


MICHAEL YOUSSEF

FOREWORD BY O. S. HAWKINS

NEVER

**GIVE
UP**

**Holding Fast to Biblical Truth
in Times of Danger and Despair**

MICHAEL YOUSSEF

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NEVER GIVE UP by Michael Youssef

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To the great teachers at Moore Theological College—those who are still on earth and those who are already in heaven. To those godly men who between 1972 and 1975 not only taught me to love and revere the Word of God but also modeled for me what it is to never give up and tirelessly and persistently stand for biblical truth.

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FOREWORD

VERY FEW TIMES over the course of a lifetime does a book come along that marks a defining moment in our lives. I look back over my own life to a handful of books that made indelible impressions on the formulation of my own convictions and helped set me on new and challenging adventures. I am confident and bold enough to say that *Never Give Up*, a new book by my longtime friend Dr. Michael Youssef, is just such a volume. This straightforward, no-holds-barred, hard-hitting book is a godsend to our evangelical community during these days of compromise and complacency.

Emerging from the old and often repeated words of the apostle Paul to his son in the ministry, Timothy, this book you now hold in your hands is the epitome of “power and a sound mind” wrapped in a package of love. While some speak the truth but not in love, and others speak in love avoiding the truth, Youssef loves us enough to speak the truth, and he does it in love.

If anyone anywhere at any time could write on this subject with authenticity and integrity, it is Dr. Michael Youssef. Born to a prominent evangelical family in Egypt, he resettled as a young man down under in Australia, resurfaced in America, and earned a terminal degree at one of the country’s most prestigious

institutions of higher learning, then founded and built one of the most far-reaching local churches in the Western world. Then he expanded the ministry he received from the Lord into a worldwide ministry. Indeed, his is a story against all odds, and he writes from the proven and credible platform of one who has never given up. So turn the page and read these words with the confidence that they flow from the pen of a man of impeccable integrity and influence whose own life is the essence of every word he has written in this volume.

These words are packed with an ingredient that is much needed in our day—truth! We never have to be afraid of the truth. It always wins in the end. So begin the journey. Read this book and reap its fruit—and *never give up!*

—O. S. HAWKINS
PRESIDENT AND CEO, GUIDESTONE

CHAPTER 1

ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR DISCOURAGING TIMES

GEORGE MÜLLER WAS a nineteenth-century Christian evangelist and the administrator of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England. He provided a home for more than ten thousand orphans over his lifetime and founded more than a hundred Christian schools. He was known as a man of prayer who always expected God to answer his prayers.

In November 1844 Müller made a commitment to pray for five friends, asking God to bring them to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. He prayed every day, whether he was at home or traveling, whether he was well or sick, no matter how busy his schedule. After a year and a half of daily prayer for these five friends, one of them gave his life to Christ. Müller thanked

God for answering his prayer, and he continued praying daily for the remaining four.

After five more years of praying, a second man came to Christ. Müller thanked God for the second answer to prayer and continued praying for the remaining three.

Six more years passed—and a third man came to Christ. By this time Müller had been praying more than a dozen years without missing a single day—and two of the five men he had prayed for remained unconverted. In 1880 he wrote in his diary, “But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.”

Müller died on March 10, 1898, at the age of ninety-two. He had been praying for the salvation of these men for fifty-four years. At the time of his death, the last two holdouts—two sons of one of Müller’s friends—remained unsaved. Even so, Müller’s prayers were answered, because they both committed their lives to Christ *after* his death.¹

Müller patterned his prayer life after Jesus the Master, who taught His disciples to “always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). Müller never gave up—and neither should we.

Never give up on prayer.

Never give up on biblical truth.

Never give up on the infallibility of the Word of God.

Never give up on the faith that was once delivered.

Never give up on sound doctrine.

Press on, persevere, and don't ever give up.

One of the great examples of spiritual perseverance is the apostle Paul. Imprisoned in a cold Roman dungeon, Paul knew he was nearing the end of his life. Eager to leave a legacy, he wrote his final letter, addressing it to Timothy, a young church leader he had mentored in the faith. We know this letter today as 2 Timothy.

Paul was not writing to Timothy alone. He knew these inspired words would endure and be read by future generations. So this letter is truly an exhortation not only to Timothy, but to church leaders and church members today, including you and me.

The central theme of 2 Timothy is *never give up*. In every generation there are temptations to compromise God's truth. Falsehood and error creep into the church, tainting the purity of the Lord's gospel. The tendency to stray from God's truth was a major problem in the first-century church—and it has reached a crisis level in the twenty-first-century church.

AIM AT HEAVEN

McLean Bible Church was founded in an elementary school by five families in northern Virginia on Easter Sunday 1961. The founders declared the new church to be a Bible-believing evangelical congregation. It has grown into a multisite megachurch with locations all around the Washington, DC, metro area. From 1980 to 2017 the church was led by a theologically conservative

preacher, Lon Solomon. In September 2017 Solomon stepped down to become pastor emeritus. His associate, David Platt, was promoted to lead pastor.

Soon after taking his new leadership position, Platt's teachings began to change. Platt and others in leadership at McLean Bible Church openly embraced secular-left social justice rhetoric. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the church was under lockdown, several staffers joined a Washington, DC, Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest. Photos of staffers holding BLM signs were posted to the church's Facebook page, but the photos were later removed.²

While genuine Christians acknowledge that Black lives absolutely matter to Jesus and His church, the *organization* known as Black Lives Matter is totally incompatible with the Christian church. It is an anti-Christian, Marxist organization that has openly declared its commitment to disrupt "the Western prescribed nuclear family structure requirement."³

David Platt's "woke" social justice sermons seem to have provoked an exodus of Bible-believing members from the church, including many who had faithfully supported the church for decades. In May 2020 McLean Bible Church reported an average attendance of 12,154. One year later, average attendance had declined to 7,300 hundred, a drop of nearly 40 percent. The sudden drop in attendance led to steep budget cuts in missions, outreach, and church facilities.⁴

Both James White of Alpha and Omega Ministries (an evangelical apologetics organization)

and conservative theologian Voddie Baucham, who is African American, describe Platt's teaching as an attempt to merge the Bible with critical race theory—a Marxist, race-conscious concept that attacks all institutions of society as inherently racist, rejects evidence and reason as “White” ways of knowing, and ranks people as either privileged or disadvantaged according to their race, gender, economic class, and so forth.⁵

When preachers decide that the pure, unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ is not enough, they invite falsehood and error into the church. When preachers mix worldly political dogmas with the gospel, they lead the church down the road to hell.

The polluting of the gospel with secular politics is not only tragic, but it undermines the very social justice that “progressive Christians” wish to accomplish. If you want a morally righteous society, in which all people are treated with justice, compassion, and respect, then preach the uncompromised gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

As C. S. Lewis noted, it was the early apostles who began the conversion of the Roman Empire, and it was the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade. They didn't transform society by polluting the gospel with political and social theories. No, Lewis wrote—they “left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in

this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.”⁶

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (John 8:31).

NO ROOM FOR DISAGREEMENT

In December 2019 the Church of England appointed Stephen Cottrell as archbishop of York, the second-highest position in the Anglican church. Many in the so-called “progressive” wing of the church celebrated this appointment because Cottrell has been an outspoken supporter of gay rights within the church. But those who are committed to remaining faithful to biblical truth took a different view. For example, Andrea Williams, an Anglican and the chief executive of Christian Concern, the United Kingdom’s most prominent evangelical organization, responded, “This is not a bishop who respects biblical truth when it comes to human sexuality or marriage.”⁷

Of course, every person deserves to be treated with respect and kindness. We are all sinners, and God loves the homosexual sinner as much as He loves the heterosexual sinner. So as Christians we are to love everyone with the same unconditional love that Christ has shown to us. But we don’t do sinners any favors by normalizing or celebrating sin, or by denying the teaching of Scripture.

The Scriptures make clear, in such passages

as Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:26–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, and 1 Timothy 1:8–11, that homosexual behavior is a sin. We must treat homosexual people with Christlike love and respect, just as Jesus treated the woman caught in adultery with love and respect. But we remember that He also told her, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

That is not how Stephen Cottrell, the archbishop of York, treats the issue of homosexuality. He takes the position that human wisdom supersedes the wisdom of God. He supports what Anglican progressives call a “radical new Christian inclusion.” He claims that the church damages itself by rejecting the secular view of human sexuality. The world now views the church as “immoral,” he says, because of biblical teaching on homosexuality. The biblical view of same-sex relationships, he says, is “homophobic”—a buzzword intended to prejudice the argument and frame Bible-believing Christians as “phobic” (afraid of homosexual people).

Archbishop Cottrell claims Bible passages that condemn homosexual behavior are merely “part of our story and our inheritance.” He says that “what we know now about human development and human sexuality requires us to look again at those texts to see what they are actually saying to our situation, for what we know now is not what was known then.”⁸ In other words, we in the twenty-first century know so much more about human sexuality than God did when He inspired the writing of His Word.

Or maybe it would be more accurate to say

Archbishop Cottrell believes God's Word is not inspired at all but is merely a collection of ancient stories and opinions we can safely ignore. Either way, the archbishop of York has explicitly departed from the traditional teachings of the church and a common-sense understanding of the Scriptures.

Worst of all, he has made it clear that there is no room for disagreement with his position on homosexuality. Anglican clergy have said that on more than one occasion Archbishop Cottrell stood before a meeting of clergy and declared that anyone who disagreed with the progressive view of human sexuality should leave the church. Clergy who hold the biblical view of human sexuality are not welcome in today's Church of England.⁹

We have come a long way since the time of the English reformers, who willingly went to the stake to be burned to death rather than betray the Holy Scriptures.

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

Today, as in past generations, churches and individual Christians are tempted to compromise God's truth and pollute the gospel of Jesus Christ with worldly ideas. That's why the central theme of 2 Timothy—*never give up* on the truth of God's Word—is so vitally important today.

If I were to assess the evangelical church in the

Western world, I would compare it to a botanical hothouse. A hothouse is a structure with glass walls and a glass roof with heating equipment so that a specific temperature can be maintained. This way, even in wintertime, warm-weather plants can be grown at a constant temperature. The gardener will come in and test the soil, add just the right amount of fertilizer and water, and may even play classical music on the stereo to keep the plants in a cheerful mood.

But the moment you take a hothouse plant out into the real world, where it is too hot or too cold, or the soil is too arid or there's too much rain, the plant will sicken and die before your eyes. That is how I see the professing church in the twenty-first century.

The Bible tells us that when we are rooted and established in the Word of God, we will bloom wherever we are planted. (See Colossians 2:6–7.) If you are planted in Pharaoh's prison, you will rise up to become the prime minister of Egypt. (See Genesis 39:7–20; 41:37–44.) If you are planted in the fiery furnace, you will rise up and testify before the king. (See Daniel 3:9–30.) If you are planted in a den of lions, you will rise up to become second-in-command of the Persian empire. (See Daniel 6.) If you are planted in the desert, you will bloom and proclaim that God is with us. (See Matthew 3:1–2.)

When Paul began writing his final letter, he was planted in a wretched Roman prison. Yet the pages of his letter bloom with a rich and encouraging meaning for our lives today. Paul wrote:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

—2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7

These words become especially meaningful to us when we realize where Paul was and what his circumstances were when he wrote them.

STAND UP AND FIGHT

From the Book of Acts and other historical accounts, we know Paul was imprisoned twice in Rome. His first imprisonment was a house arrest in a rented place where Paul was allowed to receive visitors. He was eventually freed, probably for lack of evidence. After

his first imprisonment, Paul likely went into Spain to preach the gospel.

Paul was arrested and imprisoned a second time during the great persecution of Nero, the fifth emperor of Rome. Nero blamed the Christians for the Great Fire of Rome July AD 64. Paul's second imprisonment was not like the first. Denied the privilege of house arrest, the apostle was sent to Mamertine Prison, a dark and miserable dungeon carved out of the north-eastern slope of the Capitoline Hill. His sufferings were magnified by age and physical infirmity.

My wife and I have visited Mamertine Prison several times. We have stood on the very stone floor where Paul languished in his final days. There is a hole in the center of the ceiling through which food and water were lowered to Paul. There are no windows. The place is cold and damp, close and claustrophobic. My wife and I couldn't stay there for long.

What would be the furthest thing from a snug and cozy hothouse environment? It would have to be the apostle Paul's cell at Mamertine Prison.

We don't know how long the apostle Paul remained in that miserable place. But we know he was eventually taken to the place of execution on the Ostian Way. There he knelt with his gray head resting upon a great stone. Moments later, the executioner swung his axe down upon the apostle's neck—and Paul passed from this life into the presence of the Lord.

Some weeks or months before the Roman government took his earthly life, Paul wrote these moving

words to his spiritual son, Timothy—and to generations of believers yet unborn. I'm grateful to the Lord for preserving these treasured words. Because of 2 Timothy, we can know triumph in times of defeat, we can know joy in the pit of despair, and we can find encouragement in times of disappointment.

Paul knew his disciple Timothy very well. He knew Timothy's strengths and weaknesses. He knew Timothy was prone to discouragement, self-pity, and the temptation to surrender. Timothy also tended to be timid and unassertive in situations that called for boldness. He sometimes allowed unscrupulous people to take advantage of him.

So Paul wrote to Timothy from the depths of the dungeon and urged his young friend to *never give up the fight*. As Paul contemplated his departure from this life, his message was: stand up and fight for the truth, regardless of the cost.

In each of the four chapters of 2 Timothy, Paul unveiled a unique aspect of what it means to never give up on biblical truth. In chapter 1, Paul urges us to uphold God's truth at all costs. In chapter 2, he enjoins us to be unafraid of suffering for God's truth. In chapter 3, he encourages us to be steadfast even when others fall away from God's truth. In chapter 4, he tells us to maintain our sense of urgency in spreading the good news to others.

I'm convinced there is no more urgent message for Christians in the twenty-first century than Paul's second and final letter to Timothy.

These days we see so many people, including leaders in the church, turning their backs on God's truth. If I focused only on the apostasy I see all around me, I could sink into a deep spiritual depression.

But I am not depressed. I am joyful and encouraged! Why? Because I look around me and I see God raising up a new generation of young Timothy's. I see bold young men and women in the church who are unashamed of the truth of the gospel. I'm convinced they will guard God's truth and remain faithful until Jesus returns.

PREPARED TO BELIEVE

Paul opens his letter with the words, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus."

Apostles were people who had a unique calling of Jesus Christ upon their lives. The twelve apostles of the New Testament derived their apostolic authority from the experience of seeing the risen Lord. In the Bible, only a person who had met Jesus face to face was qualified to be an apostle.

Unlike the other apostles, Paul never met Jesus prior to the crucifixion and resurrection. Instead, Paul's face-to-face encounter with Jesus took place years after the resurrection. Paul was a fanatical persecutor of the early Christians. Just two or three years after the resurrection, when Paul was on the road to Damascus in Syria, he experienced a dramatic encounter with

the resurrected Lord (Acts 9). On the Damascus road, Jesus not only revealed Himself to Paul, but He commissioned Paul. That's why Paul was not afraid to die for Jesus. He knew that it is a joyful experience to die *in* Jesus.

Paul addressed this letter, "To Timothy, my dear son" (v. 2). Timothy was not Paul's biological son, but his spiritual son. Timothy came to the Lord through the ministry of the apostle Paul, so Paul became Timothy's spiritual father.

I can identify with Paul, because my goal is to someday arrive in heaven with more than a million sons and daughters in Christ—a million people from around the world whom God has allowed me to introduce to Jesus.

Paul goes on to write some of the most intensely personal words in any of his letters: "I constantly remember you in my prayers" (v. 3). Not occasionally. Not merely when you happen to come to mind. No, Paul prays for Timothy *constantly*, again and again throughout the day.

And Paul says he recalls Timothy's tears (v. 4). Those tears speak of Timothy's sincere and tender heart, his genuine faith, and his godly affection for Paul and other believers. That tenderhearted faith came from Timothy's godly heritage. He had a godly mother and grandmother who taught him from the Scriptures and prepared him to receive the message of the gospel.

If you are a mother, father, or grandparent, please take Paul's words to heart. It is profoundly important

that we sow seeds of faith in the hearts of our children and grandchildren. If we sow those seeds now while they are young and their hearts are receptive, they will bear fruit someday. You may not see the fruit immediately—much as George Müller didn't see the results of his prayers for many years—but keep praying, keep sharing your faith, keep teaching them the Word of God, and sooner or later you will see the fruit of God's Spirit in their lives.

Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice, undoubtedly taught him the Old Testament passages about the coming of the Messiah. So when Paul taught Timothy that the Messiah had already come and fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, Timothy's heart was prepared. He could look at the Old Testament prophecies and compare them side by side with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he could see that the prophecies had been fulfilled.

The Messiah had come.

His name is Jesus.

He died on the cross and rose again.

He ascended into heaven.

And He will come back to judge the human race.

Because his heart had been so well prepared by his mother and grandmother, Timothy readily placed his faith in Jesus.

POWERFUL ENCOURAGEMENT

We know Timothy's father was a Gentile (that is, a non-Jew, possibly a Greek). So Timothy's father was not a Jewish believer like his mother. But here's an encouraging word I want you to notice. Timothy's mother is a living example of a principle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 7:14: in a family with a believing spouse and a nonbelieving spouse, the believer *sanctifies* both the nonbelieving spouse and the children.

This doesn't mean the nonbeliever and children are *saved* by the believing spouse. *Sanctify* means "to set apart to a sacred purpose."¹⁰ Every human being, in order to be saved, must make a personal decision to accept Jesus as Lord. But the faith of a believing parent does sanctify and set apart the children as holy and consecrated to the Lord.

And there's more. Paul vividly remembers the day he and other elders prayed for Timothy by the laying on of hands (v. 6). At that time Timothy received the Holy Spirit, was gifted by the Holy Spirit, and went on to exercise his gifts through the Holy Spirit. So Paul, the great encourager, tells Timothy, in effect, "I remember all of that, Timothy, and I thank God for you." Timothy, who was prone to discouragement, must have been greatly encouraged and strengthened by those words. Paul's encouragement empowered young Timothy to stand firm against the onslaught of Satan.

Friend in Christ, the same Satan who opposed Timothy and provoked feelings of discouragement in him is still active in the world today. Right now Satan may be tempting you to throw in the towel, to give up, to surrender. And candidly, there is a lot in this world to be discouraged about. We face health fears, career worries, problems raising our kids, plus mounting bills and debts. All around us we see political squabbling, racial strife, soaring national debt, rising crime, threats of wars and terrorism, inflation and unemployment, and global instability.

It would be so easy to give in to discouragement and say, "Lord, don't ask me to be a witness for You. Don't ask me to share You with my neighbors and coworkers. I'm just going to lock my door, mind my own business, and let the world go by."

That's Satan talking. It's Satan who wants to instill in us a spirit of fear, timidity, and discouragement. Don't listen to the voice of Satan, the voice of discouragement.

Instead, listen to the Spirit of God. Take out your Bible and read words of encouragement. Remember how God blessed you before. Remember how He protected you and watched over you and rescued you.

Can you remember a time when you fell into a pit of circumstances from which there seemed no escape? How did God rescue you? Meditate on that experience, thank God for His protection in your life, and tell Him you look forward to seeing how He will redeem you from your present situation.

The same God who rescued Joseph from an Egyptian prison, the same God who rescued Daniel from the lion's den, the same God who rescued you from your circumstances in the past, this same God wants to bless you, encourage you, and use you again.

THE HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE

This brings us to the very heart of Paul's encouragement to Timothy in the opening verses of this letter. He tells Timothy, in effect, "Shake off your timidity, shake off your fear, shake off your discouragement!" Why? Paul explains in verse 7: "For the Spirit God gave us *does not make us timid*, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (emphasis added). In some translations, "self-discipline" is translated "a sound mind."

I could write an entire book on this verse alone—and someday, perhaps, I will. But for now, I'll do my best to summarize Paul's profound insight.

Paul is saying, first, God will *never* send an evil spirit to make us afraid. I don't know how many demons there are in the spiritual realm carrying out the bidding of Satan. And it doesn't matter. What does matter is that we recognize that feelings of fear, anxiety, and timidity are not from the Spirit of God. Such feelings may arise from our unstable human emotions or from Satan and his demons.

The Bible tells us, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because *the one who is*

in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4, emphasis added). Who is “the one who is in you”? The Holy Spirit. Who is “the one who is in the world”? Satan. Satan wants to crush your effectiveness, neutralize your impact, paralyze your spiritual life, and terrify you, trapping you in a prison of fear.

But the Spirit of God within you is greater than the spirit of fear. The Holy Spirit dwells within you to encourage and empower you to say “No!” to fear, to say “Go away!” to Satan.

We can’t help but notice the irony of Paul’s message of encouragement to Timothy. There is Paul, awaiting death in the most miserable dungeon in Rome—and his message to Timothy and us is, *Don’t lock yourself up in a prison of fear.*

Paul is saying, in effect, “If you live in fear, your prison is much worse than mine. If you live in fear, you live in a cage colder and more unbreakable than steel. If you live in fear, you are trapped in a prison more escape-proof than Alcatraz or Devil’s Island.”

If you let fear rule your life, it will waste your God-given abilities, inhibit your desire to serve God, paralyze your commitment to God, and impede your spiritual growth. Fear can damage and ruin your friendships, family relationships, and marriage relationship. Fear can undermine your health, disturb your sleep, raise your blood pressure, ruin your digestion, and shorten your life.

That’s why Paul tells Timothy—and us—that God’s Spirit is the Spirit of comfort, encouragement, and

boldness. The devil is a liar. God's Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

We often don't like to admit that we are afraid, so we may excuse our fear and call it by different names. We might say, "I'm careful," "I'm cautious," "I'm shy," "I lack confidence," "God didn't give me an outgoing personality," "I'm just not an adventuresome person," "I can't share the gospel with my neighbors because God didn't give me the gift of evangelism," or "Other people are so much better at serving others; I would just make a mess of things."

We can try to give our fearfulness another name, but we can't escape the truth. We don't have to live in fear. Paul has shown us the way to conquer our fear and timidity.

THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR

Please understand, there is nothing sinful about experiencing fear when you face real danger. If you see a truck rushing at you while you're in a crosswalk, a surge of fear and adrenaline will put power in your muscles as you leap out of harm's way. That instantaneous impulse of self-preservation we call fear is intended to keep us safe.

Believe me, I know that impulse well. I have experienced raw fear in dangerous situations, and that's a normal emotion in the face of an immediate threat. But in those moments, I have also experienced the Spirit of God breathing within me, saying, "Fear not!"

Again and again throughout the Gospels, in various ways and at various times, Jesus tells His followers, “Fear not!”

- “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” (Matt. 8:26).
- “So do not be afraid of them” (Matt. 10:26).
- “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (Matt. 14:27).
- “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).
- “Don’t be afraid; just believe” (Mark 5:36).
- “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people” (Luke 5:10).
- “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed” (Luke 8:50).
- “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).
- “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

We don’t have to be afraid of life. Why? Because Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life”

(John 14:6). He is the author of life, and every detail and aspect of our lives is under His control.

We don't have to be afraid of death. Why? Because Jesus said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18).

We don't have to fear the unknown. Why? Because Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Rev. 22:13). He is the Creator of time and space, the future and the past, and there is nothing in life unknown to Him.

If there is one thing the apostle Paul learned in more than three decades of walking with the Lord, serving the Lord, and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is this—there is only one antidote to fear: faith in the almighty God who alone can banish fear from our lives.

God is in control. He never makes a mistake. And His love never fails.

LIVING CONFIDENTLY AND FEARLESSLY

Do you feel you are living effectively for Jesus? Are you serving joyfully? Are you witnessing eagerly? Are you giving generously? If not, why? What is hindering your effectiveness for the Lord?

Is it fear? Are you afraid of failure? Are you afraid of being ridiculed or mocked for your faith? Do you lack confidence in sharing your faith?

Believe me, it is better to obey God, take a step of risky faith, and fall flat on your face than never risk at all. If fear of failure keeps you from attempting great things for God, consider this: if you never take the risk, you're defeated before you begin.

Everybody fails from time to time—at least everybody who makes an attempt. Falling down doesn't make you a failure. *Staying* down does.

Failure is never your undertaker. It is only your teacher.

Failure is never a dead-end street for believers. It is only a detour.

People have said to me, "I can't serve Christ. My past sins haunt me." If your sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, God has buried them in the depths of the deepest sea. What's more, He has placed a sign over that spot that reads, "No fishing allowed!"

A verse to memorize for times when Satan brings up past sins to intimidate and immobilize you is Isaiah 54:17, which says, "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD." For times when you face threats, obstacles, and enemies, remember Psalm 27:1. It says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"

When I was in my early teens, there was a street bully who used to intimidate me. My parents raised

me to avoid fighting because Christians should be peacemakers, not fighters. So this street bully knew he could push me around and I wouldn't fight back. He continued to bully me week after week.

One day I was walking down the street with my oldest brother, Nader, and I saw the bully standing on the street corner. Nader was six feet five inches and, like me, had been taught at home that Christians shouldn't fight. But the bully didn't know that.

So, with my brother close behind me, I walked up to the bully and stared him down.

The bully looked at me.

Then he looked at Nader.

Then he turned and ran like a jackrabbit.

My friend, fear is a street bully. Fear will intimidate you if you let it. But we don't have to let fear rule over us.

We have a spiritual big brother. His name is Jesus. And every satanic, demonic bully flees at the name of Jesus. Call on Jesus whenever you are afraid, and then watch your fears flee in panic.

Though Satan is a street bully in this world, his power over us is limited by the limitless power of God. And we know the Spirit God has given us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, self-discipline, and a sound mind.

So live confidently and fearlessly in the power of the Holy Spirit.

What if the answers to our modern crises are found in **ancient truths**?

The spread of the gospel is in great danger. Biblical beliefs are being attacked. Biblical morality is being assaulted. Christians are being denounced for holding to the ancient truths found in the Scriptures. We are in a fight to be heard and not canceled—to share our faith amid the cancel culture.

What is God's message to us this day? What does He want from us in these troubled times? Resilience. Courage. Faithfulness. His call to us is to never give up.

NEVER GIVE UP—on the infallible Word of God.

NEVER GIVE UP—on the faith once delivered to the saints.

In *Never Give Up*, Dr. Michael Youssef echoes the words of the apostle Paul so that we may experience encouragement—and know triumph in the midst of defeat. With a sense of urgency, he calls us to the steadfast service of a certain conviction. Despite hardship and suffering, we can learn to be unwavering in our devotion.

As followers of Jesus, too often we are tempted to throw in the towel, give up the fight, and give in to fear. But we must not let that be our reality. We have not been abandoned. **God is here. Yet conviction is needed and service is required. No matter what comes our way, we must NEVER GIVE UP.**



DR. MICHAEL YOUSSEF holds degrees from Moore College in Australia, Fuller Theological Seminary in California, and Emory University (doctorate) in Atlanta. He is the founder of The Church of The Apostles in Atlanta, which became the launching pad for *Leading The Way* to minister in 190 countries. Dr. Youssef has authored more than fifty books, including the recent best seller *Hope for This Present Crisis*. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have four grown children and eleven grandchildren.



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