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## INTRODUCTION

In my work within recovery, I've discovered most people struggle with fear. I'm familiar myself with living a fear-based life. I believe the most important journey in life is the journey away from fear. No one should live in the grips of chronic fear, and in this book you will learn how to move from a fear-based life to a faith-based life—a life grounded in the courage and freedom only God offers.

Probably the most universal fears among people are the fears of rejection and abandonment. We fear if people knew us intimately, then they would reject us. It causes us to run our whole lives. We run *to* perfectionism. We run *from* our potential, hiding in false identities. We hide in drugs and alcohol. We hide in pornography. We hide in food and eating disorders. We hide in dysfunctional relationships and codependency. We hide so well sometimes that we can't even find ourselves. We lose touch with our emotions, eventually feeling nothing. We drift from one relationship to the next, never finding our identities or having a strong sense of self-worth. Fear restrains every element of our lives once we begin to run from a false sense of rejection.

But what I've come to realize is that fear in and of itself isn't a bad thing. It's simply a feeling, and it can actually have a positive influence on one's life. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Fear of being incompetent or lacking specific skills shows us our need for others. Fear can cause us to run from something harmful. Children who have a

healthy fear of their parents learn to respect them and listen to their instruction, which will ultimately keep the children safe.

Fear of negative consequences of doing something dangerous or harmful is a good thing. It helps provide boundaries to the personal values we have, keeping us from living in contradiction to what we believe. Fear can be a very healthy motivator if we're thinking about jumping from a tall building, causing us to think twice because we are afraid of heights. Fear stops us in our tracks when we think about doing stupid things.

But there is a dark side of fear that can prevent us from striving for new things and reaching our full potential. This sinister fear controls and cripples, preventing us from achieving goals. Our response to fear is paramount. This is why God gives this reminder throughout the Bible: "Do not be afraid!"

I've heard it said that a coward dies many deaths, where a courageous man dies but once. This has been true in my life. I've allowed fear to prevent me from achieving success in the past. Sadly, it didn't have to be that way. And with God's help, you can face your fears, courageously work through them, and begin to live in freedom.

As I have inventoried my life, I realize the extent of the impact fear has had. Nothing else comes close. Fear dominated my existence, my choices, and my decisions. When I was a child, I had bad nightmares. I would wake up terrified and couldn't go back to sleep. I was afraid of the dark because I heard strange noises that terrified me. I was afraid of death and the dangers of living in an evil world. As I grew older, I became insecure, fearing that I wouldn't be smart enough or good enough. I feared my peers would reject me. Early in life I developed different ways to control my fears. These defense mechanisms would eventually become deeply rooted addictions in my life.

I wouldn't be alive now had I not met God and gone through a recovery process about twelve years ago. This is when God began working in my life, banishing my fears and altering my response to them. A therapist once asked me, "If you're not acting out of your addictions anymore, then why does it still hurt? Why is there still pain at the core?"

What I discovered was that even though I wasn't displaying symptoms of fear, deep down I still felt I wasn't good enough. I felt inadequate as a man. I was a poser, fearing my exposure as an incredibly flawed human being was imminent. The fear of being known and judged, and then coming up short, terrified me. But slowly, over time and with the help of wonderful people, I was able to establish a new foundational voice in my life, making the transition I pray all of you who read this may discover.

The definition of courage isn't a life absent of fear. Rather, it is doing what you are afraid of doing despite the presence of fear. One of the fundamental skills of recovery is learning to implement the principle of replacement. When we abandon our negative stifling responses to fears and replace them with courageous responses, we live life to the fullest.

In the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, Russell Crowe's character experiences severe hallucinations due to schizophrenia. Eventually, he is able to make tremendous strides toward living a relatively normal life because of the great support of the people who love him. He comes to realize his disease will always be present, but he learns to recognize and then ignore his hallucinations, preventing them from interfering with his life. This, in essence, is the purpose of this book: to take an honest look at our fears, to acknowledge them, and to walk forward with courage, altering our responses to them.

When we embrace fear, we acknowledge the struggle to live in a world where we have the responsibility to make choices. We all live with the knowledge that we're going to die, that death is imminent. How we respond to fear will determine the freedom and joy we experience in living. In the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, the character Red, played by Morgan Freeman, is released from prison—a place that has been his home for most of his life. Things were manageable in the big house, and now that he's free, he is afraid. There is a scene where we hear his inner dialogue: "It's a terrible thing to live in fear. I just want to get back to where things make sense." Red had seen just about every kind of violence and evil in his many years of incarceration. And yet he would rather live in that literal prison than be a prisoner to his internal

fears in the free world. What a powerful statement about the profound effect of fear!

In our journeys to freedom, we face our fears. We need to explore and ponder them. We need to open up and reveal them to God and other supportive individuals. When we speak openly about them, we'll be able to move forward and learn to live in faith. This faith-based life will give us the courage to live as free men and women. Self-liberation is our goal. Our hope is to free ourselves from the negative grip of fear-based lives, walking as liberated men and women who are no longer controlled by fear, but who are living courageously in the freedom that God promises.