

Endorsements for *I Never Signed Up for This*

“I cried until I could barely breathe. This was not how I had planned my life.” Isn’t it true? God has a way of disrupting our best-laid plans. Like Ann, I am also the mother of a missionary, and when my son was born, I held him close and imagined I always would. But when he was a young man, God called that very precious child (with his wife and our grandchild), into His work across the ocean. And like Ann, I cried because this was not how I planned my life of perfect family togetherness.

With raw honesty, emotion, and true beauty, Ann tells the story of sending not one, but two, of her children (and several young grandchildren!) on mission to “unsafe” parts of the world. In her pursuit of peace and freedom from fear, Ann turns to the stories of mothers in the Bible and discovers that the legacy of motherhood always requires surrender. By choosing to lay aside her dreams for a “predesigned perfect life,” Ann has convinced me that God doesn’t owe me anything, but he promises to give me everything I need—because He is all I need—even if I never signed up for this.

– Tori R. Haverkamp,

Author of *The Missionary Mama's Survival Guide: Compassionate Help for the Mothers of Cross-Cultural Workers* and founder of the Parents of Goers ministry

Raw, beautiful, and so relatable, Ann’s memoir of being a reluctant missionary parent is a must-read for any parent sending their children and grandchildren off to serve in far away lands. Inviting us into the thoughts and emotions that “good Christians” are often afraid to disclose, Ann gives permission for us to do the same and to experience the love and gentleness of our Heavenly Father as we surrender our children to His calling. A must-read for grandparents of TCKs!

– Lauren Wells,

CEO of TCK Training and author of several books on raising Third Culture Kids and on the Grief Tower Model

You will find yourself captivated by the real-life journey of Ann Bowman as she carries you down her path of transformation and calling to be the parent of international missionaries serving in difficult places. Through her book, *I Never Signed Up for This*, you will discover that the calling to the world extends beyond the adult missionaries who are sent and includes both the children in tow and the families who stay behind.

There is much to learn from Ann’s spiritual, psychological, and familial journey that moves her from a place of resistance, fear, and grief to a place of peace as she embraces and participates in her children’s call to a lost world. This inspiring book should be on the list of “must reads” for the parents, advocacy teams, and churches of those who are sent to serve.

– Cindy Wiles,

Executive Director, Restore Hope

In the chapters of Ann Bowman's book, the reader gets an honest and intimate picture of a mother's heart as it wrestles with God. For her, the wrestling is in His call on her life to surrender not one, but two children (and grandchildren!) to the mission field in foreign lands. Both children would be called to the mission field to serve in places that have been and continue to be places of danger and unrest.

As a mother, I found that I could not let the tissue box be too far away, and as the sister of a missionary, I found myself wishing my own parents could have read this book to prepare and guide them through their own journey of surrender. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I found myself so very moved by the transparency with which Ann shares her journey from a fearful observer to a prayerful participant (albeit still frightened at times) and joyful "all in" player for the harvest field.

Finally, as a mental health counselor for many years, this book is a tremendous gift that I will be able to share with many of the individuals that I serve, whether their mission field is across the globe, in the local church, across the street, or across the kitchen table.

– Julia Diane Cost,

Pastoral Counselor, Global Counseling Network

Ann lays out the struggle between the ideal and the real: the questions about our journey that are different than we imagined they would be. This is a relatable struggle, whether or not you face the journey of sending your children off to far-flung places.

But if you are on a journey like Ann's with children serving around the world (whether in missions, military service, international business and NGOs, or even children and grandchildren who live far from you), then this book is for you. It will help you process and grow through the time your family is far from you. Through her personal stories, Ann shows us how to support and stay connected with family members who choose to serve far away from their families.

– A global worker and trainer with 40 years of experience

I've known Ann for over 30 years and have watched her children grow up and wholeheartedly give themselves to missions, serving in some of the most needy and dangerous areas of the world. I found Ann's retelling of her own journey insightful as well as courageously and refreshingly honest. Ann not only shares her own struggles but also how God carried her through the process of sacrifice and brought her to joy.

This is the first book I have ever seen that tells the story of missions from the perspective of those who stay and that shows the impact it has on the larger family. Much is made of the sacrifice of missionaries, but the context of that sacrifice is so much bigger. Ann's book is a gift for other parents and families who walk through this path of trusting God when their children are called into missions, and I am eager to share this book with my own parents who have supported my own missionary journey.

– Meredith, a missionary serving in Eastern Europe for over 30 years