

*Graceful Beginnings Series*

for New-to-the-Bible Christians

*The Walk from*

# **FEAR TO FAITH**

Trusting God with Your Fears

(A Study of Old Testament Women)

MELANIE NEWTON

# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1: Got Fear? Trust Your God.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2: God Is Bigger than Your Weaknesses.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3: God Is Stronger than Your Enemies.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>4: God Is Good in the Waiting .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5: God's Riches Meet Your Needs.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>6: Trusting God? Tell It! .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Applying Faith To Fear.....</b>	<b>73</b>

# Introduction

## GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS

The *Graceful Beginnings Series* of Bible studies are specifically designed for anyone new to the Bible—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The lessons are basic, introducing you as an inexperienced Christian to your God and His way of approaching life in simple terms that can be easily understood.

Just as a newborn baby needs to know the love and trustworthiness of her parents, the new Christian needs to know and experience the love and trustworthiness of her God. *A Fresh Start* is the first book in the series, laying a good foundation of truth for you to grasp and apply to your life. The other books in the series can be done in any order.

## SOME BIBLE BASICS

Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your life with Christ. The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God's promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ's coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God's promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as "before Christ" and the New Testament as "after Christ."

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Ephesians 2:8 refers to the New Testament book of Ephesians, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, and verse 8 within that 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Printed Bibles have a "Table of

Contents” in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps also have a contents list by book and chapter.

The Bible verses highlighted at the beginning of each lesson in this study are from the New International Version® (NIV®) unless otherwise indicated. You can use any version of the Bible to answer the questions, but using a more easy-to-read translation (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV) will help you gain confidence in understanding what you are reading. You can find all these translations in Bible apps.

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

## **OLD TESTAMENT SUMMARY**

About 1700 years after God created everything, He sent judgment on a rebellious race through a worldwide Flood. He later separated the nations with different languages and scattered them from Babel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were founding fathers of the Hebrew people. Sold into slavery, Joseph became a powerful foreign leader. The Israelites developed into a great nation for ~400 years in Egypt, until their deliverance from bondage. Then Moses took the people across the Red Sea and taught them God's Law at Mt. Sinai. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land after a 40-year trek in the wilderness because of unbelief.

During the transition toward monarchy, there were deliverer-rulers called "Judges," the last of whom was Samuel. The first three Hebrew kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—each ruled 40 years. Under Rehoboam, the Hebrew nation divided into northern and southern kingdoms, respectively called Israel and Judah. Prophets warned against worshipping the foreign god Baal. After the reign of 19 wicked kings in the north, Assyria conquered and scattered the northern kingdom. In the south, 20 kings ruled for ~350 years, until Babylon took the people into captivity for 70 years. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led the Jews back into Jerusalem over a 100-year period. More than 400 "silent years" spanned the gap between Malachi and Matthew.

The 39 books in the Old Testament are divided into 4 main categories:

- “THE LAW” (5 books)—the beginning of the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people; God giving His Laws to the people that made them distinct from the rest of the nations.
- “HISTORY” (12 books)—narratives that reveal what happened from the time the people entered the Promised Land right after Moses died until 400 years before Christ was born.
- “POETRY & WISDOM” (5 books)—take place at the same time as the history books but are set apart because they are written as poems and have a lot of wise teaching in them.
- “PROPHETS” (17 books)—concurrent with the books of history and, except for Lamentations, reflect the name of the prophet through whom God spoke to the nation of Israel.

### ELEMENTS OF EACH LESSON

This book covers the lives of several Old Testament women. Each lesson begins with a brief history of a particular Old Testament time period and then covers the lives of 1-2 women who lived then. The lessons are arranged chronologically following the simple Old Testament timeline below.

Historical Period	Years BC	Woman Studied
The Patriarchs	2100 - 1800	Sarah
Israel in Egypt / the Exodus	1800 - 1450	Jochebed, Miriam
Conquest of the Land	1450 - 1400	Rahab
Kingdom	850 - 800	Zarephath Widow Prophet’s Widow Shunammite Woman

Work through each lesson, reading the scripture passages that tell each woman’s “Story.” You’ll be encouraged at the end of each lesson to “Journal Your Faith Story,” writing something that relates to what’s learned in the lesson. Your faith walk is your story, your biography of God’s faithfulness to you and your response back to Him. A “Faith in Action” teaching session follows each lesson and gives you help in taking action so you can walk from fear to faith. Every “Faith in Action” section is followed by a “Reflect” time to consider how you will respond.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

While you can work through these lessons as a personal study, this topic is great for small groups. Share the following suggested guidelines with the group members to maximize your discussion group experience.

- ✓ Set aside some time each week to do the study questions so that you will get to know God better.
- ✓ Consistently attend whether your lesson is done or not. You will learn from the discussion.
- ✓ Respect each other's insights. Listen thoughtfully. Share your own insights, but do not dominate the discussion.
- ✓ Celebrate unity in Christ by avoiding controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues and denominational differences.
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality of whatever is shared within the group.

Enjoy your small group discussion and learn from one another. As you journal parts of your story and share that with your group members, you will have a greater connection with each other. And, you'll have more reason to praise our ever-faithful God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years. A small group is a great place to share your "Walk from Fear to Faith."

### **Suggested Leader Guide for Group Discussion:**

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what He wants you to know through the lesson.
2. Work through the lesson together, reading the Bible verses and discussing the questions.
3. Discuss THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH questions, read the summary paragraph and say the four truths together.
4. Share your response to the JOURNAL YOUR FAITH WALK section.
5. Read through the FAITH-IN-ACTION section. Find podcasts and videos expanding the teaching at [melanienevton.com/podcasts](http://melanienevton.com/podcasts). REFLECT on the teaching.
6. Pray for the group members – about their fears and decisions to trust God in them. Thank God for His grace and His love for you.
7. Remind each person to do the next lesson before the group meets again.

## THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH

Jill Briscoe once said, “Women are a fear-driven, performance-oriented species.” She’s right. Fear is an ever-present emotion with us. Real fears and imagined fears. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? No!

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. Yet, fear can take root in us and cause us to give way to panic and hysteria. God knows this about us. I am so grateful for that! I can remember times in my life when something happened suddenly that caused that creepy-crawly feeling down my back. A car cutting in front of me sending me to change lanes quickly, hoping there wasn’t an 18-wheeler occupying that lane. One night, a feeling of fear my oldest daughter’s safety hit me in the chest. I quickly prayed for her protection. Of course, she didn’t answer her phone when I called so I had to wait until the next morning to hear from her that she was okay. What. A. Scary. Night.

Thankfully, some wise mentors have taught me to trust God all the time, especially when I am afraid. One such wise woman, Vickie Kraft, drilled a couple of verses into my heart and mind.

*“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (Psalm 56:3-4)*

This wise friend said, “Melanie, the psalmist doesn’t say, ‘If I am afraid.’ He says, ‘**When** I am afraid.’ When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear.”

If fear alerts us to danger so we will take action against it, the most significant action is to not give into fear but to trust God instead. That’s the walk from fear to faith. And we can experience God’s faithfulness through any trouble, danger, suffering, or pain that we face. God is faithful always.

And, in His faithfulness, our God doesn’t leave us guessing as to what this walk from fear to faith looks like. In His enduring, living Word, He has recorded examples for us to follow—women of the past who put their hope in God, did what was right, and did not give way to fear (1 Peter 3:5-6). The writer of Hebrews 11 gave us specific examples who chose to live by faith in the midst of terrifying circumstances.

So, in this study, we are going to look at their lives—these Old Testament women who learned to trust in God’s faithfulness and goodness. They were ordinary females with the same emotions and tendencies to panic that we have. Each one of these women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over and over to millions of eager listeners. You might be surprised how many times the scriptures refer to them actually telling their story in one form or another. You’re going to get to know it as you get to know them. It’s a connection with real women. As we study their lives, we’ll see an ever-faithful God in action, a faithful God whose character never changes.

God is as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to them. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can’t see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid. Trust is faith. Faith is confidence in God—His existence, His character, and His faithfulness to those who place themselves in His care.

*That’s the “Walk from Fear to Faith” — learning to trust God whenever we are afraid.*

As we join these Old Testament women moving from fear to faith, we will see consistent truths that we can apply to our lives today in our faith walk. In every case, we know that God loved her. He knew what was going on in her life. He was able to do something about it. During her faith walk, a loving God said “no” to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways.

Likewise, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...

- #1 God loves me.
- #2 God knows what is going on in my life.
- #3 God can do something about it.
- #4 I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

Count on these truths and live each day believing they are true. It’s going to be a great journey. And, I’m so glad to be walking beside you!

*Melanie Newton*





# Got Fear? Trust Your God

*“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere man do to me?” PSALM 56:3-4*

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast [“Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith”](#) before doing this lesson to get some background for the whole study.

*Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you through this lesson.*

## THE GIFT OF FEAR

*You know that feeling. The pit in your stomach, pounding of your heart, and rush of your thoughts as you go from just the possibility of a job loss to starving and being homeless on the streets—all in a matter of seconds. Gripped by fear, although an imagined one.*

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. It has a purpose. It tells us to take precautions, to be wise in our dealings with strangers and strange situations. We need to think of it as a gift.

We know fear has a dark side as well. Bible teacher Jill Briscoe has often said, “Women are a fear-driven, performance-oriented species.” Just watching the daily news can panic us. But, what did she mean by fear-driven? Why would fear drive us? And, what does fear drive us to do?

Women in general are created with a nesting instinct, a need for security and stability, and a desire to control our environment in order to create that security for us and for those we love. Our American way of thinking is this: we can fix it—whatever “IT” is. When we cannot fix it, we panic.

Fear can be real or imagined. For me, a real fear is meeting a snake in my woodsy yard while gardening. I know they are there so I carefully do everything I can to avoid interaction with them.

I experienced an imagined fear as my youngest daughter was growing up. That fear manifested itself in ongoing nightmares about her being kidnapped or molested. She was never threatened that way, but she was friendly and outgoing. I guess I thought she was more vulnerable than my older, more cautious daughter. When that young daughter became a strong teen girl who was daily hockey-checking her older brother into the wall as they met each other in the hallway, those nightmares stopped. I guess my subconscious recognized that she could handle herself.

*Consider examples of both real fears and imagined ones in your life.*

Fear is an ever-present emotion with most women—real fears as well as imagined ones. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? No!

Our faithful God understands this about us.

**Read Psalm 56:3-4.**

*Write out these verses in the space provided below.*

*Reading back over the verses, underline the phrases that tell you what to do when you are afraid.*

Notice that David doesn't write, "If I am afraid." He says, "**When** I am afraid." Fear will happen.

God gave us the emotion of fear. It was given with a purpose—**to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it.** Yet, sudden fear

can cause us to be terrified. We can let fear take root in us so that we give way to panic and hysteria. Does that ring any bells with you? Are you prone to hysterics?

God knows this about us. When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do that is our **walk from fear to faith**.

## TRUSTING A FAITHFUL GOD

“When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We become people who feel, ‘I don’t know if that can work. I don’t know if I can get through this.’ When we look at the Scriptures and begin to...see how God empowered normal average people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and strengthens us and gives us courage that we didn’t know we had.” (Steve Hixon, pastor)

Because God understands this tendency to fear and panic, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write to us women in 1 Peter 3:3-6 words that strengthen us and give us courage we didn’t know we could have.

**Read 1 Peter 3:3-6.**

*What does God consider to be great worth in His sight (verse 4)?*

Although the focus of this passage is a marriage relationship, the principles relate to any woman’s character (“inner self”), especially the qualities of a GENTLE and QUIET spirit that are precious in God’s sight. These enable a woman to “do what is right and not give way to fear” (verse 6).

But, you may be thinking, “How can that apply to me? I have a bubbly personality. I’m not naturally quiet.” Before you start feeling put out about these words or afraid that you could never measure up to this, let’s find out what “gentle” and “quiet” actually mean.

*Gentle = Controlled strength*

“GENTLE” does not mean passive, weak, or someone who cannot help herself. Rather, it means “**controlled strength.**” Picture a mother cradling a newborn. She has the physical strength to harm that child but doesn’t because her strength is under control. If you are going to have a gentle spirit, what will you need? Strength under control.

*A woman with a gentle spirit has a humble heart that bows itself before God, recognizes God’s dealings with her as good, and chooses not to be contentious or resistant against Him.*

*Quiet = Tranquility from within*

“QUIET” does not mean whisper, silent, or bland. It does mean “**tranquility arising from within**” and includes the idea of causing no disturbance to others. Think how a woman’s hysterics affect those around her—family, friends, and coworkers.

*A woman with a quiet spirit has an inner peace and calmness in the midst of any circumstance. Have you experienced that kind of peace?*

Gentleness and peace are the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work (Gal. 5: 22-23) in a believer’s life and available to every Christian woman who desires them—that includes you and me! We can have a tranquil spirit in the midst of chaos. See how it fits with the “strength under control” mindset?

***Now that you know the real meanings of these words, are you more likely to desire these qualities? Why?***

***Why do you think these qualities in a woman would be so precious – of great worth – to God?***

**Read these verses again.**

*"For this is the way the holy women of the past who (1) put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful...like Sarah...You are her daughters if you (2) do what is right and (3) do not give way to fear." (1 Peter 3:5-6, NIV)*

***In the verses written above, underline the three choices women can make—identified by (1), (2), and (3).***

Peter identifies these examples for us as "holy women of the past." The word "holy" means set apart for God's special use. These women are holy because they had learned to trust in God when they were afraid. As holy women, these women were beautiful in God's eyes (regardless of their outward appearance, age or societal status). This beauty attributed to them by God Himself was based on three choices they made ("used to make themselves beautiful") that every woman can also make:

- ✓ Choice #1: **You can put your hope in God**—in God and His Word rather than the unreliability of ourselves or others.
- ✓ Choice #2: **You can do what is right**—according to God's way of approaching life, not the world's way, especially those cultural practices that go against God's Word.
- ✓ Choice #3: **You can choose to not give way to fear.** Let's examine this one more closely.

*Choose to not give way to fear*

Choose to not give way to fear. What does that mean?

We know this: God's not saying, "Don't ever feel fear?" God gave us the gift of fear as a normal human emotion designed to alert us to danger so we can take action against it. He's saying, "Here's why you don't have to be terrified and paralyzed by your fear." We are to face our troubles without panic and hysteria. We are to TRUST GOD—in whom we have put our hope and by whose Word we are taught to do what is right.

***Have you ever felt terrified? How did you respond?***

God says that having a gentle and quiet inner spirit will make it easier for us not to get so terrified and stay that way.

***What's harder for God: rescuing us from desperate circumstances or developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?***

Did you select the “developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?” I agree because it involves our cooperation! Is it too difficult for Him? No! A humble, peaceful heart makes it easier for us to face troubles without panic and hysteria and to choose to trust in the faithfulness of God.

We have a faithful God. That's not imaginary. In 1 Peter 3, Sarah represents several other everyday women who lived in Old Testament days who put their hope in God and found Him worthy of their trust. This was their walk from fear to faith. What is that?

## **THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH**

In the Bible, “walk” refers to following a certain course of life or conducting oneself in a certain way. It's your daily life. How you choose to live daily. What motivates you. What guides you. What decisions you make in how you will respond to life. Will your daily walk follow God's way of approaching life or the world's way? Your walk is your choice.

For the purposes of this study, your choice involves moving away from fear and toward faith. Most of us have a pretty good understanding of fear in our lives. But, what is faith? God defines that for us Himself through the writer of Hebrews.

**Read Hebrews 11:1.**

***What is faith?***

**Read Hebrews 11:6.**

*What must one believe about God?*

Did you notice that faith is related to confidence? Confident hope and confident assurance that what we believe is true. That confidence is in the fact that our God exists and is good to anyone who seeks Him. This confidence pleases Him. Hebrews 11 continues to relate the lives of men and women who had this confidence in God.

**Read the following verses. In each, who chose faith in God over giving way to fear?**

- Hebrews 11:11—
- Hebrews 11:23—
- Hebrews 11:31—

**Read Hebrews 11:35 (first half of verse).**

*By faith, what did these women receive?*

These are the women who are our examples of choosing faith in God over giving way to fear. Old Testament women.

### **CONNECTING WITH OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN**

You may have very little knowledge of the Old Testament so these women may be strangers to you. Even though these women lived years ago, they were still women like we are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes,

including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day!

At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and maybe more. They wore beads, earrings, and anklet bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They faced invading enemies, sick family members, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices.

These were **EVERYDAY WOMEN**, just like we are.

*As women in general, what kind of life experiences for them might have been the same as your own life experiences?*

*What kinds of fears did these women face that you may also face?*

Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them, and to know their God who is also our God—an **EVER-FAITHFUL** God whose character never changes.

They knew Him by the personal name *Yahweh* (YAH-weh). In our English translations, it is usually written as LORD in capital letters. In the Old Testament, you’ll find the phrase “the LORD your God” or “the LORD our God” at least 500 times. Every time, that phrase is emphasizing, “We have a personal God. His name is *Yahweh*.” It’s the



name by which God wished to be known and worshiped in Israel and by Israel, and it means, "I am." This name expressed His character as **constant, dependable and faithful**.

Jesus applied God's name "I am" to Himself (John 4:26; 8:59). Those listening knew he was declaring Himself to be God. So, the ever faithful, promise-keeping God of the Old Testament is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament and forever.

We still have a personal God.

## **THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH**

**Read John 14:27 and 16:33.**

*What does Jesus promise to you?*

He is with you through any trouble. You can trust Him. Our God is trustworthy!

*What might be holding you back from trusting Him whenever you are afraid?*

"When we experience anxiety or fear, the enemy can try to use it as an opportunity to make us feel guilt or shame. That's when we pause and ask God for help, knowing He understands and never condemns us." (Holley Gerth, "Fear Not," *Homelife Magazine*, March 2016)

## **JOURNAL YOUR FAITH STORY**

*Describe a problem in your life (current or past) where you have needed to make a choice to do right, but the possible consequences have filled you with fear. What have you learned about trusting God and living by faith in that area?*



## “EMBRACE 4 TRUTHS ESSENTIAL TO FAITH”

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast [“The Walk from Fear to Faith-4 Essential Truths”](#) or watch the [Session 1 video](#). Use the section below as a listener guide.

When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We think to ourselves, “Nothing’s going to work. I don’t know if I can get through this.” But, when we look at the Bible and begin to see how God has empowered everyday people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God to strengthen us and give us courage that we didn’t know we had. Our examples are Old Testament women. As we join these Old Testament women on their faith walk, we will see consistent truths that we can embrace and apply to our lives today in our WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH.

*Truth #1: God loves you*

*John 3:16; John 16:27; Romans 5:5*

You are part of that world that God loves. And, as a believer in Jesus, God the Father loves you and pours out His love into your heart so you can experience His love.

*Truth #2: God knows what is going on in your life*

*Matthew 6:31-32; Psalm 139:1-10*

God is everywhere and knows everything. So, God knows what is going on in your life. He knows your needs and how best to meet them.

*Truth #3: God can do something about it*

*Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37*

Is anything impossible for the Lord? The answer is, NO! Our God is all-powerful. He is capable of doing anything He chooses to do that is in agreement with His character and His purposes.

Truth #4: You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do

*Psalm 119:68; Proverbs 3:5*

The Bible says that God is good, and what He does is good. It's a choice to trust God and bank on His goodness.

As we study each of these women—our mentors, we'll see that during her faith walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You and I can do the same.

When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move  
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through  
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You  
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!  
(Lauren Daigle, "Trust in You")

Dear friends, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But, in any and all situations, you can embrace these truths, making them personal...

- #1. God loves me
- #2. God knows what is going on in my life
- #3. God can do something about it
- #4. I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do

*You can count on that!*

#### REFLECT

***What is causing you fear today? What are your choices for acting on that fear? Apply the 4 truths to your situation.***

*Pray about your fears and decisions you are making to trust God in them. Thank God for His grace toward you and His love for you.*