

*Tracie Miles*

GOD'S

*Embracing New Beginnings*

GOT

*with Courage and Confidence*

YOU

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**Books for Courageous Women  
from David C Cook**

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## Chapter 1

# When You Can't See through the Fog

*If you want a new beginning, you just have to begin.*

One day years ago, I was full of emotions as I drove to pick up my dad for a major surgery that he was scheduled for later that morning. The closer I got to his house, the tighter the knot forming in the pit of my stomach became. I was filled with anxiety, knowing we could receive very bad news from the surgeon. Hot tears began stinging my eyes.

Then suddenly, through those tears, I saw a man in the fog.

Due to the limited visibility, I was driving unusually slowly down my dad's street when I noticed the figure in the distance walking straight toward me. I thought it was quite peculiar for anyone to be walking outside so early, but as I got closer, my eyes widened and my heart began to pound.

The figure began to resemble a silhouette of someone I immediately recognized—someone who shouldn't be standing in the middle of the road on a foggy morning. As I approached him, I could see he had on a soft white shirt and baggy tan pants, his bare feet sticking out from the

bottom as he carried his brown sandals in his hand. He appeared to be in his midthirties, with wavy brown hair and a full beard, although he had a neatly kept appearance.

He looked exactly like Jesus—like all those drawings in children's Bible storybooks. And he was now oddly standing right in front of my dad's house.

My heart skipped a beat. My thoughts raced. My mind knew Jesus Christ wouldn't be standing in front of a house in a small beach town in North Carolina, but my heart told me He was indeed there.

I could not take my eyes off him. Chill bumps covered my body from head to toe. As I crept past him and pulled into the driveway, his eyes met mine for a split second and a sweet, gentle smile washed over his face. Then he nodded and disappeared into the fog.

I sat in my car somewhat stunned. For one moment, it had felt as if I were looking into the eyes of Jesus. A sense of peace flooded my spirit. It was as if God's quiet whisper penetrated my heart, assuring me that, regardless of the outcome, everything would be okay even though the healing journey for my dad would be long. Throughout that day at the hospital, I couldn't get the man in the fog out of my head. I truly felt as if I had experienced a Jesus encounter, and He was right by my side all day long.

Now I'm not saying I actually saw Jesus, of course, but I do believe He divinely designed that meeting in the road and orchestrated it as a sign that I would recognize. I think He intended to saturate my heart with the reminder that He really does walk among us and He is always with us in every situation, especially those in which our hearts are heavy and burdened with unknowns. In a very tangible way, Jesus showed me He understands my fears and He cares. I think He also knew I really needed to "see" Him that day.

## Jesus Cares about You Too

Jesus also cares about you today. Standing there in a stare-down with the unknowns of your future, lost in the fog of a life that used to feel so clear.

Maybe you're wrestling with swirling thoughts like these:

*I feel stuck where I am, and I want to start something new. I have big dreams and ideas, and I want to turn my visions into reality. But can I? Do I have what it takes? And where would I even begin?*

*I'm not where I thought I would be at this age. All my friends are married or having babies, and I'm still stuck and disappointed in myself and my circumstances.*

*I'm turning fifty? My life is nothing like I thought it would look, but is it too late to start anew?*

*I never wanted to get divorced, but now I'm alone, afraid, and forced to start over, yet I have no idea how to move forward. Or if I even can.*

*All my children have now moved out, are married, and have lives of their own. What am I supposed to do with myself?*

*Why did God allow this transition in my life? I'm kind of mad at Him and doubting His goodness, but I'm afraid to let anyone know how I really feel.*

If any of those thoughts sound familiar to you or if a unique opportunity or struggle relevant to you just popped into your mind after reading these, I can only assume that, for some reason, you're in uncharted territory in the landscape of your life.

You're in a phase of transition, wondering how to manage your emotions or control your negative thoughts about this unfamiliar and uncomfortable place you've found yourself in. Not knowing whether to turn left or right—or how to turn in any direction for that matter. Uncertain about where to find solutions or how to bring about change. Please know you are not alone.

From time to time, we all come up against fears of the unknown, transitional seasons of life, and personal problems that seem hopeless or scary. We all face seasons of new beginnings and unfamiliar shifts in our lives that can feel beyond our ability to handle, no matter how big or small they may be.

During these journeys into our new seasons, it's easy to get caught up in our emotions and worries, let our fears get the better of us, and forget to look for Jesus amid the gloom. In some situations, we may even find ourselves wondering if He is even aware of our problems, if He sees the fog we're pushing through, and if He really cares about what we're enduring. But we never have to live afraid and alone.

Joshua 1:9 serves as a sweet reminder that Jesus is aware of what we're facing, He does care about what we're going through, and He is with us all the time: "This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Believing this promise will give you peace for the journey and is a great verse to tuck into your heart as you begin marching toward the new you.

Also keep in mind Proverbs 16:1: “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD” (ESV). And Proverbs 16:9: “We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.” You see, the Lord gave us ears to hear Him, eyes to see Him, and a mind to plan out our lives, and He wants us to use them and be courageous while doing it, knowing He has our best interests in mind.

## We're in This Together

As you walk through the rest of this book with me, I'm going to help you get through this season of new beginnings. No matter your current situation, the common denominator is the felt need we all share—the desire to be whole, secure, and happy in whatever phase of life we find ourselves in.

Regardless of our age or situation, if a lifequake of sorts happens—where everything seems shaken up, our circumstances drastically change, or seasons shift—it's normal to feel out of sorts as well. We feel directionless and confused, stuck in a place in a life we don't recognize and are unsure how to navigate. Fears and other emotions appear to be controlling our every waking moment, and as much as we want to feel and think differently, we simply don't know how.

We long to be successful and have the courage and faith to push through the forest of doubts in our minds and see even the smallest ray of hope shining through the trees, but we often feel lost, misplaced, and directionless. All of which causes us to secretly wonder if we even have what it takes to not only get through our unfamiliar, uncomfortable season but also come out on the other side feeling even better and happier than we did before.

Not only do we not feel like ourselves, but we don't even know who this “new me” is supposed to be now, much less how to survive and believe the future can be bright.

Even if you've been through no actual lifequake event, I bet you can still relate to these unspoken thoughts and feelings. You may question if the changes you're dreaming about and the visions of how you want your life to be are even possible. You may doubt if you even can begin again. Go for that scary yet exciting career move you've been dreaming about. Start that new business. Kick off a ministry idea God has been pricking your spirit about. Or write that book to share your story or start a blog or a podcast to encourage others.

Regardless of the circumstances that have led you to this crossroads, I imagine you don't want to be in such an uncertain position. You might feel angry about your situation—angry at God and even angry at yourself for being in this spot. If not angry, you might be frustrated at your own unwillingness to take a chance on yourself. Or maybe you're just plain ol' tired of feeling stuck and discontent, and you're ready for some adventure and excitement!

In any case, all these questions, thoughts, and feelings hold great power over our lives, our happiness, and our future, especially when we let them control us and dictate how we live out each day. They can be like a dense fog blurring our vision, preventing us from seeing all the possibilities and keeping us trapped where we are. All those exciting things we long for seem out of reach, and the courage to pursue them wanes when we get bogged down by the burdens of our transitions.

Yet you might agree that, despite your fear of beginning again, deep down *you still want to*.

Who wouldn't want a fresh start and new hope?

Perhaps you have a vision for what you want life to look like, who and how you want to be, but it seems like an out-of-reach fantasy. How can you

know how and when to forge ahead? How can you trust that this *new* you're longing for or this *new* you were thrust into will actually work out in the long run? How can you overcome the obstacles keeping you from happiness? How can you start turning that fantasy of a better life into a reality?

How do you begin again?

## It's Never Too Late

The truth is, if God has planted a seed in your heart—a desire to get through a change in your life with joy, a dream or vision, a longing to do something new, big, adventurous, risky, or just out of the norm—He is with you. If you're yearning to adopt a new outlook, tackle problems with courage and faith, or learn to acquire happiness right where you are, He has qualified you to do exactly that.

My friend, as I stated previously, God has already given you what you need. The qualifying and the equipping. And it's never too late to embrace a new beginning.

It's up to us to work on our confidence and courage (more on that coming up), remember our motivation and where we want to be, and then commit to persevere and succeed, while expecting nothing but God's best for us. We must stop worrying about what could go wrong and instead get excited about all that can go right!

It's never too late to embrace  
a new beginning.

God-instilled power, confidence, and courage are inside you. You may just have to do the hard work to unearth them again! I promise you, if you do the work, God will bless the work, and you will be blessed. And eventually you're going to feel so proud of how far you've come!

These are all truths I remind myself of every day, especially when I'm feeling discouraged, afraid, or hopeless. I pray you will remember them too. It's not always easy and may at times feel impossible in the face of adversity, but take heart because, as Jesus promises us, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible" (Matt. 19:26). For me and for you.

I came across a cute meme the other day that further supports this point: "It's impossible," said pride. "It's risky," said experience. "It's pointless," said reason. "Give it a try," whispered the heart. *Impossible*, *risky*, and *pointless* are all lies from the Enemy which can render us immobile and keep us from our new beginnings. They are not truths from God's Word, so let's not allow those thoughts to trip us up.

When we accept we're in a new stage of life—knowing profound growth and change have already happened, believing deeply in ourselves and our capabilities, and clinging to the truth that nothing is impossible with God—only then have we taken that first step toward the person we want to become or toward that place in life we know we want to land one day.

The new beginning you're heading toward may seem blurry right now. But transitioning well is simply the process of adapting to changes in life, whatever they may bring, and making the best of them.

You *can* reinvent yourself. You *can* reshape your life and your future. You *can* achieve the desires of your heart. And you *can* begin again. I'm learning to let the space between where I am and where I want to be

inspire me and not terrify me. And I want to encourage you today to start doing the same.

Miracles will happen when we give as much energy to our dreams as we do our fears and inhibitions. Channel your energy into positive spaces, and I promise you've got this because God's got you.

Your new beginning can start right now if you're ready. Are you with me?

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## Moving Forward

### Think about It

What scenario has you staring a new beginning in the face today? Is it a lifequake, a change of season, or simply a desire to start something fresh, new, and exciting?

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## Plan for It

What are the stumbling blocks—whether mental, emotional, or physical—that threaten to stand in the way of your quest to begin again? Make a list of those stumbling blocks on a piece of paper, and consider how they've kept you from moving forward. Then beside each one, jot down at least one idea for how you can overcome it and keep it from standing in the way of progress.

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## Act on It

Make a list of all the new things you want to begin. Write down at least three action items for each of those things, and set a deadline for when you want to accomplish each one. Dream big, but know that it's okay to start small. Every little step in the right direction is a positive step into your future. And remember, nothing is ever impossible unless we decide it is and give up.

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## Pray over It

Jesus, I invite You into this adventure with me today as I embark on my new beginning. I need Your strength and peace to pursue this new season of life and overcome all the challenges that lie ahead. Give me the wisdom to be aware of my emotions and the ability to control my thoughts so neither of them will become a hindrance. Pick me up when I stumble, but help me view every stumble as a learning experience that can push me forward. Fill me with excitement about this fresh start, about feeling joy again, and about trusting You all along the way to open the right doors and protect me and my heart. Amen.

Write your own prayer to Jesus in this space.