



TAKING THE PLUNGE

Relaxing in the sun was just where the author wanted to be. Until one special little girl called her out of her comfort zone and into a terrifying adventure involving a 200-foot waterslide. Read how the author experienced exhilaration and joy far greater than any chaise lounge could offer.

BY ALICIA BRUXVOORT

We celebrated my daughter's tenth birthday with a splash. Lathered in sunscreen and laden with beach towels, we hauled a minivan full of girls to a nearby water park for a pool party. The aquatic complex housed snaky water slides, a walloping wave pool and a sprinkler-studded playground. But the highlight of the day loomed four stories high at the top of a tall timber tower; the Rage looked as daunting as its name.

The talk of the park, this thrill-ride included a 200-foot drop into a small pool of water no deeper than my bathtub. Despite its intimidating appearance, the attraction drew a steady stream of dripping wet

adventurers who wound like colorful party streamers up the steep wooden stairs.

One by one, my daughter and her friends accepted the spine-tingling challenge. I watched as they plummeted down the water slide and landed with a victory whoop at the bottom where I stood cheering. After capturing their first flights on film, I headed to the sun deck where I stretched out for a rare moment of relaxation.

Eventually the birthday girl and her pals found me. With dramatic embellishment, they gave accounts of their fast and furious falls down the Rage. I congratulated their bravery, helped them apply a second round of sunscreen, and promised to keep watching the action from my lawn chair.

However, my 10-year-old had other plans. She reached for my hand and said, "Come with us this time, Mom. Please."

I glanced at the sky-high slide and felt my stomach somersault. "I don't think moms are allowed on that one," I replied with an apologetic grin.

My daughter's smile capsized and her shoulders dropped. Her blue eyes bore into mine. "You could call it a birthday gift," she suggested.

I took one last look at the lofty ride and reluctantly slipped off my flip-flops. Moments later I stood at the top of the Rage looking down. I grew weak as I watched my daughter and her friends sling their delicate bodies over the edge and speed to the shallow finish. Finally, I was the only one left on the wooden platform.

"Just lie on your back and give yourself a push," the life-guard instructed, smacking her bubble gum and twirling a silver whistle around her pointer finger. I tried to ignore the nausea rising while I inched toward the slide's start. My daughter waved from the ride's end.

Tentatively, I stepped into the swirling wetness, lowered my body onto the slide and shivered. The water was freezing! The drop looked daunting from my perspective. One push and I would fall 200 feet. What was I doing? I'm not a thrill seeker. I took a deep breath (and held it all the way to the bottom), reclined in the cold water, then grabbed the side of the slide. I closed my eyes and pushed myself over the ledge.

Water spewed into the air. My heart jumped to my throat. My backside momentarily lifted off the slide and then battered the sidewall with a thump. Adrenaline rushed. The birthday girl screamed with delight as I came to a splashing halt.

"You did it, Mom! Wasn't that awesome?"

I stood to my feet and realized I was still in one piece. I turned to revel in the sight of the watery path I'd just braved, then flashed my birthday girl a smile. I tossed my dripping arm around her shoulder and asked, "Shall we do it again?"

As I headed up the steps, this time without the knocking knees, I realized the Rage was an apt picture of my life with Jesus. Following Him is an amazing ride, but sometimes the hardest part of obedience is simply taking that first plunge.

I want you and your family to move.

"Are you kidding, Lord? I'm happy right here in my lawn chair. See? I have friends, a great church, a thriving ministry ..."

I want you to surrender your career plans to Me.

"But, Lord, I don't want to climb that ladder. I want to pursue these dreams ..."

It's time to give your husband the reins. I created him to be the head of your family. Get out of the way and let him become the man I've dreamed him to be.

"But, Lord, he's too busy to lead well. He doesn't have the vision I do ..."

And for every argument I have, the Author of this adventure called life urges: Just trust Me and take the plunge!

Thanks to a daring 10-year-old girl and a persistent Savior, I'm learning the true thrill of faith begins when I push my wary heart over the edge of my comfort zone and follow Christ's lead. Each time I do, I discover that Jesus is waiting at the end of my challenge with delighted applause. As I catch my breath, I hear Him say, "Wasn't that an awesome ride? How did you like those splashes of joy? Did you feel your heart lift off the ground and soar?"

Then, as I get back on my feet, He grabs my hand and beckons, "Come on! Let's do it again!"

Alicia Bruxvoort is a mom of five who lives, writes, and scales mountains of laundry in Iowa. A freelance writer and speaker, she blogs about the adventure of faith at The Overflow! Meet Alicia at www.aliciabruxvoort.net.