



FOREWORD

Green, blue, yellow, orange, and red. There was a time when these everyday colors only brought to mind the simple pleasures of life—a box of crayons, the arched rainbow overhead, or an array of flowers in our garden. Today, however, they represent the level of our fears. I saw the color-coded chart as I passed through airport security, an unwelcome reminder of the current threat of terrorist activity. In a world with plenty of reasons for fear, this new fear has managed to insert itself into our post-9/11 lives with such importance we have color-coded it.

The first time I met Denise George, I was impressed by her Southern warmth that quickly put others at ease, her heart for ministry to women, and her determination to do something about the hurts that distress and hold us captive. In this book, she puts fear on the table, a problem that daily touches us all in deeply private and unnervingly public ways.

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FIGHTING FEAR WITH FAITH

As a wife, mother, and frequent flyer, I'll admit I am no stranger to fear. I've suffered my share of sleepless nights, when fear and anxiety have had a stronger grip on me than my exhaustion. I hardly slept a wink the night before my husband's heart catheterization. Sometimes I wonder if my stomach will ever stop turning into knots over my daughter and the choices, challenges, and temptations confronting her. As a traveler, I've felt a surge of distrust and fright over a suspicious looking fellow passenger. No matter how often I fly, my palms still turn moist the instant the plane encounters more than the usual turbulence in flight, even though I look like I'm calmly reading a book. Living in a broken, fallen world, our fears remind us that we are not in control and the stakes are high, for the uncertainties and dangers that surround us threaten our well-being and happiness and that of our loved ones.

In this book, Denise George invites us to bring our fears—both real and imagined—to the only one who truly is in control, the God who calls us to “fear not”. She doesn't write from an ivory tower, but joins us as a friend and fellow struggler against this ever-present foe. Every reader will find her own fears in the topics Denise discusses. I appreciate her honest refusal to sidestep the very real possibility that the things we most fear may actually come to pass. She doesn't urge us to summon up a triumphant Christian bravery. Instead, she calls us to face our fears under the gaze of God, who calls us to trust him with all of the uncertainties and anxieties of our lives. According to Denise, even our fears are purposeful, for they expose our need for God and drive us to him. She gently points the way for us to move from fear to faith, by setting God, and his unchanging promises, before us.

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Whatever the color of your fear, this book offers balm for your soul. Read and ponder it, then share it with a friend!

Carolyn Custis James
Author of *When Life And Beliefs Collide: How Knowing God Makes a Difference*; *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*; *Lost Women of the Bible: The Women We Thought We Knew*; *Understanding Purpose*; and *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*. Based on:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."
(Jesus in John 15:5, 8)







INTRODUCTION



I learned about survival in a garden. As a little girl, I played beneath the stately elm trees that overshadowed my grandmother's gardens. They looked like huge umbrellas opened up to the sky. As I grew, the elms grew, tall and strong.

My grandmother's elms canopied her small, white-gabled farm house in Rossville, Georgia. "Mama" (pronounced "MAW-maw") told me her great great-pioneer grandparents made wagon wheel hubs, fence posts, and furniture from elm trees.

"Elm wood's tough," she said. "Doesn't easily split."

She said Indians (Native Americans), who once lived on this same soil, made ropes from elm bark.

As a child, I rocked my baby dolls to sleep under those graceful, arching beauties that shaded me from summer's hot Southern sun. I climbed their sturdy branches and peeked into orioles' nests. I swung from tire-swings





FIGHTING FEAR WITH FAITH

strapped to their limbs. I searched for Easter eggs around their thick bases. And many times, as a romantic budding teen, I leaned against an elm and dreamed the dreams that young girls dream.

Mama said the elm's roots grow as deep into the ground as their branches grow high into the sky. Her roots dig deep, she said, and send food, water, and air through the trunk to the branches. Strong roots anchor the elm, hold her up straight, and help her stand up to storms. Without her roots, she told me, elms would die. They're her means of survival, her lifeline.

As I grew older, I didn't think much about elms. Time no longer allowed climbing trees and swinging on tires. School, marriage, travels, and babies filled my waking hours. Not until the morning of April 19, 1995, did I stop and ponder the true majesty and strength of the American elm.

That morning, a young man filled with hate, Timothy McVeigh, set off a homemade bomb that exploded in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The explosion killed 168 people, nineteen of them children. It leveled most of the building, set nearby cars ablaze, and devastated the grounds.

After the smoke cleared, only one thing remained standing in the rubble: a seventy-five-year-old American elm tree. Deep-rooted and strong trunked, it had sustained the blast's full force and survived. When I visited the Oklahoma City National Memorial site several years later, I saw they had named it: "Survivor Tree."

I've met many Christian women who, like the elm tree, are so securely joined to the Lord, whose roots grow so deep in God's Word, who stand so strong on God's promises,





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they too can survive life's unexpected blasts. They too are deeply anchored and grounded in Scripture's sturdy foundation, and dread no danger from life's inevitable storms. But I've met many others who live in constant fear—immobilized and/or devastated by hard times.

Maybe you've picked up this book because you are dealing with some unhealthy fears, and yearn to find freedom from them. Or maybe your mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, or another loved one is dealing with unhealthy fear, and you need the tools to help her. Throughout the following pages, you'll learn a lot about fear. You'll discover how to differentiate between healthy fears (those that are God's gift to encourage you) and unhealthy fears (those that are Satan's tool to discourage you). You need not live your life in the grip of unhealthy fear. Through God's promises and Christ's examples, you can conquer your unhealthy fears, and you can find freedom from them.

Did you know that the opposite of fear is not courage? Most people believe that, but it's not true. The opposite of fear is faith. As your roots deepen in God's Word, and as He helps you identify and analyze unhealthy fears, these fears will begin to fade. Strong, deep roots, steadily growing in faith, will equip you to weather all life's storms. You'll not only survive, and rid your life of unhealthy fear, but you'll thrive in your faith and love for God. My prayer for you is that, through the guidance of these pages that point you to the wisdom of God's Word, you'll find release from unhealthy fear's bondage – so that God can use you fully, and unhindered, in His remarkable ministry.

Now, let's begin our journey!

Denise George
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