

Face the Music (and Your Fears)

After a lifelong battle, musician Alvin Slaughter overcame his fears by confronting his own faulty thinking. Here's how you can do the same.

By the time I was 34 years old, I had seriously messed up my life. I had failed at most of my 16 jobs, fathered two children out of wedlock, was evicted from two apartments and suffered foreclosure on my mortgage. My financial problems led to two declared bankruptcies and an inevitable crisis in my marriage. I had lost a lot.

If you consider closely my ongoing dilemmas in life, you'll observe a pattern. The problem was not that God wasn't big enough or that He'd forgotten me. Neither could I blame the devil or other people for everything wrong in my life. Though the devil and people are sometimes factors that need to be addressed, in this case it was my faulty life pattern I had to ultimately face. In short, I had to face the music.

As a professional singer, the phrase "facing the music" intrigued me. Simply put, it means "to accept responsibility for what you have done." It means owning up to poor choices and patterns of living. For me, it meant admitting that for more than 20 years, my life had been completely gripped by fear. Fears of failure, rejection, my own weakness and not knowing how to confront life's challenges plagued me continually. They affected every area of my life and kept me from success.

My faulty thinking, which continued to feed these fears, was the most powerful negative force that kept me living in a cycle of failure—faulty thinking about myself, about relationships, about life and even about God. Until we are

willing to face the music of our own lack of understanding and wrong opinions, attitudes and actions, we'll live in fear and walk in failure.

What fears do you need to face and overcome? What faulty thinking do you need to confront? Failure is inevitable if we live under the captivity of our own faulty thinking or the wrong opinions others have of us. See if any of the following fear-producing myths have influenced your life. If they have, I challenge you to embrace God's truth and defeat the power of the lie that has affected your level of freedom and success. Consider how your life could be different if you applied God's truth to your life and released His power into every area of living.

Myth: If I Truly Have Faith, I'll Never Feel Afraid

Truth: Yes, you will! Great men and women of faith have felt afraid at times. Besides numerous healthy fears that protect us (e.g., fearing fire), it's evident from the Scriptures that fear is not absent from the lives of godly people. The psalmist declared, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you" (Ps. 56:3, NLT). It was a given. David said he faced times he was fearful, and in those times, he chose to put his faith and trust in God.

What's important is how you react to fear. The apostle Paul asked for the church to pray that he would have boldness when preaching the gospel (see Eph. 6:19-20). Why did he need those prayers? Because he faced fearful situations. Paul endured rejection, physical beating, imprisonment and even death in pursuing his passion. He needed prayer to overcome his fear and to be bold in proclaiming the message of Christ.

When I read that, I had a light bulb moment. Fear doesn't just plague the timid. If someone like the apostle Paul, who had such divine revelation that he wrote much of the New Testament, had to face fear, there is no shame that I (and

you) have to admit to having fears too.

Greatness is not simply determined by accomplishing an incredible goal in life. It's also a result of your determination to face fear and conquer it with faith. Success in life will require that you wade through the raging waters of fear and come to the other side unharmed. God's answer to fear is to give you boldness to both face it and embrace the truth that conquers it.

Myth: I'm Not Worthy of Success

Truth: God says you are! Again, it was David who exclaimed, "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. ... You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head" (Ps. 139:1,5). Incredible! God's blessing was on David despite knowing everything about him. Divine blessing has to represent the greatest success a human being can know. Jesus said He came to Earth "to give life in all its fullness" (see John 10:10). Sounds like success to me!

How many times have you heard people pray, "O God, I'm not worthy of Your goodness"? It sounds humble, but the problem is, it's a myth. The truth of God's Word teaches that Christ made us worthy. Maybe you've thought humility involves putting yourself down so you don't seem too boastful. That doesn't bring glory to God. Giving your testimony of how He's delivered you from fear and empowered you to live a victorious life negates the myth of unworthiness.

Some people have endured physical or emotional abuse by people they trusted or cared about. Their sense of self-worth has been impacted by these very real and destructive experiences. Others may not have succeeded at anything they've tried in life and have resigned to a life of mediocrity. Their sense of unworthiness keeps them from even trying to succeed.

If you can relate to these or other negative experiences that

have given you feelings of being unworthy, I challenge you to embrace the truth of God for your life. He knows you—every move you make, every word, every thought and every failure (see Ps. 139:1-6). Still, He loved you so much that, while you were still in your sin, He gave His life for you. When you say, “I’m not worthy,” you’re telling God, perhaps inadvertently, that you’re more informed than He is. You’re saying that He wasted His time in creating you in His image, and that Christ’s death on the cross to redeem you was a waste of His shed blood.

Reject this myth. Embrace the truth that God has made you worthy of His blessing. Then you’ll be free to enjoy a future in God!

Myth: I Can’t Handle Rejection

Truth: Yes, you can! God’s grace gives you strength to face the disapproval and rejection of others. The apostle Paul was persecuted greatly, and he declared, “For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need” (see Phil. 4:13). He understood that rejection is a part of life and that God gives grace to face it without fear.

I experienced a humiliating episode during gym class one day in grade school. As a chubby, bona fide dork, I dared to walk onto the basketball court, where the cool guys were hanging out and picking teams for a game. I thought this might give me a chance to connect with some of the jocks, and maybe by osmosis some of their “cool” would rub off on me. Instead, the guys ended up picking nine “cool” players—still one short for what they needed—and headed off to the foul line to play their game.

I don’t know if my fear of rejection and my insatiable desire for people’s approval was born that day on the basketball court or if it was just solidified there. I do know that I spent the next 20 years battling low self-esteem and

dedicating my efforts to pleasing people. That painful gym class experience was eventually reflected in many areas of my life, motivating my decisions and actions, molding my relationships with others.

I hated rejection back then, and I hate rejection now. But by the grace of God, I've resolved the issue of rejection in my life. Just because in some people's eyes I may not be the right size, have the right education or be the right color, I absolutely will not be denied the blessings of God.

Self-confidence is useless. It's limited to the extent of what I think of my achievements or myself. God confidence, on the other hand, is everything because in Him there are no limits. You don't have to play head games about who you think you are or what others think about you. When you walk in God confidence, you rely on the full force of the promises of God, knowing that He cannot lie.

When you feel like you can't face rejection, begin to declare the truth of God's promise: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37, NKJV). Rejection is a part of life. If they rejected Jesus, they will reject you at times. You must choose to believe the truth over the myth; then you will conquer the fear of rejection.

Myth: I'm Not a Strong Person

Truth: Just because you're imperfect doesn't mean you're powerless. Even as Christians, we are all imperfect in many ways, but we are becoming stronger as we make right choices to continue growing in our relationships with God. The Bible says that when we are born into the kingdom of God, we are to be like babies who desire the sincere milk of the Word so that we can grow up in our salvation (see 1 Pet. 2:2).

Babies are weak and fragile and must be cared for diligently.

Yet, with time babies grow and become more self-sufficient. As they drink milk and progress to solid food, they develop first into little children, then into active youth, and they finally become healthy adults.

To mature as a Christian, you need to learn how to get up from your “falls” and shake them off to get going again. The Bible teaches us to walk in repentance and to ask for God’s help in every situation. This learning process can’t be avoided; it’s integral to becoming a strong person.

As you dedicate your life to Christ daily, you’ll reap the reward of walking in His strength and growing into maturity as a godly believer. Don’t use the myth of “I’m not strong” to excuse your immature behavior. Determine to grow in Christ and become a strong person.

Myth: I Don’t Know What to Do

Truth: God promises to lead you into all truth by His Spirit (see John 16:13). When you get connected to the source of truth, which is the Holy Spirit, He will reveal to you all you need to know to live victoriously. The Spirit of God is here to reveal Jesus to you (v. 14), and the Bible teaches that Jesus has become our wisdom (see 1 Cor. 1:30).

Of course, if you live independently from God, this myth of “I don’t know what to do” becomes a reality. That’s when fear creates a stronghold in our lives. Many times when faced with fear, we retreat into ourselves. We try to figure everything out and save ourselves. We are not capable of knowing which way to go without the light of God shining on our pathway. It’s possible that the answer to your dilemma may not be inside you; it may come from an outside source.

I don’t know where your answer will be found, but I do know from experience and from the truth of God’s Word that there is always, *always* an answer. And God will always give it to you in time to resolve your most troubling situation. That

assurance prompted the apostle Paul's instructions: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

I challenge you to face the music—and the myths that are defeating your dreams. Confront your fears, acknowledge them and allow your faith in God to make you an overcomer. An overcoming life depends on deepening your relationship with God. Strengthening this divine relationship is the only way you can discover your destiny and be empowered to fulfill it. As you love and worship Him, you learn to live for the purposes of God for your life. And as you step out in faith, you'll find a season of open doors, fulfilled dreams and divine miracles.

Alvin Slaughter *is an award-winning gospel musician, worship leader and inspirational speaker. He is also the author of two books, including his latest, Reinvent Your Life.*

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