

GINGER HARRINGTON

HOLY IN THE MOMENT

SIMPLE WAYS TO LOVE GOD
AND ENJOY YOUR LIFE



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MOMENTS TO BELIEVE

You will have to believe God is who He says He is. You will have to believe God can do what He says He will do. You will have to adjust your thinking in light of this belief.

—Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*

Holiness inhabits the small things, faith for our moments, simple and short. Added together, holy moments change lives and steer destinies in God’s direction. But it all comes down to attitudes and choices made . . . one moment at a time.

Just as umbrellas shield us from rain, faith protects us from questions and doubts that flood our souls. When storm clouds gather, an umbrella is only as good as the choosing of it in the moment.

Umbrellas left in the closet or forgotten in the car offer no protection from the deluge. And faith left unused will not shield us from unbelief. Choosing to believe God is a sacred choice, empowering us to “hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil” (Ephesians 6:16 NLT).

It’s during the storms of life that faith solidifies into more than a concept. The year our family moved from North Carolina to California is the year I thought I was going crazy.

In May of 2000, sunny skies turned dark as storm clouds let loose with a force, whipping and twisting my faith inside out. How do we choose holiness on days when believing God is hard?

WHEN BELIEVING GOD IS HARD

I sat in a stark, utilitarian green office, checking on lab results. “No one called you?” asked a frantic nurse. She explained that my thyroid test (several months old) indicated I have Graves’ disease, a hyperthyroid autoimmune disease. Instantly my mind snapped to high alert as I told the nurse, “I’m moving across the country in *three* weeks. We’re a military family with three small children. We don’t get to choose when or where we move. I *can’t* be sick now.”

Maybe I hoped the nurse would say something to take the problem away. Something like, “You’re right, this isn’t a good time for you. Let’s reschedule this problem for another time.” Our thoughts don’t always make sense, do they?

I don’t have time to be sick.

It didn’t matter. We don’t get to schedule challenges at our convenience.

Tested and diagnosed, I was treated with lightning speed. Just take a little pill to slow my thyroid down. *Maybe this won’t be too bad*, I thought as packers loaded the moving truck. We drove 3,000 miles with three young kids buckled into our overloaded van. As the miles ticked by, I prayed everything would be OK.

NOW-FAITH IS FOR THIS MOMENT

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 ESV). We need *now-faith* for all of life’s moments—the good and the bad. Hope is not wishing, though we often feel like faith is nebulous as cotton candy, wisps of air held together with sugar-coated wishes. *Just have enough faith and you can conjure up whatever you want*, our misconceptions whisper.

Don’t we chide ourselves to try harder?

Faith doesn’t come by trying harder.

I've made that mistake many times, and it only leads to discouragement. Have you ever been tempted to think you must act better and perform the right spiritual tricks—as if God is only moved to work in a life if the faith is good enough? *Yes, me too!*

That puts it all on us, doesn't it?

Assurance grounds faith in reality—that which has actual existence. It is a steady-minded believing with confidence, courage, and firm trust. There's nothing *maybe-ish* about faith.

Faith is a gift from God, not some secret power we must manufacture on our own. Faith is inseparably tied to the power and holiness of God.

In the Greek, *power* is translated “dynamis,” which is God’s power for creating life, performing miracles, and righting the crooked soul. This is power we need for all of our *right-now needs*. Every single one.

Choosing faith begins with the holiness of God, not on our ability to harness faith and make it go our way. Faith to believe begins and ends in the rightness of God—His way of doing and being right. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8 NKJV, emphasis added).

We make thousands of choices every day. It only takes a moment to respond with *now-faith* and discover more of God. Here's the simple decision of a moment: to believe or not, to trust or not. Holiness is quietly accomplished as we receive the life of Christ in this *now-moment*.

God graciously stirs up more faith when we embrace and live out the faith we currently hold in our hearts. Step by step and choice by choice, we can walk into greater faith and wholeness. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:17 ESV). In this small three-letter word, *but*, is the choice of the moment.

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We can choose the wholeness of believing God, faith for every moment. Or the *buts* can become excuses and questions turning our eyes away from God's power and presence.

I experienced this mentally, physically, and spiritually in a way that tested my faith far beyond the borders of what I thought I could handle. Have you also experienced situations pushing you past your current level of faith?

In the coming months, I learned to rely on God's power to choose faith, one moment at a time. With each choice to believe, God gave me strength to hold on in the moment. There wasn't any other way to get by.

At the end of our cross-country trek, we pulled into military housing in California. We drove slowly down the street, looking for the address of our new home. Tidy, small homes faced the sidewalks where children played. "Is that our house?" piped little voices from the back of the van. More than ready for the end of a long journey, I felt the fresh excitement of new beginnings . . . *until I saw our house.*

Faded yellow paint peeled in spots, and weeds grew two feet tall in cracks of cement. With a hole in the foundation and dead, uncut grass, the house had a dilapidated, musty, uncared-for look. *We're going to live here? Shouldn't this place be condemned?*

This was the moment the imbalance of my hormonal system tipped to a place called *uncontrollable*. Plunging down the steep drop of a thyroid-induced roller coaster, blood pulsed and adrenaline flooded my system; it was months before I felt anything close to calm.

It was months before my hands stopped shaking.

BELIEVING GOD IS A CHOICE, NOT AN EMOTION

Fear stormed in with a take-all vengeance, threatening to wash me away in an unrelenting flood of anxiety. Clouds gathered and my hormonal system

cracked open with internal thunder. Dread plagued my days as we got settled, and I tried to care for three young children in an unfamiliar place.

With my body stuck on constant go, sleep became impossible. I spent the dark hours pacing the house, wearing a thin path in the carpet. No matter what I tried, I couldn't turn off my racing thoughts or squelch my feelings of fear.

How do you choose to believe, to stand strong in faith while swirling in overwhelming uncertainties? *I'm going crazy. Will I ever feel normal again?* How do you choose holiness in an iron grip of fear? These are crucial moments to remember that believing in God is a decision, not an emotion.

Many nights I was too jittery to sleep but too weak to stand. While the rest of the family slept, I rocked on my knees pleading, "God, help me!" Heart pounding with my pulse out of control, I longed to unzip my skin and climb right out of myself—be anywhere but stuck in this broken body.

I didn't recognize myself anymore. Who was this frantic, fear-crazed woman taking over my life? Praying like gasping for breath when the water is over your head, I clung to God's promises in Isaiah 43 with the blind strength of a drowning woman gripping a lifeline: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you" (Isaiah 43:1b-2 AMP). These words helped me hang on, minute by minute.

The soul, the inner life of personality, mind, will, and emotions, is like a deep pool filled with what each of us believe—*really believe*—not just know or agree with.¹ This is the truth we live. Our core beliefs are tucked away in the secrecy of our souls. Some of those beliefs are the truths of God. But others are conclusions and misperceptions based on experiences, thoughts, and emotions impacted by our history. Sometimes truth and false beliefs born of pain and sin lie side by side in the depths of our souls. We have a desperate need for God's healing and restoring work of holiness.

"O LORD, You have searched me and known *me* . . . And are intimately acquainted with all my ways" (Psalm 139:1, 3b, emphasis added). No one

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knows us better than God. Dallas Willard explained, “You’re a soul made by God, made for God, and made to need God, which means you were not made to be self-sufficient.”²² God understands our struggles, and part of holiness is His desire to cleanse us inside and out from the bondage of sin and self.

Given a choice, we would prefer to leap from sinner to sanctified in one quick leap, skipping all the mundane moments and difficult times. But day-by-day, God works to heal our hurts, restore our vision, lift our emotions, guide our steps, and fill our lives with the indwelling Christ. Jesus is the savior, the Savior, of our souls.

Especially in our toughest experiences, holiness is found in each small-but-significant choice to trust God one more time. Inhale another breath and move forward with another shaking step. Never discount small, brave acts of faith that spur you to go on rather than give in. Don’t let the hard days keep you from reading God’s Word, for truth is lifeblood for our fractured hearts.

Six weeks later and twenty pounds lighter, I was severely sleep-deprived and emotionally strung out with anxiety. Afraid to go out and afraid to stay in, I tried not to give in to fear. I failed again and again, face-planting in the muck of difficulty. God’s Spirit strengthened me over and over, reminding me of the passage in Isaiah 43 I had memorized: *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.*

I was afraid of being afraid.

And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.

I was afraid of nothing specific.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched.

I was afraid of everything.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (vv. 2-3).

Savior. Holy One.

The Lord is my God; He is with me, and He is with you.

*Choosing holiness on the hard days comes down to believing
God is our Savior who walks with us in all things.*

This is true not because it feels true. Fear was the only thing I could feel at this time. Maybe God removed any emotional, warm-fuzzy feeling of His presence to teach me to stand on the truth rather than feelings. To believe God's words were true, I had to stop letting my emotions dictate and define faith.

BELIEVING GOD CONNECTS OUR NEED TO HIS SUPPLY

One foggy morning when taking the kids to school, I pulled up to a stoplight. Staring at the glowing red light, my mind went blank. *Where am I going? Why am I here? I can't remember.* I jerked to consciousness when my son asked, "Mommy, are you going to take us to school?"

That was the day I stopped driving, terrified I would cause an accident.

It's humbling and frightening to realize your sense of sanity is fragile, marked by numbers on a lab report. I just wanted to be well—body, mind, and spirit. I didn't realize I was craving holiness.

What does holiness have to do with wellness? The answer is a lot, actually. Early roots of the English word *holy* mean "whole, uninjured, healthy, complete, and happy."

Daily I prayed for healing, for the problem to go away, only to struggle with another sleepless night filled with fear.

I wanted relief, but God wanted growth.

In this strange and scary time, God supplied my needs through His Word and through the kindness of people who helped in practical ways. My active-duty husband was assigned to a school, so he was home every night, a God-gift for a military family. Before we even moved in, the first friend I made was Jennifer, a pharmacist. She answered endless medical questions and helped

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me navigate the complexity of my symptoms. Always cheerful, she invited us to explore our new community, getting me out of the house.

Living on a military base meant I was surrounded by women who knew the challenges of moving. My neighbor Liz could look at me and know when I needed help. She would say, “Bring the girls over so you can try to take a nap.” After a rest, we’d drink coffee and visit. Her calm spirit and strong faith were also God-gifts. Recognizing the practical ways God helped and provided gave me hope.

During these anxiety-ridden days and nights, I read Bible verses again and again. I said them softly, prayed them in the dark, and even yelled them at times: “Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life” (Philippians 4:6-7 MSG).

God heard from me plenty—as in constantly—as I took this passage to heart with *now-faith*. Worries became prayers, transforming emotions into choices to believe. And I waited long and hard for a sense of God’s wholeness to settle my soul.

Day after day, I wrote notes to God in my journal, pouring out my heart with a mix of prayers and complaints. I copied verses in my book, grasping each promise of strength as God brought them to my attention.

- I’m still feeling terrible, not sleeping. Praying for deliverance. Lord, give me the ability to choose faith today. Help me to trust You. —10/15/2000
- It’s so hard to take care of the children. Will You help me do all the things I need to do? I’m so tired of being anxious and weak. I’m barely hanging on today, Lord. —11/5/2000
- I can do all things in Him who strengthens me—You’re going to have to bring the strength, for I don’t have any. Today, I can hardly walk across the street. —11/20/2000

- Who am I? Where did the best parts of me go? I hate the person I'm becoming. Is this really part of your plan? —12/5/2000
- I believe You are the God who makes me holy and whole, but I'm falling apart in broken pieces. I'm leaving a trail of worry and fear everywhere I go. PLEASE put me together—spirit, soul, and body! (1 Thessalonians 5:23a *rephrased*). —12/15/2000

CHOOSING HOLY IN THE HARD

As the California fall days melted into the fog of my mental state, I had numerous medical appointments. Before finding a specialist, I saw a physician's assistant. "I have Graves' disease, and I haven't slept in a month," I said, desperate for something to help me sleep. This young man glossed over the one-month-no-sleep part, asking, "Have you tried hot milk?" I'm not going into details, but for me, this was definitely a most unholy moment. I considered scratching his eyes out but restrained myself . . . barely.

God reminded me of the story of Abraham, the one who believed God's promise of a child even though he was impossibly old. A child from Sarah's old and shriveled womb? *Really?* "Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22).

Faith is conviction of truth, belief in God, including the idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith.

Faith walks hand in hand with holiness.

- Growing strong in this case means to be strengthened or given strength. God was the source of this strength for Abraham's choice to believe.

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- God viewed Abraham’s faith as righteousness—a word closely related to *holiness*, meaning “integrity, virtue, purity of life, and rightness.”
- Receiving strength to believe is a holy moment and a gift from God.

That Christmas, I experienced God’s strength in a miraculous way. My mother flew out to join us for the holiday. After the long flight from Tennessee, she was exhausted. This was strange for a woman with more energy than three of me. Too tired to eat dinner, she went to bed, as I grew more and more concerned. In my anxious state, I could feel the first wave of fear roll through my system. “No, not now, Lord! I can’t give in to fear. I need Your strength and a calm heart,” I prayed. That night, my mom had a stroke brought on by the air travel. Where do you find holiness in the middle of a stroke?

- Turning to God in prayer is choosing holy in the hard.
- Choosing to believe God is good is choosing holy in the hard.
- Recognizing God’s provision in our need is *experiencing* holy in the hard.

One holy choice: Not every moment is good, but believe God is good in every moment.

Waiting for the EMTs to arrive, my pulse slowed to a steady calm I hadn’t known in months. In the middle of my ordinary, broken life, I experienced wholeness through God’s gift of strength. By all counts, this emergency should have sent me over the edge.

My hands stopped shaking.

My mind was clear.

My heart settled with a long-forgotten peace.

I believe Jesus spoke to the storm in my mind and body, with a divine

command, “Peace, be still.” Right at the time I needed it most. No wavering. No shaking. All grace.

Three days later, Mom was released from the hospital with minor issues. Her left hand was clumsy-slow and one foot dragged heavily, but she was improving. She came home on Christmas Eve, spunky and determined to attend church for the candlelight service. With a grateful heart beating slowly and steadily, I experienced a Christmas miracle—both for Mom and for myself.

As the anxiety lifted and sleep returned, God gave me strength to help my mom. A few weeks later, doctors used radiation to destroy my thyroid, continuing my physical process of healing. This challenging year ended with a Christmas so special that tears flow at the memory as I write. The warm glow of candles and the presence of God filled the church as we raised our voices singing with pure, clear tones.

Silent night, Holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin, Mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace.

SIMPLE WAYS TO BELIEVE GOD

- Ask God for the faith you need for this moment—*use your umbrella.*
- This is your moment to believe. Trust God with your *right-now need.*
- Don’t let emotions define your faith.
- Watch for ways God provides.
- Write, pray, and memorize specific truths to strengthen your faith.
- Accept help and encouragement from friends. Don’t isolate yourself.
- Believe God has given the faith you ask for and take a step forward.

YOUR MOMENT TO BELIEVE

How about you? What need is before you? Are you buffeted by emotions, making faith hard to hold? Identify your *right-now need* for faith. Is it fear or frustration? A diagnosis or a decision? Faith is the power anchoring hope to our souls with the grit of determination to believe God and to discover holiness in the hard. Rest in this moment and stand under the power of one sacred choice to trust God, to hang onto hope *right here, right now*.

Holding on is the strength of holiness working in the moment.

Now-faith is for the anxious and rainy moments—the drizzles, the showers, and even the downpours threatening to wash you way. Open your umbrella and choose holiness that is solid ground when dreams grow soggy at your feet.

Don't wait for the rain to stop. In daily life, umbrellas are for the rain, but faith is for the spiritual storms. In the middle of my ordinary, broken life, I experienced wholeness through God's gift of strength.

SIMPLE REMINDERS TO BELIEVE

- Choose *now-faith* for this moment.
- Faith doesn't come by trying harder.
- A gift from God, faith isn't some secret power you must manufacture.
- Faith is inseparably tied to the power and holiness of God.
- Believing God is a decision, not an emotion.
- Don't let the hard days keep you from reading God's Word.
- Believing God connects your need to His supply.
- Not every moment is good, but believe God is good in every moment.

Discover the difference that choosing holiness in the moment can make in your life.

Enjoying life (*zoe*) in Christ comes in the choices we make moment by moment. Author and speaker Ginger Harrington guides women in discovering how intentional choices become holy habits. With refreshing perspective, Ginger shows that holiness isn't a rigid standard to keep but a gift to receive through a vital relationship with God, who makes us whole.

Holy in the Moment explores the practical power of choices to grow in holiness without the pressure of perfectionism. Through biblical insights, personal stories, and applicable ideas, Ginger will help you:

- overcome distractions, negative thinking, and shame
- address challenging emotions, live a praying life, and discover the importance of rest;
- choose biblical love and forgiveness;
- understand how work becomes holy; and
- discover methods for practicing holiness in parenting and friendship.

Energize faith with simple choices to love God, embrace truth, and enjoy life with practical ways to be holy. Experience your best moments as you trust God, rely on His wisdom, and live from His resources.

Ginger Harrington is an award-winning blogger, speaker, and ministry leader. A military spouse and mom of three, Ginger helped create the Planting Roots: Strength to Thrive in Military Life military ministry where she serves as coordinator of publishing, speaks at regional conferences, and assists with social media. She writes at GingerHarrington.com, for Roma Downey and Mark Burnett's LightWorkers.com, and for *Planting Roots*. She guest posts for *Guideposts*, *(in)courage*, *The Praying Woman*, *For Every Mom*, and others. She lives in northern Virginia.

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