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# Living Fearlessly

How to be brave when you're afraid



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How to be brave when you're afraid

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Introduction

# It Isn't Brave Unless You're Afraid

By Marian V. Liautaud

**I**n the 2000 movie, *Bounce*, Ben Affleck tries to encourage Gwyneth Paltrow, who is struggling to face her life as a new widow with two small children. She tells him how scared she is to move forward in her life. Ben answers her fears with one of my favorite lines: "It isn't brave unless you're afraid." Unless you're a person who struggles mightily against being afraid, you may not grasp the magnitude of this statement. For me, this line unlocked a new reality: Bravery doesn't mean accomplishing feats without feeling afraid. We are brave when we perform challenging feats in spite of our fear.

## Living Fearlessly

### It Isn't Brave Unless You're Afraid

I have spent the majority of my life thinking I was a coward because I am afraid of so many things. I fear my children dying horrific deaths. I fear speaking in public, and would rather die than sing karaoke. I fear losing my job. I fear cancer. I fear losing my husband. I fear breaking my leg skiing. I fear snakes. I fear disappointing God. My ultimate fear: that I will prove to be a complete coward if I am called upon to rescue another human being and cannot rise to the challenge. I fear I will choose to rescue myself instead.

I need the articles that are in this download. I selected them as much for me as for you. Starting with Ruth Van Reken's article, "A Brave New Worldview," she asks the same question that's been on my mind: *How can I live God's way in a world that often feels not only out of my control, but out of control, period?* She looks to examples from the apostle Paul's life and writings for help in answering the question. Author Keri Wyatt Kent provides three ways to read and meditate on Scripture in "Fresh Air"—important ways we can breathe courage into our soul. Cornelius Plantinga delves deep into the tension we feel reading Psalm 91: How can we find courage to face the world, trusting in God's wings of protection, when all around us prayers go unanswered and bad things still happen?

We've also included two TCW interviews with Sara Groves and Anne Graham Lotz. You may be surprised to discover the fears they have faced in their own lives and how God has molded them and met them at their point of need. You'll find courage reading their stories.

## Living Fearlessly

It Isn't Brave Unless You're Afraid

What fears are plaguing you? Lay them down before God as you read through this download and work through the "Reflect" questions at the end of each article. By the end, you will have bathed your mind in the reality of God's faithfulness no matter what life circumstances come your way.

Peace,

*Marian V. Liautaud*

Contributing Editor, TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN downloads,  
Christianity Today International



Leader's Guide

## How to use “Living Fearlessly” for a group study

**“Living Fearlessly”** can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the “Reflect” questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It’s important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**



# A Brave New Worldview

How we can live confidently in uncertain times.

By Ruth E. Van Reken

**F**or one who grew up with the well-deserved nickname "Worrywart Ruthie," I find living in today's world can be pretty scary. It's hard not to feel anxious while watching the nightly news. What will the repercussions be from America's war with Iraq? When or where might Al Qaeda strike again?

Sometimes my worries become more personal. Could I, or someone I love, become the victim of some sniper attack while going about our daily routines? Can I keep my grandchildren safe from the child abductors who seem to lurk everywhere?

Life that once seemed relatively safe now appears up for grabs, making me wonder: *How can I live God's way in a world that often feels not only out of my control, but out of control, period?*

I've come to believe there is a way to live with confidence—but it's not a confidence based on the worldly arrogance that somehow I can control my own destiny. Rather, it's a Christ-centered confidence, the kind the Bible calls "an anchor for our souls" (Hebrews 6:19).

The apostle Paul wrote from prison to his dear but struggling friends at Philippi: "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

In that passage, Paul revealed three reasons why he could live with absolute confidence. They're the same reasons we can be confident, too—no matter what our personal, national, or global circumstances are.

#### **We can live confidently because we know who God is.**

Paul's entire reason for confidence is rooted in the character of God himself—not what Paul did or didn't see going on around him. He's absolutely certain of one thing: God is in control. Period.

This, of course, is a great mystery to us. How does God take into account Satan's fierce, evil opposition, along with the free will he gave humans, and still promise he can work everything together for good?



I have no idea. God never promises I'll understand him, but he does ask me to trust him. Believing that God is sovereign is vital for confident living. It means that when I've begged him to spare the life of a 24-year-old single mom struggling with Hodgkin's disease and she dies, or when he appears so horribly silent as suicide bombers attack once more in the Middle East, God's still in control. And he already knows how he's going to use these evil situations for his own purposes—even if it looks as though Satan's victorious now.

We know from all his writings that Paul trusted not only that God is sovereign, but also that his character is faithful and good. It's critical for Christians to believe this, too. Why?

Because without these additional attributes, we could view an absolutely sovereign God as a potential big bully. If I can't trust that God is always good and faithful, then God goes on trial with each particular circumstance of my life. I become the doubter who's like the waves of the sea, always being tossed about.

Of course, it's easy to say I'm confident God's faithful when I've escaped a negative situation, but is he still faithful when the friend I've lifted up in prayer for more than 30 years has never returned to faith in Jesus? Or when I was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago and had to face chemotherapy? The truth is, either God is faithful and good in all these situations, or he's faithful and good in none. How we decide between these opposite choices determines whether we live with confidence (and peace) or anxiety.

#### **We can live confidently because God knows us personally.**

Sometimes it's easier to trust in God's sovereignty when we consider the mega-events of life rather than the small but challenging moments we experience every day. Is he in those as well?

A comforting, confidence-building truth is that the same creator God who controls the flow of history also knows how many hairs I have on my head. When God says I'm his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that he's already planned for me to do, that means every event of my life is part of his plan to shape me for the role he's designed for me to fill—even those events or situations I don't understand.

All my life, I planned to be a nurse. In fact, I became one. Yet, through a series of events, many of which confused me at the time, I've ended up spending most of my time helping internationally mobile families deal with issues they face while raising children cross-culturally. I couldn't have prepared for this because I didn't even know it was a topic! Yet through the circumstances of my life—growing up as a missionary kid, then becoming a missionary myself as an adult and raising my children abroad—God prepared me perfectly for this one tiny niche in his kingdom.

This is why I can be confident for others I love as well. All the unlikely twists and turns of their particular journeys are part of God's shaping and directing of them. I know he'll work with them until the day of Christ's return, just as he has and does with me. That confidence allows me to walk with others through difficulties because I know God's

at work, even when I have no idea how a particular situation may turn out.

#### **We can live confidently because we know the end of the story.**

Paul had no doubt about the end of the story. Whatever God allowed to happen to the New Testament church or allows to happen to us—persecutions, false teachers in the church, adverse political situations, conflict between fellow Christians, or personal tragedies—his work never will be left undone in or through us. If we never understand the circumstances of our lives before then, things will make sense at last when we see Jesus face to face.

Because there's no question about the grand finale of our lives or even history itself, Paul gives his final, practical instructions for how we are to live God's way—even in a world that feels out of control: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ... Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6, NAS).

The result of living this way? "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7, NAS).

*Ruth E. Van Reken is a speaker and writer. This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine, 2003.*

## Reflect

- *Fear has a way of simmering beneath the surface, creating silent stress. Sometimes naming our fears helps us face them. What fears plague your thoughts, or quietly turn over in your mind? If you had to name your top three fears, what would they be?*
- **Second Corinthians 10:5** says, *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* In what ways does this verse give us guidance for handling fears? What does it mean to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"?
- *Which of the author's reasons for living confidently in the face of fears is most helpful to you? Which of the Bible verses cited throughout this article are most comforting and confidence-boosting for you?*



## Laid Off!

While my husband searches for a job, God's helped me do some soul searching.

By Laurie Jackson

**W**hen my husband, Dennis, first began job hunting, I'd hold my breath as I waited for him to appear at the door, eager for a glimpse of his face to tell me if his day had been a success. But now, 15 months after he became a statistic—one of 300 laid off by his employer of six years—I can tell how his day's gone simply by the way his feet hit the steps leading from the garage into the house. Today his footsteps are heavy, as though he's carrying the weight of the world.

All these months I've watched Dennis stuff hundreds of résumés into the mailbox and pound away at the computer keyboard, courageously sending hundreds more electronically. I've waved good-bye to him as he drives off early in the morning to face another day of approaching unapproachable receptionists at companies that "are not

hiring." And greeted his slumped shoulders and downcast eyes upon his return after another unproductive afternoon.

I've seen Dennis lower his expectations, then lower them further. An electronics technician with a sterling work record and more than 20 years' experience in his field, he first sought a comparable job. After a few months, Dennis expanded his search to include entry-level positions in his field, expecting that would do the trick. His wink and nod assured me we'd find a way to get by for a while on the lower salary. But after several weeks went by with no interviews, much less job offers, he began to respond to every job posting for which he was qualified—and, more often than not, *overqualified*.

He then began to be turned away for jobs on a whole different level: gas station attendant, custodian, grocery clerk, and school crossing guard, to name a few. And while I was proud of his willingness to do whatever job it took to put food on the table, it was at that point I became afraid.

My fear stemmed from all the unknowns: *What if Dennis doesn't find work soon? How long can we go without his income? What will happen to us when the unemployment insurance expires, or our savings runs dry?*

In the beginning, I was Dennis's biggest cheerleader. But the more time goes by, the more discouraged, despondent, and bewildered Dennis becomes. And the more tired I get. I'm tired of saying things I don't even believe anymore, such as, "It's going to be all right," "You'll find something soon," or, "Don't worry; today will be the day."

I dread the inevitable question from concerned friends and family: "Has Dennis found a job yet?" I hate the look on people's faces when they hear of our situation for the first time. And I'm frustrated that my attempts to help have proven equally unfruitful. As a stay-at-home mom with job experience that's six years stale, I'm aware of my inability to compete with people of my husband's caliber for the small pool of available jobs.

Several months ago, Dennis and I thought things were on the upswing when another mom from our church asked her husband to hire me as a temporary employee. We breathed a sigh of relief when I landed the full-time job, which was expected to last up to six months. Five days later, as I was playing with our son, Benjamin, at the park, I broke my hand and required surgery to repair the damage. I had to quit the job and, what's worse, lacking health insurance, we had to pay for the surgery out-of-pocket, setting us back even further financially. Afterwards, I was unemployable for the months it took to heal, and more bewildered than ever by the apparent futility of our financial situation.

I hit rock bottom the day I walked by my husband at the computer and saw a game of Solitaire on the monitor instead of a job website. I stopped dead in my tracks.

"What are you doing?" I wailed. "You're supposed to be looking for a job!"

Not looking up from the screen, he snapped at me over his shoulder. "I'm just taking a break."

Anger and resentment that had simmered for months suddenly bubbled out of me.

"Is this what you do all day when you're supposed to be job hunting?" I accused. "No wonder you still haven't found a job!"

More unkind words spilled out of my mouth, and even when Dennis swiveled around in his chair to face me with pain in his eyes, I couldn't stop. I finally was quiet when he said bitterly, "This is your idea of support? You're supposed to be encouraging me!"

His words rang in my ears long after our fight, each time followed by my unuttered reply: *Oh yeah? Well, who's encouraging me?*

All through this nightmare, I'd prayed for God's provision for our family. But with each passing week, I wondered what was taking so long. *Why isn't God answering any of my prayers?*

I cried out to God again from my position at rock bottom. Looking up out of my window, waiting expectantly for an answer, I noticed a flock of blackbirds glide across the clear blue sky. A familiar Bible verse came to me, as if whispered on their wings: "Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable are you than birds!" (Luke 12:23–24).

I thought about the birds. And I began to look at my situation with fresh eyes. Then it struck me: God's been providing, all right. The reason I hadn't seen it before was because God's idea of provision is so different than mine. I'd been waiting for God



to provide my husband a job. But instead, he's given us an opportunity to assess what's important and what isn't. He's stopped us in our tracks to take a look at ourselves and learn.

We've tightened our belts, done without frivolous things, and even done without things that *aren't* frivolous. I've watched our bank account drain away to dollars and change with nothing to show for it except meeting basic needs. At first it was painful, but now it's gotten easier. I'm grateful when I remember we once had more than enough, and I entertain the hope we will again someday.

God's provision has been time: a season for our son Benjamin to be with his father; one that, at five, he may not consciously remember, but that I know has shaped his character nonetheless. Dennis has read to him, painstakingly taught him to play chess, ride a bike without training wheels, and master pinball and foosball. Our son's had the opportunity to see his father's perseverance in action. Benjamin's learned by example how to weather disappointment, and how to pitch in and encourage each other. And he's had the privilege to pray earnestly for a job for his father.

God's provision has included a crash course in humility. When I had my hand surgery, some friends brought over dinner and groceries. Later, we opened the card they'd included; it contained a generous gift certificate for the local supermarket. I expected my proud husband to refuse it politely, but instead witnessed him sit down at the kitchen table and write them a heartfelt note of thanks.

And I've been humbled as well. The other night I sat with a frozen smile as an acquaintance, face aglow, told me her husband just was handed his dream job on a silver platter. She gushed about how it was an answer to their prayers, until I felt as though I was the unloved stepsister of fairy-tale lore. Even as bitter tears wet my pillow later, I was keenly aware of clean sheets, a full stomach, and a roof over my head. That night I committed to memory another lesson about provision: While it may not seem equitable, you have to trust God gives you exactly what you need.

I don't know whether we have weeks, months, or perhaps even years more to go in this trial. I don't know if we'll have to move away from a hometown we love so Dennis can find work. I don't know if there's a full-time career out there with *my* name on it. But when I dwell on all God *has* provided, I find the answers to questions I didn't know to ask.

First, I know what it means to live on a wing and a prayer. Because it's clear how God's provided for us so far, I can trust him for tomorrow. It doesn't mean I'm still not afraid, just that now I'm giving my fears to God.

I know I'll never again take a job, health benefits, or unemployment insurance for granted. And I now know that wealth has nothing to do with your income, your job title, or what you can buy at a store. Wealth is being surrounded by those you love, secure in your future not because of a bank balance, but because of the One who loves you.

Above all, I understand more fully Jesus' statement, "How much more valuable are you than birds!" Birds can fly, but

they can't cry out to God, hear his answer, or learn to be grateful for suffering. Though I stand here flightless and jobless, I know God's estimation of my value: priceless.

*Laurie Jackson, a freelance writer, lives with her family in Colorado. This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN, July/August 2004.*

## Reflect

- *When have you had to be an encourager to someone for an extended period of time? How did you handle this experience? Did you, like Laurie Jackson, the author, struggle to fight off fears over the situation? How did you keep fear from consuming you?*
- *Read **Philippians 4:8–9**. How does fixing "your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable" help keep fear at bay?*
- *If you, your spouse, or a parent has been laid off, in what ways have you experienced God's provision?*



# The Gift of Doubt

How God transformed singer/songwriter Sara Groves's fears into courage to serve a needy world.

By Camerin Courtney

**F**ive years ago, Christian singer/songwriter Sara Groves just wanted to be left alone by the big scary world. And by God.

She'd given birth to her first child, a son Sara and her husband, Troy, named Kirby. And while the adventure into motherhood brought the usual joys to this now 33-year-old woman, it also brought fear, as did a series of tragic events that followed this milestone. In the midst of loss and pain, Sara sought iron-clad promises of safety for her child—and found none.

And so began Sara's wrestling match with the big questions of the Christian faith. The result was a year-long tailspin, during which Sara rarely read her Bible and often felt mired in anger, bitterness, and fear.

"One day in frustration, I said to God, 'Jonah—what was *that* about?'" Sara explains. "'You chase the man down, and you get him swallowed by a fish. He doesn't want to go to Nineveh.' At the time, *I* felt like that. I was tired, filled with questions and fears. I felt swallowed up by a big tour bus. Sometimes I didn't want to go minister to people, either. 'Leave Jonah alone,' I told God. 'And, by the way, leave me alone, too.'"

This was a surprising turn of events for the "good girl" who had become a Christian at age four, released five critically acclaimed Christian albums, and had made a name for herself with faith-affirming lyrics on hits such as "First Song That I Sing," "All Right Here," and "How Is It Between Us."

Today, sitting at the kitchen table in her suburban Minneapolis home, sipping coffee from a pottery mug, Sara talks openly about that difficult season she now considers a gift. As Kirby, and his younger brother, Toby, five and two respectively at the time of this interview, wander in and out of the kitchen quoting lines from Disney's *Tarzan* movie, Sara tears up. Her renewed passion for God's kingdom—and our role in it—is obvious. The lyrics on her sixth Christian album, *Add to the Beauty* (INO), released late last year, and the phrase on her T-shirt both hint at where she's landed two years after her "dark night of the soul": Free to be you and me.

#### ***What happened after Kirby was born that triggered your questioning?***

Several of my close friends and family members experienced tragic losses. Bringing my vulnerable baby into such a scary world terrified me. I was so worn out from a rigorous touring schedule; I had no reserves left to handle this struggle. I became paralyzed by fear.

### ***Fear of what?***

So many "what ifs." I worried about the end of the world and how bacteria are getting stronger and are immune to more antibiotics. I worried about computer hackers who could steal my identity and buy weapons of mass destruction with my Visa.

When I had Kirby, my worry expanded to include abductions, food allergies, and the pond in our backyard. I feared something would happen to him. I'd always told the Lord, "Your will, not mine. Take me, make me, break me." But when Kirby was born, it seemed impossible to say, "Take *him*, make *him*, break *him*." I didn't trust God at that level. Death was the source of tremendous fear—not just my death, but my son's death, my husband's death.

Before, I was trying to create a perfect world for my children; now I want to introduce my children to the world we're in. I thought I wanted to be safe, but I realized I don't want my kids growing up watching me be safe. If that's my highest goal, then I'm not reaching out to the tax collector, I'm not surrounding myself with sinners, as Jesus did.

In the end, this journey has been a gift to me.

### ***How so?***

The Lord helped me gain, deep within my heart, a greater understanding of his nature. He is good. I know there will be questions and struggles in the future. I don't have all the answers, but I feel better equipped to handle the questions.

Michael Card, in his wonderful book *A Sacred Sorrow*, says doubts are actually a profound statement of faith because

they're a person saying she won't let go of a good God in the face of the profound evil she's seeing.

When I'd questioned God about Jonah, telling him to leave Jonah—and me—alone, I eventually felt God tell me to ask him about Nineveh. And I thought, *Well, Nineveh was an evil place.* God continued, *And what happens in evil places? I thought, Little girls get abducted from their own stoop. People are awful to each other. There's war and famine.* And God said to me, *That's why I sent Jonah. I was being personal to a little girl in Nineveh, to a hurting woman there. I was running to their rescue. But I need people to do that. I need you.*

I've come to see *that's* the good news. Despite our depravity and selfishness, God uses us to heal this broken world. That's pretty amazing.

***It sounds as though you've come a long way in the past two years.***

I always said I'd never write an "it's going to be all right" song, because that seemed so clichéd and simplistic. But on my album, *Add to the Beauty*, I finally wrote such a song, because ultimately that's what God told me: *In the scope of eternity, you're going to be all right. You're going to be beyond all right.*

And if what God's done in my life to this date is any indication of what he's going to do in the next world, then I can't even imagine how true that really is.

*This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine, March/April 2006.*

## Reflect

- *Have you ever experienced a "dark night of the soul" like Sara Groves describes—a period of fear and doubting God? What issues did you wrestle with? Was there a life event, such as the birth of a child, that precipitated this hard phase in your spiritual life?*
- *If you are a parent—or hope to be—what are your fears relating to your child and parenting? What Bible verses do you cling to for solace and strength in the face of these fears?*
- *In what ways did God use Sara Groves's fears to grow a servant heart in her? How might God be drawing you to be his hands and feet through your fears?*





# Fresh Air

3 practices to breathe courage into your life.

By Ragan Sutterfield

*Here are three practices to help you connect with God more deeply. You can do a topical search in the Bible to find passages that relate to fear and courage and use these verses to try the following spiritual exercises.*

## I. Deep Listening

Christians have prayed and listened to Scripture through a practice called *Lectio Divina* (Latin for "Sacred Word") for centuries. You read a passage slowly several times, spending time in silence between readings, letting the words sink into your soul as you listen for the one word or phrase that touches you most deeply.

*Lectio Divina* is a way to meditate on Scripture by listening and then responding—breathing in God's Word, breathing out a prayer. Traditionally, this practice includes four parts: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Deep listening to Scripture requires a focus on God's words rather than ours. In *Lectio Divina*, I listen to what God wants to say just to me through the text. I'm open to listening not just to general truth that's applicable to everyone, but for specific truth that applies to my unique circumstances.

In this practice, I read a short passage. For a month or more one summer, I kept going back to Psalm 27, reading a few verses at a time. I found myself drawn to verses 3–5, so for several days, I returned to that short section. I read it slowly, noticing how often I found myself drawn to the word "dwell." What did it mean for me to "dwell in the house of the Lord" (vs. 4)? Did I really believe I was "safe in his dwelling"? How could I truly dwell in his presence?

These verses became a love letter from God to me, an invitation to deeper intimacy with him. At the time, a work project had me feeling nervous –fearful I would fail, that I couldn't do it. God spoke through Psalm 27, telling me to trust, that he would keep me safe, he would dwell with me. I responded with prayer: *Lord, help me to stay connected, to dwell with you, to notice you, and to trust you.* As I slowly worked on the project, I'd think of that word "dwell" and knew he promised to be with me as I did what he'd called me to do. But he also reminded me that my work wasn't the most important thing; my intimacy with him was.

**Try this:** Read a short passage of Scripture slowly, noticing which word seems to jump off the page. Spend a few moments in silence. Do this several times, looking for God's invitation or encouragement in the word he seems to be highlighting. Reflect on the word or phrase; listen for God's

invitation. Be quiet; let that word draw you into prayer, into wordless companionship with God.

## 2. Breath Prayer

A breath prayer is a short prayer that can be prayed in the space of one breath. It expresses your love for God and your desire for God's touch in your life. Usually a breath prayer combines a name for God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit with a deep desire of your soul, forming a single sentence you pray. It focuses on God but names your deepest need. Sometimes, it's a form of confession or self-examination. A classic breath prayer used for centuries comes from Luke 18:13: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Breath prayer is a way of meditating on Jesus, letting go of distractions so you can be in his presence. Psalm 1:2 exhorts us to meditate on God's Word, to delight in it. Unlike Eastern meditation practices, which focus on emptying the mind, a breath prayer is a way of filling your mind—but filling it with God alone. It's like sitting in companionable silence with God, not having to talk but being aware of his company, and how his very presence meets your deepest needs.

**Try this:** Use a verse of Scripture or a simple phrase that expresses your deepest spiritual desire. In one particularly difficult season of my life, I carried the prayer "Peace and strength of Christ flow into my heart" through my days. I'd breathe in that peace and strength, then exhale my fear and tension. I silently prayed it for other people even as I talked with them. This practice soon began to change the way I felt and responded to others around me. I felt more peaceful, more aware of Christ. I think that's how he answered that prayer.

### 3. Being There

Have you ever read a biography or a great novel and felt so swept up in the story that the book's characters became real to you? As you read their story, you felt you actually were spending time with them?

Gospel meditation, or "being there," has traditionally been called the Ignatian Method, after Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). He instructed his followers to spend time with Jesus by imagining themselves in the Gospel story.

David Benner, author of *The Gift of Being Yourself*, writes, "Gospel meditation provides an opportunity to enter specific moments in Jesus' life and thereby share his experience.

Shared experience is the core of any friendship. And Spirit-guided meditation on the life of Jesus provides this possibility."

Once I was reading in Mark 1:35–38, where Jesus tries to get some time alone. His disciples come and find him, saying, "Everyone is looking for you!" I imagined the scene, thought about how Jesus felt, and realized this: Jesus had his solitude time interrupted! Like me, he'd experienced interruptions, so he knew what I was going through when I had trouble finding time to be alone.

**Try this:** Choose a passage from one of the Gospels. Read it slowly. Daydream about it, imagining you're there. Perhaps you're a bystander watching Jesus, or the person talking to Jesus. Try playing various roles in the scene. Use your imagination to add details. Put yourself into the story via your

five senses: What do you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell? By being there, you're spending time with Jesus.

When I slowed down, used fewer words but took them deeper, I not only enjoyed my time with God more, I actually found myself thinking throughout the rest of my day about the things on which I'd reflected. I realized God continued to speak even after I closed my Bible. Or I found myself recalling a breath prayer, using it as a way to calm down and connect with God when I couldn't even collect my anxious thoughts.

This more contemplative approach may be just what you need to revitalize your quiet times. Try putting aside your current routine and substitute one or two of these practices just for a week or two. Play with them; experiment. My prayer is that they'll provide a breath of fresh air for your soul.

*Keri Wyatt Kent, a TCW Regular Contributor, is author of several books, including [Oxygen: Deep Breathing for the Soul \(Revell\)](#). This article first appeared in [TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN](#), January/February 2007.*

## Reflect

- *If these practices are new to you, try experimenting with them one at a time until they each become comfortable. You may want to keep a journal with you as you practice them to record what you're learning as God speaks to you.*
- *It can be challenging to make time for contemplation, meditation, and Scripture reading. What can you do to arrange your schedule in such a way that you have time set aside for your relationship with God?*
- *Fear affects our breathing. In what ways will the "breath prayer" help when you start to feel panicky?*
- *Read the Bible with an eye toward discovering the stories of men and women who overcame perilous situations. How does this bolster your own faith?*



# Can God Be Trusted?

What Psalm 91 tells us about God's protection.

By Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

**M**any adults can recall a certain childhood feeling that has now pretty much faded away. Unhappily, one of the things that fades away is a childlike feeling of security in the nest. It's a sense that you are loved, protected, and perfectly safe. It's a sense, above all, that somebody else is in charge. In properly functioning homes, children often have this feeling. Adults do not, and they miss it.

Years ago, on the old *Candid Camera* television program, a very large and dangerous-looking truck driver—a man of about 50—was asked in an interview what age he would be if he could be any age he wanted. There was a silence for a while as the trucker contemplated the question. What was he thinking? Was he hankering for age 65 and retirement so he could trade his Kenworth four-and-a-

quarter semi down to a John Deere riding lawn mower? Or was he yearning for age 18 and the chance to go back and take some turn he had missed?

Finally he turned to the interviewer and said that if it was up to him he'd like to be three. Three? Why three? the interviewer wanted to know. "Well," said the trucker, "when you're three you don't have any responsibilities."

When I first heard the interview, I thought this man was trying to be cute. I now think he said something wistful. What he knew was that when you are a child, and if your family is running the right way, your burdens are usually small. You can go to bed without worrying about ice backup under your shingles. You don't wonder if the tingling in your leg might be a symptom of some exotic nerve disease.

You don't wrestle half the night with a tax deduction you claimed, wondering whether a federal investigator might find it a little too creative. No, you squirm deliciously in your bed, drowsily aware of the murmur of adult conversations elsewhere in the house. You hover wonderfully at the edge of slumber. Then you let go and fall away.

You dare to do this not only because you fully expect that in the morning you shall be resurrected. You also dare to do it because you are sleeping under your parents' wings. If parents take proper care of you, you can give yourself up to sleep, secure in the knowledge that somebody else is in charge; somebody big and strong and experienced. As far as children know, parents stay up all night, checking doors and windows, adjusting temperature controls, fearlessly driving



away marauders. They never go off duty. If a shadow falls over the house, or demons begin to stir, or a storm rises, parents will handle it. That's one reason children sleep so well. Their nest is sheltered and feathered.

I think children might be alarmed to discover how much adults crave this same sense of security. *Adults* need to be sheltered, warmed, embraced. Some of us have been betrayed. Some of us have grown old and are not happy about it.

People get betrayed, or they get old or sick. Some are deeply disappointed that their lives have not turned out as they had hoped. Others have been staggered by a report that has just come back from a pathology lab. Still others are unspeakably ignored by people they treasure. Some are simply high-tension human beings, strung tight as piano wire.

To all such folk, the psalmist speaks a word of comfort. It is one of the great themes of the Scriptures: God is our shelter. *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge.*

The image here is that of an eagle, or maybe a hen; in any case, it's a picture of a bird that senses danger and then protectively spreads its wings over its young. An expert on birds once told me that this move is very common. A bird senses the approach of a predator or the threat of something falling from above, and instinctively spreads out its wings like a canopy. Then the fledglings scuttle underneath for shelter. The move is so deeply instinctive that an adult bird will spread those wings even when no fledglings are around!

And the psalmist—who has almost surely seen this lovely thing happen—the psalmist thinks of God. *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge.* The point is that God is our shelter when the winds begin to howl; under God's providence we are defended, protected, perfectly safe—someone else is in charge—someone big, strong, and experienced, who never goes off duty.

In one of his books, John Timmer, my former pastor, tells of his experience as a boy in the Netherlands at the start of World War II. German troops had invaded Holland a few days before, but nobody knew just what to expect. Then, on the second Sunday of May 1940, as the Timmer family was sitting around the dinner table in their home in Haarlem, suddenly they heard the eerie whining of an air-raid siren and then the droning of German bombers.

Of course, all of them were scared out of their minds. "Let's go stand in the hallway," John's father said. "They say it's the safest place in the house." In the hall, John's father said, "Why don't we pray? There's nothing else we can do."

John says he has long ago forgotten the exact wording of his father's prayer—all except for one phrase. Somewhere in that prayer to God to protect his family from Hitler's Luftwaffe, Mr. Timmer said, "O God, in the shadow of your wings we take refuge."

God spreads his wings over us. Here is a picture that all the Jewish and Christian generations have cherished, in part because it invites us to recover our childhood feeling of security in the nest. Or to discover it for the first time if we

have had a terrorized childhood. It's a picture that offers sublime comfort, and only a pretty numb Christian would fail to be touched by it.

Still, a disturbing question pricks us. How true is the picture of a sheltering God? How secure are we in the nest? I wonder whether in 1940, on the second Sunday of May, some other Dutch family begged God to spread his wings over their house. I wonder if the bombs of the German air force pierced those wings and blew that house and its people to rubble.

You read Psalm 91 and you begin to wonder. It offers such comprehensive coverage. *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge. ... You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

Really? I need not fear any of these things? I can sleep in a dangerous neighborhood with my windows open? I shall not fear the terror of the night? My child's temperature soars and his white blood count plummets: I shall not fear the pestilence that stalks in darkness? I can plunge into my work at an AIDS clinic: I shall not fear the destruction that wastes at midday? Really? Is there a level of faith that can honestly say such things even after all allowance has been made for poetic exaggeration?

In his book *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, Thomas L. Friedman writes of his years in the Middle East. One of the terrors of life in Beirut during the civil war there was the prospect of dying a random death. Long-distance sniping and shelling made it hard to tell where bullets or shells might land, and the

people who launched them often didn't care. You never knew whether the car you walked past might explode into a fireball, stripping trees of their leaves so that in the terrible silence that followed, scores of leaves would come fluttering down in a soft shower on top of the dead and the maimed.

No one kept score. Police would even lose track of the *names* of the dead. "Death in Beirut had no echo," says Friedman.

I shall not fear the grenade that flies by day. Could a believer say this in Beirut?

Let us face the truth. Faith in the sheltering wings of God does not remove physical danger or the need for precaution against it. We cannot ignore Beirut tourist advisories, or feed wild animals on our camping trips, or jump a hot motorcycle over a row of parked cars and trust God to keep us safe. We cannot smoke cigarettes like the Marlboro man and then claim the promises of Psalm 91 as our protection against lung cancer. A person who did these things would be a foolish believer and a foolish reader of Psalm 91.

You may recall that in Matthew's Gospel Satan quotes this psalm to Jesus in the temptation at the pinnacle of the temple. "Throw yourself down," says Satan. After all, it says right in Psalm 91 that "God will give his angels charge over you." And Jesus replies that it is not right to put God to the test. God's protection is good only for certain events; restrictions may apply. Jesus was teaching us that we cannot act like a fool and then count on God to bail us out. God may do it—and some of us can recall times when we acted like fools and God bailed us out. But we may not *count* on it.

But, of course, some believers get hurt, terribly hurt, by no folly of their own. Suppose a drunk driver smashes into your family car. Suppose an I-beam falls on you in a storm. What if you make the mistake of visiting a great city during tourist-hunting season?

Or suppose you are a devout middle-aged Christian woman who lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan. One June you start to feel sick. So you visit your primary-care physician, who sends you for tests, and then a visit to a specialist, and then more tests. Finally you go back to your own physician, and she says, "Ma'am, I'm sorry to say that you had better get your affairs in order." She says more, far more, about treatments and research and making you as comfortable as possible—on and on with all kinds of stuff that is well-meant. But you have grown deaf. All you can think is that you are 46-years-old and you are going to die before your parents do and before your children get married.

Whatever happened to the wings of God? Can you get brain cancer under those wings? Get molested by a family member? Get knifed by some emotionless teenager in a subway in New York? Can you find, suddenly one summer, that your own 17-year-old has become a stranger and that everything in your family seems to be cascading out of control?

*Where are those wings?*

What troubles us is not so much the sheer fact that believers suffer along with everybody else. C. S. Lewis once pondered this. If the children of God were always saved from floods

like believing Noah and his family; if every time somebody pointed a gun at a Christian, the gun just turned to salami; if we really had a money-back guarantee against hatred, disease, and the acts of terrorists, then of course we wouldn't have to worry about church growth. Our churches would fill with people attracted to the faith for secondary reasons. These are people who want an insurance agent, not a church. For security they want Colin Powell, not God. We *already* have people becoming Christians because they want to get rich or get happy. What would happen to people's integrity if becoming a believer really did give you blanket protection against poverty, accident, and the wages of sin?

No, it's not the fact that we have to take our share of the world's suffering that surprises us. After all, our experience and the rest of Scripture have taught us to *expect* hardship. What worries us is that Psalm 91 tells us not to worry. It says "a thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you." This is advertising that sounds too good to be true. In fact, the psalmist says, "Because you have made the Lord your refuge ... *no* evil shall befall you." And the statement troubles us. What about Paul? What about Stephen? What about our Lord himself? He wanted to gather the citizens of Jerusalem as a hen gathers her chicks. What some of those citizens did was to take him outside of town one day and nail his wings to some two-by-fours.

So what is going on in Psalm 91? How are its extravagant promises God's Word to us?

What Psalm 91 does express is *one*—one of the loveliest, one of the most treasured—but just *one* of the moods of faith. It's a mood of exuberant confidence in the sheltering providence of God. Probably the psalmist has been protected by God in some dangerous incident, and he is celebrating.

On other days, and in other moods—in other and darker seasons of his life—this same psalmist might have called to God out of despair and a sense of abandonment. Remember that when our Lord was crucified, when our Lord shouted at our God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—when Jesus shouted this in astonishment, and with maybe even a note of accusation, remember that he was quoting another psalm (22). Despair or astonishment at what can happen to us under God's providence—that too is natural and biblical.

Psalm 91 gives us only part of the picture and only one of the moods of faith. With a kind of quiet amazement, the psalmist bears witness that under the wings of God good things happen to bad people. You need another psalm or two to fill in the picture, to cry out that under those same wings bad things sometimes happen to good people.

Psalm 91 says no evil shall befall us. When we have cashed out some of the poetry and then added in the witness of the rest of Scripture, what we get, I believe, is the conclusion that no final evil shall befall us. We know that we can believe God with all our heart and yet have our heart broken by the loss of a child or the treachery of a spouse or the menace of a fatal disease. We know this is true—

everyone in the church knows it. And yet, generation after generation of bruised saints have known something else and spoken of it. In the mystery of faith, we find a hand on us in the darkness, a voice that calls our name, and the sheer certainty that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God—not for this life and not for the life to come. We may be scarred and shaken, but, as Lewis Smedes says in one of his luminous sermons, we come to know that it's all right, even when everything is all wrong.

We are like fledglings who scuttle under the wings of their parent. The forces of evil beat on those wings with everything they have. The pitchforks of the Evil One, falling tree limbs in the storm, merciless rain and hail—everything beats on those wings. When it is finished, when evil has done its worst, those wings are all bloodied and busted and hanging at wrong angles. And, to tell you the truth, in all the commotion we too get roughed up quite a lot.

But we are all right, because those wings have never folded. They are spread out to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. And when the feathers quit flying, we peep out and discover that we have been in the only place that was not leveled. Yes, we have been bumped and bruised and hurt. Sometimes badly hurt. But the other choice was to be dead—the other choice was to break out of the embrace of God. If we had not stayed under those wings we could never have felt the body shudders and heard the groans of the one who loved us so much that those wings stayed out there no matter what came whistling in. This is the one who protects us from final evil, now and in the life to come—the life in which, at last, it is safe for God to fold his wings.



*He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge. It's not a simple truth, but it is the truth. And we ought to believe it with everything that is in us.*

*Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., is dean of the chapel at Calvin Theological Seminary. This article first appeared in CHRISTIANITY TODAY magazine, 1998.*

## Reflect

- *Select specific verses from Psalm 91 and apply the practices from Kerry Wyatt Kent's article, "Fresh Breath." Which words or phrases jump out at you? What truth do you sense God speaking to you through these verses?*
- *In what ways does the author's conclusion—that **Psalm 91** expresses one truth about our eternal safety in God—satisfy your need to find comfort and courage in the Lord?*



## Just Give Me Jesus

What happened when renowned Bible teacher Anne Graham Lotz learned to rely on the power of Christ to sustain her through all of life's challenges.

By Jane Johnson Struck

**A** crowd of several thousand women at Tampa's Ice Palace arena wait patiently for the "Just Give Me Jesus" revival to begin. Those of us close to the chilly main floor this Friday night hunker down in our coats as we warm up to the worship music of Christian recording artist Fernando Ortega. Suddenly, it's time: Well-known speaker and best-selling author Anne Graham Lotz, clad in a silver-gray pantsuit, gracefully crosses the platform to the podium—a simple wooden cross—to open this free, two-day event with prayer. Tall, elegant, and articulate, Anne acknowledges our need for God in her heart-felt plea for him to "Just give us Jesus!" Over the next few hours and during the following Saturday

sessions, which are interspersed with worship, guided prayer times, and Bible study, Anne vividly reintroduces Jesus as the suffering Savior, the crucified Lord, and the resurrected, reigning King portrayed in Scripture.

The second daughter of evangelist Billy Graham and his wife Ruth Bell Graham, Anne looks as much at home on the platform as her famous father, who once called her the "best preacher" in the Graham family. A gifted Bible expositor who uses edge-of-the-seat narratives in her teaching, Anne's spoken at venues as varied as church sanctuaries, the General Assembly of the United Nations, and Amsterdam 2000—the largest gathering of evangelists in history. For 12 years Anne led a burgeoning Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) class in her hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina. But in 1988, she left BSF to create AnGeL Ministries (derived from her initials), a nonprofit organization that promotes Bible exposition through Anne's live presentations as well as her audiotapes and books. Then, in 2000, Anne launched "Just Give Me Jesus" to spark revival in the church. JGMJ events are cosponsored by AnGeL Ministries and local church leaders in host cities across the United States, and as far as Seoul, South Korea, London, England, and Cardiff, Wales.

With the wide scope of her ministry today, it's surprising to discover that as a young mom and inexperienced teacher, Anne was so nervous before teaching her BSF class that she'd throw up in the church washroom.

Anne candidly admits her passionate pursuit for revival was birthed out of her own desperate need for a fresh encounter with Christ. Married for 36 years to dentist Danny Lotz,

with three now-married children, Jonathan, Morrow, and Rachel-Ruth, Anne reveals from the platform and in two of her several books, *Just Give Me Jesus* and *My Heart's Cry* (both W Publishing Group) some of the trials that drove her back into an intense study of God's Word—seasons of infertility, along with spiritual and marital dryness. The recurring theme in Anne's life is her hunger to know God better and her burning desire to help others do the same.

In this exclusive TCW interview conducted in her Raleigh home a few days after her Tampa revival, Anne talks about her inadequacies, her trials, and her consuming passion and greatest need—Jesus.

***Seeing you now, it's hard to believe when you first started teaching, you'd become nauseated from nerves.***

It's true. When I began teaching that Bible Study Fellowship class in 1976, I was painfully self-conscious. I was terrified to get up in front of the class with all eyes staring at me.

***If it was so difficult for you, why did you plow ahead?***

After my son, Jonathan, was born in 1970, followed by my daughters Morrow and Rachel-Ruth, I was immersed in small talk, small toys, small clothes, and small, sticky fingerprints. I found it hard to set aside time for Bible reading and prayer—much less my treasured morning cup of coffee. So I didn't. I wasn't drifting spiritually intentionally; it's just that I was distracted. But because the importance of prayer and Bible study had been ingrained in me from childhood, I desperately desired them.

I wanted to take a Bible Study Fellowship course, but nobody volunteered to teach it. Even though I'd never so much as taught a Sunday school class before, I was so desperate to be in BSF, I agreed to lead it. I not only had to complete the lesson plan, which involves daily Bible reading and studying, but also had to prepare a weekly message. Three hundred women showed up for the first meeting! I knew God had opened this door for me; I was more afraid to say no to the Lord than I was to teach the class, despite my painful shyness. Within a year, the class had grown to 500.

***Does God expect us to do something we don't think is our "spiritual gift"?***

I would have gone toe-to-toe with somebody if she'd told me I could teach and preach, because I knew I couldn't. But deep down I knew I'd been *called*. God didn't speak to me through handwriting on the wall; he opened my eyes to a need in my city and in my life to draw closer to him. I felt compelled to become the woman he wanted me to be. So I stepped out in faith.

Sometimes God calls us in our point of need. That's because God's attracted to our weakness. Where we're weak, he's strong. Where we're inadequate, he's sufficient. When we say we can't, we discover *he* can. In 1 Corinthians 1:27–28, God says he chooses the weak and uneducated, the ones the world despises, because when *he* uses them and people's lives are changed, he receives the glory.

***Do you still battle self-consciousness?***

I don't *battle* it anymore because I simply accept the fact I'm inadequate, then get on with it. The wonderful thing is,

for all my inadequacies, God is sufficient. What you see is what he's enabled me to do. Every time I go to a platform to speak, I pray, *God, crucify my fleshly insecurities so my self-consciousness goes away.* And increasingly he's done that.

The way you know God is by reading his Word and being on your knees in prayer. But what fleshes out that knowledge is obedience. You can say "Jesus is Lord," but words mean nothing. The proof of his Lordship in your life is your obedience to his commands.

God doesn't want to hurt us, embarrass us, or make us unhappy. It's the opposite. But to get to that place of blessing, to that place of joy and deep satisfaction, sometimes you have to go through a death. It may be the death of a desire for something you think you need or want to control. Jesus would tell us today, "I have a cross for *you*"—not a physical crucifixion, but a denying of ourselves to follow him.

***That's not a popular message in this self-centered culture.***

That's true. We often feel that if we're not happy and problem-free, then we're not in God's will. But you can be right in the thick of a problem and still be in God's will. Jesus was bound that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, yet he was right in his Father's will.

There's that beautiful verse in John 12:24: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Women come up to me and say they've never been taught about the crucified life—that if you want to have life, victory, and power, you've got to die to yourself first.

***A part of you must have died when you learned your son had cancer.***

Yes, I had to die to my hopes and dreams as a mother. After I got over my shock and denial, I immediately had to fall back on who God is. I didn't know if Jonathan was going to die, or if God would heal him. But I was confident God was in control.

As I sat at the hospital the morning of Jonathan's surgery to remove the malignancy, I felt God call to mind verses that assured me everything was going to be okay. I had wonderful people who sat with me and encouraged me. When the surgeon came out of the operating room and told us he'd been able to remove all the cancer and that the surrounding tissues were clear, it was a huge answer to prayer.

Apparently Jonathan had this cancer for six years, and the physicians were surprised it hadn't spread. Jonathan had follow-up radiation treatments, and to date, he's doing really well.

But I knew that whether Jonathan died from the cancer, was healed of the cancer, or underwent treatments for the cancer, God would be glorified in this.

***How were you able to get to that point of surrender?***

Danny and I experienced infertility in the early years of our marriage, so Jonathan was intensely prayed for and fasted over before he even was conceived. Jonathan was prayed for every day of my pregnancy. And he's been prayed for every day of his life. I knew this cancer hadn't caught God by surprise.

When Jonathan was 13 and Morrow and Rachel-Ruth were 11 and 9, they all came down with a brutal case of the chicken pox. In fact, the pediatrician said it was the worst case he'd ever seen. I knelt beside their beds and surrendered their lives to the Lord. So I'd already given my children to God.

Much of this rests on knowing God. If you don't think God is good, you're not going to trust him with your children. But as you know him, you can release your children, marriage, friends, and parents to him—because you're confident he has their best in mind.

It all goes back to being able to hear your Shepherd's voice. What's imperative is that you know how to read your Bible so you can hear God speaking to *you*.

***Do you have a favorite Bible verse?***

One of the first verses I memorized was Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." A friend cross-stitched that for me because I'm a worrier. It's in my genes.

I also like Joshua 1:8: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Our spiritual success is directly related to being in the Book. It helps us keep our focus. *We* tend to look at things as they happen now and in light of how we feel today and what we think can happen tomorrow. But *God* sees the big picture; he



knows that if we can just get our eyes off this moment and hold on, down the road there will be tremendous blessing. That was true of the Cross. Jesus challenges us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. But don't forget the glories ahead—there's a resurrection coming.

*This article first appeared in TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN magazine, 2003.*

## Reflect

- *Fear of public speaking is ranked as one of the top fears among all people. Do you have this fear? If so, have you overcome it, or do you avoid situations where you may be called upon to speak?*
- *Anne Graham Lotz says, "God's attracted to our weakness. Where we're weak, he's strong. Where we're inadequate, he's sufficient. When we say we can't, we discover he can." What are some examples in your own life of God filling in the gaps of your weakness with his strength? Read **Corinthians 1:27–28**. In what ways has God chosen to show his glory through your weaknesses?*
- *In what ways can fear be a blessing?*



## Additional Resources

Books, Bible Studies, and articles to help you further.

**21 Ways to Finding Peace & Happiness: Overcoming Anxiety, Fear, and Discontentment Every Day** by Joyce Meyer (*Faithwords*, 2007, 304 pages). Cautioning Christians that when we follow our own desires we forfeit serenity and doom ourselves to anxiety and ineffectiveness, Meyer reveals that peace is a heavenly priority and should be ours, too. Learn to actively seek God's guidance, overcome inner conflict, and experience lasting tranquility within yourself, in your relationships, and with your Creator.

**The Fear Factor: How to Recognize and Overcome Your Fear** by Akeem Shomade (Bridge-logos Publishing, 2008, 252 pages). Fear has become a way of life in today's world. We are under a constant barrage of threatening news and the dread of sickness, violence, hate, and social instability. The Fear Factor shows how

fear develops, exposes its roots, and provides biblically based solutions to our deepest anxieties. Using 1 John 4:18, the author admonishes readers to allow perfect love to cast out fear in our lives. Readers will identify causes of fear in their lives including: fear of failure, fear of death, fear of change, fear of man.

**Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety Becoming a Woman of Faith & Confidence** by Elyse Fitzpatrick (Harvest House Publishers, 2001). Fear and worry are surprisingly common and paralyzing emotions for many women today. In fact, even those who have been Christians for years find themselves battling difficult and often overwhelming concerns—concerns about marital strife, rebellious children, problems in the workplace or at home, serious health issues, financial difficulties, and much more. Women will find comfort and encouragement as they learn from the transparent, real-life examples of others who have struggled with anxiety, including the author herself. A warm, friendly, and solidly biblical book that helps women cast their cares upon God and be filled with complete confidence for every circumstance in life.

**Journey into Love: From Fear to Freedom** by Nan C. Merrill (Continuum International, 2006, 144 pages). *The Journey to Jerusalem* is literal, metaphoric, and archetypal. It is a believing and a discovering of Jesus' story as one's own, a process of internalizing various roads (and Roads) described in the New Testament.

**Fearless: 40 Reflections on Fear** by Tom Stephen, Hank Foto (Gospel Light, 2006, 146 pages). You don't have to live in fear. It's time to find freedom from anxiety and the relentless pursuit of security. In these 40 meditations, accompanied by the stunning photography of *Surfing Magazine's* Hank Foto, you'll come face-to-face with your deepest fears. Through daily reading and reflection, you'll discover a strong sense of God's presence in your life. And, as you develop a pattern of quiet and meditation, you'll discover that through God, these fears no longer need to have a hold on you.

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