

JOYCE MEYER

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR



NEVER GIVE UP!

Relentless Determination to
Overcome Life's Challenges

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Overcome Life's Challenges

JOYCE MEYER



New York Boston Nashville

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INTRODUCTION



More than anything else, I want you to know you can have a deep, intimate, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the very best life has to offer. God is no respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34) and His promises apply equally to everyone. Yes, you can have the very best God offers, but you will have to be determined to never give up until you have succeeded in every area of life.

I believe God has a great purpose for you, and I urge you to not settle for anything less. He wants to bless you and give you a life that will not only thrill you, fulfill you, and bring you deep joy and sweet satisfaction but also challenge you, stretch you, frustrate you at times, and even lead you to moments when you are tempted to give up.

Think of this book as a manual to use as you pursue the best in every area of your life. It will give you the inspiration you need to keep putting one foot in front of the other when you grow weary on your journey and remind you over and over again, in a variety of ways: *You can do it if you never give up.* It will give you strength to soar above life's tests and trials like a majestic eagle, increase your determination, and teach you how to turn adversities into opportunities. It will empower you to persevere, and build your confidence in God's ability to see you through to the achievement of the goals He has given you. It will strengthen your faith in His desire to fulfill the dreams He has put in your heart.

As you walk through the pages of this book, you will become acquainted with amazing people, people who refused to settle for less than the best and whose stories will inspire you and astound

you. With every word you read, I will be cheering you on, reminding you God is on your side, and urging you to never give up.

One of the primary reasons people give up is that they try things, don't succeed, and feel like "a failure." The truth is that we are never a failure unless we give up. When we don't succeed at something, many times we do not have the courage to try again, and we settle for less than we could achieve or enjoy if we would simply keep trying. The fact is, we all have times when things just don't work out the way we hope they will, even though we do our best. We may fail at one thing, or even a few things, but that certainly does not make us a failure in life. I believe these temporary setbacks are part of life and we must experience them in order for us to ever be truly successful. Failing at some things on our way to success humbles us and teaches us lessons we need to learn. For people who never give up, failure is simply the fuel for greater determination and success in the future.

Some of the most successful people in history failed and, instead of being discouraged, refused to give up. For example, consider the following:

- Henry Ford, who invented the automobile, went broke five times before he succeeded in business.
- The great dancer and movie star Fred Astaire took a screen test at MGM studios in 1933. A studio memo reported he was slightly bald, could not act, and could dance a little.
- The family of Louisa May Alcott, the great author who wrote the popular book *Little Women*, thought she should abandon the idea of being a writer and become a seamstress instead.
- A newspaper fired Walt Disney for lack of ideas, and he went bankrupt several times before building Disneyland.
- Enrico Caruso's parents believed a voice teacher who said he had no future in music—he simply could not sing at all. He did not believe the teacher and became one of the most famous opera singers in the world.

- Theodore Roosevelt suffered the deaths of both his mother and his wife on the same day in 1884 before he became a war hero and a very effective president of the United States.
- John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was often asked to not return to churches after preaching in them once. When he preached on the streets, townspeople kicked him out. When he preached in a meadow, people turned a bull loose on him. But later, because he refused to give up, he preached in a pasture and ten thousand people came to hear him.

The story of Abraham Lincoln also amazes me. In the face of many defeats, he had reason to believe there was no way he could succeed in life or be president of the United States. At twenty-two years old, he failed in business. One year later, he ran for the legislature and lost. When he was twenty-four, he experienced a second business failure. At twenty-six, the woman he loved passed away, and he suffered a nervous breakdown the next year. When he was twenty-nine, he lost another political race, and at thirty-four he made an unsuccessful run for Congress. At thirty-seven, he did get elected to Congress, only to be defeated again two years later. At forty-six, he lost his bid for the Senate, and the next year, he failed in his attempt to become vice president. When he was forty-nine, he was defeated for the Senate again. He had four sons, but only one lived to adulthood. But, at fifty-one years of age, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States, and successfully led the country through one of its most difficult periods. Many people would have said, “No way,” but not Lincoln. He never gave up.

In addition to the well-known people who had to persevere, there have been countless others whose names we do not know, but whose failures or mistakes became some of the best-known, best-selling products in the world today.

For example, Ivory soap was never intended to float. It floats because of a manufacturing error—and its buoyancy is the quality that distinguishes it from every other soap on the market.

Similarly, the material used to manufacture Kleenex tissues was originally intended to be used to make filters in gas masks during World War I, but it did not work. It also failed as a cold cream remover. But when someone decided to package and market it in the form of disposable handkerchiefs . . . well, you know the rest of the story.

I believe you are destined to do great things. God created you for a purpose. He has opportunities He wants to give you and assignments with which He wants to entrust you. I'm sure you have realized by this point in your life that you will face opposition as you follow God. People who are called to greatness meet great challenges. He never promised us it would be easy. In fact, He guarantees us adversities in His Word. He also promises to be with us through difficulties, to fight on our behalf, to strengthen us to overcome any obstacle we confront, and to give us the ability to overcome them under one condition—that we never give up.

No matter what comes your way, *refuse to quit*. Before you get started, I want to remind you of a biblical truth to carry with you through the pages of this book and long after you finish it: “God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. *He will never give up on you*. Never forget that” (1 Corinthians 1:9 The Message, emphasis mine).

NEVER

G I V E U P !

CHAPTER 1

NEVER SAY “NO WAY”

“Without the way, there is no going; without the truth, there is no knowing; without the life, there is no living.”

THOMAS À KEMPIS



Have you ever faced a situation and said, “There is no way this can ever be”? Maybe some of these thoughts weigh on your mind:

- There is no way I can handle the pressure at work.
- There is no way I can pay my bills at the end of the month.
- There is no way to save my marriage.
- There is no way my children will ever grow up to be responsible adults.
- There is no way I can keep my house clean and straight.
- There is no way for me to open my own business.
- There is no way I can go back to college at my age.
- There is no way I can lose the weight I need to lose.

I want you to know there is always a way. It may not be easy; it may not be convenient; it may not come quickly. You may have to go over, under, around, or through. But if you will simply keep on keeping on and refuse to give up, you *will* find a way.

I want you to make yourself a promise. Promise yourself that you will never again say, “There is no way.” The truth is, even when there seems to be no way, with God there is always a way. If you are a born-again

Christian, the Spirit of God lives inside of you. All the creativity in the world resides in Him, and because He lives in you, you have access to all that creativity. The Holy Spirit can give you ideas that never occurred to you and show you ways to do things you never thought you could do.

Instead of dwelling on our difficulties, we need to focus more on the fact that God is for us and His power is at work in us. Often, we give up too easily, saying, “This is too hard” or “This is taking too long.” We must stop looking at situations in our lives and thinking, *I really cannot handle this; it’s too much for me. I’ve already tried too many times. I have to accept there is just no way it will ever happen.* Instead, we need to say, “I don’t care whether there seems to be a way or not. Jesus is the Way; His Spirit lives in me; and I will find a way!” God promised He would make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (see Isaiah 43:19).

Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.” He is the way, and He will help you find a way where there doesn’t seem to be one. First Corinthians 10:13 says, “For no temptation . . . has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man . . . but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.” In other words,

God always has a way for us if we will look for it, wait for it, and refuse to give up on it.

I wonder how many times people give up just before a breakthrough, on the very brink of success.

I wonder how many times people give up just before a breakthrough, on the very brink

of success. You can feel the same way for ten years and then suddenly, one day you wake up and everything will change. You don’t feel any different than you have felt any other day. Nothing looks any different than it ever has; nothing appears to be happening, but something does happen; and when you go to bed that night, your dream has finally been fulfilled, the situation you lived in for so long is

finally over, or you finally achieve the accomplishment for which you labored for years.

I know a young woman who was once working at a job she did not particularly like and was single but wanting to be married. Within one month she became engaged and was hired for her dream job. She waited for what seemed an eternity, but at the right time God made a way. God's ways are not our ways, but His way is always best!

God has a plan for you and He has heard your prayers; you may not realize how close you are to your breakthrough. Even if you have to wait three, four, or five more years, if you will keep pressing on, you *will* have the victory you need. Whatever you do, do not give up on the brink of your breakthrough. Do not stop hoping, believing, and trying. Instead, say, “I will never quit; I will never give up; I will never say, ‘No way.’”

THREE KEY ISSUES

I have encountered thousands upon thousands of people over the past thirty years in ministry and I have observed that most people consider three aspects of their lives most challenging and most worth fighting for: health, finances, and family. I have dealt with each of these areas on a personal level over the years and have seen great improvements and victories. If you are willing to persevere through the struggles you face in your health, your family, and your finances, I know you will emerge victorious too.

Never Give Up on Your Health

I'm amazed by the number of people who simply do not feel strong, vibrant, and healthy. I often overhear people telling each other, “Oh, I am so tired”; or, “I would do some of the things I enjoy if I had the energy.” This lethargic approach to life is not God's best for us! God wants us to feel good and have the passion and energy we need to enjoy our lives and do everything He calls us to do. He does not

want us to be too exhausted or depleted to do the things that give us joy or move us forward in His purposes for our lives.

Though some people do suffer with various conditions that must be treated with medication or therapy, many health problems people struggle with are stress related. Other health conditions develop because people do not take care of themselves; they do not eat healthily, drink enough water, exercise regularly, or get enough rest. If they would simply make some lifestyle changes, their health and quality of life would improve dramatically.

In chapter 8, I discuss in further detail the ten-year period during which I struggled with various health problems. I saw many doctors during that time, and all of them told me my problems were stress related. As I learned about nutrition, exercise, living a balanced life, and reducing stress, my health improved remarkably. I feel better today than I felt thirty years ago.

My daughter Sandra has a similar testimony. She felt badly and suffered with health problems for years. Many of her problems resulted from the stress that came with being a perfectionist's perfectionist. After she gave birth to her twins, she had terrible digestive problems, back pain, and other physical challenges to the point that she had to be taken to the emergency room several times. Sandra finally reached a point where she knew in her heart she could be healthy and feel well. She determined to find the causes of her problems and to solve them. Though she had to be diligent and disciplined, she refused to give up on the prospect of good health. As she applied the lessons she learned about nutrition and exercise, and learned how to keep the stress of perfectionism (worry, fear, etc.) from affecting her physically, she began to feel better and gain strength. Now, she feels terrific and is in good health.

I urge you to do everything you can do to improve your physical health. Make the lifestyle changes you need to make to feel better and be stronger and more energetic. If you need to change your eating habits to include more fruits and vegetables and less sugar and fat,

change them. If you need to drink more water and fewer soft drinks, do so. If you need to discipline yourself to sleep a certain number of hours each night, adjust your schedule to accommodate the sleep you need. If you need to exercise more, start exercising more.

In addition, deal with the stress and emotional issues that affect you physically because your mental and emotional state certainly impacts your body. Being a perfectionist may be affecting you, as it did Sandra. Maybe worry is causing your blood pressure to be higher than it should, or perhaps fear or nervousness is affecting your digestive system. Maybe stress and tension are giving you headaches or causing your muscles to stay tight instead of limber. No matter what is affecting you, make sure you seek help for it so it does not make you feel bad or do permanent damage to your body.

If you are tired, lethargic, or simply not feeling well, see your doctor. Find out why you do not feel well and learn what to do about it. Do not settle for poor health when good health is just a few lifestyle changes away. Do everything you can do to feel well and be energetic.

Never Give Up on Your Finances

So many people are trapped in debt these days, struggling to pay their bills at the end of each month, wondering how to build a savings account, and concerned about how to finance their retirement or their children's education.

I remember when Dave and I had to buy clothes for our children at garage sales and drive cars so old we never knew if they would run or not. In the early days of our ministry, we could not afford to stay in hotels when I preached meetings at night, so no matter where we were or how tired we were, we had to drive home. Sometimes we were so exhausted we had to pull over on the side of the road to sleep for several hours before we could continue. I can remember buying canned goods with no labels because they were on sale at the grocery store. I never knew whether I would open those cans to find

peaches, green beans, alphabet soup, or cat food, but the “mystery cans” were so inexpensive I had to try them.

I share these memories to let you know I understand financial hardship. I also know from personal experience, and from seeing God turn around the financial situations of countless others, that you should never give up on your finances. Never allow yourself to believe you will always be in debt or never be able to save money.

Bookstores and libraries are full of resources designed to help you break free from the bondage of debt and become a wise steward of your money. With discipline, determination, good counsel, and enough time, you can eliminate your debt, pay cash for your purchases, make investments, and save for the future. Do not think financial freedom is not possible for you, because it is. It may not be easy, but you can achieve it.

Never Give Up on Those You Love

Before Dave and I married, he asked God to send him someone he could help. When God sent him me, he got more than he bargained for! Because of the abuse in my background, I had serious, serious problems. Trying to be in an intimate relationship with me would have been extremely difficult for anyone, and I am sure many men would have given up. But Dave continued to pray and seek God for ways to help me, even when I acted as though I did not want help. At times, he even wept because he did not know what to do. He has even shared that he often went for a drive in the car to pray and cry, and returned home trusting that God would change me. After a few days, he noticed I had suddenly changed. I had not totally changed, but at least he saw progress and that let him know God was working.

I am so thankful today that God was faithful to Dave and to me. He had to lead me along an arduous path of healing, deliverance, and wholeness. He had to teach me to think differently, to trust people, to allow myself to be loved, and how to love others. He even had

to teach me to be nice because I grew up thinking I had to protect myself, which meant I was often defensive and harsh.

Our journey was not easy, but Dave refused to give up on me, and we both refused to give up on God. Now we have had more than forty years of marriage, and I can honestly say our relationship is better than ever. Though our early years were difficult, we have had many years of happiness and we look forward to many more.

Like Dave, I also had the opportunity to refuse to give up on someone I loved. My oldest son, David, and I were so much alike we could hardly stand each other at times. At one point, he worked in the ministry and the two of us clashed so intensely I finally decided to tell him to find another job. I did not want to fire him, but I did not believe I could endure the conflict that characterized our relationship. I planned to talk to him and let him know his presence in the ministry simply was not working, but God spoke to my heart, *Don't give up on David*.

Over time, David and I learned to get along well. Now he runs our world missions department, has opened eighteen foreign offices for us, and oversees numerous international outreaches. I am very thankful for his good work and glad God told me to not give up on him.

When you are tempted to give up on your loved ones, remember David and me. Dave refused to give up on me, and I refused to give up on David. Whether you are believing for someone you love to become a Christian, change their behavior, leave a bad relationship, stop using drugs, go back to school, come home, or get a job, keep believing change is possible. Do not give up on the ones you love; your patient love and faithfulness may be exactly what they need to make a complete turnaround.

Love never fails. In other words, it never gives up on people. The apostle Paul describes what love is in 1 Corinthians 13 and mentions that love always believes the best; it is positive and filled with faith and hope. While Jesus was on earth, He gave a new commandment to His followers: that we love one another (see John 13:34). I believe walking in love should be the main goal of every Christian.

God is love (see 1 John 4:8) and He never gives up on us. Let's choose to live with that same attitude. Believe in the power of love to change and transform anything and anyone.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

When I think of people who never gave up, I think of my friend Pennie Shephard. Her story is the remarkable account of a woman who experienced a tremendous miracle of God's grace and healing in her life because she was determined to reach her goal.

When Pennie Shephard was thirteen years old, she fell and broke her tailbone. For years after that accident, she lived in chronic pain. When she got out of bed each morning, she felt as though someone had jammed a knife into her back. After she married, there were times her husband had to help her out of bed. She could not stand or sit for long periods of time or bend over to wash her hair in a sink. She slept with an ice pack, or a heating pad, or lots of pillows, but nothing seemed to help. She exhausted every possible avenue of escape from her agony. At times, she was almost completely overwhelmed; at other times, she was depressed by it and thought, *How can I live through one more day?*

Pennie's doctor, Caroline Rogers, diagnosed her with post-trauma arthritis and degenerative disc disease. This caused muscle imbalances, which led to problems in parts of her body where she had not suffered previously. She was trapped in a cycle of pain and suffering that was irreversible—unless, of course, a miracle happened.

Pennie loved God and truly believed He could heal her. She believed every day held the potential for a miraculous healing in her life. So day after day, year after year, she asked God for her miracle.

As Pennie prayed one day, she heard these words in her heart: *Run to your miracle*. Those words did not make sense to Pennie, because she was not a runner and had never been one. She didn't like to run,

and she lived in so much pain she did not even want to try. But when God spoke to her heart, *Run to your miracle*, she committed to do so.

The greatest distance she could think of running was a full-length marathon—26.2 miles! So with her family’s support and her doctor’s permission and offer to act as her trainer, she began the grueling physical and mental training process.

For the next four months, Pennie pushed through the pain to train for the marathon. She kept a strict diet and a rigorous schedule seven days a week, eventually getting up by 3:00 a.m. to get in a long run before a full day of work and family responsibilities. After several months of training, Pennie had no relief from her pain, so she continued to pray about her participation in the marathon to make sure the pain was not an indicator she should stop training. She was determined to pay the price of progress and to not give up. She wanted to be able to stand at the starting line and know she had done everything God asked her to do.

The day of the marathon drew near, but just two weeks before the race, her knee went out. The night before the race, she could hardly walk around her hotel room. She still believed God had spoken to her and felt she had to press through the agony. She was determined to show up at that starting line. She said, “I am going to the starting line even if someone has to carry me to get me there.”

Her husband and daughters, her strongest supporters, wrote scriptures and inspiring messages all over her hands and arms. Before sunrise on marathon day, she literally hobbled up to the starting line, with Dr. Rogers beside her, knowing she was exactly where she was supposed to be. She was going to run to her miracle!

As she stood at the line barely able to walk, she turned to Dr. Rogers and cried, “My back doesn’t hurt! My back doesn’t hurt!” She had not said those words for twenty-eight years. Her knee hurt like crazy, but her back didn’t hurt!

Dr. Rogers suggested they begin the race by walking to warm up and see how the knee responded. About a mile and a half into the race, Pennie told Dr. Rogers, “I think I’m going to be able to run.”

Throughout the whole race, she had much encouragement. A group of friends prayed for her during the seven hours of the race. Her husband and daughters were at the starting line and at regular checkpoints along the way to encourage and support her.

At the fourteen-mile marker, Dr. Rogers and Pennie were thirty-six seconds off the seven-hour pace, which meant a “sweeper” would pick them up and drive them to the finish line if they did not make up the time. But Pennie gave it her all.

At the twenty-three-mile marker, she hurt so badly her daughters began to run with her—one under each arm to help support her. Pennie crossed the finish line in about seven hours.

On our *Enjoying Everyday Life* broadcast, she said, “Before the race, I had always envisioned in my mind that I would cross the finish line and get my miracle. The truth is, I was not healed at the finish line; I did not receive my miracle at the finish line. I got my miracle at the *starting* line. All I had to do was show up. It doesn’t take running a marathon to get a miracle. In my case, it took obedience and commitment.”

Pennie Shephard is a woman who could have said, “No way.” Instead, with God’s help, the support of family and friends, and a “never say no way” attitude, she never gave up. Pennie’s miracle took place in January 2004 and she is still healed today.

GET A GOAL

Right now, I want you to think of an area in your life in which you need to refuse to give up. Come up with a goal—one that will require you to be disciplined and to overcome some obstacles, but one that promises

great reward. It may be as basic as making your bed each morning, or as ambitious as running a marathon or climbing Mt. Everest. It may be to break free from a fear of flying or a fear of public

Get with God and decide what your goal needs to be and what is worth putting your energy into.

speaking, or it may be to overcome a physical handicap or a learning disability. It may be cleaning your house or getting out of debt.

If other people think your objective is too easy, then that is too bad. If it is a legitimate goal for you, then stick with it. If other people think it is impossible, do not allow them to discourage you. Just make sure you and God are in agreement and then go after your goal with everything in you.

You will see as you read this book that rewards await those who overcome. I am praying that God will help you be full of “holy determination”—not some kind of fleshly determination or willpower—but true God-given determination. I encourage you to pray and be determined to be disciplined and diligent in every area of your life, because that is the way you will overcome your obstacles and enjoy your hard-won successes. Take life one day at a time and remember that God has rewards in store for you. Don’t you dare miss them!

BE SMART ABOUT IT

Many people never accomplish their goals because they do not know how to set them. A popular and easy-to-remember acronym that has been successful in helping countless people reach their goals is the word *smart*:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely

Let me elaborate.

Specific: Make sure your goal is as specific and accurate as possible. For instance, don’t simply say, “I want to lose weight”; say, “I want to

lose ten pounds in the next three months. Every time you hear yourself speaking of your goals in vague terms, ask yourself, “What does that mean?” You’ll soon find yourself making comments such as, “I am going to stop watching television at nine-thirty every night and be in bed by ten” instead of, “I need to watch less television and get more sleep.”

Measurable: Goals that are hard to measure are goals that are hard to meet. Before you commit to a goal, decide how you will monitor your progress. For goals involving debt reduction, you can measure your progress with monthly statements. For goals that involve exercise, you can keep track of how many pounds you can lift or how many miles you can run. Whatever your goals are, find ways to measure them, whether that includes a journal, a checklist, a chart, a graph, a spreadsheet, or some other creative way to see how you are doing.

Attainable: Make sure the goal itself is reachable. Don’t have a goal of losing thirty pounds in one week or paying off all your debt in one year—when your debt is more than your annual salary. Choose goals that lie just beyond your reach—not so easy that they don’t challenge you, but not so difficult that they stretch you to the breaking point.

Realistic: I believe in dreaming big dreams and aiming high, but don’t set yourself up for disappointment by trying to reach an unrealistic goal. Assess all the factors that will affect your ability to reach your goals and work within those parameters. Make sure it is realistic, given your health and physical condition, finances, schedule, personal capacity, and other priorities.

Timely: People who set goals without target completion dates rarely accomplish their objectives. Give yourself deadlines by which to accomplish your goals. If you are working toward a goal over a long period of time, consider setting intermediate goals each week or month, to keep you on track.

He Coined the Phrase

You may know of him as one of the most effective political leaders ever to stand on the world stage or as one of the most highly regarded statesmen of all time, but do you know what former British prime minister Winston Churchill suffered before he ever achieved greatness?

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill’s premature birth occurred on November 30, 1874—two months before he was due. He was born into a prominent English family, but his parents had no time for him. His mother did not feed him, but left him in the care of a wet nurse when he was an infant, and with a nanny as he grew older, while she pursued social activities. His father, a busy political leader, never demonstrated much interest in him.

Churchill had a difficult life, certainly one full of challenges, tumult, opposition, and near misses. His parents sent the neglected boy to boarding school as a child. He did not excel academically (except in English and history) or socially. He had a speech impediment (which he never completely lost) and failed to make friends or even get along well with others. Later in life, he told stories about having to dodge cricket balls his fellow students threw at him. After that, at age nineteen, he nearly drowned in an accident in Lake Lausanne, and much later at age fifty-seven, he was hit by a car in New York City.

A graduate of the Royal Military College, the short, stocky, shy Churchill served in the British army as a young man. During that time, he saw combat; participated in a cavalry charge; traveled Europe, Africa, Cuba, and India; and wrote newspaper reports and books.

At age twenty-four, Churchill resigned his military commission to pursue journalism and politics. He sought a seat in

(continued)