

What people are saying about ...

An Untroubled Heart

“I am happy to recommend this precious student and teacher of God’s Word to you. Micca has done her homework and lived out what she believes. You can learn much from this woman who has passed His tests with flying colors of faith because she knows her God and feeds on His Word.”

Kay Arthur, Co-CEO of Precept Ministries International

“Micca writes with the seasoned heart of a wife and mother who has known the bad times and the good times. She speaks with honesty and humility. Read her book”

Jan Silvius, author of *Big Girls Don’t Whine*

“Through captivating personal stories and biblical truths, Micca reveals how to overcome the crippling peace-robbers of fear and worry. Penned from firsthand experiences, these heart-felt pages spill over with understanding, transparency, and wisdom.”

Ginger Plowman, national speaker, author of *Heaven at Home*

“This book is a must read for everyone who treads the path of faith. Micca explores the doubts and fears that complicate our trust in God and then guides the reader into deep assurance of God’s trustworthiness with her honesty, vulnerability, and a touch of humor.”

Susanne Scheppmann, author of *Divine Prayers for Despairing Parents*

“*An Untroubled Heart* is a treasured gift to anyone who has experienced pain, fear, and hopelessness. Micca beautifully ties together the lives

of biblical and modern-day people to create a survival kit for the wounded heart.”

Mary Southerland, author of *Hope in the Midst of Depression*

“Micca is a rare combination of Bible teacher, best friend, and girl-next-door. Her laid back Southern charm leaps off the pages as she takes you by the hand and leads you to a faith that is stronger than all your fears.”

LeAnn Rice, executive director of Proverbs 31 Ministries

“Like living room conversations with a close friend, Micca shares her fears, vulnerabilities, and faith in a way that causes readers to learn as much about themselves as they do the storyteller.”

Dave Clark, songwriter

“Micca is well acquainted with the verse ‘in this world you will have trouble ...’ Thankfully, she is also well acquainted with the One who overcomes the world, and in this book she carefully highlights the essential truths that can help us experience an untroubled heart no matter what comes our way.”

Cheri Keaggy, Dove Award winning recording artist

“I know the struggle of anxiety all too well and I can honestly say that this is one of the most authentic and relevant books I’ve read on the topic. Micca challenged me to look to the source of my fears and focus on knowing and trusting Jesus as the One True Remedy.

Lindsey Kane, Christian recording artist

“Micca offers hurting hearts a warm blanket of truth and reassurance in a very cold and uncertain world. She presents the Word of God in a way that speaks deep into my heart.”

Glynnis Whitwer, author of *When Your Child Is Hurting*

an
untroubled
heart



finding a faith that is stronger than all my fears

micca campbell

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Introduction

In writing this book, I was often asked, “Don’t you have fears too?” The answer is yes. People naturally assume that since I’m writing on the subject of worry and anxiety, I have conquered all my own fears. I can honestly say that I have been liberated from most of my fears by placing my faith in God instead of in my circumstances. Still, some fears sneak up on me unaware. I find myself worrying about my children, my health, world events, and walking alone in the mall parking lot at night. Sound familiar?

Since you’re reading this book, I imagine you struggle with anxiety too. You and I are not alone. Thousands of people live with fear and anxiety every day. Fear is a very real, personal, and powerful emotion. Throughout my life and ministry, I’ve met people who are concerned about a failing economy. Others are hesitant and suspicious of anyone different from themselves. Worried parents are cautious about letting their children out of sight for fear of abduction. Nearly everyone fears death. Whether it’s our own death or the death of someone we love, the unknown factors of how and when it will happen frighten us the most. I think it was a country music singer who once said, “It’s not that I’m afraid to die. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” Those are my thoughts exactly!

We all have something that frightens us. Perhaps the thing that terrifies us most is losing control and realizing our helplessness. In the face of the unthinkable, the unbearable, or the unimaginable, fear uncovers

truth. We're not really in control of anything. Control is only an illusion. When the unthinkable happens, and we lose a loved one, we're gripped not only by great pain, but also by great fears as our illusions of control become shattered. I know, because it happened to me.

On the other hand, realizing our helplessness isn't as bad as you might imagine. It's often the beginning of a new thing—a new dependence on God who is sovereign over all. In simpler words, He's large and in charge! Therefore there's nothing to fear when you and I are certain that God is in control and on our side.

I heard a story about five-year-old Johnny who was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. "It's dark in there and I'm scared." She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, "It's okay—Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: "Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?"¹

Like Johnny, we'd be less fearful if we knew for sure Jesus was there to hand us our can of soup instead of having to get it alone. The truth is we don't have to go it alone. Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. By putting my trust in this promise, my life has been transformed. I've developed a faith stronger than all my fear. I'm certain you can too.

Whatever you and I face throughout the year, we need not worry. God has broken the spirit of fear and given us the assurance that nothing can snatch us from His hand. As God's children, we can go to Him without hesitation and cry out, "Abba, Father," which means "Daddy," confident that He will hear and answer our cries—and, if need be, hand us a can of soup.



Chapter One

When the Unthinkable Happens

Sometimes Porter would meet me in my dreams. One of those imaginings is forever etched in my mind. In the dream, I found myself exploring stored treasures in my grandmother's garage, just like I did when I was a girl. The sky was a brilliant blue and the grass was greener than ever before. Granny's blooming spring flowers gave a fresh fragrance to the staleness of the garage. As I strolled through the garage, admiring its contents, my thoughts were interrupted by the sound of someone dribbling a basketball. I looked up, and there he was. "Porter," I whispered to myself. He was so beautiful that he glowed. I had forgotten what a magnificent creature he was. The last time I had seen him, he had been blackened and disfigured by the fire. Now his perfect, muscular body stood before me, whole again, just like I remembered before the accident.

Slowly, he bounced the ball as he walked down the sidewalk toward me. Bounce. Bounce. Bounce. I couldn't take my eyes off of him for fear that if I blinked, he might disappear. Porter didn't say a word. He gently took me by the hand and led me underneath a huge oak tree, where he sat down on the basketball. I would have followed

him anywhere at that point. In his soft, soothing voice that I'd waited so long to hear again, he consoled me.

"I want you to know that I'm okay, and you're going to be okay too," he said. I longed for that moment to last forever, but I awoke.

For some time after that, bedtime became a ritual. I laid my head down on my pillow, closed my eyes, and whispered with hope, "See you in my dreams, Porter." At night, I found comfort in knowing that he just might meet me there.

Fairy Tale Romance

Fairy tales are what dreams are made of. From the time we begin to explore our world as toddlers, we dream. A little boy dreams of fighting battles, rescuing damsels, and becoming the king of his castle. A young girl dreams about finding her knight in shining armor, mothering a houseful of babies, and living happily ever after. For most, dreams do come true. We fall in love, conquer our battles, and nurture a family along the way. For others, dreams unexpectedly turn into nightmares. Such was the case with me.

I was nineteen when I met Porter. He was such a looker that my friends had only one word to describe him—"Mercy!" He worked loading boxes of frozen foods onto eighteen-wheelers, so his body was chiseled and fit. He had a cute little dimple in the middle of his chin and a picture-perfect smile. His eyes were like deep pools of rich chocolate framed by brown, wavy hair that nestled on his collar. Most important was his way of seeing the best in me and others, always putting the needs of his family, friends, and coworkers before himself. This sincere and kind attribute attracted many and gained their respect. Porter was the perfect package, both inside and out.

At first glance, “Mercy!” was the best word to describe him, but after one date, I was deeply in love. I knew this person, who didn’t even kiss on the first date, was the one for me. Once I made up my mind that he was my man, I just had to make up *his* mind that *I* was the right choice for him—and then we got married. It felt as if the whole world had been created just for us. Nothing could penetrate our circle of love. I had found my Prince Charming, and I planned to live happily ever after.

We were poor as church mice, so there wasn’t much money for entertainment. We spent our spare time snuggled together on the couch in our small duplex, eating potato chips and fantasizing about the future. Sometimes we talked into the wee hours of the morning sharing secrets like best friends and naming our unborn children. On Saturdays we took long drives on Porter’s motorcycle. I was happy with my arms wrapped securely around his waist, my hair blowing in the wind. It didn’t matter that we had nowhere in particular to go. It only mattered that we were together.

After a year and a half of marriage, God blessed us with a beautiful baby boy. My life was a fairy tale. First I became a wife, and now I was a mother. I was living my childhood dream just as I had planned—until the night Porter didn’t come home.

Shattered Dreams

Dinner was getting cold. I was pacing the floor with the baby on my hip, wondering where he could be, when my father knocked at the door. Immediately, I could tell something was wrong. “What is it, Dad?” I asked cautiously.

“Porter has been in an accident,” he said.

I didn't stop to consider that Porter could be seriously hurt. That was simply out of the question. Instead, I quickly phoned a friend to keep the baby and concentrated on packing the diaper bag with everything our son might need. I only prepared a few bottles, since I assumed Porter would be discharged when I arrived, and we would all be home together again later that evening.

Once our son was settled at the babysitter's house and Dad and I were on our way to the hospital, there was nothing else to occupy my mind. I couldn't help but think about the accident. "How bad is it?" I asked Dad, searching for clues in his face.

"I really don't know. I think ... well ... what I mean is I'm not clear about what happened. The neighbors said there was ... uh ... some sort of explosion. We'll know more when we get there." He stumbled over every word.

It seemed like we had been driving for a long time without making progress. With every mile my heart grew more anxious. I imagined every bad thing I could think of and then prayed it wasn't so. I couldn't stop wondering what went wrong that caused his accident.

Earlier that morning, Porter had gone to my brother-in-law's house to help him waterproof his basement. The day before, my brother-in-law had dug a seven-foot ditch around the foundation of the house with a backhoe so that Porter could apply the waterproofing substance to the outside wall. Realizing the substance was highly flammable, Porter felt confident that working outdoors would allow the fumes to escape and prevent any danger. Unfortunately, as they worked, the fumes mounted in the ditch. When they had only five feet left to finish, the outside heating and air conditioning unit

clicked on to cool the inside of the house. The fumes ignited, and the ditch exploded. The blast of fire left Porter and our brother-in-law badly burned over the majority of their bodies.

They were lucky, though. A fire truck was only three houses away. Neighborhood friends shared with us that firemen had been called to a nearby home to save an elderly man who choked on his dinner. By the time the firemen arrived, the food had dislodged and all was well. As the two firemen were returning to their truck, they spotted my sister's house in flames only a short distance away. Another neighbor added details to the conversation about what she saw. Apparently our husbands were in shock. Badly burned, they stripped off the rest of their clothes and began spraying themselves with the garden hose. Immediately, the firemen placed our husbands on gurneys, loaded them into the truck, and rushed them to Vanderbilt Burn Center.

When my dad and I arrived at the burn center, my mom and sister were already there. The nurse escorted all of us to a small room where the doctor tried to prepare us for what we were about to see. His explanation was quick and to the point. My brother-in-law had been burned over 40 percent of his body, but they expected full recovery. My husband, on the other hand, had been burned over 80 percent of his body, both inside and out. They gave him a fifty-fifty chance of survival.

Until Death Do Us Part

It was a long walk with the doctor as he led my sister and me to see our husbands. I felt numb inside. The activity in the hospital appeared to move in slow motion while the echo of our footsteps rang in my ears. I think I held my breath all the way. When we got to

their room, I froze just inside the door. I couldn't tell who was who. Their skin was completely black. Their heads were twice the normal size, and Porter's forearms were wrapped in towels because most of his flesh had been burned. They were unrecognizable. Suddenly, the room grew dim, and my body went limp. Someone from behind caught me and held me up. I could hear my sister crying beside me, but I couldn't turn to her. I couldn't take my eyes off of the two horrid bodies in front of us. "Please, God. Don't let it be them," I prayed to myself. At that same moment, my brother-in-law spoke. "Hey, at least we're alive," he joked. We managed to walk over to them. Curious, I reached over to lift the towel from Porter's arm and take a peek, but the doctor immediately stopped me. "Those are to prevent infection," the physician explained as he tucked the cloth tightly back around Porter's arms. "We need to keep them covered. There's not much skin left. His hands and arms got the worst of it," he continued.

Stunned, I stepped back. "Hey, it's going to be all right," Porter said, trying to reassure me. He was right. They were alive.

"Surely, it can only get better from here, right, God?" I prayed silently. It was then that I felt strength come over me, carrying me on from that moment.

Over the next eight days, the waiting room was crowded with people. They were mostly quiet, not knowing what to say. Their presence spoke volumes to me. It spoke comfort, compassion, and love, especially on the day of Porter's surgery.

To prevent blood poisoning, the doctor was going to perform a procedure called skin grafting. After Porter went into surgery, the wait was long. It was so long that my mother became suspicious,

wondering about the reason for the elapsed time. She encouraged us to eat the sandwiches our church family had brought. It was the last time that I remember eating for a long while.

Later, the doctor, still in his surgical clothes, walked slowly into the waiting room with his head hung low and his shoulders slouched. No one spoke a word. He slowly bent down in front of my chair and began confirming my worst fears. “In the middle of surgery, Porter went into cardiac arrest,” he explained as gently as he could. “His burned body was unable to withstand the trauma of surgery, and it shut down.” The waiting room was hushed and still. The doctor continued. “The good news is Porter could wake up within the next twenty-four hours.”

I could feel my chest tighten. It was hard to breathe, as if the doctor were choking me with his every word. Before he could speak again, I stood up and took off running. I ran until I found myself on the roof of one of the hospital buildings. I suppose I had to get as close to God as possible. Who else could help me now?

While people shuffled along the sidewalk below, I wailed in deep sorrow as I begged God to save Porter. Pacing back and forth, I struggled with the thought that it might be better for Porter to be in the presence of the Lord than to live. “I should let him go,” I thought. “At least in heaven, he will be fully restored and won’t have any more pain. If he lives, I know for sure he won’t keep his arms,” I reasoned to myself. But—“No!” Call it selfish. I didn’t care. I was desperate. It didn’t matter to me that Porter would never be able to hold me again or throw a ball with his son. I just wanted Porter to live. But God had other plans.

As the clock ticked down, there was no response. The doctor tested for brain waves and found none. Soon, Porter’s organs

began to shut down too. As I sat there beside him, I knew he had already left me. Days before his surgery, as he lay in excruciating pain that not even high doses of morphine could ease, Porter tried to tell me his time was short. He knew that he was going away, but I refused to listen. Each day, my sweet husband attempted to comfort and prepare me, saying, “I don’t want to leave you and our son, but I know my time has come.” He was right. I knew that now, but I couldn’t let go of him. I just couldn’t. As I struggled with my thoughts, a nurse entered the room and began to fiddle with his life-support machine.

“Can I ask you something?” I inquired of her.

“Sure, honey, what is it?” the nurse replied.

“If you were to turn off my husband’s machine, he wouldn’t breathe on his own ever again—would he?” I questioned.

The nurse paused for a moment, and then, turning to me, she confirmed softly, “No, honey, he wouldn’t.” Once again, I felt a strength that enabled me to do what I couldn’t do alone.

I got up from my chair beside my husband’s bed and walked into the crowded waiting room. “He’s gone,” I announced. My own words passed my consciousness and went straight to my heart, where they exploded in agony. Soft sniffing sounds began to move throughout the waiting room. Without saying a word or showing emotion, Porter’s mother got up and walked slowly into her son’s room. I followed her. Stopping just outside his door, I watched. She lay across her son’s body, burst into tears, and gently began to caress his feet. They were the only part of Porter’s body untouched by the fire. I turned and left them alone. Sometime thereafter, his life-giving machine was turned off by the doctor, and Porter passed from this life to the next.

Rescued from Despair

When the funeral was over, and the people were gone, I found myself alone, a new mother and a widow at the age of twenty-one. How would I get through this crisis? My dream had become a living nightmare from which I couldn't escape. Life was lonely without him. I felt deserted by my God, the God I had loved and served since I was a little girl. Why would He betray me? Why didn't Porter fight to live? It wasn't fair! This was not what I had planned.

One desperate night, I hit bottom. Grief-stricken, suicidal thoughts plagued my mind. Pacing the floor of my duplex, I found myself torn between living for my son and dying for my husband. Abruptly, my grief turned to anger until I did what any woman whose family had been destroyed would do. In my mind's eye, I burst through the door to the throne room of grace, shook my fist in the face of God, and boldly questioned, "WHY—why did You do this to me? You could have saved him! You're God! Why did You give me that baby and take his father? Oh, God, I need to know why!"

Just as a mother runs to her screaming child who is in pain, God the Father ran to me, His child. I didn't see Him with my eyes or touch Him with my hands, but I felt His presence consume me as if God poured Himself over my entire body. I couldn't cry another tear. God's presence was so calming and comforting that I knew for the first time beyond a shadow of doubt that I was going to be okay. I didn't know how, but I knew God was fully aware and involved in my circumstances. I could no longer deny it. As I sat in the presence of my heavenly Father, I was compelled to read Psalm 139. It was as if God was speaking directly to my heart.

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast. (Ps. 139:7–10)

Even in the pit of death, God had come to say, “You are not alone. I am here.”

You Are Not Alone

It’s funny. The newspapers called me a survivor. On most days, I didn’t feel like a survivor, but I had survived. I had lived through my worst fear. But that didn’t mean I would never fear losing another loved one. I do. Like Porter, his dad died young, so I fear that death at a young age is my son’s destiny too. That’s not all. Every time someone fails to call me when they are running late, I worry that the worst has happened. Is it right for me to be concerned? Are my fears legitimate? Probably so, but the good news is I don’t have to live afraid, and neither do you.

Our present fears are fueled by our past experiences. Nevertheless, God doesn’t want us to go through the rest of our lives justifying our fears. Nor does He want us to live behind some protective wall that shields us from what might happen. God wants to teach us that it’s safe to trust Him. Even if we don’t have all the answers, our past will never make sense until we invite God into our present. Then we will see He has been there all along.

My first step in learning to trust God again came when I chose to believe that I am never ever alone. God is always near me. Looking back, I realize the strength I felt in the midst of my suffering was God's presence carrying me through the valley of death safely to the other side. Time and again when I felt lost and alone, God met me in my pain and carried me to new levels of grace. With each encounter, my future grew brighter, and I was able to pick up the pieces of my shattered dream and with God's help rebuild my life.

The Lord is, indeed, attentive to our whereabouts and the circumstances we face on earth. He also knows how many days each of us will dwell here. This was an important truth for me concerning Porter's death.

Your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be. (Ps. 139:16)

God didn't take my husband from me. Porter's death wasn't a personal attack or payment for some sin I had committed. Nor had my heavenly Father left me to spin helplessly out of control. No—God, in His sovereignty, simply knew the number of Porter's years. I feel privileged to have been a part of his days and comforted in knowing that I'm not alone for the rest of mine.

It's easy to see God's hand at work in the lives of those who live between the pages of His Word. Yet through the course of our lives, especially during fearful times, God can seem so far away that we question, "Where are You, Lord?" No matter what our emotions or circumstances

may say, the truth is there is nowhere we can go to escape God's presence. Though it might not feel like it or look like it, God is always near.

You may never have experienced God's presence in the powerful, comforting way that I did when my husband died, but that doesn't mean He is not with you. You and I are His masterpieces, "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14) by the hands of a loving and faithful God. He is the God of all things great and small. He is the one who tells the sun when to rise and when to set. He is the God who causes the ocean waves to obey their boundaries. This is the God that gave life to you and me. Why would He do that and then leave us alone? He wouldn't. Just as a loving mother would never leave her child, God the Father will never leave us. He can't be torn away, led away, coaxed away, seduced away, or dragged away.

You and I come to know and experience this truth by faith. It is my prayer that as we journey together through the pages of this book, all of your fears will be replaced with unshakable faith in the One who is faithful and trustworthy in all things. As His child, may you truly learn to live carefree in the care of your heavenly Father.

Bible Study: Know It—Stow It—Show It

Loss is inevitable. We lose things every day. Some things are so small that we hardly notice, while others are so big they hurt—a lot. In any situation, God's presence is certain.

1. Recall a time when you felt afraid and alone. When was it?

2. Read Psalm 46:1. In times of trouble, what kind of help does God offer?

3. How does knowing that God is your ever-present help comfort you and calm your fears? (Or if it doesn't comfort you, talk about why.)

It calms my uncertainties to know that God's help is at hand immediately. It isn't a future help, nor is it available only when I'm worthy of God's help. No, it's a present help. God's help is available the moment we humble ourselves and cry out to Him.

4. Write James 1:2–4 here:

5. How do you view trials in your life? Are you fearful? Joyful? Angry? Do you see them as disastrous? Explain.

I have to be honest. It really annoys me that James says I should be joyful instead of fearful in hard times. I'd love to ask James, "Where's the joy when the divorce papers are served? Where's the joy when the doctor's diagnosis is bleak? What about when my teenager is living in rebellion? James, where's the joy when someone you love has died?" But over the years, I have learned that joy can be found in the midst of heartache and fearful times.

