



Don't
Be
Afraid

EMBRACING COURAGE IN THE FACE OF FEAR

JOYCE MEYER

#1 New York Times Bestselling Author

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INTRODUCTION

Fear is everywhere, and it affects everyone. It has been around since the beginning of time, and it will be here as long as the earth remains. Fear rules many people, but it doesn't have to be that way. Fear is said to be *False Evidence Appearing Real*, and that is an accurate definition because fear is rooted in lies the devil tells us. When we believe them, fear takes root in our hearts and minds.

Although fear will never totally disappear from our lives, we can confront it and overcome it. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is moving forward in the presence of fear. Courageous people do what they believe in their hearts they should do, no matter how they feel or what kinds of doubts and fearful thoughts fill their minds.

If we were to take time to notice how often our reactions to people and circumstances are rooted in fear, we would be amazed. We would also learn a great deal about ourselves. People can and often do spend their entire lives reacting to situations in ways that prevent them from being the people they truly want to be, never realizing that their lives feel empty because they have allowed fear to dictate their decisions.

If you are in a room enjoying conversation with a few friends when suddenly someone joins the group and you immediately feel intimidated, the culprit is fear. That fear may be unreasonable because you may not even know the person, and there would

be no reason for them to provoke fear in you. When something like this happens, your fearful reaction may be related to a specific personality type that reminds you of someone who hurt you earlier in your life. Or perhaps the person who intimidates you is better looking or better educated than you are, and that makes you feel insecure. Or there may be no reason at all for you to be afraid except that the devil wants to torment you. You could feel intimidated for numerous reasons, none of which are related to the other person at all.

In such a circumstance, the wise course of action is to ask God why you reacted the way you did and then watch and wait for Him to speak to your heart. The answer may come immediately, or it may take a while, but if you seek to understand yourself, you will find truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:32).

Let me urge you not to allow fear to push you around and simply put up with it. Neither should you go through your life blaming other people for your misery. Take ownership of your problems and open your heart to God, and He will help bring light into darkness (situations you don't understand). If you can understand fear and how it operates, you can be free from it.

The first part of this book will help you understand fear and recognize how it works in your life. The second part will help you confront fear. In the third part, you will learn about mindsets that will position you for freedom from some of the most common fears people face. I pray that as you read and study this book you will experience freedom from fear, which is something Jesus died to give you.

While fear is understandable under certain circumstances—earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, viruses, and other situations—being afraid does not change the experiences the enemy uses to make us afraid. Fear will never make circumstances better, but it

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will rob us of our strength to deal with them and of our ability to think clearly in the midst of them. The apostle John wrote, “Fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18 KJV), and even when feeling afraid is understandable, it does nothing but torment us.

Fear is the devil’s favorite tool in the toolbox of schemes he uses to steal, kill, and destroy God’s good plan for us (John 10:10). He uses it to prevent our progress in every area of our lives. He uses it to hold us back, to get us to run away from things we should confront, and simply to cause us emotional suffering. People allow fear to control them to varying degrees, but we can decide not to let it control us at all in any area for “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7 ESV).

*Basically there are two paths you can walk: faith or fear.
It's impossible to simultaneously trust God and not trust
God.*

Charles Stanley

Choosing God's Word over the Stronghold of Fear

During my early childhood, I had a speech impediment that made me feel pretty insecure. One day, my third-grade teacher made me walk to the front of the classroom and then ridiculed me in front of my classmates. That was decades ago, but Satan still uses that memory to trigger anxiety attacks in my mind.

On any given day, *whatever I am doing becomes difficult* if I'm struggling with anxiety. So, I really appreciate Joyce's teachings in *Do It Afraid*.

Two scriptures I've come to depend on are Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (ESV), and Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (ESV).

Recently, my boss asked me to speak candidly (in front of my peers) about the challenges we are facing in the midst of a major systems overhaul in the office. For me, it would have been easier to bow out gracefully and keep my thoughts to myself. But I knew that God wanted me to follow through. It's like He was saying, "If you'll just be open and honest about your frustrations, then I will open doors that will lead to positive changes."

I went through with it. *I did it afraid*. And the responses I received were positive. But later that night, I was so anxious that I couldn't get to sleep! Attacks from the enemy were coming left and right: *What if my feedback wasn't valuable? What if I'm just causing more problems at work?* What I needed to do was agree with God's Word and start speaking it out loud to drown out all that negative noise:

I will not be anxious, because God hears my prayers (Phil. 4:6).

I can do anything I have to do through Christ, who gives me strength (Phil. 4:13).

God is for me and not against me (Rom. 8:31).

Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

God's Word is life for me. It keeps me going forward when, on the inside, I feel like retreating.

—LaVondria

CHAPTER 1

It's Time to Make a Choice

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

Deuteronomy 30:19

God has a good plan for our lives, but the devil also has a plan, and it is *not* a good one. The apostle John explained this simply, saying, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). God’s plan is received through placing our faith in what He has said to us in His Word, and the devil’s plan is received through believing his lies. The devil is a liar; he is the father of lies and the truth is not in him (John 8:44).

God has given us free will, which means we can do what we want to do. We have choices, and each one we make brings a result. God said in Deuteronomy 30:19 that He gives us two choices: life or death, blessing or curse. Then He even told us which one to choose. He said to choose life, “so that you and your children may live.” Even though He told us which one to choose, He still requires us to make the choice. God’s good plan for our lives won’t just automatically happen and neither will the devil’s evil plan. We must choose one or the other.

You might think, *Surely nobody would intentionally choose the devil's evil plan for their life.* But people do choose his plan through a lack of knowledge regarding him and his evil ways. The prophet Hosea said that God's people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). My purpose in writing this book is to help you gain knowledge about fear, how fear works in your life, and how to break free from it so you cannot be deceived.

We make one big choice when we decide to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord; then we spend our lives making daily choices that line up with God's Word. When we are in a tense situation at work, we can choose to tell the truth instead of a lie. When a clerk doesn't charge us enough for a certain purchase, it is up to us to do the right thing and make them aware that we owe more money instead of keeping quiet and considering ourselves lucky.

If I were to ask you to guess who tempts you to lie or keep quiet about a work situation, I'm pretty sure you would know the answer. Likewise, if I asked who suggested that you tell the truth and speak up about owing more money, I am sure you know the correct answer to that also. But in both cases you would have to choose what you would do. If you make right choices according to God's will, you experience blessing. But if you choose what you know is wrong, you will face consequences you won't like or enjoy.

Living the Good Life

The apostle Paul wrote:

For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship),
recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do

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those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].

Ephesians 2:10 AMPC

We might read these words and think, *Everybody will choose the good life*, but sadly, there are more who don't choose it than those who do. Why? Because the devil lies to them and makes them think they can make wrong choices and still have right results. He convinces them that they will be the lucky ones who won't experience problems because of bad choices.

The Bible says that our sin always finds us out and that the result of sin is death (Num. 32:23; Rom. 6:23). This "death" is not always the cessation of life. More often, it is the loss of peace, joy, and a life worth living. We can always repent of our sin, receive God's complete forgiveness, and go on to live good lives, but there are times we may still have to bear the consequences of our wrong actions. A person may commit murder and God will forgive him if he truly repents. His family and even the family of the person he killed may forgive him, but he will still have to go to prison. It is important for us to realize that our actions carry consequences.

Notice also that Ephesians 2:10 tells us that God arranges a good life for us, but we must walk in it. We have to choose God's ways. He is always drawing us toward His will, and His grace is always present to enable us to do the right thing, but once again let me be clear that God won't force us to do what is right. We are partners with God in our lives. We *cannot* do His part, and He *will not* do our part. He sets before us life and death, good and evil. The choice is ours.

Whether we walk in faith or fear is a decision we must make many times throughout our lives. I don't think it would be a stretch to say we may need to make that choice daily.

Whether we walk in faith or fear is a decision we must make many times throughout our lives.

My father was an abusive man who controlled his family through fear. It was actually the devil working through him, but he made choices about how he would live, and he had to bear the consequences of those choices in his life. Although he repented and received Jesus at the age of eighty-three, he lived a miserable life for eighty-three years and died when he was eighty-six. I'm glad to know he is in heaven, but what he did had a lasting impact on a lot of people. It is good for us to remember that our choices affect the people around us as well as our own lives.

My mother was ruled by fear, and because of her refusal to confront her fear, both my brother and I suffered. My father sexually abused me, and my mother knew he was doing it, but fear was so strong in her life that she ignored the truth and eventually had mental problems as a result of the deeply rooted guilt and shame she felt.

When my mother was in her seventies, she apologized to me for what she let my father do. She explained to me that she simply could not face the scandal and was afraid she couldn't take care of my brother and me by herself. As you can see, her decisions were based on fear, and all of us suffered because of that, including her.

If you are allowing fear to rule your decisions, you are missing the good life God has planned for you, and there is a strong possibility that your fear is adversely affecting other people in your life, too. It is time to make the choice to let God help you break free from fear.

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Although you may have been ruled by fear in the past, you can choose today to confront fear and become the courageous person God wants you to be. It is not too late. It is never too late to do the right thing.

It is never too late to do the right thing.

Choose Faith

I have heard that when fear knocks on our door, we should send faith to answer. We can conquer fear, but only with faith. When the devil tells us, "You can't," we should remember that God tells us, "You can." Even though we may feel fear, we can move forward in faith.

When Peter saw Jesus walking on water and wanted to do the same, he got out of the boat and began taking steps. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he did indeed walk on water, but when he began to look at the storm and the raging waves around him, he grew frightened and started to sink. Jesus reached out and saved him, but He also lovingly rebuked him for his fear, asking him why he had such little faith and so much doubt (Matt. 14:25–31).

God never stops loving us and doesn't even become angry with us because we choose fear, but it does make Him sad because He wants us to live the best life we can live. He sent Jesus so we could have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

God Prepares Us for What He Has Planned for Us

After God called me to teach His Word, I needed a lot of time to study. In that season of my life, I had a husband and three children and certainly couldn't leave all my responsibilities and go to

Bible college. I also had a full-time job. So I studied as much as I could, but I simply did not have enough time to study as much as I needed to. I was teaching a small Bible study group each Tuesday evening at our home, but God had bigger plans, and I needed time to prepare for what He had planned for me.

I sensed very strongly that God wanted me to quit my job so I could have time at home to study several hours every day, but there was a problem. Had I quit my job, we wouldn't have had enough money to pay our monthly bills, and we definitely would not have had money for emergencies or extra things.

I finally tried to bargain with God: I quit my full-time job and took a part-time job. After only a short time, I got fired. I had always been a good employee—certainly not the type to be fired—but the office manager disliked me from the moment I took the job, and no matter what I did, it wasn't right. When I was fired, it was evident to me that God told me to “quit” my job, not to get a part-time job.

Partial obedience is not faith. It is a little faith mixed with a lot of fear and self-reliance, and it doesn't work. I was afraid we wouldn't have enough without my income, so even though I wanted to be obedient to God, I wanted a backup plan just in case we didn't get the miracle we needed each month.

This same scenario is not uncommon and many people try to do what I did—only under different circumstances. In 1 Samuel

God expects us to obey Him, not offer excuses for why we didn't obey Him.

13 and 15 we see two instances when King Saul tried partial obedience and ended up losing his kingdom because of it. Each time he offered excuses that sounded good,

but God expects us to obey Him, not offer excuses for why we didn't obey Him.

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One instance of Saul's disobedience was due to fear (1 Samuel 13:1–14), and the other was the result of greed (1 Samuel 15:1–23). Let's be very careful not to make excuses for our disobedience. An excuse may sound plausible to us, but God will not accept it.

If you send your teenagers to the store to get milk and they come back with orange juice, they have disobeyed you. They may reason that orange juice is still something to drink and might even offer you the excuse that they got it because it was on sale. But the point is that they did not do what you asked them to do.

When God is preparing us for something big that He wants us to do, He allows us to go through many tests of obedience. Some may seem insignificant to us, but they are as important as anything we might consider big. If we cannot be trusted in little things, we will never be made ruler over bigger things (Matt. 25:21, 23).

After losing my part-time job, I did what God asked me to do and quit working outside the home altogether. I was very fearful concerning finances because each month we needed a miracle to pay our bills in full and have provision for anything extra that came up. Each month, we were around forty dollars short of having enough to pay the bills, but learning how to trust God for that small amount helped prepare us to trust God for the large amounts we need now to support the work He allows us to do around the world. I will never forget how amazing it was to watch God provide for us each month. He did it in a variety of ways and never left us without what we needed.

When I quit my job, I made the right choice, but had I made a wrong choice, my life would be very different than how it is now. What kind of choices are you making in your life right now? Are

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they choices to obey God, to choose life and blessing? Are they choices you will be happy with later on? I pray you are making right choices and that if you haven't been in the past, today will be a new beginning for you. Choose faith, not fear. It is never too late for a new beginning with God.