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• BIBLE STUDIES FOR WOMEN •

Fearless Women of the Bible

Finding Unshakable Confidence Despite Your Fears and Failures

Lynn Cowell

FORMERLY TITLED *MAKE YOUR MOVE*

Endorsements

Lynn Cowell has crafted my favorite kind of Bible study—practical, relatable, doable—wrapped around stories of women in Scripture. Her writing voice is warm and confident, and it's clear she's done her research, yet it never overshadows her enthusiasm for God's Word and how it can and will change our lives for the better.

—**Liz Curtis Higgs**, bestselling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*

Like a snowflake in the palm of my hand, confidence seems to melt the moment I grasp it. One moment I'm buoyed with purpose and significance; the next I'm riddled with reminders of what I yet lack. My one comfort? God knows what I need, and He's promised to give it. If you need a confidence boost—one that won't evaporate in the heat of real life—join Lynn Cowell as she digs into biblical stories of women who discovered a God-delivered confidence they could count on. Always.

—**Michele Cushatt**, author of *I Am: A 60-Day Journey to Knowing Who You Are Because of Who He Is*

Do you sense God is calling you to take a step of faith and move outside your comfort zone? It might be a new job. Starting a Bible study. Ending a relationship. Opening a nonprofit. Going back to school. Adopting. You want to say yes, but you lack the confidence and courage to make that move. Through God's Word and personal stories, Lynn's book will help you identify your fears and insecurities and equip you with the courage and unshakable confidence you need to fulfill that call and reach your potential in Christ.

—**Wendy Blight**, member of Proverbs 31 First 5 Writing Team; author of *I Know His Name, Living So That,* and *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*

I long for studies that challenge me and help me walk out my faith. Lynn Cowell has accomplished that in *Fearless Women of the Bible*. It's fresh, interactive teaching. It feels like I'm sitting across from Lynn in a coffee shop, discovering how to depart from where I feel stuck to find deeper waters together. If you long to make your move, this is a book that will help you do just that.

—**Suzanne Eller**, bestselling author, blogger, international speaker, and Bible teacher

Self-doubt and insecurity have taken a toll on our lives for far too long. It's time to take back freedom and assurance that is ours in Christ, so that we can live in the fullness of God's purposes and plans. Don't let past failures, fear of future rejection, or everyday troubles hold you back any longer. Let Lynn Cowell show you how to boldly experience confident faith that will move you forward!

—**Renee Swope**, former Proverbs 31 Ministries radio cohost; bestselling author of *A Confident Heart*

Fearless Women of the Bible

Finding Unshakable Confidence
Despite Your Fears and Failures

Lynn Cowell

HarperChristian Resources

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Previously published as *Make Your Move* by Lynn Cowell (2017).

ISBN 978–0–310–14120–4 (softcover)
ISBN 978–0–310–14121–1 (ebook)

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Published in association with the literary agency of FEDD Agency, Inc., Post Office Box 341973, Austin, TX 78734.

First Printing November 2022 / Printed in the United States of America

To Julie,

I've spent a lifetime watching you make your move toward God despite your fears and failures. What a beautiful thing it has been, my friend. I love you!

Acknowledgments

The Lord has blessed me with so many wonderful people who have come alongside me:

Greg: God knew exactly who I would need to cheer for me on this adventure of writing and speaking. Thank you for doing that so well! I am very grateful, every day, to live this life of ours together. I love you!

Zach, Mariah, and Madi: My life is better being your mom. Thank you for every word you've read or I've made you listen to over the years. You've grown into amazing adults! I love our crazy, little family!

Robin Phillips: Thank you for seeing that God had a message for me to share and opening the doors for me to share it through HarperCollins Christian Publishing.

John Raymond and HarperCollins Christian Publishing: Thank you for holding this project together so that it didn't fall through the cracks. I am so grateful you have given me an opportunity to write for a new audience to empower women to find Christ Confidence. I so appreciate you!

Sara Riemersma: Every writer should have an editor like you, the kind who encourages them to dig deep and keep going but who also isn't afraid to say, "Try again." You are the best, my friend. I am so very, very grateful for you!

My Proverbs 31 Speaking and Writing Team: Ministry was never meant to be done alone, and I am thankful that the Lord chose you for me to minister with. I love us!

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you for challenging us to not only know the Truth but also for living the Truth for our team to emulate. Your leadership is so dear to me!

Annette, Cindi, Danya, Jana, Kelly H., Kelly T., Rachel, Shelley, Stela: Thank you so much for being a part of my focus group. Your feedback made this study so much better. Thank you for pushing me!

Kaley Olsen: Thank you for bringing your brand of beautiful to help me share this message.

The Fedd Agency: I am so grateful for your help in finding new ways for me to share God's Word.

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Introduction

I consider myself a pretty cool mom, but when my daughter, Madi, said she wanted to jump out of a plane together, I thought *no way.* She was thirteen years old when she started this concerning conversation: "Mom, for my eighteenth birthday, we're going skydiving." *Yeah, right!* I thought. I'm all about the experience and I love the outdoors. But there is a difference between exciting and absurd.

Not wanting to diminish her confidence, I joked with her for many years, trying to keep it light. To think that my girl wanted to do something so adventurous with her mom, of all people, was heartwarming. But deep down, I hoped she'd forget it and move on. The mere idea of floating in the open Carolina blue sky made me . . . well, let's not go there.

There is something you should know about me before we go any further. Sometimes, I can be all talk. Like the time I went on and on describing to my husband all we would see when we went snorkeling on a trip that he had won from his company. A girl from small-town Iowa, I grew up in the middle of seas of corn, not schools of fish. I knew nothing about the ocean. And it was obvious when I refused to leave the shore. The little mask sealing off the only airflow I had (or so it seemed) felt like a death trap. *Who in the world can possibly breathe this way?*

Heartbroken, I stood baking on the beach, as Greg called for me to come and see all God had created below the ocean's surface. I just couldn't. While my heart was floating next to him, immersing in cobalt blue, tangerine orange, and sunshine yellow sea life, my leaded feet were captive in the quicksand of the shore. I never found the courage to move.

You can understand then why I started freaking out as Madi's eighteenth birthday approached and she began reminding me of my promise. My girl really wanted to do this. All my bravado had gotten me in a whole lot of trouble!

So, I created a plan, a plan to get me out of this mess! I asked *her brother* to jump out of a plane with his sister in my place. When he agreed, my heart settled down. I could keep my promise. Well sort of . . . I paid for a promise. Now, I could look forward to the big weekend and to living vicariously through my kids. But when the day finally arrived, her brother couldn't come through!

Now what? The jump had been paid for. Two nonrefundable reservations confirmed. The hammering of my heart and moisture gathering on my palms reminded me that I couldn't let my daughter jump out of a plane alone. Someone had to jump.

Did that someone have to be me?

My guess is that you've never found yourself in a situation where you were pressured to free fall through the air. But maybe there has been a time when your life has felt like it was spiraling . . . and your confidence was falling with it.

The hot summer day when I drove with my family to the airfield was not the only time I've felt like I needed a grit I didn't have. Raising children whom I didn't always understand, overcoming rejections I couldn't avoid, and trusting God when my calling didn't make sense have all given me plenty of opportunities to lean into Jesus. I've needed to find a confidence that holds my head up when my heart is hanging low. The sort of confidence that doesn't slip away with each new obstacle and won't disintegrate when I need it most.

If you're anything like me, you're looking for the courage you need to make your move in spite of the fact that you sometimes feel fearful or possibly like a failure. Picking up this Bible study tells me you are looking for the source and how to tap into it.

That sweltering June day, I needed to jump out of a plane. Someone had to go with my girl and that someone needed to be me.

Sometimes, I think finding confidence means making a move even when, and most often when, you think you can't. I have found there are many people, including women in the Bible, who have needed confidence

to act when they had none. Making their move was part of the process to finding God's confidence.

The sense of soaring while skydiving was both terrifying and thrilling, and it was one of the most exhilarating experiences in my life. I am so glad I jumped!

That leap would never have been possible had my body not been attached to the body of another that day. My jumper, the expert who had skydived thousands of times, knew exactly what he was doing. During the entire experience, he spoke directly in my ear, telling me exactly what to do next. His instructions made the jump safe and successful. As long as I was connected to my jumper, listening and obeying, the dive was amazing. But before I could dive, I had to willingly and intentionally secure myself to him.

Jesus is *our* jumper. Our first move in this journey of obtaining unshakable confidence is to secure ourselves to Jesus through His word, worship, and listening and talking to Him every day. This study will help you do just that!

Knowing I was dependent on the parachute above my head and the jumper attached to my back was unnerving yet comforting at the same time. I knew I was not alone and had all I needed for this amazing adventure.

I think that's what God wants us to experience with Him. The thrill of leaping into the great unknown, reaching our full potential in Him, fully equipped yet completely dependent. And that is done one small, brave jump at a time.

So, friends, let's do just that! God's Word will be our equipment and the Holy Spirit our expert jumper. Together, we will dive into God's Word and discover the women (and a few men as well) who found the power, confidence, and courage needed in God to do the work God called them to.

Fearless Women of the Bible can be read individually or with a small group. Small groups allow for deeper discussion as well as accountability and encouragement to draw closer in relationship with the Lord.

You will notice that I use different Bible translations throughout the study. I do so to bring variety and find deeper meaning in the text. No matter what translation you prefer, you will have no trouble using it for this study.

Fearless Women of the Bible will lead you through six chapters containing personal stories as well as the stories of women (and men) in the Bible who made courageous moves. Each chapter opens with a prayer and a memory verse. Begin your time with the Lord each day in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to bring His personal revelation to you through the study. The memory verse is provided so that you will carry God's word into your entire day. Type it into your phone; write it on a card. However you choose to memorize these verses, let's be intentional to write God's Word on our hearts.

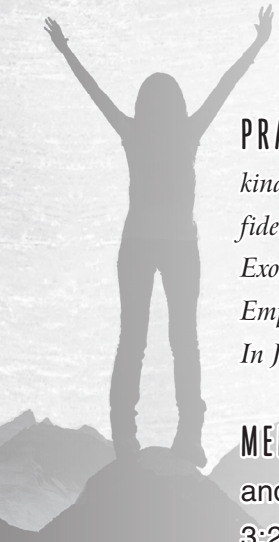
Each lesson includes teaching, a section for Digging Deeper into the Bible, and a section to Apply It. Here is where you can write your own personal revelations that have come through the Scripture and study as well as thoughts you want to continue to reflect on. I also like to have a journal or notebook next to me because often I want more space for reflection or personal revelations I have had.

Friend, I have prayed for you and believe that God will reveal to you in a very personal way what He has for you in this study. You may find it written here in the words of this book or it may be a word He whispers to your heart. Let's get started, believing that together we will find His confidence to make our move and be fearless!

WEEK ONE

The Women of Exodus

WHEN CONFIDENCE FACES ADVERSITY



PRAYER: *Lord, I may be an ordinary, everyday, down-to-earth kind of woman, but I still want to make my move and find confidence in You. Encourage me through the study of the women of Exodus that women like me are exactly the type You love to use. Empower me, Holy Spirit. Arrest my fears so I can move forward. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

MEMORY VERSE: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

DAY ONE

More Powerful Than Fear

HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED to do something but lacked the confidence or courage to do it? Go back to college? Give a presentation? Look for a new job? Move to a different city? I've so been there! Not just when it came to skydiving as I shared in the introduction, but also when it has come to pursuing my potential with God.

I think a part of us believes if *God* nudges us to do something, it won't be that hard. I'm just going to say that has not been *my* experience in this adventurous journey with Him.

Several years ago, one of my adventures began on the road to publishing. Not knowing just how hard the journey would be, I naively sent out my proposals. One by one, the replies filled my box, each one saying the same thing in a different way: *No.* It was as if a huge, rubber stamp marked REJECTION was stamped right across my forehead. The stamp got larger and ink darker with each notification.

No–You aren't well known. No–Your writing is not what we are looking for. No–We don't publish books for teens. I felt like my heart could not take another rejection.

Some days, I was brave. I gave myself a little pep talk, "Every no gets you closer to that yes." Other days, I curled up in a ball on my kitchen floor and wept. It all felt so very personal.

With no college degree, no background in English, and no platform as an author, I didn't offer a publisher the reasons to say yes that they were looking for. Encouragement from friends and family such as "God's timing is best" or "God will take care of it" were no longer working on my wounded heart. After five long years of noes, I received my nineteenth rejection letter. I wanted to quit. My confidence was shot. I felt like a complete failure.

Have you ever heard that you are not good enough over and over again? Are you in the middle of navigating rejection right now? Have you felt a rejection so deep it shook the very core of who you believed you were?

Maybe you can think of a time in your life when the enemy whispered the lie that you couldn't do it, whatever *it* was. You might be in that place today. You feel like you're not good enough. You're not fun enough. You don't have enough. You're not loved enough. Fear overshadows your confidence.

I wonder if these were some of the feelings of the women we'll meet this week: the women of the book of Exodus. They, too, may have believed they were not courageous enough. Not confident enough. Not brave enough for the task ahead.

And yet, we'll see by their courageous actions, what they may have felt and what they may have believed in the beginning all changed as they found the confidence they needed for the undertaking that lay before them.

I find it so very exciting that this story of women that took place long ago in an ancient land can be exactly what you and I need today to empower us with confidence. Exodus comes from a Greek word *exodos plithous* meaning "departure." It is the narrative of the deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and their journey toward God's Promised Land of Canaan. Moses, who is believed to have been the author, served as the Israelites' imperfect leader. For years, the Israelites had been able to put their trust and welfare in the hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh. When a new Pharaoh came into power, all that security was stripped

away. Completely out of control, they needed a strength and confidence to navigate this new and challenging change.

Maybe you know that feeling. Just when it seemed life had calmed down and you were enjoying a season of serenity, your peace was pulled out from under you. With circumstances spinning out of your control, you were left staring at a choice. Spin out of control with them or turn to the Lord for the strength and courage to face your situation.

Digging Deeper

Please read Exodus 1:8–21 for the foundation for today's study. Write any details that stand out to you below.

Paranoia whispers to Pharaoh that if Egypt went to war, the Hebrews would side with the enemy, fighting against Egypt and leaving the land. A cold sweat beads up on his forehead just thinking of so many people against him, so Pharaoh devises an evil scheme to combat his building anxiety. First, slave labor. And still the people multiply. So next he determines to stop the Hebrew nation from growing by killing all the newborn Hebrew male babies.

Describe a time when, like the Hebrews, others turned against you and you did nothing to deserve it. As you look back at that situation, how did that experience impact your confidence?

Pharaoh was fear-filled, but he had reason for concern. When the sons of Jacob came from Canaan to Egypt, they came as a clan of seventy. Now they have increased to number two million (Exodus 1:1–7).

According to Genesis 22:17–18, what had God promised the Israelites as far as their future was concerned?

Maybe Pharaoh knew of this promise that the Israelite God had made to them. Seeing just how blessed they were, his fear-induced instincts told him he had to bring an end to their prosperity. His plan: intimidation, aimed at two Hebrew women. Meet Shiphrah and Puah.

According to Exodus 1:11–14, how effective was Pharaoh's first attempt to oppress and brutalize the Hebrews to cease their growth?

According to Exodus 1:15–16, why did Pharaoh pick these two women to carry out his dirty work? Have you ever been in a situation when you were asked to do something illegal or unethical? How did you respond?

The monarch delivers this edict to the midwives: Kill your own people. "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live" (Exodus 1:16).

From that day forward, life could not go on as usual for Shiphrah and Puah, who once delighted in bringing God's babies into the world. A choice had to be made. They needed to make up their minds what move they would make *before* they received their next patient's call.

Fear would drive their response. The question—what kind of fear? *Whom* would they fear? Exodus 1:17 supplies our answer: "The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live."

The word translated *fear* in verse 17 is quite different from the type of fear Shiphrah and Puah may have had toward Pharaoh. This fear is the Hebrew word *yare*: to be afraid, be frightened, to revere, to respect or to be awesome.[1] It is a fear that comes from a combination of love, hope, and reverence, not extreme apprehension.

How does fearing God, having a deep reverence for Him, and having courage fit together in the lives of these women?

Has there been a time in your life when the fear of God—your desire to honor Him because you love Him—empowered you to be courageous? Or can you picture yourself in a scenario where this might happen?

As a teenager, I often bypassed situations where I had the opportunity to have fun if it brought the possibility of getting into trouble. My mind often went to the possible ramifications of my choices. A high school party with alcohol? *What if someone called the police?* Making out with a guy? *What*

if we got caught? Some of my friends thought my straight-and-narrow living simply came from my rock-solid faith. Honestly, the fear of God had much more to do with it. I was just plain afraid to go against Him. As a young person, sometimes this tender conscience drove me crazy. I just couldn't get wild like my friends, and sometimes it was maddening. (I am confident the prayers of my mother had a great deal to do with it!) As my relationship with the Lord developed and my love for Him grew, the desire to please Him grew from a negative type of fear into a healthy fear—a desire to want to please Him because I love Him. This desire to show Him I love Him compels me to obedience.

> My desire to show Christ I love Him compels me to obedience.

When Pharaoh's attempt to stifle Hebrew prosperity through slave labor failed, he moved on to Plan B (directing the midwives to kill every newborn Hebrew male). When that didn't work, Pharaoh summoned Shiphrah and Puah to his throne. They had not been following the command he had given them to kill the Hebrew males as they were born and now they were being called to account for their actions. I've never been summoned by the head of a country. The closest I've come is being called into the office of someone in authority over me. Whenever that has happened, I have immediately panicked. My mind turns to fear first. *What did I do? Why is she calling?*

Shiphrah and Puah had every reason to be terrified when they received the command to come to Pharaoh's throne. This ruler of Egypt was ruthless. They had, at worst, disobeyed him; at best, disappointed him to a fault.

Though Shiphrah and Puah may have been trembling in Pharaoh's presence, they did not allow the situation to paralyze them. Yes, they were

struck with awe but not by the powerful, intimidation of Pharaoh. Their fear, directed toward the majesty of their God, empowered them with the courage to let the male sons live, and that courage would not fail them now as they faced accounting for their actions.

Pharaoh's pressure brought forth an effect for sure, but it was the opposite of what he intended. Pharaoh's edict brought out, from a place deep within, a faith deeper than the women's fear of his earthly power. Shiphrah and Puah's faith in God compelled them toward courage. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had brought the Israelites safely to Egypt in the famine, would not quit on His plan to make Israel a great nation.

Shiphrah and Puah chose to fear God over fearing Pharaoh.

Do it scared became their motto.

God would come through just as Hebrews 6:10 says: "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."

Shiphrah and Puah chose to be courageous not because they were fearless. They chose to be brave because their love for their God was stronger than their fear of a human. God's love for them empowered them and helped them move forward.

Apply It

Describe an area in your life that is causing you fear now or has caused you fear in your past.

Just as a fear of Pharaoh's power and punishment may have pressed on Shiphrah and Puah, this same type of fear presses on us too. It tries to tell us what to do, when, and how to do it. *Text her. Do it now. Speak your*

mind. Don't let them push you around. Like a miniature dictator, fear from the enemy attempts to call the shots.

Today, tune in to when this fear is trying to speak to you. Ask the Lord to set off an alarm in your mind, alerting you to when fear's voice is attempting to dictate your actions. When you feel fear trying to pull you under, speak this week's memory verse over your heart: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught" (Proverbs 3:26 ESV).

Let's end with a prayer today:

Father, I'm tired of this unhealthy fear pushing me around. We know that fear is not from you because, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). Drive fear from me with Your love today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY TWO

Do It Scared

MEMORY VERSE: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

DURING HER SENIOR YEAR of high school, my youngest daughter, Madi, started traveling with me whenever I spoke. Often, at the end of the conferences, we would do a question-and-answer time with girls and their moms. When speaking, Madi would light up. Her passion to encourage young women to fully pursue Christ could not be contained.

Yet, after we had partnered together a few times, Madi informed me that although she had considered it, she could never become a speaker. "Why? You seem so natural," I wanted to know.

"Every time I get ready to speak, I get so scared! Whether I'm with you on a stage or in a classroom at school, I feel like I can't do it." Boy, did I know what she was talking about!

Even after speaking for many years, I still have to "do it scared." I have to look to Jesus to find the courage to make my move to share His word with others. Right before I get ready to speak, it's as if my mind and body conspire to hold me down. *"You really have to go to the bathroom!" "Do you even remember your opening story?" "What if someone falls asleep in the middle of your message?"* As these fears surface—fears all based on things that have happened to me before—I have to remind myself, *God has called me to this assignment. He will empower me to*

complete it. I have to remind myself to fear God more than I fear the people I'm speaking to.

I used to think that if I felt afraid, that was an indication that what I was about to do wasn't from God. I've learned that is just not the case. This is not the kind of fear protecting us from danger; our fear has a different source. We may fear failure or looking like a fool. Often, the discomfort of doing something we have never done tries to lock us down before we even get started.

Digging Deeper

Read Acts 4:18–22 and Acts 5:27–29. Peter ran into multiple situations that were also very scary. What was his response in both of these passages?

> **Being afraid doesn't mean it's not from God.**

Courage is not a feeling. Courage is a noun, the strength to go forward *even* in the face of fear.

One of the Hebrew words for *courage* is *ruah*, which can mean "breath of God" and can be used to describe God's creative activity.[2] Just as He did in Genesis 1, God is creating something out of nothing in you and me. Alone, we don't possess confidence, courage, or bravery. He is forming this fortitude where there has been a void, where it never has existed before. He is very good at making something out of nothing.

Psalm 33:6–9 tells us, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."

According to Genesis 1 and Psalm 33:6–9, what does God use to create something out of nothing?

From these verses, what can we learn about the power of words?

All God has to do is speak and it is done! By *His* word, we are empowered. We can believe that the power that brought the sun shining through your window and the moon lighting up the night sky and that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the same power that can bring the confidence we need to do all He calls us to do. God gave Shiphrah and Puah the confidence they needed to deny Pharaoh and obey God. He will give us His confidence as well.

Minds made up, the women move forward, determined to obey God rather than Pharaoh. At any moment, the moaning of a mother and the cries of a newborn could deliver an Egyptian henchman to the delivery door. The women's brave steps would not be a once-and-done move. They would need to bring forth courage *each time* a Hebrew sister's delivery time had come. The mother in labor and the midwives would have to be brave together. The nation of Israel depended on it.

When have you or when could you partner with another sister in the Lord to make a move of courage, big or small?

What difference can it make having another beside you?

We live in a culture that is more connected than ever before through social media. Yet studies show we are a culture that is also lonelier than ever before. It is killing us. Literally. "The subjective feeling of loneliness increases risk of death by 26%, according to the new study in the journal *Perspectives on Psychological Science.* Social isolation—or lacking social connection—and living alone were found to be even more devastating to a person's health than feeling lonely, respectively increasing mortality risk by 29% and 32%."[3]

Yes, we need to be confident and courageous, and we are more confident and more courageous together. I have found this to be so true in my life. Surrounding myself with others who are also moving forward in their faith encourages me each day to keep moving in God's direction.

How important were the rebellious and obedient acts of Shiphrah and Puah for the Israelite people? What might have been the effects if they had chosen to fear Pharaoh over God?

If Shiphrah and Puah had not feared God more than they feared man, Israel as a nation could have died out. Pharaoh's diabolical plan would have succeeded. This nation, on the cusp of a new birth, would have been buried but for two women. God entrusted two ordinary women because they honored, respected, and revered Him. Every time they empowered a child to continue to breathe life, the very breath God had given, they honored God's greatness.

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

The budding Israelite nation was continuing to grow and it didn't go unnoticed by Pharaoh. Maybe as they worked side by side, waiting for Hebrew babies to enter the world, Shiphrah and Puah processed the answer they would surely have to give for their daring acts. Possibly, they put themselves in a "worst case scenario."

I still have some work to do when it comes to this type of preparation. I put off thinking through the plans I will need to have in place should the "worst case scenario" come to pass.

- Backing up my computer in case it breaks.
- Filling up my spare tire in case of a flat.
- Printing pictures off my phone before it dies.

All good and wise actions require plans that I all too often fail to execute.

But the worst case did come to pass for these women. And they were ready.

First Peter 3:15 tells us we should also be ready. Ready for what exactly?

The day had finally come and it was none too soon. My husband and I had stalled on making needed repairs to our backyard, and I was happy to finally see the repair crew arrive. As the workers sweated away outside, I typed away in my office. Finishing my article, I ended my writing with this challenge: "Today, let's you and I look for someone who needs our prayers."

Sounds good, doesn't it?

Looking out in the yard, I noticed a new worker, so I headed out to introduce myself.

After exchanging greetings, it didn't take long to learn that Johnny was fairly new to our community. We swapped stories of how we both had to make adjustments when we moved from our home states to the South, but now we both loved it. Then that nagging, *I've got to get back to work* feeling crept in my mind. Yet as I tried to figure out how to get back to my work, I felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit in my heart.

What is most important is the person in front of you.

I paid attention to the prompting and continued listening to Johnny before heading inside to grab my checkbook. As I began writing the check for the payment, I noticed the name of our church on my pen.

Ask Johnny to church, came the second nudge. Honestly, this one scared me. I told myself, *"I'll ask Johnny to church if I see him again."*

I wrote the check and looked again into my backyard. No Johnny. Will you judge me if I tell you I felt relief? *I don't have to do the hard thing,* I thought. Then, I turned around, only to spot Johnny's truck through the front window. He *was* still at our home.

Ask Johnny to church, I sensed the Holy Spirit say again.

I needed to obey.

How am I going to do this, Lord? It's so unnatural. Then, I had the idea: Go get the mail and start a conversation. Trying to dig up a courage I didn't feel, I headed down our driveway. After checking the mailbox, I stopped by Johnny's truck.

Honestly, I was terrified to even start dialoging again. With my heart pounding and with the Lord's help, I asked Johnny if he had found a church yet. As I blurted out my question, I stuck out my church's pen. Johnny looked at the pen. He looked at me. Then, as a dam breaking from flood waters, he poured out his heart. Hurt by a relationship in his prior church, Johnny desperately wanted to believe that God was still good. He had been searching for a way to reconnect with God again.

I was stunned. To think I had almost missed this opportunity because I didn't want to do it scared. After a few minutes, I attempted to wrap up our conversation, when I sensed God wasn't finished yet.

That nudging in my heart came again. *You have yet to pray for Johnny.*

Oh man! I really thought I had done what God wanted me to do, but apparently I wasn't done yet. My mind quickly gathered together so many reasons for not praying with Johnny right then and there. *I'm in the middle of my cul-de-sac. My neighbors might see me. They could draw a wrongful conclusion.*

None of my excuses caused the prompting to fade. Instead, I sensed God's peace; He could take care of each and every concern.

So, I said five simple words to Johnny: "Can I pray for you?"

As I prayed for this man in the middle of my cul-de-sac, God made His presence known. You don't need a church to have church! And as I walked back up my driveway, my heart was doing flip-flops again. Not because I was scared, but because of the joy I found in obeying.

Just because we feel afraid to do what we feel prompted to do doesn't mean it's not God asking. Courage is not a feeling; it's the strength to move *even* in the face of fear.

Apply It

Maybe like me, one of the areas where you want to become fearless is finding the boldness to share your faith. You want to share Jesus and not

let what others think hold you back. You desire the courage to *do it afraid* and allow the fear of God to compel you more than your fear of people.

We can be assured: God wants us to fear Him more than we fear anything else. Let's start overcoming our fear of people by fanning our fear of God. I am challenged today to be on the lookout for ways He is encouraging me to share Him with others. Join me in simply looking for someone who needs prayer. Boldly ask another: "How can I pray for you today?"

DAY THREE

God Can Use Anyone

MEMORY VERSE: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

WHEN YOU'RE A GIRL LIKE ME, without a college degree, seeing God use ordinary people increases my faith and confidence that He can use me, too!

In 2014, I was introduced to a young girl named Katie Davis, via her book, *Kisses from Katie*.

Disobeying and disappointing her parents by forgoing college, plus breaking up with the love of her life, Katie followed Jesus by going on a short-term mission trip to Uganda. Then the eighteen-year-old senior class president and homecoming queen stayed in Africa, and subsequently *adopted* thirteen children and established a ministry, Amazima, that feeds and sends hundreds more to school while teaching them the Word of God.

Through her book, Katie challenged me to look for ways to keep saying yes to the people God places in front of me, to change the world one person at a time. That process begins when we believe God can use anyone, whether that's an eighteen-year-old girl or even me! The women of Exodus encourage us in this truth.

Pharaoh's ambition was clear: Stop the blessings God was pouring out on His children. Genocide would be his vehicle. In Pharaoh's

eyes, the increase of God's favor on the nation of Israel equaled a threat to his own. God, however, would not stand idly by and watch His children suffer. He sent help just as He later promised in 1 Samuel 2:9: "He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. 'It is not by strength that one prevails.'"

Shiphrah and Puah would not be the only women in the tale of the exodus of Israel who would need God's confidence and the bravery to do it scared.

Digging Deeper

Read Exodus 2:1–10. If you are familiar with this story, use an online Bible and read this in a version other than your normal study Bible. My mind grows familiar with the Bible that I study from daily. Reading in another version allows me to see things I might have missed before.

What are the names of the two bold Hebrew females in this portion of Scripture?

_____

_____

Trick question! They are not mentioned by name.

We learn later in Exodus 6:20 that the mother of Moses was Jochebed. We are given no other details in Exodus 2 of this rock-of-a-woman except that she was a Levite who married a man of the house of Levi (2:1).

Yet Jochebed, whose name implies "glory of Jehovah" or "Jehovah (is her or our) glory" is a key piece of God's plan to bring salvation to His people. Jochebed would have a total of three children—all three pivotal persons in the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.[4]

Moses, although her youngest, was her most well-known child.

Read: Exodus 33:11; Numbers 12:3; and Deuteronomy 34:5–6.

What does Scripture tell us is unique about Moses and his relationship with God?

From adopted child to shepherd to redeemer of thousands, we could argue that Moses was one of the greatest leaders to ever live. In the world's estimation, he was a man who went from nothing to something.

Jochebed's second child, Aaron, was the first high priest of the Israelites. God not only called Aaron to this important role, but Aaron's entire lineage would become Israel's priests.

According to Exodus 28:29–30, what service of honor was Aaron given as the high priest?

Aaron was also used as God's mouthpiece for Moses when Moses would deliver God's message of deliverance to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:14–16).

The oldest child of this ordinary woman was the spunky little thing who followed her brother's boat in the Nile. Described as "his sister" in Exodus 2:4, the girl we later come to know as Miriam is brave beyond her years. It is as if she already knew what Paul would write one day,

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

She certainly set an example as she headed to the water. There is no evidence that Miriam went to the bank of the Nile at the command of her mother.

What title does Exodus 15:20 give Miriam?

How could her gift have played into what took place the day she went down to the Nile River to watch over her brother?

Maybe, like Jochebed, Miriam had also seen that Moses "was a fine child" (Exodus 2:2) and somehow sensed that he was a vital part of God's plan for redemption for the Israelites.

In what ways might God speak to us today? Describe a time when you had an instinct or feeling that something was about to happen.

How did that sense impact the way you acted on that day?

Unlike many of us, this young girl doesn't care what others think of her actions because she's standing for what's right. She is audacious and gutsy enough to not only speak to Pharaoh's daughter but to offer the

princess advice! Wise beyond her years, she concocts a plan to get her mother involved in the raising of her brother in his early years *and* to have Jochebed paid for it as well.

Miriam not only stands by her brother at this critical time but also comes alongside Moses later in his life during the exodus of God's people. Using her gifts of music and poetry, Miriam helps God's people worship Him in the desert. Exodus 15 records the song Miriam led the Israelites in. I, too, sang these words, in our church as a young girl: "I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him" (Exodus 15:1b–2 KJV). A song makes Scripture stick like nothing else.

Three ordinary children grew up to become three extraordinary adults. I find so much hope in the mothering role of Jochebed. While she lived a life of boldly trusting God, her children were watching every step. She may not have been aware of how her actions were impacting them. She could not have known what type of adults they would become. God did. He was preparing them to have great influence with a willingness to "do it afraid."

Confidence was not something Jochebed's children were born with; it was some *One* they conformed *to*. The more they came to know the God of Jochebed, their fear of God grew.

> *Confidence was not something they were born with; it was some One they conformed to.*

Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, and Miriam—all ordinary women—all used in extraordinary ways by God.

Ordinary women like you and me, who stood up to a king, who were bold enough to defy human authority in order to obey the Authority over all.

They were women who took risks that could have led to their own deaths, so that another might live. Women who valued others above themselves.

They challenge me to choose the steps I take based on what God can do in me and through me, rather than based on the comfort I crave. Their stories provoke me to do what *I* can to help others and be a part of change in my community, in my church, and in my country.

Read Acts 5:29–40 to learn of someone who stood up to those with religious authority. Verse 34 tells us who he is. What was his name? Who was he standing up to?

God can fill our mouth with words to move people. In Acts 5:34, God used an educated man speaking to educated people, but his words were ones they did not want to hear. The Holy Spirit empowered him to speak words that "persuaded" them to go in a completely different direction.

In Acts 4, Peter and John also stood up to the religious authorities. What adjective is used to describe Peter and John in verse 13?

Peter, previously known as a coward, shows tremendous courage, boldly making known the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth to those who have a history of killing those so bold.

Who does Acts 4:8 give credit to for Peter's newfound courage?

Jesus can and wants to use us all. Educated or uneducated. With an important job or an ordinary one. Famous or unknown. As His Holy Spirit fills us, He develops in us the courage and confidence we need to do the work He gives us to do, including sharing Christ's offer of salvation with others.

Apply It

God also is challenging you and me to boldly move forward in His power.

You may not be asked to speak up to your nation's leader, but God may be calling you to be brave enough to speak up to your boss, your coworker, your neighbor, or a friend. You may see practices at your workplace that are unethical or illegal, and you are the voice God wants to use for correction. He can give you the bravery you need to confront that situation.

You may be the bold voice that brings the gospel to your family. Perhaps you've been silenced. The Lord is calling you and me to be bold, to live out our faith in our deeds and actions. You might be the voice of change in your own community, church, and country, one who will no longer sit by and simply watch as others are oppressed and pushed down by culture.

God has given us much and He calls us to move, to take action.

What is one step of courage, big or small, that you can take?

Today He says to you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10 ESV).

Lord, reading the stories of these women gives me courage, but it is easy to be courageous as I sit here. What I need is an opportunity to put this truth into practice. I need a fearlessness that moves forward when confronted. Holy Spirit, please cause my ears and eyes to be open and look for these opportunities. Speak to me. Help me to make my move. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY FOUR

Contagious Courage

MEMORY VERSE: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

EACH DAY I STARTED MY WORKDAY by telling myself, *You can do this! It's not a big deal.* For many people, the task I needed to complete would be effortless. But not me.

Even though writing this study would help others, that motivation wasn't enough to push me through. The fear of failure crippled me. I finally found the courage I needed to push past my phobia when Shiphrah and Puah's story leapt off the page and into my heart.

I saw for the first time that the first two chapters of Exodus tell the tale of a chain of courage—one act of fearlessness prompting another until the whole of these women's actions changed history. Like these women, God is calling you and me to be a part of contagious courage.

Digging Deeper

Reread Exodus 1:15–Exodus 2:10, seeing this piece of history as a whole.

If this passage were a play, *Contagious Courage*, it might look something like this:

Act 1: Shiphrah and Puah are commanded by Pharaoh to kill all males as soon as they are born. The brave women obey God rather than Pharaoh in a courageous act of rebellion against the king.

Act 2: Shiphrah, Puah, and Moses's mother, Jochebed (between her labor pains) discuss their options should this third child be a boy. In hushed tones they huddle, piecing together a plan for his survival. How would Jochebed answer questions about her delivery? Disguise her newly changed body? Where could they put the baby as he grew? How long could they keep him quiet?

As they make their plans, they rehearse their history with God. He had proven to the Hebrews that He could and would care for them, even in this foreign country. Their confidence in the one true God grows and their fear of their fierce enemy wanes as they move forward. Cowardice gives way to courage when we rehearse the faithfulness of God.

> Cowardice gives way to courage when we rehearse the faithfulness of God.

Once Moses is born, rather than killing her son, Jochebed courageously hides him at home. When she can no longer keep his existence a secret, she puts her son in a basket among the tall reeds of the Nile River. She is one fearless woman!

Act 3: Moses's sister Miriam stands by, watching the basket boat float on the Nile. But she isn't just observing. When Pharaoh's daughter calls for the basket to be brought to her, this girl-with-grit steps up and addresses the princess, giving royalty advice on how the child can be cared for.

Do you see the chain reaction one woman's courage had on another?

Shiphrah and Puah decide to defy Pharaoh.

Jochebed, in a similar move, chooses courage instead of compromise. Miriam, inspired by her mother, moves fearlessly toward the princess.

A ripple effect can take place when one person takes a daring step and others witness it. News of the righteous rebellion of Shiphrah and Puah would have traveled through the whole community, reaching the ears of Jochebed. Miriam would have witnessed her mother's fearlessness each day she cared for baby Moses.

Can you think of a time when you were witness to someone's step of faith? What impact did this act have on you?

Just as Shiphrah and Puah didn't know if they might be executed for not murdering Hebrew babies, Jochebed would not have known what would be the outcome of her audacious act. *Would she be found out and punished? Would her choice bring danger on her husband and her two other children? Was it irresponsible to risk all of their lives for one? Would the little vessel hold up once Moses was put in it? Would a wild animal find it?*

Jochebed followed her heroic instincts without any guarantees that any of her plan would work.

None of the women knew the future blessing resulting from her obedience to God.

According to Exodus 1:20–21, what was the result of the midwives' obedience for the Israelites?

What was the result of the midwives' obedience personally?

According to Exodus 2:9, what reward was given to Miriam and Jochebed for their bravery?

I want to be part of a chain of courage too!

As a young mother, my mom stepped out of her social norm, embraced Jesus as her Savior, and became a prayer warrior for her eight children. Even though several were already adults when she came to know Christ, through her prayers and life testimony, all of us serve Him today.

Seeing my mother's fearless faith gives me courage to make a difference in my world. Seeing God answer her prayers for her children empowers me to pray for my children's relationship with the Lord, asking God that they will follow the steps of Miriam. My desire is for them to be on the lookout for where God can use them—and when the time is right, boldly step up with the wisdom God gives them.

What if the midwives were not courageous in defying Pharaoh's edict? Moses's mother Jochebed would not have had the opportunity to hide her baby boy in the Nile. Moses would have been dead. End of story.

If Jochebed had not courageously hid Moses, Miriam would not have been bold enough to speak to Pharaoh's daughter. There would have been no need for her to stand on the shores of the Nile, no reason for her to step out.

If Miriam had not been courageous and spoken to Pharaoh's daughter . . . who knows what would have happened to the millions of Israelites Moses led out of slavery.

But they were courageous.

They took steps of bravery, making it possible for the next woman to be brave. Maybe you remember a lesson from science class: Newton's first law of motion. It says: An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.[5]

I love how God's word was proving itself true before Newton ever came up with his law. Shiphrah and Puah set the movement of faith into motion. They went against the grain, against the ungodly command of the government, in order to move toward God. News traveled; others heard of their bravery. This motion pushed other women in their community to move in the same direction: obeying God rather than men. Their courage changed the course of Jochebed and Miriam and who knows how many other women who are not listed here in Scripture. They gave other women the permission to be brave and, in doing so, Shiphrah and Puah changed the course of history!

One woman's courageous act opens the door of courage for another.

> *One woman's courageous act opens the door of courage for another.*

I've been pondering this chain reaction and thinking of so many women throughout history whose courage opened the door for others.

Harriet Tubman (interestingly called "Moses") led approximately seventy slaves and their families to freedom during the Civil War and became the first woman to lead an armed expedition. Her name was feared by slave owners because of her courage.[6]

Women like Harriet Tubman, who were a part of the abolition movement, sparked the suffrage movement for women's right to vote and own property. These champions of courage paved the way for women in America to be able to vote in each election.

Catherine Booth, cofounder of the Salvation Army, led the way for women to be able to publicly share the gospel. Her acts of bravery opened doors for women coming behind her to be able to live out the calling of God on their lives. Catherine Booth opened the door for me and for you to share the Word of God aloud. She stood up to religious authority, who felt women were not to speak up. She boldly spoke what she felt God's Word said.[7]

I could go on and on, telling of the courageous women who have gone before us, opening doors so that we can have the opportunity to be brave and make a difference in our world at our time.

For many of these women, their steps of courage were ones taken over and over again. Harriet Tubman made some thirteen freedom trips during the course of the four-year Civil War. Catherine Booth spent more than twenty years defending the right of women to be able to preach the gospel, having to overcome significant timidity to do so.

Likewise, who knows how long Shiphrah and Puah allowed illegal births or how many close calls Jochebed had hiding the infant Moses?

Obeying God often requires us to persevere undaunted. When the answers and change don't come quickly, we need not be dismayed or discouraged. Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." God's Word says, we *will*, not we *might*. The Lord can empower us with great courage even when our confidence is stretched again and again. Rehearsing His faithfulness causes our courage to arise. Then we are enabled and empowered to open the doors of courage for those coming after us.

Apply It

How about you? How will you move toward courage like the women who have gone before you?

Is God calling you to be the first in your family to break out? To step up and bravely make decisions to bring God's redemption to your family line? To redefine "normal" in your family's legacy?

Maybe like me, you are blessed to have witnessed the courage of another, and it's empowered you toward bravery. We have to be careful to not become complacent or comfortable.

Where will you invest in another to keep the chain of courage going?

We can start by:

- Praying for courage. We can bravely ask the Lord to put us in situations that require us to be courageous for Him, then be on the lookout for these opportunities each day.
- Surrounding ourselves with others who are courageous. We become like those with whom we spend time. Are there people in our lives who are taking risks with God? If not, we need to find courageous people and spend time with them.
- Reading stories of others (in the Bible or other books) who've been courageous. Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." *Everything you do.* Since *everything we do* flows from our heart, let's intentionally fill it with courage and bravery so that we will do what is courageous and brave!
- Making our move to bring courage to another person who needs bravery too!

Lord, help us to choose courage over fear. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us to lean on You and make the moves You call us to take. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY FIVE

The Soil Confidence Grows In

MEMORY VERSE: "For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

SITTING ON BLANKETS at a flag football game, the moms around me shared their concerns about their older children. Their sons playing football that day were their youngest, while our son was our oldest. Having children entering high school, they talked about the trials their kids would soon navigate.

Under my breath, I whispered to myself, "Being a Christian in high school was so hard!" One of the moms quickly picked up on my comment. "You were a Christian in high school?" My affirmative response was not all that amazing to me. Next thing I knew, the moms were asking me to mentor their daughters. "I don't think so," was my quick reply. *What did I know about teens?* My kids were nine, six, and three years old. We hadn't learned how to navigate teen waters yet, nor did I feel equipped to wade into them. It was not a place I was eager to go.

The next morning in church, I stood with my hands raised high, worshiping my Lord. With my eyes shut, a picture of sorts entered my mind. I was sitting in my backyard, surrounded by a small group of teen girls. Eating pizza together, I was sharing with them my story of

running after God in high school. *Oh no! What could this mean?* I was afraid it meant what I thought it meant.

After church, I shared my "picture" with my husband. "Sounds like God to me, Lynn. You had better do it." But I didn't want to! I *did* want to obey God. More than anything in my life, I feared God. Out of respect and awe for Him, as well as His place of authority, I wanted Him to always make the last call in my life. So, reluctantly and before I could talk myself out of it, I invited a group of girls over. Just like the picture, I did what I felt God was calling me to do: I ordered pizza and shared my story.

Remember how I said I used to think that if God asked you to do something, the least He could do was not make it difficult? That was not my experience that night either.

Interruptions, one after another, chopped into our time. These were not normal interruptions. The first call came from my sister-in-law; there had been a shooting in their neighborhood. She wanted her girl to be careful coming home. Another mom called to say her daughter's pet toucan that had flown away returned. Another mom locked her keys out of her car and needed her daughter's help. I am sure the girls could sense my frustration of wasting my time, energy, and money.

Can I just be honest and tell you I was so mad at God? I had obeyed, did what I felt He wanted me to do. I had been afraid. *What would these teen girls think of this mom who wanted to hang out with them*? I had done it afraid . . . and it had not turned out. *Thanks for nothing* crossed my mind as I wrapped up the night, quickly shoving pizza boxes in the garbage.

One neighbor girl lingered. After helping me clean up, she asked, "Would you mentor me?"

Would you hate me if I told you I said no? That night, I was so fed up with the situation. If that experience was any indication of what it meant to mentor teens, my answer was *"Thanks, but no thanks!"* My confidence in this stepping out for God was gone.

I knew there was a group of Christian teens at her high school she could join. That was not what she wanted, she said. She wanted a mentor.

I told her I would give her a chance, but if she wasn't serious, I would be done. (I am so embarrassed! How mean of me!)

You know, that night in my backyard, I didn't go into it with any preconceived notions about the future. I hadn't any thoughts of "what this meant" or why God was asking me to do this or what it was for. I didn't dream of growing a small group, writing Bible studies, or traveling the country speaking at events. What I did know was there was a nudging in my heart that I believe came from God. And if God was asking me to do something, I was going to do it. No matter how small it was or how big. No matter what, I would obey Him.

God wanted me to obey Him because He loved that one girl who was just beginning to develop her own fear of God in her life. And He wanted me to come fan that flame and teach her, both in words and actions, what it means to live a life that is built around a deep respect for God. He wanted her to grow to love Him.

Mentoring that one girl eventually led to a small group that grew and continued for thirteen years. That one act of obedience led to my trying to get published. Yes . . . after five years and nineteen rejections, God eventually opened those doors, giving me the opportunity to write three books for teen girls. I've been speaking to young women now for more than fifteen years. I absolutely love it! Give me a room full of authentic, ready-to-grab-life girls and I am ready to invest. Now, I feel confident around them because **confident is what I have become in Him**. Walking out the fear of the Lord and following His calling has developed in me a confidence I could never have discovered otherwise.

This growth that has taken place in my life began with the same seeds that were planted in the lives of Shiphrah and Puah: "The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live" (Exodus 1:17). The fear of God was in them in the beginning.

They feared God more than they feared a man who had the power to kill them! This reverence, awe, and submission compelled them to do

the hard thing. Empowered them to do it scared. It is exactly the same answer Peter and the apostles gave hundreds of years later when they were in a similar, dangerous situation. Pulled before a court and threatened for their act of sharing that Jesus was the Son of God, they replied to the authorities, "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29).

Peter and the apostles were not the only ones whose actions were determined because of their fear of God.

Read Genesis 22, the story of Abraham and his son Isaac. What action did God ask Abraham to take? How did God honor Abraham because Abraham feared him (22:12)?

Were Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, Miriam, Peter, and Abraham all afraid in their situations? I'm sure they were. Most likely much more afraid than I was to invite over a group of high schoolers.

Yet, we all had something in common: We had to do it afraid. And you can too. I know we don't *want* to, but when we make the choice that we want to obey God more than we want anything else, that *want* will fuel us with the faith we need to move forward.

Nothing builds our confidence like doing fearsome things *with* God. Doing scary things with God is the action where the seed of confidence is planted into the soil of fearing Him. This is the perfect condition for Christ Confidence to grow. When, in complete trust, we depend on Him, a deep assurance can settle in our soul, even though we are still scared.

Even in chaos, when we know we are right where God wants us, we can experience His confidence.

In Luke 1:50, in what my Bible titles "Mary's Song," what does Jesus' mother say is a benefit to those who fear Him?

But what if you don't already have the fear of God? In the times we are living in now, when so many do not believe in absolute truth, many of us have not been raised to fear God. The good news is you can develop or grow the fear of God in your life.

The fear of God can grow in our lives as we get to know Him. The more we get to know God, digging into His Word to learn more and more about who He is, what His character looks like, how He thinks and acts, the awesomeness of His majesty compels us to fear Him.

This mighty tree of confidence that begins to grow tall can withstand winds and storms because it is a confidence that is deep. It is not standing on ground that moves like the sand when the tide comes in and out. The reason we make the choices we make to do the things we do is because we never want to offend this One who loves us so very much. Instead, we want to return deep love with deep love. And the absolutely beautiful thing is when this fear of God grows, it develops into a passion for Him that can stand firm against anything . . . even the threat of a king.

Apply It

Up to this point in your relationship with God, what have you understood "the fear of the Lord" to mean?

How has that changed after our week of studying together?

Friend, this week you have planted a seed in the good soil of learning to fear the Lord. As we continue to dig into God's Word together, we will learn more about Him, His character, and His heart.

As we finish up, ask the Holy Spirit to develop in you a deep awe and respect for our holy God. Ask Him to reveal to you, in a way you have never experienced before, His deep and boundless love so that your fear of Him will grow more and more.

Group Discussion Questions

Start by reading this week's memory verse aloud as a group, or select an individual to do so:

"For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."—Proverbs 3:26 (ESV)

1. Considering Lynn's stories, what are some examples of snares we can get caught in when we lack confidence? What are some examples of your confidence facing adversity?
2. Did you grow up "fearing God" in one way or another? Was it a healthy fear, full of respect and awe, or was it unhealthy, literal fear?
3. Share with the group a time when you were called to account for something and felt you had to make a choice of allegiance or loyalty. Perhaps a time when you had to choose between this world and God's will or command? What did you do? Why?
4. Why is the fear of people such a big barrier to us walking in God's confidence?
5. In our study this week we read 1 Peter 3:15. Read together 1 Peter 3:14. How does the motto "Do It Scared" fit with this verse, and what does it mean in your life today?
6. What do you resonate with most about the example of confidence we have through the Women of Exodus?

Go around the group and share what the fear of God means to you personally today.

End your time together praying for each woman to be full of confidence through her personal fear of God rather than her fear of earthly approval.

About the Author

Lynn Cowell is a national conference speaker who passionately empowers women of all ages to understand the importance of Christ confidence. She is the author of several books including *Esther: Seeing Our Invisible God in an Uncertain World* and *Loved and Cherished* just for girls ages 8–12. Lynn also serves on the speaking and writing teams for Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Website: If you enjoyed *Fearless Women of the Bible,* you can find additional empowering resources at www.LynnCowell.com and www.Proverbs31.org.

Connect with Lynn, see pictures of her family, and find out where you can meet in person at her speaking events:

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Proverbs 31 Ministries

If you were inspired by Lynn Cowell or *Fearless Women of the Bible* and desire to deepen your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we encourage you to connect with Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Proverbs 31 Ministries exists to help you know the truth and live the truth, for it changes everything. We come alongside you through:

- Free online daily devotions
- First 5 Bible study app
- Daily radio program
- Books and resources
- Online Bible Studies
- COMPEL Writers Training: www.CompelTraining.com
- Speakers for events

To learn more about Proverbs 31 Ministries, call 877-731-4663 or visit www.Proverbs31.org.

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A Prayer for Confidence

Jesus, I admit that I can't do today without You.

Confidence doesn't come naturally to me; it is only something that comes from You. As I rehearse Your faithfulness in my life, my confidence will grow.

There will be times when I have to make my move, even when I don't have the confidence to do it.

When confidence-crushing thoughts overwhelm my mind, guard my mind with the promises in Your Word. My flesh wants to say, "I'm not good enough," but You say, "With Me, all things are possible."

As I walk in Your wisdom and see the blessings that come from obedience, may my faith build in You. And as I wait for Your direction for my next step, help me see when I need to move, wait, or simply get out of Your way.

Enable me to fully understand and live out my spiritual gifts so I can fulfill my calling in Your plan. I know when I am focused on what You have called me to, I can celebrate what You have called others to. Mold me into the confident woman who doesn't have to pull another down in order to pull myself up.

You will ask me to do things beyond my natural abilities. And I'm okay with that because it allows You to do greater things through me than I could ever do alone.

When disappointment and discouragement deplete me, You will restore me.

When life knocks me down, I will choose to draw closer to You still.

I will remember that where You move, the enemy isn't far behind. These trials that come my way are indications that You are at work in my life.

As I take a deep breath in, I feel Your peace from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. And I exhale knowing that with You, I've got the confidence I need for this day.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

inScribed

• BIBLE STUDIES FOR WOMEN •

How to Live in Bold Confidence

Have you ever needed confidence in a specific circumstance and couldn't think of an example of anyone who had "been there, overcome that"?

Author and speaker Lynn Cowell took every form of insecurity we experience as women and asked God to reveal how we should respond. The result is this in-depth, six-week Bible study spanning obscure and recognizable women in Scripture who demonstrate unshakable confidence no matter their circumstances.

This six-week study will help you to:

- Stand with resolve when your confidence faces adversity—Women of Exodus
- Step out in your own defense when your confidence is challenged—The Daughters of Z
- Remain faithful when your confidence in God is elusive—Rahab
- Focus on what is true when your confidence in relationships is questioned—Abigail & Michal
- Trust when your confidence is in doubt—Martha & Mary

Includes biblical and historical background insights, practical application, and a memory verse for each chapter. This study may be completed individually or with a small group.

InScribed is a collection of studies that lead women to not just survive but thrive by encouraging them to immerse themselves in the Word of God.

LYNN COWELL is a national conference speaker who passionately empowers women of all ages to understand the importance of Christ confidence. She is the author of several books including *Esther: Seeing Our Invisible God in an Uncertain World* (with Amy Carroll), and *Brave Beauty: Finding the Fearless You* just for girls ages 8–12. She also serves on the speaking and writing team for Proverbs 31 Ministries.

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