself out to be way less than I am – both come out of a place of uncertainty.

Sometimes I stop calling myself Joy and call myself- JOY- QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE- righter of all wrongs, solver of all problems, unquestionable genius, who is totally right about everything always. You know... God.

I do it when I am scared, I do it when things aren't going the way I think they ought and I'm not sure that God really has things under control. I do it when I am uncertain that what God is doing is best. I do it when I doubt, when I am uncertain.

Around a month before my sister's wedding she called me up to ask me to pray. Her then fiancé had just booked their honeymoon and had made all these plans, which included him driving to Scotland. The thing was, he hadn't passed his driving test yet and the next available slot was 10 days before they were due to go. It was imperative to their honeymoon plans that he passed. I prayed- I'm a good sister, but I also said to her that they'd better have a back up plan. JOY- QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE etc., advised that while it was good to pray that God probably wasn't that interested in their driving test and honeymoon and they should have been more organised.

And when my brother-in-law did pass his driving test- JOY- QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE etc., was furious with God for not punishing them for being unorganised. I actually remember saying out loud (to my shame) 'that's so unfair, if I had done that I wouldn't have passed.'

Now right now I'm not saying that I fully understand how prayer works or how God intervenes in our lives, I don't know if God helped my brother-in-law pass his driving test. But at the time JOY- QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE was 100% that God did not work like that, and that my idea of how things should go was right.

In my desire for certainty I made rules up and then made a god up that stuck by them. In my desire for control, for a sense of fairness, in my desire to have a god that fitted with me, I made a god that was limited and distant, and when that god let me down I sulked.

Making gods of and for ourselves isn't what we should be doing- it's a sin and we need to throw it off.

Sometimes I stop calling myself Joy and call myself joy the gross- destroyer of goodness, ultimate screw up and failure ... I do it when I'm scared, I do it when I don't do the things I ought do, I do it when I am uncertain that God can do all the things he said he does. I do it when I doubt.

There was a time I decided to quit being a Christian- I didn't do an amazing job of it, and at the end of that time I was acutely aware of needing to make things right with me and God, to say sorry and repent. I just couldn't, it took ages and ages, it wasn't that I didn't believe in God it was I had become certain that God

couldn't love me, would not love me anymore. That His grace had run out and that I was the one it has run out for. I start to tell God what is possible and make up a small angry little man of a god who I have pleaded with and have been sent away from. And like I said, making gods for ourselves isn't what we should be doing- it's a sin and we need to throw it off.

We're supposed to be running a race- travelling, moving, growing into God's Kingdom. We're going forward into all that God intends for us- but the names we give ourselves, and the gods we make for ourselves get in the way.

To me it seems that the problem is when met with uncertainty- we look for certainty to resolve it, and if we don't get an answer we understand we make one up. We draw lines that never existed, or make rules up. We make things so they fit within our understanding.

But instead of trying to fill the gaps, instead to make certain our uncertainty, perhaps the thing to do is to grasp it.

First we need to stop naming ourselves and let God decide who we are. You are not who you think you are, you can't be, because you are not yet fully known by anyone but God, God holds you in himself, and has you run toward Him, and as you run you become more you. God marks out our race- directing our steps to bring his kingdom and we as we run we are transformed, our communities are transformed. God gives us our identity, I am not JOY QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE, or joy the gross, I am Joy beloved child of God, precious and powerful because of what God has done.

But sometimes the doubt is too much, right? - I know God loves me, I know I can trust him but sometimes- sometimes it's hard to keep going. It is then we can look to the crowd of witnesses- the ones who have gone before, the ones who are running alongside us; the ones are cheering us on. We can borrow their wisdom, their faith, and their certainty and use it to help our own. We can read Paul's letters, the prophets, David's songs of praise and bitter laments. We can share our stories of faith with each other, the glimpses of God we have seen. We share communion- we remember our saviours love and sacrifice together- and we keep running.

The fact is we cannot know all of God, all the power and wonder and love and grace. As it says in 1 Corinthians 13:12 'For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror'

Those moments of faith that we do have- those bits of God's kingdom that we have seen, the love and the kindness we do experience, are just small bits of something way bigger and more amazing than we can imagine. What we see is just a reflection of what is, just part of a massive God- perhaps we do not need to fill the gaps, but let those gaps fill us with wonder and awe- how amazing is it that someone so big, and so mighty and so unfathomable, crammed a part of himself into a fragile little human body so that he could love us closer.

Our certainty comes in our surrender to God's uncertainty. I do not know what is coming. I do not know who I will be. I do not know what God will do but I know that if I throw off everything that hinders and run with perseverance God's kingdom will come.