

The Upside *of* Fear

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I admit it—fear is no stranger to me. My earliest recollection of its presence in my life traces back to my preschool days. At that time, my family lived in Alberta, about 40 minutes' drive from an area famous for dinosaur fossils. My imagination worked overtime, especially if I woke during the night. I was sure that a dinosaur lived under my bed and that it would grab my ankles if I dared step onto the floor.

My childish thinking told me that leaving my room meant losing my life. So rather than fall prey to the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, I'd stand on my bed and take a flying leap toward the door to get beyond its grasp. My strategy obviously worked—I'm still alive and have two ankles to prove it!

Fear stayed with me when I graduated from kindergarten and entered elementary school. My mom occasionally asked me to fetch a jar of peaches or pickles from the basement storage room. I obliged, but only after mustering every ounce of courage within my skinny frame. I was certain that girl-eating monsters lived in the basement and that they could outrun me on the stairs. I ascended those stairs two by two, terrified that if I did anything less, I'd become a monster's meal.

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As a grown woman, I can look back on those fears and laugh. But nowadays I face other fears that are anything but funny. I've worried about my kids' well-being. I've fretted over our bank account. I've

stewed over feeling inadequate, and I've panicked when personal storms have blown in and threatened to shake my world.

Can you relate?

Be honest—I know you understand what I'm talking about. In preparing to write this book, I conducted a survey wherever I spoke at women's events. The results only confirmed what I suspected—I'm not the only woman who struggles with negative fear. It affects women of all ages and from all walks of life, often signaling its presence by provoking apprehension, premature wrinkles, stomach pains, tension headaches, and sleepless nights. If left to run rampant, it can rob us of joy and the power-filled life that God intends for us.

As I began studying examples of fear in the Bible, I discovered a fascinating truth: The first reference to fear is found in Genesis 3:8-10. It says, "Toward evening they [Adam and Eve] heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The LORD God called to Adam, 'Where are you?' He replied, 'I heard you, so I hid. I was *afraid* because I was naked.'"

Fear was not a part of God's agenda for His creation, but it slithered onto the scene when Adam and Eve sinned. It became a wedge between them and the One who created them for relationship with Himself.

Unfortunately, fear is still on the scene today. It can interfere with our relationship with God, just as it did for Adam and Eve. Or—here's the exciting part—it can be the catalyst for a deeper relationship with Him. Every time we're afraid, we can either forget faith and try to do things our way (as if that's really going to work!), or we can acknowledge our fear and call out to God for help. When He answers, we experience Him in new ways. That's the upside of fear.

Life is too short to spend it battling fear and its negative effects. Besides, God has better things in store for us. He wants us to embrace each day wholeheartedly and make every minute count. He wants us to live to our full potential and leave a mark on coming generations. He wants us to impact our families, our churches, our

communities, and ultimately the world for Himself. I want that too. Do you?

If so, this book is for you. You'll be inspired by the real-life stories of other women who have faced their fears and discovered new truths about God. You'll be challenged as you see how biblical heroes and heroines dealt with fear. And you'll be encouraged as you learn what God's Word says about fear and how to rise above it.

At the end of each chapter you'll find several practical helps. First is a section called Points for Progress. These questions are designed for individual or group study and will help you apply truth and experience deeper personal growth.

Next you'll find a section called Promises to Ponder. Copy these Scriptures on recipe cards and post them where you'll see them often—on the fridge, near your kitchen sink, on the dashboard of your car, on the bathroom mirror, near your computer, or beside your baby's changing table. Filling our minds with the truth of God's Word equips us to face fearful situations when they come along. His Word renews our minds and helps us to view life from His eternal perspective rather than from our own limited point of view. Fear takes flight in the face of God's infinite person and power!

You'll also find a section called Praying the Promises in which I've turned those Bible verses into prayers. Pray them for yourself or on behalf of others struggling with fear. God promises to hear those whose hearts belong to Him and who ask anything in line with His will (1 John 3:21-22; 5:14). We know beyond a doubt that He wants His children to overcome their fears, so we can pray with confidence and expect Him to answer.

As I've written this book, my understanding of the potential negative impact of fear on my life has grown. But so has my understanding of the upside of fear. I pray that from this day forward, God will enable me to view fear in a different light—as a tool in His hands that will help me experience Him in new ways and move into freedom. I pray the same for you!

I invite you to e-mail me about how God has used this book in your life. We can encourage each other in our spiritual journey. In fact, give a copy of this book to a friend or donate one to your church library. Ask your public librarians to bring it in so that other women in your community can benefit from its message. Let's live life the way God intended—in rest and relationship with Him. And let's make a difference in the world around us.

By the way, I write a free monthly online newsletter called *Growing with Grace*. If you'd like to receive it, simply visit my website, click on the free e-zine link, and follow the directions. I hope you enjoy it!

Know you are loved,

Grace

www.gracefox.com

The Faces of Fear

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop and look fear in the face.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Fear—every woman struggles or has struggled with it in one form or another, and few dare to admit it. Why? We're afraid to! If we confess to wrestling with fear, others might think less of us. Besides, we've been brought up to believe that it doesn't bother good Christians. We're supposed to have strong faith—strong enough to move mountains.

Rather than admit our real feelings when our faith wavers and fear takes over, we often bury ourselves in busyness or flash a fake smile and pretend everything's okay. Unwilling to identify and acknowledge our fear, we succumb to feelings of failure and powerlessness.

Ladies, it's time to change!

Fear is our worst enemy. We can let it ruin us by filling our minds with thoughts of dread and woe, or we can face it head-on and use it as a tool that can empower us by drawing us into a deeper understanding of who God is. My purpose for writing this book is to help others learn to face it and use it as a tool.

I'm not a psychologist, however, so I'm not pretending to give

clinical advice. I'm an ordinary woman who, through life experience, has encountered the face of fear more than a few times. I've felt my heart race and my adrenalin rush at the sound of things going bump in the night. I've wrestled privately with the fear of rejection—*What will others think of me if they know what I'm really like?* I've panicked when my journey has taken detours into unknown territory, and I've trembled when sensing God asking me to walk a path too risky for my liking.

In the past, fear has rendered me sleepless at night and snappy toward my husband and kids. It's caused me to say no to too many opportunities. I believe it was even responsible for a mysterious rash on my arms when I was in junior high.

Back then, our family considered moving to a new city. The thought of leaving friends and familiarity terrified me. An itchy red rash broke out on my arms. When it wouldn't go away, I saw a medical doctor. He asked a few questions and prescribed tranquilizers. The drugs did the trick, but we never addressed the root of my problem—fear.

In the past, fear has played havoc in my thoughts and caused me to second-guess God. But no more. I'm done with it. I know that God has a better way for me to live than in fear's clutches, and I choose to pursue His plan and purpose.

Speaking at women's events has given me the opportunity to address the fear issue and see its far-reaching impact. Before writing this book, I asked nearly 350 women to name the fears they struggle with. Some signed their names on their papers, but many did not—perhaps the fear of being identified restrained them. Here's a smattering of their responses:

Abandonment.

My husband was not a Christian when I married him. He was on active duty in the U.S. Navy, and as the day approached for him to be deployed, I feared that, in

the worst-case scenario, he would die without knowing Jesus.

I had an affair. My husband knows, and we're working things out. But no one else knows, none of our friends or family. No one. I feel like I can't talk to even my best friend about what's happened within me. Every day is a battle.

We lived in a twelfth-story apartment for a few months. The balcony truly scared me. I was afraid my baby might fall from it.

I'm dealing with cancer, and I struggle with the fear that my son, age 15, and daughter, age 12, will be harmed by watching me go through this. I don't want to miss their growing up. I struggle to remember that God is in control.

My life has been wonderful with only small challenges. I fear that the Lord may cause some catastrophic event to help me grow. I'm a wimp—I want to grow in easy ways.

Because of the way my daughters-in-law were raised, I fear losing relationships with my grown sons.

My kids take up so much of my time that I fear losing connection with my husband. I fear not knowing him when my kids leave home.

My mom died before I had kids. I fear raising children without her advice or help.

I'm getting older and still haven't married. I fear remaining single for the rest of my life.

I fear marriage because my folks had a lousy relationship.

I fear what might happen if my husband doesn't get a job before our money runs out.

I fear that my children will make poor choices and pay harsh consequences.

I fear not being able to conceive.

My husband has multiple sclerosis, and I'm afraid of what the future holds.

The list goes on and on, penned by women ages 19 to 80 representing various cultures. Some of these gals are stay-at-home moms. Others are single parents, business women, pastors' wives, missionaries, or grandmothers. Some have whopping bank accounts. Others survive on social assistance.

Each answer is as unique as the woman who wrote it, but most fall into specific categories such as fear about our children's well-being, fear of an unknown future, and fear of financial insecurity. As you read this book, you'll find that the chapters expose the most common faces of fear. My prayer is that whatever fears you face, you'll find the stories and teachings relevant to your situation.

Are you ready to move from fear to freedom with me? If so, let's go!

Fear Defined

Let's begin with a basic understanding of fear. Webster's dictionary offers three definitions of fear as a verb: (1) "to be afraid of," (2) "to be in awe of," and (3) "to expect with misgiving."

It's easy to relate to the first definition because we've all felt afraid of something or someone at sometime. Kim, my 20-year-old daughter, is afraid of having her blood drawn for medical tests. Her face turns white, and she nearly faints when the needle is inserted. (We've learned, by experience, that she ought to lie down rather than sit in a chair when this procedure is done!) We haven't got a clue as to why she's so afraid of needles. She just is.

I'm afraid of big barking dogs because several mangy mutts tried

to make me their meal when I delivered newspapers in eighth grade. Nearly four decades have passed, but I still remember the adrenaline rush I experienced when a German shepherd lunged at me and plastered his muddy paw prints on the back of my winter jacket. Even today, walking past my neighbors' homes when their dogs are loose requires all my courage. The first sight of a woofing, free-wheeling canine kicks me into prayer mode: *Lord, please, please, p-l-e-a-s-e keep me safe.*

I have other fears too, such as driving on icy roads and sailing in extremely high winds. I consider them dangers that pose a potential threat to my physical safety, so I choose to avoid them.

Now you know my fears. How about you? What are you afraid of? Think of your own situation. Fill in the blank. "I am afraid of _____."

The second definition—"to be in awe of"—describes how we should regard God. We ought to fear Him because of His holiness and power and wisdom. This doesn't mean we're afraid of Him, although we have reason to be if we're deliberately choosing to disobey His commands. Being in awe of Him means that we revere Him. We hold Him in high esteem because of who He is.

The third definition—"to expect with misgiving"—describes a sense of uneasiness or disquiet. We can relate to that one as well if we've ever focused on a particular situation and worried about its potential outcome.

Many parents experience this when their eldest child begins driving alone. They know the child has passed the driving exam, the vehicle is in good working condition, and the roads are clear. But still... a nagging uneasiness haunts the parents until both child and car return intact.

A list of synonyms for *fear* lends several vivid descriptions. To fear is to falter, lose courage, be alarmed, have qualms about, cower, shrink, tremble, and—my favorite—break out in a sweat.

Can you relate to any of these synonyms? Perhaps you've lost your courage while facing a terminal illness. Maybe you've faltered in

praying for a wayward child because you've prayed for years without seeing results. Perhaps you've cowered in a corner, afraid that your friends might abandon you if they discover a hidden secret, such as a homosexual lifestyle. Maybe you've been tempted to shrink back when someone asked you to do a task for which you didn't feel qualified, or you've had qualms about your child's relationship with a particular member of the opposite sex.

If you can relate to these synonyms, take heart. You're not alone! Your specific circumstances may be different from the ones I mentioned, but the feelings they trigger are the same, and they're all based in fear.

Types of Fear

Women of all ages and from all walks of life encounter two basic types of fear—destructive and constructive. The latter is beneficial. Here are a few snapshots of how this appears in real life:

- The fear of being run over causes us to look both ways before crossing the street. We instill that fear into our kids at a young age!
- The fear of an empty gas tank prompts us to stop at a gas station and fill 'er up.
- The fear of a house fire prompts us to make sure we turn off the stove burners and the coffeemaker before we leave home.
- The fear of lung cancer keeps us from smoking or prompts us to stop.
- The fear of breast cancer encourages us to do monthly self-examinations and have annual mammograms when we reach the appropriate age. (Well, at least it should!)
- The fear of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease causes us to eliminate junk food and eat nutritious meals. (Ditto—at least it should!)

Constructive fear can prove helpful. It steers us toward wise decisions and actions. It promotes self-preservation and can literally save our lives. We'll place reverential fear in this category. It inspires a healthy fear of God and encourages us to make wise choices and live in a manner that pleases Him.

Destructive fear, on the other hand, is another story. If left unchecked, it can cause sleeplessness, illness, and chronic worry. It can hinder our ability to make decisions and perform even mundane tasks. It can paralyze us, rob us of joy and peace, and cause stress and ulcers.

Phobias fall into this category. One dictionary defines a phobia as an "intense, abnormal, or illogical fear of a specified thing."¹ We've heard of claustrophobia—the fear of confined spaces—and arachnophobia—the fear of spiders. But I found a list of numerous less-known phobias.

For instance, *mageirocophobia* is the fear of cooking. (I'm writing this after 5:00 p.m., and I still don't know what to fix for dinner. Perhaps I should plead *mageirocophobia* tonight!) Then there's *hypogiaphobia*—the fear of responsibility. Try this one: *ephebiphobia*—the fear of teenagers. And then there's *anglophobia*—the fear of England or English culture. And *bibliophobia*—the fear of books (obviously not an issue you struggle with!). And finally, *phobophobia*—you guessed it, the fear of phobias.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), nearly 11.5 million American adults suffer from phobias. More than 19 million American adults are affected by anxiety disorders annually. The NIMH describes these disorders as follows:

- *Panic disorders*. "Repeated episodes of intense fear that strike often and without warning." Symptoms include chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, fear of dying, and abdominal distress.
- *Obsessive-compulsive disorder*. "Repeated, unwanted thoughts or compulsive behaviors that seem impossible to stop or control."

- *Post-traumatic stress disorder.* “Persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event such as rape or other criminal assault, war, child abuse, natural or human-caused disasters, or crashes.” Symptoms include anger, irritability, nightmares, numbed emotions, and flashbacks.
- *Phobias.* Two major types of phobias are social phobias and specific phobias. Social phobias result in a disabling fear of embarrassment or humiliation in social settings and lead to the avoidance of many pleasurable experiences. Isolation becomes a risk and can lead to depression or alcoholism. Specific phobias are characterized by an irrational fear of a situation or object that poses little or no real danger, such as spiders. Sufferers limit their lives to avoid the object of their fears.
- *Generalized anxiety disorder.* “Constant, exaggerated worrisome thoughts and tension about everyday routine life events and activities, lasting at least six months. Almost always anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it.” Symptoms include muscle tension, fatigue, nausea, and headache.²

Destructive fears can control our minds, attitudes, and behaviors. But we can overcome them! A professional counselor’s insights and recommendations might help. And of course, we should always delve into God’s Word to see what it says about any issue.

Fear’s Effect

I’ve given you a brief overview of the scientific face of fear and some of the different effects it can have on people’s lives. Now let’s zoom in for a closer look.

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified, terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert

retreat to advance,” said Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first inaugural address.

Roosevelt’s statement accurately describes fear’s effect. If we let it, fear paralyzes us and prevents us from making progress in our lives. It stunts our growth. It locks us into position and declares, *You’re not goin’ anywhere, sister.*

Been there. Actually, I’m still there. I was a high school senior when my older sister and her best friend took me snow skiing in beautiful Banff, Alberta. They’d both skied before and loved it, but this was my first experience. After two practice runs down the bunny hill, they felt confident about their ability to move on. “C’mon, Grace, you can do it too,” they said.

I assessed the situation. Two trips down the bunny hill hardly qualified me to move to a steeper slope, especially when I hadn’t even mastered the art of catching the lift without falling on my face. But, impulsive soul that I am, I agreed.

The view from the top nearly took my breath away, but it wasn’t because of the scenery. My sister and her friend completed two runs in the time it took me to muster the courage to shove off.

Everything went well for the first few seconds. I glided a few feet and then cut to the left. I skied another few feet and cut to the right, trying hard to look like a pro. It didn’t work. When the time came to cut to the left again, my ankles refused to cooperate. Rather than turning, I headed straight down the slope.

Speed and panic gained momentum. My ski poles flapped like broken wings. The ski lift on my left and the trees on my right blurred. Straight ahead, at the bottom of the slope, I saw a snowplow, a small wooden building, and the line of skiers waiting to get on the lift, and I wondered which one I would slam into first.

Scenes from my life zipped through my mind. Dying hadn’t been on my agenda when I left my parents’ home that morning. Neither was ending my day as a quadriplegic. But now I feared the worst. What could I do?

Pray!

Eloquence loses its importance when one's life is whizzing before one's eyes. Forgetting all inhibitions, I hollered for heavenly help: *God! You made this mountain! I'm gonna die unless You do something quick! H-e-e-e-l-p!*

I didn't even have time to close with a proper amen. About six feet from the lift line, my ski tips crossed each other, and I landed in a heap, sprawled facedown before a gawking crowd. I stopped so abruptly that I have no recollection about how it felt. I do remember lying there and wondering, *Am I still alive?* Then I heard a stranger's voice say, "Are you all right?"

I wiggled one arm and then the other. I stretched one leg and then the other. Everything felt okay physically. But my pride...oh, the pain. At least I could have broken a leg after putting on a show like that for my audience. But noooo, my body was intact. I desperately wanted to stay there, my face imbedded in a snow bank, but the lack of bodily injury gave me no excuse.

"Wow—that was some ride," said another stranger as I struggled to my feet, avoiding the onlookers' stares.

"Yeah, a real rush," I said. "Want me to show you how it's done?"

I've dared to snow ski twice since that incident nearly 30 years ago. It just doesn't work for me. I'm a liability, a hazard to the bunny hill innocents. My high school experience scarred me for life, I'm afraid. Yep, that's the problem—I'm afraid. And fear of being killed or of maiming someone else on the ski slope has held me back from enjoying the sport with my family. I tell them that someone has to guard our family's lunch cooler in the lodge, and I'm happy to volunteer.

Some readers will empathize completely. You too are happy sipping hot chocolate while babysitting the lunch cooler. Others won't relate at all. Careening down a mountain slope at breakneck speeds brings sheer delight. You go, girl! But be honest. Do you have a hidden fear that paralyzes you in a different way?

Perhaps someone has invited you to sing in public. You'd love to

oblige, but the mere thought of performing sends shivers up your spine, so you refuse the invitation.

Maybe a woman in your church has been trying to establish a meaningful friendship with you, but you've experienced the pain of rejection once and don't want to feel it again. Rather than make yourself vulnerable, you hide behind your busyness or communicate with her in shallow terms only.

Maybe your husband is abusing you. If you leave him, you won't have a home or source of income. You desperately want help, but fear of reprisal or of being unfairly criticized by others prevents you from telling anyone about your pain.

Perhaps a certain behavior or addiction—overeating, pornography, or perfectionism—holds you captive. You realize your need to escape its grip, but that requires change, and change can be scary. Rather than moving from fear to freedom, you remain mired in the muck. Fear has locked you into position and declared, *You're not goin' anywhere, sister.*

Break Free!

Some folks think they can escape fear's grip on their lives by gaining control of their circumstances. They work harder, play harder, and pray harder, trying to manipulate people and events so they can feel comfortable and predict outcomes. Unfortunately, that doesn't work.

Bruce Larson points out the uselessness of this approach: "We think we can get our lives organized to the place where fear is eliminated. The fallacy here is that we believe we are in control and that by our efforts we can manipulate almost everything around us: family, friends, even circumstances. Obviously, we can't."³

Some people try to escape by blaming others for their fear-filled outlook. Rather than assuming responsibility for their attitudes, they blame their parents for raising them incorrectly, they blame their bosses for being too demanding, and they blame the authorities for not doing a good job of protecting them.

I heard about a woman who cared for her 92-year-old mother. As her mother's health deteriorated and she required more assistance, the daughter became frustrated. "Why didn't you look after yourself when you were younger? If you had, you wouldn't have all these problems now," she said.

The daughter's accusation wasn't true. Her frustration was actually based not in irritation with her mother, but in her own fear of the unknown. Anxious thoughts haunted her day and night. *How much medical attention will my mother require as her health declines? How will that affect my other responsibilities? Will my mom's finances cover her expenses? What will life be like without her? Will I be in her situation someday?* Rather than face her fear and assume responsibility for her attitudes and actions, the daughter blamed her mother.

Some folks try to escape their fear by drinking alcohol or taking drugs. They party hearty, enjoying temporary relief but waking up with a big fat headache in the morning, or they find themselves stuck in addictions that land them on a dead-end road. These supposed solutions don't work, so what does?

I believe that the key to unlocking fear's chains is a proper understanding of the character of God. I'm not talking about an understanding based merely on our feelings or what we think is true—we might think we're right but in reality be terribly deceived by society's subtle teachings. I'm talking about understanding God's character as He's revealed it in the truth of His Word. His own declarations and the accounts recorded by the writers of long ago comprise the only trustworthy revelation of who God is.

First John 4:16-18 shows more clearly than any other passage the relationship between fear and the character of God:

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence

because we are like Christ here in this world. Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.

Some commentators say these verses teach that those who have a personal relationship with God no longer need to dread standing before Him on the judgment day. He loves us and has forgiven our sins; therefore, we have confidence before Him. If we fear standing before Him on the judgment day, we haven't come to know and understand His love and forgiveness.

But do these verses apply to us and the fears we face while living here on earth as well? Indeed they do. Think about it for a moment...

God is love. Nothing can alter that fact. Love is who He is, and everything He does or allows throughout all of eternity flows from this aspect of His character. If you're like me, you find the full implications of this truth challenging to grasp.

Our finite minds tend to compare God's love to the earthly love we've known. That's like comparing elephants to daisies, especially if we've been rejected by a lover or abused or ignored by our earthly father. They share nothing in common. Human love can be warm and wonderful, but it can sometimes be conditional or controlling. It often disappoints. It often brings pain. But God's love is perfect in every way.

Accepting the truth of God's perfect love by faith, regardless of our feelings, enables us to find rest in His care and sovereignty. Whatever happens, He won't abandon us. He won't hang us out to dry. He won't turn His back on us when we need Him most. That knowledge gives us the courage to face our fears. "Perfect love expels all fear."

God's Word is filled with promises about His constant love. Romans 8:38-39 is just one example:

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels

can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The apostle Paul wrote these verses, and he did so with authority born of experience. During his ministry, he endured court trials, whippings, imprisonment, snakebites, shipwreck, and more. But regardless of what happened, he remained convinced of God's steadfast love for him. In the midst of our frightening circumstances, can we say, as Paul did, that we're convinced of God's love for us?

The Scriptures teach us that God's love for us measures far beyond our wildest imagination. I remember, as a little girl in Sunday school, singing an action chorus that described this love—as wide as the ocean, as high as the heavens, as deep as the deepest sea. Growing up on the prairies left me with little firsthand knowledge of the sea, so I sang those words with an academic understanding only. Unfortunately, that's also how I understood God's love for most of my adult life—merely academically. Thankfully, God is changing that.

Today my family lives on Canada's west coast, and the sea brings me a constant visual reminder of the great expanse of God's love. One of my favorite places to visit is Tofino, a town on the west side of Vancouver Island. Its surfing, fishing, and sandy beaches beckon tourists from around the world.

Our family once spent Thanksgiving in Tofino. Gene and I sat for hours on a rocky point, talking and gazing across the horizon. We saw nothing but water—endless in its expanse.

Could we measure the sea as it stretched to the far horizon and beyond? No. Could we gaze heavenward and measure the distance between the sky and where we sat? No. Could we measure the

water's depths and touch the ocean floor? No. Such is the Father's love for you and me. Beyond measure. Fathomless.

God is love. Can we trust Him with our lives? Can we trust Him even when we don't understand our circumstances? Can we trust Him when others abandon us? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes. Because God is love and He loves us, we can trust Him at all times. Perfect love casts out fear.

Janice's Story

Janice's life proves that understanding God's love can break fear's chains. She grew up in a home where her parents professed to be born-again believers, but life behind closed doors was anything but pretty. Spankings with a leather strap left red welts on her arms and buttocks. Her mother, a bitter woman, often exploded in angry fits and yelled, "I wish you'd never been born!" Her folks provided for her physical needs, but they rarely hugged or kissed her. She felt like an inconvenience. She convinced herself that she could never please her parents, regardless of how hard she tried.

After high school graduation, Janice left home believing she was unlovable. She sought to dispel those feelings through relationships with guys. Each relationship was marred by inappropriate physical involvement and eventually broke up. Her heart was left tattered; her hopes for finding true love, shattered.

JESUS LOVES ME

ANNA B. WARNER

*Jesus loves me! this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.*

*Jesus loves me! He who died,
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.*

*Jesus loves me! loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From His shining throne on high,
Comes to watch me where I lie.*

*Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
If I love Him, when I die
He will take me home on high.*

*Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.*
