

## INTRODUCTION

A lot has changed in the world since this book was first published twenty-five years ago. When I first submitted the *Acts of Faith* manuscript to my editor, it was on paper, delivered by snail mail. The Internet was very new, which didn't matter because most people did not own a computer. There was no social media to spread news or gossip. Millionaire Kylie Jenner had not yet been born, and the only way you could purchase something outside of a store was through a catalog. Today, much of what is common, normal, and accepted is very different. Still, certain elements of the human conditions remain the same. Even in today's fast-paced technology-driven world, there are people who do not believe they have the capacity or the power to navigate the advances taking place all around them. For more than just a few, today's world is an overwhelming and scary place. With great fear and trepidation, these people are *just about to*. Just about to break up; just about to break down; just about to make some money; just about to declare bankruptcy. Very often, when these folks are *just about to* do something, they encounter something that takes them off track. They blame *that something* for their lack of faith in themselves and the process of life.

There are other people who skip through life *almost-ing*. I almost had this; I almost did that. These are usually the same

## INTRODUCTION

people who almost *didn't do* something but are now *just about to do* something else. Looking at them and the situations many of them wrestle with, you pray that they do something, anything to move themselves in a new direction. What you may not understand or recognize is that there is a secret thrill and excitement that goes along with *just about to do* and *almost did* that keeps people stuck in a time warp of fear and faithlessness. There is no amount of likes or follows that will convince them that they or life can be different. They are content to *talk about* rather than *be about* something different. Change takes place in the moment, and when you have faith, any moment can be the moment that change happens for you. Without faith, you will live in a scary place. For clarity's sake, let's call that place *on the edge*.

The edge is the place you live in when you almost do what you know you need to do, but don't follow through for one reason or another. The edge is where you live when you hope, wish, and try, but never seem able to get anything done. The edge is where you live when you view yourself as a victim of the circumstances of your life, with no real clue about how you are creating our experiences. It is also on the edge where you can develop the faith you need to do what is required to abandon the edge forever.

Twenty-five years ago, when this book first appeared, patterns of belief and behavior were breaking down because they no long fit the times in which we were living. Back then when a postage stamp cost 25 cents, people could not imagine that the ATM would make a difference in the lives of ordinary people. When a gallon of gas was 97 cents, people believed that

## INTRODUCTION

a low-fat diet with lots of carbs was the key to losing weight. When gangsta rap was growing as a recognized form of social and political expression, public discussions of spirituality outside of the church were feared and denounced. In response to these changes, people's stress levels were increasing. Most people needed a little help to get them off the edge of changing times and mind-sets. They were willing to consider something new and different that gave them a sense of empowerment. In the pages of a little purple book, I offered them something to consider. I offered them faith. Faith in themselves. Faith in the changes taking place in the world. Faith in the processes of life that at the time looked and felt very strange. Since that time, more than six million people have used the messages in this book to renew themselves and their faith. But again today we find ourselves on the edge, being motivated to find and embrace a more centered, loving, and peaceful approach to the changes we encounter. At the same time, there are many who are scratching their heads in amazement or shaking with fear, wondering if they are going to make it through the rapid changes with which we are being confronted.

Let's be honest! There's a certain thrill that comes with living on the edge. There is a thrill that accompanies the struggle to hang on. There's a certain thrill people get from the urgency of holding things together or keeping them from falling apart. People who live on the edge can become so addicted to the adrenaline rush of the drama that they depend on crises to make them feel important. When you are struggling on the edge, you have something to do. When there is a problem to solve or a crisis to

## INTRODUCTION

overcome, you feel needed. When you make desperate attempts to overcome the problems and difficulties you face, you feel validated. This gives you a temporary high called *busyness*. For some people, being busy makes life worth living. People who live on the edge are always busy avoiding something, getting over something or getting through one thing or another. In most cases, they never quite make it over to the other side, but they can tell exciting stories about the struggle just to hang on.

I grew up on the edge. I became master at hanging out on the edge by watching the adults in my life move through *just about* to dramas, *almost* disasters. I can't even count the number of times I heard one of my relatives say, "I *almost* had a disaster on my hands." For most of my young adult life, I lived on the edge of poverty or the edge of financial breakthrough. I lived right on the edge of almost getting my life in order, while at the same time being on the edge of having my life fall apart. I lived on the edge of my relationships breaking up while doing everything I could to keep myself from breaking down. I learned how to survive being on the edge by pumping myself up with victory chants: "*This is not going to happen to me—again!*" "*I'm gonna make it through this!*" "*I'm not about to let this get me down!*" I had a lot of company on the edge. Friends who knew about my situation because of their own situation cheered me on. We supported one another through our edge-of-night and edge-of-daylight dilemmas. We compared notes on how close we were to falling off the edge, each one of us quietly taking pride in the fact that there was someone closer to falling off than we were. Living on the edge ultimately becomes a way of life, simply

## INTRODUCTION

because it is what you know. More often, you stay there because you don't believe you deserve better, and because you lack the faith required to have more.

Some of us live on the edge because we are undisciplined. Others of us are there because we simply don't know any better way. We live on the edge because it attracts attention, gives us an excuse; as long as we are hanging on at the edge, we cannot be held responsible for ourselves, our lives or the way things turn out. After all, when you are on the edge, you could be pushed over; you could slip and fall; you could hang off the edge until you lose your grip; but whatever way it happens, should you fall off the edge, it would not be your fault. You did the best you could because when you are on the edge, *just about to* or *almost-ing*, life happened to you, not through you. When life is happening to you, it is almost impossible to focus faithfully on anything good.

When you live on the edge, you do not plan, because you need faith to plan. You have no faith, so you wish, hope, and try. You hope things will work out. You try to do better. When things don't work out or when you don't get what you are trying to get, you get busy trying to make things happen. But when you live on the edge, you expect the worst. You look for the worst anywhere and you see it everywhere. In reality, though, you have very limited vision. It takes faith and courage to see beyond your present circumstances into the divine opportunities and possibilities of the future. Trying to make things happen keeps you on the edge, whereas faith can and will catapult you into a breakthrough.

## INTRODUCTION

Day by day, step by step, a little at a time—that is how faith works. Quite often when I read my mail, I am stunned by the anguish, fear, frustration, and sometimes desperation with which people write. More than a few describe the feeling of being overwhelmed. They do not understand why things are not going better in their lives or in the world. Painfully they describe to me their meditation and prayer practices. They affirm forgiveness of themselves and others. They claim to be working diligently to overcome their own shortcomings and challenges. Yet for some reason the bills still aren't paid or the relationship doesn't seem to be getting better; there is no relationship prospect in sight and the business still isn't booming. More important, when the feelings of frustration get the best of the best of them, they ask me: "What am I doing wrong?"

For those who may feel they are on the edge, rest assured, you are not doing anything wrong. Everything is exactly as it should be. There is no amount of meditation, prayer, silence, or any other spiritual practice that will change the circumstances of your life overnight. The purpose of all spiritual practice is to change your consciousness—how you see things; what you care about; how you approach whatever it is that confronts you. Day by day, prayer will elevate the heart and mind above and beyond the physical realities of life. Step by step, meditation will take you into a deeper realization of truth, enabling you to act in ways that will alter the physical makeup of your life. Little by little, your thoughts and feelings will be transformed, and your consciousness will follow suit. When this happens, life takes on an entirely different meaning and perspective. You are not doing

## INTRODUCTION

anything wrong. You are being transformed day by day, step by step, a little at a time, because that is how faith works in, through, and for us. In the pages of this book, I am offering you the opportunity to get off the edge by doing a little each day to transform how you see yourself, like our ever-changing world. Which, by the way, is exactly what I did twenty-five years ago when this book was first presented.

Today, as we move into yet another new time, a new frontier, the new and fast-paced energy of an ever-changing world, it is our spiritual responsibility to seek, find, know, and embrace truth, not just facts. Facts are the physical manifestation of data, but truth is the immutable impersonal laws of the universe into which we invest our faith. As we embrace the truth with faith, we *shall be* emancipated from all manner of bondage in our minds, hearts, lives, and souls. Toward that end, I am offering what I call the Twelve Commitments of Faith, which will be reinforced by the daily messages you will find in this book.

Thou shalt be committed to . . .

- Standing proudly and boldly, demonstrating your authentic and unique self without defending or diminishing who you are to others.
- Speaking the truth of your heart and experience in a loving manner, holding on to that truth even when no one else agrees with you.
- Making peace your priority, endeavoring to be kind

## INTRODUCTION

and loving to all people, even difficult people, who are anything but peaceful, kind and loving.

- Giving yourself permission to make mistakes by believing and trusting that the universe will give you an endless supply of do-overs.
- Forgiving yourself and others daily, even when it is hard, more specifically when you absolutely don't want to do it.
- Refraining from thinking, saying, and doing anything that does not bring you peace or joy.
- Demonstrating respect for all people's beliefs, particularly those that are different from yours.
- Demonstrating and remembering that you matter.
- Honoring and taking care of Mother Earth.
- Balancing your life with work that you love, play that is fun, rest of mind and body, and service to others without expectation of reward or recognition.
- Securing the children first.
- Remembering that each of these things brings both tangible and intangible benefits into your mind, heart, and life when you place your faith in doing them consistently.

If you will commit to faithfully reading one page of this book every day for one year, you will experience a shift in your consciousness that can change your life. If you go one step further by reading, answering, and practicing the reflections offered at the end of each day's reading, your mind, your heart, and your

## INTRODUCTION

life *will* change. While I can honestly say there are no guarantees in life, I can also say that when you elevate your consciousness, faith unfolds naturally. When you are faith-filled and faithful, trust grows. When you faithfully trust yourself and the process of life, you see things change. They just do.

I know what it feels like to lose faith. I lost faith in myself, life, and God when I lost my daughter Gemmia. I *almost* gave up. I was holding a pearl-handled pistol in my hand ready to end my life. Suddenly, as if someone was sitting next to me, I heard, “*Stop being dramatic!*” In that instant, I remembered the message I had written for July 15 in this book: *People come into your life for a reason, a season, and a lifetime.* Gemmia’s season in life, in my life, and on this earth had come to an end. Ours would continue to be a lifetime relationship, even though she was now in spirit. I remembered how I had struggled as a young mother trying to find myself and maintain stability for my children. Neither Gemmia nor her brother and sister ever gave up on me. They trusted me as their mother. They hung in there with me while I danced around the edges of my life. It became clear to me that I did not have the right to give up on myself or on life. I put the pistol back in the box and placed the box back on the top shelf of the closet. Moment by moment I called in the faith and strength I needed to live beyond the loss of my baby girl, my best friend. Day by day I garnered the faith to know and then to believe that the pain of the loss would end. Step by step I remembered who I was, what I believed in, and everything Gemmia would have said to me about being faithful and trusting God and myself and the process of life. Today my

## INTRODUCTION

faith is stronger than it has ever been, and I am at peace. I now know that the experiences we face each day are designed for us to test us and help us grow in faith.

I invite you to join me on a faith-building journey through the pages of this book. Let us set an intention to change how we see ourselves and one another, using faith as our looking glass. I encourage you to use faith as the foundation for creating and attracting more peace, joy, love, and abundance in every area of your life. Yes, things have changed over the past twenty-five years; however, there is a truth that has remained constant. That is, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen*. My prayer is that together we can transform our hopes, dreams, and visions into reality by being faithfully committed to transforming what we think, how we speak, and what we do day by day, step by step, act of faith by act of faith. And now we shall begin.