

# MOVING FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM

by Grace Fox

“Go ahead, jump! I’ll catch you – I promise.”

Scared and skeptical, I perched on the high diving board at the local pool and peeked at my swimming instructor treading water below. Taking the plunge from that altitude seemed downright stupid from my eight-year-old viewpoint. My tiptoes curled around the end of the board, my fingers coiled around the handrail, and my heart *ka-boomed* with an intensity new to me.

“C’mon, you can do it. Don’t be afraid,” he said.

*Don’t be afraid?* I thought. *You must be kidding.* A what-if list gripped my imagination: *What if you look away at the exact moment I jump? What if my feet slip and I lose my balance? What if I belly-flop? What if my classmates laugh at me?*

Four decades have passed since that knee-knocker. I recall it, and countless others, from my childhood as vividly as though they happened this morning. To my dismay, reaching adulthood didn’t mean outgrowing my fears. Rather than enjoying freedom, I began wrestling with giants such as the fear for my children’s well-being, of financial insecurity, of moving beyond the ghosts of my past, and the biggie – the fear of an unknown future.

## Facing an Unknown Future

Life can change in a heartbeat. The phone rings, a friend emails, or a stranger comes to the door, and the news they deliver throws us onto a path we’d never envisioned. The future, once bright and seemingly secure, now hovers like a scary storm cloud.

Sometimes we’re nestled in our comfortable schedule and surroundings when God nudges. “Get up,” He says, “I have a task for you.” Fear is our first impulse: *What happens if I fail? What if nothing works out as I think it should? What if everyone thinks I’m crazy for doing this?* The future, once warm and inviting, now appears cold and intimidating.

Most women can relate to the fear of the unknown. Some allow it to paralyze them. Sadly, these gals never discover the joy of living life in the freedom and fullness God intends. Others respond with courage and confidence. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was one such woman. When a heavenly stranger knocked on her door and delivered a message that marked her for a potentially deadly future, Mary focused not on her circumstances but on the character of God – His faithfulness, power, and kindness – in the midst of them (Luke 1:46-55). Doing so enabled her to rise above the frightening what-ifs and embrace God’s purpose for her life.

I’ve recently found huge encouragement in Mary’s example. More than two years ago, my husband and I began sensing a major change coming. We’d enjoyed involvement in a year-round Christian camping ministry for nearly a decade, but our growing restlessness told us to pray and watch for something new.

That “something new” has finally arrived. It’s much different, and much riskier, than anything we’d expected. It involves assuming national leadership of a new ministry, moving to a different location, and finding reasonably-priced housing in an unreasonably-priced market. It means having to double our monthly donor base, establish a network among pastors and church leadership across our nation, and travel overseas at least twice yearly to encourage missionaries and their families. It also means leaving our 20-year-old daughter behind if she chooses not to move with us.

Fear sometimes taunts me as we sort and pack our belongings in preparation for moving. *What if we can’t find housing? What if we can’t find enough donors? What will happen to our daughter if she stays*

*behind – will she be okay?* Entertaining anxious thoughts feeds my fear and leaves me feeling like the eight-year-old on the diving board, afraid to jump despite my teacher’s skill and his promise to catch me. But focusing on the character of God builds courage and confidence. And that’s the key, I believe, to moving from fear to freedom.

### The Key to Freedom

It’s easy to question the sanity of our plans, especially when I consider the cost of suitable housing. It’s easy to get scared when I think about the commitment required for building a national ministry from the ground level. And I shudder at the thought of leaving our daughter behind.

Fear-filled moments hit me when least expected, and I’m instantly forced to make a decision: how will I respond? Will I focus on them and allow them to control or paralyze me? Or will I choose to believe that God is exactly who He says He is, and fill my mind with the truth of His Word?

God’s Word contains 366 references that tell us to “fear not” and “be not afraid,” and for good reason. Life is filled with courage-testing situations, but in the midst of them, God promises that His presence goes with us and He’ll fight our battles for us. He reassures us that He knows our needs even before we ask, and that He’s an able provider. If the worst case scenario happens and the future brings negative circumstances, His unending wisdom and power is able to turn bad into good. Best of all, His Word tells us that He *is* love and says that nothing can separate us from His love for us.

Sometimes, from our human perspective, the future looms like a storm cloud on the horizon. Our employer speaks of impending layoffs, our children make unwise choices that guarantee negative consequences, or disease strikes our spouse. We view the future through scared and skeptical eyes. At those times, fear plays havoc in our hearts if we focus on our feelings.

Moving from fear to freedom requires moving our focus from those feelings to the fact of who God is. Believing that God is who He says He is – faithful and loving – gives us the courage to admit our fear and leap into His waiting arms.

“Don’t be afraid,” He says. “Go ahead, jump! I’ll catch you – I promise.”

Grace Fox and her husband minister with International Messengers in Canada. She’s a popular speaker at women’s events internationally and is the author of the *10-Minute Time Out* devotional series (Harvest House). Her latest release is *Moving From Fear to Freedom: A Woman’s Guide to Peace in Every Situation* (Harvest House). Check her website for more information: [www.gracefox.com](http://www.gracefox.com)  
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