

BRAVE WOMAN, MIGHTY GOD

30 THINGS YOU CAN DO

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Chapter One

Calling Out the Lies

Eve

As I rounded the corner, I heard a thud and glanced over to see that one nonfat caramel latte and two almond-milk mochas had tipped over in the passenger seat. I was able to stand them up quickly, but coffee had already escaped from the lids and left a small puddle on the leather seat of my husband's new car.

How could you be so foolish? How could you let this happen? Why are you so irresponsible? I heard a voice sneering inside my head.

Which really weren't questions, but accusations.

No one else was in the car. The voice wasn't what my husband would say to me or about me. The voice wasn't what I would tell any of my kids if they'd spilled. No, I'd say something like, "Oops. No big deal. Here's a napkin. Let's clean up the rest when we get home."

But the voice was one I'd heard before. Growing up, I'd heard similar phrases barked at me whenever I made a mess or a mistake. The person who spoke these words to me clearly wasn't in the car, but the soundtrack from my childhood replayed in my mind, making me doubt my value and worth, making me feel like a bad wife and mom all because the coffee tipped.

Did you notice the words? *Foolish. Irresponsible. You. You. You.* None of which were true. It wasn't my fault the coffee spilled. It

was an accident. I hadn't been foolish or irresponsible. The coffees were in a drink carrier that I had set upright on a flat surface. The cups had lids. They were presumably secure. I transport coffee like this all the time without spilling. And I certainly didn't *let* it happen. But the Enemy's aim is to make me feel like I'm not good enough. He'll do whatever it takes to pepper blame, shame, and guilt into my thought patterns. Which is the opposite of what God does.

I am not the first person that sneaky snake has tried this on. I'm betting he's tried it on you. And his tactics go way back to the very beginning.

God created Eve in His own image. He blessed her and her husband, Adam. He told them to fill the earth and subdue it. He gave them the power to rule over the earth. And then after declaring that everything else He had created was "good," God called man and woman "very good."

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them...

Then God said [to them], "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

(Genesis 1:27, 29–30)

Adam and Eve were living in the actual garden of Eden—paradise. What a life! But then the Serpent found Eve one day and slithered in with an accusation meant to sound like a question,

emphasizing the word *you*.

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

God didn’t say anything like that. But the Enemy was crafty. He twisted words to make them confusing. God had told Adam and Eve they could eat *any* fruit that had seeds (meaning it could create more fruit). I’m picturing a peach—remarkably fuzzy yet edible. How if you slice into it, thick nectar drips out that tastes like summer. I’m picturing cherry trees, orange trees, plum trees—all kinds of trees loaded with bright, sweet, ripe fruit packed with nutrients, all planted in the same magnificent garden.

God never said, “You must not eat from any tree.”

But the seed of doubt was planted in Eve’s mind. She tried to correct Satan: “Wait. God said we can eat fruit from the trees, but...” As she considered the question, she remembered there was one thing God wouldn’t let her do. Maybe she wondered for the very first time, *Why won’t He?* Eve finished her response to the Serpent. “God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’” (verses 2–3).

And then that Serpent had Eve where he wanted her. He tricked her into saying God wouldn’t let her do something—as if God were restricting her, limiting her, keeping her from something good. The Enemy inserted doubt and twisted it around a bit. *Why would God do that? Why, if God loved you, Eve, would He not let you have everything?* But the truth was that God loved Eve so much He gave her and Adam free rein of the garden. There was only one fruit they couldn’t have, out of *all* the fruit they could, and it was only to protect them, not deny them. Kind of like how I won’t let my daughter with a nut allergy eat a brownie with walnuts sprinkled on top. I’m not denying her. I’m protecting her.

Satan has been inserting doubt into our minds and twisting it around ever since. *Oh, you didn't get the scholarship, promotion, engagement ring, deal, bid, shout-out, invitation, better office, prize, bigger portion, first choice? Perhaps it's because you're not good enough, not liked as much, don't have what it takes, the Enemy whispers.*

But God clearly states we are loved, we are His daughters, part of a royal priesthood, mighty warriors, and made in His image. Which means whatever we do or do not win, earn, or achieve, we are still loved. God still considers us royalty. God still empowers us with His might. We can be brave because He is on our side. And we still (and always will) reflect the very image of the living God. So all that mumbo jumbo about “not enough” from the Enemy? It's ridiculous.

But the Enemy is relentless. He gets us alone and starts in with the lies. Big ones. Small ones. Silly ones. Irrelevant ones. Lies that sting like salt in a wound. They sound like questions, but they're actually accusations. *Why didn't you try harder? What makes you think you're qualified? Do you think anyone really wants to hear/see/try/taste that thing you made, that idea you have? Remember how your last relationship/job/attempt worked out? What makes you think it will be better this time? Why didn't you work out more, study longer, be more careful, pipe down, speak out, grow out your bangs?*

The Enemy is a liar. But the Bible is pure truth. It reminds us: There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

None.

Jesus loves you. Always. Forever. Right here. Right now.

The Enemy wants you to lose sight of that.

Don't listen to him.

Whose voice are you listening to today?

God's?

Or the thief's, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10)? The Enemy is lurking, trying to get God's people alone and confuse them about who they are in Christ. Eve had been living her best life, eating delicious fresh fruit daily with the perfect man for her, and then the Serpent came in with his smoke screen of finger-pointing accusations. Next thing you know, Eve was hiding in the bushes, ashamed. How did she go from absolute freedom to cowering behind branches?

She listened to the wrong voice.

Instead of dismissing his lies, she believed the Enemy's accusation that God was keeping something from her.

We, like Eve, get to choose who we listen to. But we have something she didn't. We have Eve's story. And God made sure her story was in the Bible for us to learn from. We know how that snake manipulated Eve into listening to him instead of God. We can learn from her mistake and tell that slippery Serpent that he's a liar and we're not going to listen to his trash talk anymore.

In the car with the spilled coffee, I had to talk myself out of a spiral of negative self-talk and challenge the Enemy. I did it out loud.

"What?" I challenged the Enemy. "I wasn't being foolish or irresponsible. I didn't *let* the coffee spill. Those thoughts, statements, whatever, aren't true. And they have no business in this car or in my head. They are lies."

It felt good to call out the lies. And I felt so much peace.

It takes effort and intentionality to overcome the lies of the Enemy—they're so slippery and sneaky and constant. But God is mighty and empowers us to question the accusations and bravely dismantle the lies. This is what it looks like to follow Paul's instructions to the Corinthians: "We take captive every thought to

make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). We call out the lie for what it is. And we take it down.

.....
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.....

At age sixteen or twenty-six, I would have been mortified by the spill. *How could I let such a thing happen?* My shame would have felt like walking through the dense, gray smog of a smoke bomb, making me feel sick, disoriented, cloudy, muddled, and worthless. And it would have led me to be dishonest about the whole thing. I would have been terrified to tell anyone. I would have sneaked into the house, crept back out with cleaning supplies, and tried to erase any evidence of the spill. I would have kept my mouth shut, allowing the shame to fester where it was trapped inside.

But that day? I carried the coffees inside, took a long sip of my rich mocha, set all the cups on our red kitchen table, grabbed paper towels and some lavender-scented cleaning spray, cleaned up the small spill in the car, came back inside, carried my hubby’s coffee to him in his home office, and told him the whole story.

“You know I’d never say that to you, don’t you?” Brett said as he looked me in the eyes.

“Yup. I do. And thank you for loving me like that.”

“It’s just a car. And just a spill. Thank you for getting me coffee.” Brett held his paper cup up in a toast.

His voice sounded a lot more like God’s, and like truth, and like the voice I want to listen to.

How did I get to this place of recognizing lies and calling them out?

It took a while. And I still don't always get it right.

But the more time I spend with God, talk to Jesus, and read my Bible, the more God teaches me how to distinguish lies from truth, God's voice from the Enemy's. This will work for you too.

You might not get worked up about spilling something. Maybe you worry about what people think of your performance, your home, your outfit, your kids' behavior, or the words you speak. Those are important things to value, but let's do this right.

Eve may be famous for eating the forbidden fruit. But God didn't give up on her then, or ever. After the whole hiding-in-the-bushes incident, God sought Eve out, clothed her, blessed her, and protected her. God never stopped loving her, and that enabled Eve to bravely move forward from that devastating day with the Serpent to become the mother of all mankind, teaching her children to worship God. Our mighty God loves you and me with that same perfect love.

Let's listen to God's loving voice. Make it the loudest one in our heads. He frees us from shame and invites us into an abundant life. Stand up. Lift your head. Take a step forward. Oh, and yeah, tell the Enemy he's a liar.

Call Out the Lies

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them...
God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
(Genesis 1:27, 31)

- What are you focusing on today? The smoke screen the Enemy has put before you? Or the truth of who God created you to be?
- What are some current thoughts you have about yourself?
- Eve learned the hard way that the Serpent likes to whisper lies and accusations. Let's combat the lies that bombard us by speaking out loud the statements below that are backed by Bible verses. If any of the thoughts in the previous question were negative, write one of these verses over it. Maybe make one of these verses your new screen saver or write it on a note card and stick it to your mirror.

I am made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

I am Christ's prized possession (1 Peter 2:9).

I am Christ's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10).

God has plans to prosper me (Jeremiah 29:11).

God promises to never leave me (Hebrews 13:5).

FIND STRENGTH, HOPE, AND RESILIENCE

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"A reminder of how
deeply God loves us
and how intentionally
He chooses us."

- Erica Ligenza Gwynn
host of the *Thrive* podcast



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