

FACING YOUR GIANTS



FACING THE GIANT OF

FEAR

UCB UNITED
CHRISTIAN
BROADCASTERS



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FEAR

We live in unusual times! All around us are reports of economic difficulties, illness, the threat of global terrorism, natural disasters and so much more. And privately, we may carry our own secret fears too – fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of not mattering, fear of losing a loved one, and fear of our own death.

Fear is not sinful in itself. It is like an internal warning system, alerting us to potential danger. But fear can lead to sin. When it convinces us to put safety and control first, it undermines our faith and trust in God. Our lives get smaller and smaller as we are hemmed in by worries and 'what-ifs'. Fear paralyses us, imprisons our spirit, and limits our potential. It stops us from doing what we should do and makes us do things we shouldn't.

For this reason, Jesus takes our fear seriously. Of the 125 commands of Christ in the four Gospels, 21 are related to fear and courage, which makes it the one statement He made more than any other.

God has given us everything we need to fight back. His Word is full of 'fear not', 'do not be afraid', and 'take courage'. Through the lives of Bible heroes and in the words and person of Jesus, He speaks directly to our worst fears and replaces them with faith.

The Facing Your Giants series is designed to help people like you find God's help in dealing with the challenges that face us all.

Contained in these little booklets are big truths from God's Word, guidance on how to pray, and practical suggestions for change. There are 28 readings from Bob Gass, author of the UCB Word For Today, to help you practise new thought patterns and habits day by day for a month. As the Bible says, 'he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4 ESV). With the help of our great God, you can face any giant in front of you.

Every Blessing,



David L'Herroux - Chief Executive, United Christian Broadcasters

PS If working your way through this booklet raises any issues and you would like prayer, please do contact UCB Prayerline. You can find out more at ucb.co.uk/pray or ring us on 01782 363 000

DAY 1

God ahead – jump!

'We should go up and take possession...for we can certainly do it.'

Numbers 13:30 NIV

The twelve spies Joshua sent into the Promised Land all saw the same thing. But ten came back saying, 'The people who live there are powerful, and the cities are...very large...We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes' (Numbers 13:28, 33 NIV). They caused such panic that the people wanted to stone Moses, pick a new leader, and go back into Egyptian slavery. Incredible! But not Caleb! He had 'a different spirit' (Numbers 14:24 NIV). Listen: 'We should go up and take possession...for we can certainly do it' (Numbers 13:30 NIV). Years later, when Joshua was dividing the Promised Land amongst the tribes, Caleb stepped forward and said, 'Here I am today, eighty-five years old!...just as vigorous...as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me...Then Joshua blessed Caleb...and gave him Hebron as his inheritance' (Joshua 14:10-13 NIV). Caleb lived the winning life because: a) he recalled the promises of God and acted on them; b) he dared to take an unpopular stand; c) he refused to quit when the pressure was on; d) he saw possibilities where others saw only problems; and e) he kept his mind young even when his body was old. Does that describe you? Listen: 'The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him' (2 Chronicles 16:9 NKJV). As you face continued challenges God wants to show you what He can do in you, for you and through you! Will you let Him?

PRAYER POINT

Father, when I'm faced with unpopular decisions in life, give me the confidence to stay close to the convictions of my heart. Even if things around me are shouting out for me to compromise my stand, I pray that I will have the faith and boldness to keep my eyes focussed on You. No matter what the storms look like, I choose to believe in You.

DAY 2

Are you worried?

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.'

Philippians 4:6 NASB

Have you seen the poster that reads, 'Who says worry doesn't work? Most of the things I worry about never happen!' If you want to test your memory, try remembering what you worried about last year – or even last week! Jesus said, 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (John 16:33 NIV). We're not hurt so much by what happens to us as by our perception of it. David writes, 'Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee' (Psalm 55:22 KJV). Those who live worry-free are those who keep casting their burdens upon the Lord until the enemy decides there's no point giving them that burden anymore. Trust is an attitude. Attitudes are nothing more than habits of thought and habits can be acquired. If you want to change your attitude from worry to trust, do these six things: a) pray the right prayers; b) hang out with the right people; c) read the right books; d) speak the right words; e) listen to the right messages; f) do the right things. Is a worry-free life really possible? Yes! Listen: 'It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life' (Philippians 4:7 MSG).

DAY 3

Dr Mayo on worry

'Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything.'

Philippians 4:6 AMPC

Worry is like a rocking chair; it uses up all your energy but where does it get you? Leo Buscaglia writes, 'Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.' He's right! Dr Charles Mayo of the famous Mayo Clinic says, 'There's a growing mountain of evidence to suggest that worry is the chief contributor to depression, nervous breakdowns, high blood pressure, heart attacks, and early death. Stress kills. I've never known a man to die from hard work, but I've known a lot who died from worry.' Mathematically speaking, it doesn't make sense to worry. Psychologists tell us that roughly 30 per cent of what we worry about never happens; another 30 per cent has already happened; 12 per cent is about unfounded health concerns, and an additional 20 per cent involves worrying about the little things. That leaves only eight per cent. Think about that! We worry 92 per cent of the time for no good reason at all, and if Dr Mayo is right, it's killing us. What's the answer? Listen: 'Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honourable and right and pure and beautiful and respected ... And the God who gives peace will be with you' (Philippians 4:6-9 NCV). That's God's answer to worry!

PRAYER POINT

Father, I so crave peace in my life, when so much is in turmoil. Help me to meditate on Your Word today and create an oasis of peace within me. I pray that Your Holy Spirit would come and dwell in my life and slowly build up my ability to handle the pressure I feel under. You are Lord over every circumstance; I submit my life to You today. Amen.

DAY 4

Go ahead, risk it!

'With Him on my side I'm fearless, afraid of no one and nothing.'

Psalm 27:1 MSG

Ray Blankenship looked out of his window one morning to see a little girl being swept along in a rain-flooded drainage ditch beside his home. He knew that further downstream the ditch disappeared underneath the road and emptied into the main culvert. Nobody could survive that! He raced along the side of the ditch trying to get ahead of the child. Finally, he hurled himself into the water. When he surfaced he was able to grab her. The two tumbled head-over-heels, and then, within three feet of the culvert, Ray's free hand felt something protruding from the bank – a tree limb! He clung to it desperately while the force of the water kept trying to tear him and the child away. Amazingly by the time the fire department arrived, Ray had pulled her to safety. As both were being treated for shock it was discovered just how much of a hero Ray was: Ray Blankenship couldn't swim! Today, let your courage respond to the needs you see, not the fear you feel. Go ahead, take that risk. Reach out and meet that need. Walk through that door of opportunity.

Step over your fear. God is just waiting for you to do what you can, then He'll do for you what you can't. But nothing happens until you make that first move!

DAY 5

Learn to let go

'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.'

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

To 'let go' doesn't mean you stop caring for them – it just means you can't do it for them. To let go is not to cut them off, but to realise you can't control them. To let go is not to enable, but to allow them to learn from their consequences. To let go is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in your hands and it never was. To let go is not to try to change or blame somebody else but to make the most of yourself. To let go is not just to care for but to care about; not to fix but to be supportive; not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes but to allow others to affect their own destinies; not to be protective but to permit them to face reality; not to deny but to accept; not to nag, scold or argue but to search out your own shortcomings and work on them; not to adjust everything to your desires but to take each day as it comes and cherish yourself in it; not to criticise or regulate others but to try to become what you dream you can be; not to regret the past but to grow and to live in the present. The truth is that letting go is to fear less, trust God, and love more.

PRAYER POINT

I really do struggle in letting go, Lord, and ask today that You help me with that. Help me focus on the negative things in my life that hold me back and teach me, Lord, how to turn those things into positives with your help. Help me be confident that You can perform miracles in and through me, that I will stand in faith and proclaim Your Lordship, in Jesus' name.

DAY 6

Faith and the flying trapeze

'My hope comes from Him...I will not be shaken.'

Psalm 62:5-6 NIV

A good trapeze artist must learn to do four things: a) launch out; b) let go; c) hold still; and d) expect to be caught. It takes practice – lots of it. What stage are you at? Are you ready to:

Stage 1) Launch out! You can't walk on water if you're not willing to leave the boat. Faith means walking to the very edge, stepping into the unknown and being confident that when you do, God will either put solid rock under your feet or teach you to fly. Stage 2) Let go! Let go of what? Your best thinking. Your need to control either the method or the outcome. Your desire to look good or get the credit. Your stubborn ways. Stage 3) Hold still! When people say, 'Don't just stand there, do something', God says, 'Don't just do something, stand there.' You've a decision to make. You're in a Red Sea situation. God's spoken to you but not a soul around would believe you if you shared it. So what do you do? 'Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today' (Exodus 14:13 NIV). Obey God then let Him vindicate you. Stage 4) Expect to be caught! That's what Jack Hayford meant when he wrote the song, 'I anticipate the inevitable, supernatural intervention of God. I expect a miracle.' David had that same confidence.

Listen: 'My hope comes from Him...I will not be shaken' (Psalm 62:5-6 NIV). The word for today is: Launch out! Let go! Hold still! Expect to be caught!

DAY 7

A prayer for peace

'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace.'

Isaiah 26:3 KJV

Here is a prayer for peace: 'Lord, Your Word says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Your Word says, "The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11 NIV). Your Word says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you...Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Your Word says, "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7 NIV). Today I need this peace which transcends understanding to settle my nerves and calm my mind. Instead of thinking about my fears and worries, help me to focus on Your goodness, Your faithfulness, Your healing power, Your overflowing resources, and Your forgiving heart. Take up residence within me and fill me with Your peace. Show me what's robbing me of it. I really want to know, Father, so I can be specific in what I need to confess, what I need to commit to, and what I need to change. I open myself to You now. Teach me the secret of lasting peace. I thank You now for whatever it will take to help me receive the peace You have so generously offered to me. Your Word says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15 NIV). Today I want to be ruled by Your peace instead of my fears and worries. So, I give all my concerns to You, trusting You to work them out for my good and Your glory. In Jesus' name I pray: Amen.'

PRAYER POINT

I pray that You keep my heart tender and open to change. I pray that I am as open to Your Holy Spirit as I have ever been. Help me to believe the promises You have for me in Your Word, and help me hand all my worries over to you, Lord. Help me to step out in faith and lean on You. Amen.

DAY 8

Experiencing fear and faith

'Be strong and of good courage.'

Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV

Any time you attempt something for the first time, or something you've failed at before, or something you think is too big for you, you'll experience both fear and faith. They go together. One will win out over the other, but they never go away. Because Israel had no idea what challenges awaited them or what life would be like in the Promised Land, God told them, 'Be strong and of good courage...for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.' And today that's His promise to you too! It's fear of failure that stops us most of the time. Yet as you look back, you realise that most times failure doesn't do permanent damage at all; you actually grow through it. Dr Joan Borysenko writes: 'When I was admitted to Harvard, I was sure there had been a computer error and I'd be exposed as a fraud. A lawyer friend of mine stops short of terror every time she has to give a final argument before a jury. Even when you're an expert, fear doesn't necessarily go away. It's accepting fear as part of the journey instead of running from it, that helps you to conquer it.' To go anywhere, you must launch out from somewhere, or you'll get nowhere. American essayist

Hamilton Wright Mabie said, 'The question for each man to settle is not what he would do if he had the means, time, influence, and educational advantages, but what he will do with the things he has.' So, confront your fear, step out in faith, and believe God for success.

DAY 9

You're free!

'He has sent me...to proclaim liberty to the captives.'

Isaiah 61:1 NKJV

During World War II, an American professor and a British Army chaplain were imprisoned in a German prisoner of war camp; the professor on the American side and the chaplain on the British side. Since the Americans had secretly built a homemade radio the two friends would meet at the fence each day to discuss the latest news. They talked in Gaelic so that their captors didn't understand. When the professor heard over the radio that the Germans had surrendered three days earlier, he told his friend on the other side of the fence. Moments later a roar of celebration went up from the British barracks. When the news reached the German guards several days later, they fled leaving the gates unlocked and the British and Americans walked out together as free men. Jesus said He came 'to proclaim liberty to the captives' (Isaiah 61:1 NKJV). Good news: Satan is now a defeated foe. Your prison door is open – your freedom has been won at Calvary, so accept it, act on it and stop living like a prisoner! Did you know that the African impala can jump ten feet high and cover a distance of ten yards? Yet this magnificent animal can be confined within walls only three feet high. Why? Because unless it first sees where it's going to land, it's afraid to jump. Faith is the ability to jump and trust God even when you can't see. It opens doors and frees you from every prison of fear. Today the Son has made you free, so start acting like it!

PRAYER POINT

Help me, Lord, live a life of faith and not a life of absolutes. Help me put my hand within Your hand and trust that you want what is best for me, to be free in Christ. In the times when my circumstances are overwhelming and I want to retreat back, release Your angels around me, Lord, to fight and help me break through, in Jesus' name.

DAY 10

Angels watching over you

'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.'

Psalm 91:11 NIV

Remember that 'close call' you had? That wasn't 'luck' but your angel, guarding you in 'all your ways'. Chuck Swindoll tells of a group of church kids who got lost on a mountain climbing expedition. A snowstorm suddenly covered the trail and their leader didn't have a clue where they were or how to get back to camp. The sun was setting. The temperatures were plunging. The danger was real. Trudging through the snow, getting more panicky by the moment, they heard somebody on the slopes above yell, 'Hey, the trail's up here!' They glanced up and to their relief saw another climber about 100 feet above them. Quickly, they made their way up to the big boulder where the man had been sitting. But when they arrived they found nobody there, not even a footprint in the snow. When they looked however, the trail stretched out before them, leading safely back to camp. The Bible says, 'some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it' (Hebrews 13:2 NIV). 'Are you serious?' you ask. Absolutely! Even your children have guardian angels watching over them. Jesus said, 'See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 18:10 NIV). Paul discovered that when you go through storms, God assigns an angel to protect you. Listen: 'Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, "Do not be afraid, Paul"' (Acts 27:23-24 NIV). Relax – God's got you covered!

DAY 11

Where is God in the storm?

'When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.'

Acts 27:20 NIV

There are times when God seems inaccessible. When you pray, you feel abandoned in your present circumstances. And not just abandoned, but terrified and even hopeless. Paul understood that feeling. He'd longed for an opportunity to preach in Rome, and was on his way there when a hurricane destroyed his ship. Paul not only foresaw the loss of the ship, its crew and cargo, but 'our own lives also' (v. 10 NIV 2011 Edition). He tried to warn the crew of the impending tragedy, but his words were disregarded by those in charge. In short, Paul and 276 others were placed in a life-threatening position by the wilful disregard of others, and there was nothing he could do about it. Feeling a sense of despair, he and his believing companions declared, 'We finally gave up all hope of being saved!' Then after fourteen days lost at sea – when the hurricane was fiercest – God sent an angel. 'Do not be afraid, Paul...God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you' (v. 24 NIV 2011 Edition). When it looked like Paul's consuming desire to preach in Rome would be thwarted, God faithfully piloted them through the storm to the exact destination He'd planned for them. Paul would go to Rome and declare God's Word before Caesar! Are you caught in a storm? Whatever trial you're facing today, know this one thing: you can trust God to carry you through it. He determines 'the end from the beginning' (Isaiah 46:10 NIV), so you will come out of this stronger and wiser.

PRAYER POINT

Father, I acknowledge Your power and sovereignty. You are the creator of the universe and I get to speak to You one-on-one. Forgive me, Lord, for when I have thought that any situation in life was too big a job for You to handle. I pray today, Lord, that You will make me more than a conqueror through Christ, and I will be influential in and for Your Kingdom.

DAY 12

All through the night

'And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night.'

Exodus 14:21 AMPC

The miracle of rolling back the Red Sea happened 'all that night.' The morning simply revealed what God had done the night before while the Israelites were sleeping. Good news: God works the night shift! Even though you feel lost and alone He's still on the job, working 'all things after the counsel of his own will' (Ephesians 1:11 KJV). Have you heard of 'songs in the night'? Here's one of them: 'When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand' – My Hope is Built on Nothing Less, Edward Mote (1797–1874). You may not be able to see Him today but His eyes are still on you. If you're a student at school, a young couple hard pressed financially, divorced and struggling to get back on your feet, a servant of God labouring in difficult circumstances or just lonely and in need of companionship, here are some words to help get you through till the morning: a) 'I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken [have you?], nor his seed begging bread' (Psalm 37:25 NKJV); b) 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh [it's on the way!] in the morning' (Psalm 30:5 KJV) c) 'In all these things [whatever you're facing] we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us' (Romans 8:37 KJV). Be encouraged, God's working in the dark!

DAY 13

You've got to take the first step!

'Be strong and of good courage and do it.'

1 Chronicles 28:20 NKJV

Larry Walters got tired of sitting around doing nothing. So on 2 July 1982, he rigged 45 helium-filled weather balloons to a garden chair and lifted off. Armed with an air gun to shoot out a few balloons should he fly too high, he was shocked when he quickly reached 16,000 feet and he wasn't the only one! Pilots reported seeing, 'Some guy in a garden chair floating through the sky.' Forty-five minutes later when he landed in Long Beach he was asked why he did it. He replied, 'It was something I had to do. I just couldn't sit there any longer.' When the Prodigal Son finally got sick and tired of being sick and tired he said, 'I will arise and go to my father' (Luke 15:18 KJV). Did he have any idea how his father whose heart and whose law he'd broken would treat him? No, but he refused to sit in his pigsty another day. When Israel came to the River Jordan, God told the priests carrying the ark to step into the water and it would dry up. But nothing happened until they took that first step! There could be a song in you that's never been sung, a sermon that's never been preached or a gift that's just waiting to be released. The moment you stop holding back, the doors will open, the right people will come and the resources will be provided. But you've got to take that first step!

PRAYER POINT

Lord, help me take the first step of a life change today. Help me identify the aspects of my life that are holding me back from my full potential and overcome them, in Jesus' name. Nurture my walk with You, Lord, that I might grow in confidence, faith and grace. I want to be a servant of Your Kingdom in all aspects of my life. Amen.

DAY 14

To nurture or neuter

*“Didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?”
“An enemy did this.”*

Matthew 13:27-28 NIV

During times of upheaval, the enemy will try to slip into your field and sow weeds. It could be debt or divorce, abuse or abandonment; it's not so much what you've been through but what you're left with – terrible self-doubt. Unless you want your future to be a second helping of your past, stop nurturing what needs to die. If you don't, it'll continue to live off your strength and suck up all your joy, like the hungry mouth of a nursing child. Neuter it! Anything that's neutered loses its ability to a) threaten you, or b) reproduce in your life. 'But how?' you ask. By forgiving, 'just as in Christ God forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32 NIV). That means forgive and keep on forgiving until it loses its power to infect your words or influence your thoughts. God says, 'Remember ye not the former things; neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing' (Isaiah 43:18 KJV). God doesn't just command this; He enables you to do it. He says you can start again. You can nurture your problem child through this crisis or your partner through this illness and your part-time job into an executive position. The reason you can do it is 'because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world' (1 John 4:4 NIV).

DAY 15

Courage is more of a feeling

'The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.'

Psalm 118:6 NIV

Check the record – anybody who ever beat the odds did it in spite of their fear! They did it because: a) they were desperate and felt as if they'd no choice; b) they were inspired by somebody else's example; c) they were angry at injustice; d) they were moved by a need; e) they said to themselves, 'If not me, then whom? If not now, then when?; or f) They didn't think much about it at all – or they might have changed their mind. What are you waiting for? A feeling of courage? Forget it, it doesn't exist! You're only courageous when you do what's right despite your fear. Now, since every one of us feels fear, that means every one of us is capable of acting courageously. It's a choice. Anytime you go where you've never been or try something you've never done before, fear will be present. It will always stand between you and anything worth doing. But the good news is, each time you conquer it, you feel a surge of self-respect and gain a level of confidence you never had before. Whatever you're facing today, listen to these words: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of [the size of the enemy], for there is a greater power with us than with him' (2 Chronicles 32:7 NIV, paraphrased). And one more, 'The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?' (Psalm 118:6 NIV). What more do you need?

PRAYER POINT

Father, I know the times I have been paralysed by fear, the times when fear has stopped me from moving forward in my faith. I ask for Your help to overcome any fear in my life. I pray that my confidence in the future would not be limited by any fear it encounters. I believe that You will be there when You want me to step out in faith, in Jesus' name.

DAY 16

Believe God today!

'Without faith it is impossible to please God.'

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

Peter didn't walk on the water because Jesus lifted him out of the boat and moved him, it was only when he responded to His word that a miracle happened (see Matthew 14:26). How do you walk on water? a) by seeing Jesus in your storm; b) by responding to what He says to you; c) by refusing to be intimidated by your surroundings; d) by doing what others in the boat are afraid to do; and e) by choosing what's possible, instead of settling for what's rational. All God needs is something to work with and somebody to work through and the rest, as they say, is history. The only thing that can stop God is your unbelief. Listen: 'And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith' (Matthew 13:58 NIV). Since God can't lie, fail, change or be pleased without faith, you need to make a quality commitment today to developing your own. When you do that, your life will change forever. One day on board a ferryboat, George Müller prayed, 'Lord, lift this fog so that I can get to church in time to speak.' As he said 'Amen' and rose to his feet, the captain said in amazement, 'Look, the fog's lifting!' Müller replied, 'Just as I thought.' Jesus said, 'Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours' (Mark 11:24 NIV). Believe God today.

DAY 17

God has everything under control

'Do not fear or be discouraged.'

Deuteronomy 1:21 NKJV

Are you feeling afraid today? If so, listen to these words from the God who loves you beyond expression, protects you around the clock and blesses everything you put your hand to. When there seems to be no way out, He says to you, 'Fear not: stand still [firm, confident, undismayed] and see the salvation [deliverance] of the Lord which He will work for you today' (Exodus 14:13 AMPC). When the problem looks too big He says to you, 'Be strong, courageous and firm; fear not nor be in terror before them, for it is the Lord your God Who goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you' (Deuteronomy 31:6 AMPC). When you feel that you just can't cope any more He says to you, 'Do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and harden you to difficulties, yes, I will help you; yes, I will hold you up and retain you with My [victorious] right hand' (Isaiah 41:10 AMPC). When you long for peace of mind, He says to you, 'Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance...continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace...which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds' (Philippians 4:6-7 AMPC). Now go back and read those words again and remember that God has everything under control!

PRAYER POINT

Lord, I really don't understand how You work; I don't know all Your ways, but I do trust that You are God over everything. Your Word tells me You want to use me, even when I don't feel worthy. Thank You, God, for Your grace toward me that often provokes me to action in spite of all my circumstances. I love You, Lord.

DAY 18

Your position and your condition

'In him we have redemption through his blood.'

Ephesians 1:7 NIV

Stop worrying about your condition and start focusing on your position! You see, your condition will never change until you understand your position. Any condition is temporary; they come and go but your position 'in Him' is eternal. Paul says, 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV). That means you're forgiven, redeemed, and perfected in the eyes of God – present tense! Redemption means 'payment of ransom.' It depicts God holding you in prison under a death sentence, because of your sin. But when He sees the blood of Jesus, all claims against you are thrown out of court; your prison door swings open and you're free. Awesome! No matter how hard you try or how dedicated you become, you couldn't, in 50 lifetimes, pay off your debt. Only Jesus could do that because only He could offer a life completely free from sin. But it's not enough to issue a declaration of emancipation – the slaves need to know about it and the last person on earth who wants them to know is the slave master. You see, if you don't know you're free, you'll remain in bondage in your mind and you live accordingly. So when the devil points to your condition, remind him of your position. Tell him, 'Some areas may be under construction, but I'm still loved, accepted and approved 100 per cent by God!'

DAY 19

Fear or trust

'The righteous are as bold as a lion.'

Proverbs 28:1 NIV

There are times when we must all choose between fear and trust. For example, if you are in an abusive relationship, you can get help, leave, or remain stuck. If you are being pressured to do wrong, you can go with the crowd, or walk away. You always have a choice! God says, 'The righteous are as bold as a lion.' Now even if you do not feel that way, remember, courage is not the absence of fear, it is the mastery of it! David said, 'Wait on the LORD...and He shall strengthen your heart' (Psalm 27:14 NKJV). As you learn to trust God more, He will give you the boldness needed to act. People who know no fear are not just a gross exaggeration – they are a biological rarity! As long as you are growing, fear never completely disappears. That is not what you want to hear, right? You were probably looking for a quick formula that would make all your anxieties vanish overnight. But it does not work that way. Anytime you risk, stretch, or 'put yourself out there,' you will experience fear. It is normal; it lets you know you are alive! When you are afraid, the worst thing you can do... is nothing. Just sitting around 'hoping for something to happen' will leave you paralysed. Today, God's calling you to act, because taking a single step forward robs fear of its power. In fact, fear can be a great motivator when it moves you to trust God more and make changes, leading to new levels of understanding.

PRAYER POINT

Father, with Your help I know I can reject every negative thing spoken over me in the past, which continues to speak to me today. You want what is best for me and proclaim I am valuable to You. I do have worries and fears, Lord, but already You have overcome every potential the devil has to keep me from freedom at the cross. I trust You, Lord.

DAY 20

Are you afraid?

'As they followed they were afraid.'

Mark 10:32 NKJV

Ted Engstrom tells of a guy on a cruise ship who rescued a girl who had fallen overboard. At a party given in his honour that night, he gave the shortest 'hero speech' ever made. 'Ladies and gentlemen, I just want to know one thing: Who pushed me?' Most of us aren't naturally courageous, are we? We need a push. Robert Flood writes, 'We like to think of ourselves as a mixture of Davy Crockett, John Wayne and the prophet Daniel, when the truth is we're more like Gulliver, tied down by tiny strands of fear, real or imagined, and the result is a tragic loss of courage.' Being a Christian doesn't exempt you. Listen: 'Jesus [went] before them...and as they followed they were afraid' (Mark 10:32 NKJV). Max Lucado writes, 'Before they were stained glass saints on the windows of cathedrals, the disciples were next door neighbours trying to make a living and raise a family. They weren't cut from theological cloth or raised on supernatural milk. They were just an ounce more devoted than they were afraid, and as a result, they did extraordinary things.' Some of the world's greatest discoveries were made by people whose faith just ran ahead of their minds and overcame their fear. They knew that security and opportunity were total strangers. They understood that if it didn't require faith then it didn't involve God. The exact wording may vary, but one of the most repeated commands in the Bible is 'do not be afraid'. Why? Because each time you do the thing you fear most, fear loses its hold over you and you become a little stronger – and a little more dependent on God.

DAY 21

Don't be afraid!

'Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.'

Psalm 56:3 NKJV

Have you any idea how much it's costing you to fear things that never happen? Meteorologists say that a fog capable of covering half a square mile is made up of only one glass of water, divided into 60 million particles. But when it settles, it can obscure your entire vision. A little fear can do the same thing! Why do almost half of us suffer from stress-related disorders? Because instead of walking by faith we think we're supposed to fly like jets on supercharged adrenaline and we pay for it in terms of fear and anxiety. It's so easy for fear to replace faith because they've got something in common, both challenge you to believe that what you can't see is about to happen. Fear will persuade you to run from something that's not after you at all. Billy Sunday said, 'Fear knocked at my door. Faith answered. There was no one there.' But how do I overcome this fear? By faith, and faith comes by hearing the Word of God (see Romans 10:17). Begin to feed your faith on the Scriptures and watch your fears starve to death! Howard Chandler says, 'I spend the first 15 minutes of every morning filling my mind with God's Word; that way there's no room left for worry.' Good formula! David says, 'When I am afraid, I will...trust the promises of God' (Psalm 56:3-4 TLB). And you've got to do the same! Today, get into His Word and you'll discover that God's got everything under control.

PRAYER POINT

Help me, Lord, reflect on the promises in Your Word, which promote truth and life in my life. Remind me of the times in life when You have been there, to build evidence that You are there today, will be there tomorrow, next week, month and year. Let me rest in the fact that I have a relationship with You, which continues to profoundly touch my life. Amen.

DAY 22

God's peace

'Do not permit yourselves to be fearful.'

John 14:27 AMPC

Worry is something you permit; peace is something you pursue. Jesus said, 'do not permit yourselves to be fearful.' That means you can take control of what goes on in your mind. How? By doing two things: By filling it with God's Word. Not just the Word you read casually but the Word you process mentally, apply to each circumstance, and stand on in times of crisis. By placing each situation into God's hands and leaving it there with confidence. Here's a prayer to help you do just that: 'Lord, everything's in a panic! Everybody wants a piece of me. There's far too much to do and never enough hours to do it. My head is clogged with all kinds of rubbish and my heart is ready to break. Lord, where are You? I feel like the disciples when the storm came up and the winds and waves rocked their boat. My cry is the same as theirs: "Somebody get Jesus because I'm about to drown out here!" The storms of my life have all but sunk my boat and I can't take much more. Prince of Peace,

I need You. Father, who never slumbers nor sleeps, take charge. I need the comfort and courage that comes from Your Spirit. Speak Lord, for the wind still remembers the sound of Your voice. Let me find in You a quiet place, a place where I can pillow my head on Your breast, hear Your heartbeat and feel secure. Amen.'

DAY 23

Stand in your place

'Having done all [the crisis demands]...stand [firmly in your place].'

Ephesians 6:13 AMPC

Paul Harvey says: 'In times like these, it's helpful to remember that there have always been times like these.' The question isn't, 'Will trouble come?' but, 'How will I handle it when it does?' Here's how: 'Having done all [the crisis demands]...stand [firmly in your place].' What place? In Christ (see Ephesians 2:6). Can you think of a safer place to stand? Listen: 'We who have believed do enter into rest' (Hebrews 4:3 KJV). In times of trouble, do what God leads you to do, then relax, stand still and watch God work on your behalf (see Exodus 14:13). Go ahead and enjoy your life while God works on your problems! Too many of us have the idea that it's wrong to enjoy ourselves when we have problems. We think that if we can't do anything else, the least we can do is look solemn and miserable. Paul addresses this: 'Do not [for a moment] be frightened...for such [constancy and fearlessness] will be a clear sign...from God' (Philippians 1:28 AMPC). This Scripture plainly lays it out; when you're attacked, stay in peace! That tells the devil he's defeated. He doesn't know what to do with you when he can't get you upset. You've taken one of his greatest weapons out of his hands. It also assures you of being delivered by God, because an attitude of peace and rest shows that you trust Him completely.

PRAYER POINT

When I haven't got answers, Lord, when my faith seems weak, when I don't know where to turn, help me stand. Let me be a pillar of strength when the attack of the enemy comes, and show me, Lord, how I can be strong, even when I feel weak, that I might overcome fear, stress and doubt and still believe You are God, and I am still Your child.

DAY 24

By God's grace you can too!

'Out of weakness were made strong.'

Hebrews 11:34 NKJV

Listen: 'Time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle' (Hebrews 11:32-34 NKJV). Who were these people? People like Samson who was morally weak; like Samuel who failed at parenting; like Jephthah, a social outcast born to an unwed mother. Notice the words 'out of weakness were made strong.' They didn't start out strong – they became strong! Their courage was forged in the fires of adversity. And if they can do it, by God's grace you can too! For reasons God never explains, He chooses to work through ordinary people like us. So He: a) places us in situations that unlock our compassion and creativity; b) connects us with those who can open the right door at just the right moment; and c) makes us a 'solution' wherever we go. Does that mean you won't encounter fear? No, many of the world's greatest accomplishments were made by people who just decided to 'feel the fear and do it anyway'. They knew that opportunity and security were strangers. They understood that if it didn't require faith, it neither pleased God nor involved Him! The truth is you'll never discover what your life can amount to until you put it into God's hands!

DAY 25

Victorious living

'We should go up and take possession...for we can certainly do it.'

Numbers 13:30 NIV

The twelve spies Joshua sent into the Promised Land all saw the same thing. But ten came back saying, 'The people who live there are powerful, and the cities are...very large...We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes' (Numbers 13:28, 33 NIV). They caused such panic that the people wanted to stone Moses, pick a new leader, and go back into Egyptian slavery. Incredible! But not Caleb! He had 'a different spirit' (Numbers 14:24 NIV). Listen: 'We should go up and take possession...for we can certainly do it' (Numbers 13:30 NIV). Years later, when Joshua was dividing the Promised Land amongst the tribes, Caleb stepped forward and said, 'Here I am today, eighty-five years old!...just as vigorous...as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me...Then Joshua blessed Caleb...and gave him Hebron as his inheritance' (Joshua 14:10-13 NIV). Caleb lived the winning life because: a) he recalled the promises of God and acted on them; b) he dared to take an unpopular stand; c) he refused to quit when the pressure was on; d) he saw possibilities where others saw only problems; and e) he kept his mind young even when his body was old. Does that describe you? Listen: 'The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him' (2 Chronicles 16:9 NKJV). As you face continued challenges God wants to show you what He can do in you, for you and through you! Will you let Him?

PRAYER POINT

Father, when I'm faced with unpopular decisions in life, give me the confidence to stay close to the convictions of my heart. Even if things around me are shouting out for me to compromise my stand, I pray that I will have the faith and boldness to keep my eyes focussed on You. No matter what the storms look like, I choose to believe in You.

DAY 26

Water-walkers

'Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you.'

Matthew 14:28 MSG

The disciples were alone in their boat when the storm hit. About three o'clock in the morning they were terrified by a figure approaching them on the water. Jesus spoke: "It's me. Don't be afraid." Peter...said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you" (Matthew 14:27-28 MSG).

Let's examine this story: 1) Water-walking isn't just about risk; it's about discernment. There's a funny story about a man standing at the pearly gates. Saint Peter says, 'Name one great deed you've done.' The man replies, 'Well, a gang of bikers were threatening a woman so I smacked them, kicked over their bikes and ripped out their nose rings.' Impressed, Peter asks, 'When did this happen?' The man answers, 'About 30 seconds ago!' Learn to discern between God's voice and your own impulses. God's not looking for bungee-jumping, hang-gliding, tornado chasers! He's looking for wisdom and spiritual maturity. Water-walkers have to leave the boat.

Change places with Peter. The storm's raging and you're afraid. The boat's secure and comfortable; who wouldn't want to stay there? But you can't!

God designed you to do more than simply avoid failure; He designed you for faith-filled adventures with Him! What's your boat? Where do you put your faith when life gets stormy? A job? A relationship? Remember, your boat is anything that stops you from stepping out in faith to walk with Jesus. Leaving it is the scariest, most rewarding step you'll ever take!

DAY 27

Relax – trust God

'Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you'

Psalm 55:22 NIV

You either carry the burden or let God carry it – the choice is yours! How does God sustain us? One day at a time! Remember the Israelites in the wilderness? Each day God fed them by sending manna from heaven. But like us some of them wanted to make sure they'd have enough for tomorrow (just in case God forgot). But God would allow them to collect only enough for each day. If they collected more, it rotted. Think: worrying over the future is like trying to store up manna for tomorrow and before you know it you feel rotten (no pun intended). Your Heavenly Father wants you to give tomorrow to Him because it's too big for you. Are you being tormented by the 'What ifs'? What if the money doesn't come? What if I get hurt, seriously ill or lose my job? What if I'm lonely all my life? What if I'm not really hearing from God and make a mistake? The King James Bible calls these 'imagination's' (2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV). You're imagining the worst. Paul says, 'cast them down' [paraphrased], for if you don't, you'll live in dread concerning things that haven't happened, and probably never will, unless you create them through fear (see Job 3:25). What if you reason and reason and figure it all out, then God surprises you and does something different? All that time would be wasted! Haven't you wasted enough time worrying? Here's an idea: what if you just relax and let God be God?

PRAYER POINT

Lord, help me find a way to stop gravitating back to thoughts of failure, even when there's no proof that things will fail. Every time You have come through for me, is proof that you can do it again. Help me be confident but not arrogant in my faith, to stand and believe You are there. You will supply the need, You will solve the problem, in Jesus' Name.

DAY 28

Need boldness?

'The righteous are as bold as a lion.'

Proverbs 28:1 NIV

Rosa Parks, a committed Christian and the mother of the American Civil Rights movement, was arrested in 1955 for refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. Boycotts and bloodshed followed until the Supreme Court finally ruled racial segregation unconstitutional. In *Quiet Strength*, Rosa writes: 'Knowing what must be done does away with fear. When I sat down on the bus that day, I'd no idea history was being made; I was only thinking of getting home. But I had made up my mind. After many years of being a victim of the mistreatment my people suffered, not giving up my seat – and whatever I had to face afterwards – wasn't important. I didn't feel any fear...I felt the Lord would give me the strength to endure whatever I had to face. It was time for someone to stand up – or in my case, sit down.' John Knox's epitaph reads, 'Here lies a man who never feared the face of clay.' At Westminster Abbey in London, a memorial to Lord Lawrence says, 'He feared man so little, because he feared God so much.' How would you like to be remembered like that? God's Word says, 'The righteous are bold as a lion.' Even when you don't feel very brave, always remember, courage isn't the absence of fear – it's the mastery of it! David says, 'Wait on the LORD...and He shall strengthen your heart' (Psalm 27:14 NKJV). When your cause is righteous and you commit it to God, He'll give you the boldness you need to act. Count on it.

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