

30 DAYS
TO A
**STRONGER,
MORE
CONFIDENT
YOU**

DEBORAH SMITH PEGUES



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*This book is dedicated to my husband, Darnell,
my companion, my confidant, and my cheerleader.
There is none like you on all the earth.*

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Day 1

Confront Your Insecurity



The Sunday morning worship service was in full swing at Faith Covenant Church. Sherry glanced up from her hymnal just in time to see the usher direct a shapely young woman to the seat on the other side of her husband, John. She cringed as she took in the beauty of the sexy latecomer who looked as if someone had poured her into her way-too-short-for-church spandex knit dress. Sherry silently scolded herself for abandoning her latest diet program. Of course, John was a loving husband who had never been unfaithful and was not prone to wandering eyes. Notwithstanding, Sherry thought of asking him to exchange seats with her, but decided that her motive would have been too obvious.

Across the aisle, Jerry the church plant manager, despite the upbeat singing of the choir, decided to peek into the weekly bulletin. What he saw caused him to turn green with envy. Lois Smith, the latest new hire to the church staff, was featured as “Staff Person of the Month.” Until the arrival of this highly credentialed

superstar, Jerry had been the most esteemed member of the staff. Though he could claim only a high school education, he was one of the founding members of the church. He was faithful in his attendance to scheduled services and was the official go-to person for the majority of the problems that arose—at least he was before the church started to experience mega growth. Now the pastor was hiring seasoned professionals with fancy technical and managerial skills. He was even raising his expectations of all paid and volunteer leaders. To Jerry, it seemed that his status was eroding by the day.

Finally, in the pulpit, Pastor Terry was fretting over the increasing popularity of Elder Moore, the men's Bible study teacher. Why, the attendance in his class was large enough to start a small church! Elder Moore was a great communicator, his messages were relevant, and he was genuinely concerned about the men and their issues. It was no secret that they adored him and considered him their mentor. To boot, he was also a solid and well-balanced family man. Pastor Terry had never heard anyone cast an aspersion on Elder Moore's character. In sum, the guy was virtually perfect. Pastor Terry was torn between viewing him as a valuable asset or a potential liability.

Insecurity is an unbelieving mindset, rooted in fear and nourished by spiritual and natural ignorance.

What do Sherry, Jerry, and Pastor Terry have in common? They are all battling an unrelenting emotional giant. It is a giant that lives in the mind and causes its victims to feel inadequate, unsure, or doubtful of their abilities to perform in the essential aspects of life. It is the giant of insecurity.

No respecter of persons, insecurity infiltrates and influences every major aspect of a person's life. It attacks individuals from the lowest to the highest rungs of the professional, social, economic, and spiritual ladder. Although it thrives in the mind, insecurity is not a psychological disorder.

Insecurity is an unbelieving mind-set, rooted in fear and nourished by spiritual and natural ignorance. It was once my frequent companion until I found out how to recognize and overcome its many manifestations. Even now, it sneaks in an occasional visit, but my spiritual radar quickly alerts me to its presence and enables me to respond with appropriate firepower from the Word of God. But I am not so naive as to believe that it will ever stop trying to rear its ugly head in one area or another in my life. That is why I am writing this book.

In the following chapters, I will share the truths that God has revealed to me for conquering this giant. You will be introduced to biblical characters and situations, as well as modern-day people who may mirror your own behavior or that of someone you know. Your relationships will improve as you gain insight into the fears that cause you to behave in certain ways—at home, at work, and at play. You will learn how to stay on high alert for this insidious enemy and to defeat it each time it rises up in your life.

During the course of our journey, I will give you instructions on how to leave the valley of self-doubt, bypass the road of self-confidence, and advance to the highway of Supreme confidence, the kind only God can give.

It is not my intent to provide an in-depth analysis of the numerous circumstances or situations that may have caused a person to become insecure. Suffice to say that insecurity is learned behavior—and it is learned early in life. Its origin may run the gamut from a traumatic childhood experience, such as the loss of a parent through death, divorce, drug abuse, or abandonment; cruel teasing and rejection by other children; rejection by peers during the formative years because of a handicap or other physical difference; an overly critical, nonnurturing, nonaffirming parent; a prejudiced, unsupportive teacher; an unstable home environment due to numerous job relocations, or financially irresponsible parents, to name a few.

It would be time well spent to trace your various insecurities to their roots. At least you will know the foundation of the problem. But while it is helpful to understand the path that got you to your current level of insecurity, it is more important to get on the road to Supreme confidence. That is what this book is about.

In Part 1, “Syndromes of Insecurity,” we will examine seven biblical characters and look at how their insecurity affected their lives and the lives of others. In Part 2, “Roadblocks to Confidence,” I will challenge you to take an introspective self-audit of the seven behaviors that may be preventing you from becoming the confident person you desire to be. In Part 3, “Strategies for Slaying the Giant of Insecurity,” the battle is on. These chapters parallel the story of David and Goliath and show you how to overcome your insecurities despite obvious realities or discouragement from others.

By the time you reach Part 4, “Habits of Supremely Confident People,” you will have conquered the giant—or know how to—and will be poised to model the behavior that bespeaks the emotional victory that you have achieved through God’s grace.

Finally, the appendixes feature key information to help you maintain your mastery of insecurity. Appendix A is a powerful, scripturally referenced healing prayer that connects you with God and leads you into declaring your victory on a daily basis. Appendix B is an arsenal of Scriptures for you to read, recite, and memorize to reinforce your confidence.

Quick Self-Assessment

Before you begin your quest for Supreme confidence, let’s take a quick assessment of your current level of insecurity. Please answer yes or no to the questions below. Be honest. Resist the urge to go into denial. Know that an acknowledged weakness can be your greatest strength and the quickest path to an emotionally balanced and fulfilling life.

INSECURITY QUIZ

1. Do you find yourself resenting or criticizing others who are assertive, confident, or capable in areas in which you feel inadequate?
2. Do you become anxious when it appears that someone may take your place of prominence in a certain environment or relationship?
3. Do you brag about your possessions, accomplishments, or well-known acquaintances in order to gain the admiration of others?
4. Do you become perturbed when someone disagrees with your opinion or rejects your advice?
5. Do you fail to pursue certain opportunities for fear of failure or inadequacy for the task?
6. When working with a team, do you prefer to “shine alone” rather than having the group share the credit for your ideas?
7. Do you resist giving or receiving constructive criticism?
8. Do you find it difficult to say no or to express your personal boundaries or preferences in relationships?
9. Do you feel slighted when someone gives a friend, sibling, coworker, or another person a compliment or an accolade in your presence?
10. Do you feel inadequate or inferior due to certain unchangeable physical features such as your height, skin color, a physical deformity, a handicap, facial features, or your age?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, you are most likely battling insecurity at some level. If you answered yes to five or more, insecurity has a major stronghold on your life. Do not



despair; conquering it is not impossible. You can break its grip on your life and become an internally secure person. Be patient and understand that this will be a process rather than an event.

A popular riddle asks, “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is, “One bite at a time!” And so it is with insecurity. How do you conquer it? One fear at a time!

Let’s get started.

Part 1

Syndromes of Insecurity

Syn-drome: a distinctive pattern of behavior

Day 2

Justifying Jealousy



*Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood,
but who can survive the
destructiveness of jealousy?*

PROVERBS 27:4 NLT

King Saul found himself in a real dilemma. David, an unknown upstart, had killed Goliath, the Philistine giant, and was gaining in popularity daily. In fact, the women were literally singing his praises.

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the

kingdom?” And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David (1 Samuel 18:6-9).

Angered and humiliated by their song, King Saul embarked upon a campaign to wipe David off the face of the earth. The insecure king was relentless in his pursuit, engaging in repeated attempts to slay the innocent young man whom he now viewed as a rival to his throne (1 Samuel 18–26). David’s lifestyle became that of a fugitive as he literally ran from place to place trying to escape the wrath of Saul.

What was this gnawing emotion that fueled Saul’s actions? It was raw, unadulterated jealousy—the fear of being displaced. It consumed him like a fire. He was determined not to rest until he eliminated the threat to his kingdom.

We can learn from Saul’s example. When we attempt to destroy someone whom we consider to be a threat of any kind—be it professional, relational, or otherwise—we have embarked upon a course that will most assuredly come to a dead end as we reap the results of the negative seeds that are planted. Saul did not succeed in killing David. Rather, he and all of his sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 31). David then became king of Israel according to the sovereign plan of God.

The sovereign plan of God is a factor in our lives that we must constantly remind ourselves to consider. When jealousy rears its head and tries to make us fear that we are going to be displaced in any manner or in any circumstances, we need to swat those negative thoughts with Psalm 139:16: “You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed” (NLT).

Guarding What’s Mine

Like the powerful suction of a vacuum cleaner, jealousy can pull us into its chamber. Once there, we become angry, possessive,

fearful, and totally ineffective. There are two truths I try to stay keenly aware of when I sense jealousy's lure. First, God has my back. Second, He has a sovereign plan for my life.

David knew the key to avoiding this trap. He proclaimed, "LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine" (Psalm 16:5 NLT). I have come to understand that when God has determined that something is mine, I have no need to guard it in the sense of watching over it for fear it will escape. That's God's job, not mine. My responsibility is to nurture and enjoy the blessing on a daily basis, rather than obsessing over whether it will still be mine tomorrow. Embracing this truth can free you from anxiety about the unknown. On the other hand, when God, in His wisdom, has decided that something is not to be mine, then I must submit to His plan and release it. Holding on to it will keep me in the pit of insecurity as the thing continues to elude me. Sure, I will need God's supernatural intervention to help me to let it go, but at least I know His empowering grace is available for the asking. I absolutely must trust God to guard what is mine. When a child of God succumbs to the pitfall of jealousy, he engages in the ultimate act of unbelief.

The fear of being displaced knows no economic, social, or political boundaries. Consider Norman McGowan's story:

It was Sir Winston Churchill's standing order that when he returned by train from a trip that his dog Rufus should be brought to the station to meet him. Rufus would be let off his leash to dash to his master and be the first to greet him. One day I happened to be standing close by. Rufus ignored his master and came leaping all over me instead. Of course, Sir Winston loved Rufus too much to blame him. Instead, he turned to me with a hurt look and said quietly, "In the future, Norman, I would prefer you to stay in the train until I've said hello."¹

The Jealous Mate

“But,” you may be saying, “I’m not the jealous one. How do I deal with my mate’s jealousy?” If you are committed to staying in your relationship, you must understand the root cause of your mate’s fear of being displaced.

Take the case of a man I will call Kory. He is the illegitimate son of Ronald, a man highly regarded in his community for his wealth and influence. Now, Kory’s mother, Wanda, was close friends with Ronald’s wife. When Kory was born, Wanda was too embarrassed by her betrayal to disclose the name of Kory’s father. However, when Kory reached high school, his mother told him the truth about his birth. By then Ronald’s wife had separated from him and moved to another state.

Kory related to me that one day he was downtown shopping with Ronald when they met one of Ronald’s friends, who remarked about their striking resemblance. The inquisitive friend went on to ask, “Is this your boy?” Ronald refused to answer directly and deflected the question with a lighthearted reply. Kory was devastated. He took Ronald’s response as rejection of him. He wanted his father to be proud to acknowledge him. Kory never told Ronald how that incident had affected him. He chose rather to hide his hurt and to mentally rehearse the incident every chance he got so that he could feel sorry for himself. To this day, Kory has had a challenge with each woman whom he has attempted to relate to romantically. His ex-wife confided to me that during their marriage he was extremely jealous. He even confessed to me that he had often felt that the women in his life would eventually abandon him. Kory allowed one incident to destroy his ability to trust.

Dealing with an Insecure Mate

If you are dealing with an insecure mate, you must make every effort to be accountable. It is important to voluntarily provide adequate (read: *extra*) details to an insecure person. After all, he is

looking for assurance. Learn to explain your whereabouts in a casual but thorough manner. Short, one-syllable responses will only provide more insecurity and leave the person to imagine various negative scenarios. After all, the jealous person is insecure and thus feels he does not have what it takes to maintain the relationship.

Do not make the mistake of thinking or saying, “Tough, you just need to get over your insecurity.” If it were that easy, he would have done so by now. Continue to pray for his or her healing from this debilitating mind-set, but do your part not to exacerbate the problem with vague communication. Most of all, encourage your partner to talk about his or her fears. Listen without being critical or judgmental. Seek first to understand. Make it clear that you have pure intentions regarding your relationship. But here is something important to keep in mind: Stay balanced in your interaction. You must also make it clear that you will not be forced into an emotional prison by having to account for every moment of the day. This too could exacerbate the jealousy and set up unrealistic expectations. Trust is a two-way street.

Wisdom vs. Insecurity

Some situations may require you to exercise the kind of wisdom that could cause others to accuse you of being insecure. For example, no matter how faithful your husband is, it is probably not a good idea to allow your girlfriend to spend the weekend in your home alone with him while you are away. I know of a woman who regularly allowed her husband to take her best friend home late at night. She was devastated when she later discovered they were having an affair. Wisdom would have dictated that she accompany them—even at the risk of appearing to be insecure.

I once asked the wife of a very popular, internationally known minister if she frequently accompanied her husband to his numerous speaking engagements to various cities and countries. She replied very resolutely, “You have to.” Of course, this is not to say

that men of the cloth should never travel alone. This was simply one woman's way of being a visible safeguard for her husband.

Now, you may say that if an affair is going to happen, it's going to happen anyway. Just know that a wise woman does not serve her husband to another woman on a silver platter.

CONFIDENCE CHALLENGE

- Describe a relational, professional, social, or other situation in which you fear being displaced.
- Write the Scripture below on a separate piece of paper or a card and meditate on it often.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life
was recorded in your book. Every moment
was laid out before a single day had passed
(Psalm 139:16 NLT).

- Remind yourself that no one except you and God can affect His plan for your life.