

**Foreword by Shelley Giglio**

cofounder of Passion Conferences

and Passion City Church

# fighting forward

HANNAH  
BRENCHER

Your **NITTY-GRITTY** GUIDE  
to **BEATING** the  
**LIES** that **HOLD**  
**YOU BACK**



# fighting forward



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Your NITTY-  
GRITTY GUIDE  
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YOU BACK

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BOOKS

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*Fighting Forward*

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## Chapter 1

# Just Show Up

It may be time for you to just start. To not waste any more moments. To not wait on perfection. But to just get up from the floor, with wobbly knees, and start moving imperfectly into that thing that fear is always trying to hold you back from.

I can't even begin to count the number of people I meet who have a goal, a vision of who they want to become, that they never move toward because they're too afraid of failing. They're afraid of what people will think. They're afraid of not being successful in the end and inevitably breaking their own heart. The thing is, more hearts break every day over never taking that first step than anything else.

I think most of us feel this fear. Somewhere in our younger years, we learned to carry this expectation that we'd be exceptional. We'd be good. We'd do all the right things. We'd be perfect.

Maybe you learned to tell yourself, *If perfection isn't a realistic expectation, I will just get as close to perfect as possible*. And these words you spoke over yourself cracked open the back door just wide enough for fear to get in. Soon enough, you became someone who writes but never presses publish. Or someone who buys the running shoes but never takes the first run. A person who always wanted to paint but never picked up the brush. Or the one who wanted to go back to school but whose internal dialogue prevented them from ever filling out the application.

## Get Ready, Get Set

This is what fear will do if we opt for perfection over choosing to start just as we are in this moment.

There are no shortcuts. There are no overnight fixes. There are no detours. The instruction manual for deep change is the same every single day: *Show up. Show up. Show up.*

You've probably heard that phrase a bunch. People say it all the time. But this isn't a call for you to show up when things are easy and convenient. If you wait on convenience, the time will likely never be right. There's no way to cut corners on the hard parts of life that really help to form the person you're becoming. Trust me, you don't want to skip those parts, as hard as they will be to endure. The tough conversations. The endless goodbye. The "thank you" she never extended in your direction. The way it sounded when the front door closed and you knew it was really, definitely over.

These things likely would have never happened if you hadn't shown up. And sometimes they'll hurt so bad you'll be tempted to not show up again, to keep your heart locked up inside a safe where only you know the combination. But you'll miss so much if you live that way.

Even if life breaks your heart, decide to show up anyway, because the scars are worth the purpose you fought for. They're proof you were here. They're proof you struggled and you believed in something. They're proof you laced up your shoes and entered the game with your whole heart.

I read a book recently titled *Atomic Habits* in the hope it would change everything about my life. That's just how I operate. I believe I am always a thirty-day plan away from a completely new landscape. I'm a transformation junkie, and I have no hopes of recovering.

The book did change some things though. My favorite story was about a man who decided he wanted to take back his life and lose weight. He began going to the gym every single day.<sup>1</sup>

## Just Show Up

But that's just it.

That's all he did for the first few months.

He would walk inside the gym, put on his gear, and sit in the gym. That was the only promise he made to himself: "I'm going to show up to this gym and at least sit here for the next five minutes." For the first month, he didn't allow himself to do anything else.

Day after day, the method repeated itself until he felt ready to stay a little longer and inch a little bit further outside his comfort zone.

Some may think it's ineffective and pointless to even drive to the gym, sit on a bench for a few minutes, and head back home. But I know the feeling, and you probably do too, of making a promise to yourself that you could not keep. It's not because the promise was bad—whether it was to eat healthier or write the book or go back to school. Sometimes the promise is just too unrealistic for where you're currently at. It must be broken up into bits. And the first bit is always *showing up*.

Showing up to sit on a bench in a gym.

Showing up to read the first sentence.

Showing up to eat one leaf of kale.

Showing up to fill out the first line of an application.

This slow progress could change the world. Turns out, it often does.

The opposite of showing up is opting out.

Sometimes I deal with anxiety when it comes to social situations, and my first instinct is not to show up at all. I think the culture has made it really comfortable to claim you want a lazy night on the couch away from others because then you won't have to have deep conversations or endure small talk or commit to more things. It's a sour-grapes attitude, and I am really trying to work on it.



## Get Ready, Get Set

My husband, Lane, keeps reminding me to change the way I'm talking about events on the calendar, and I've started opening up to others about it, admitting that I've created a problem where there wasn't one before. That I have all these things on my calendar, and I treat them like hurdles to get over rather than opportunities that God may want me to step into. I do a really bad job of being present for other people when I don't even feel like being in the moment.

I have one friend whom I always text when I don't feel like going somewhere. I fill the space with all my reasons that it doesn't matter if I don't go. I want her to be swayed and tell me to stay home and just enjoy my me time. But she always replies, "Yeah, the things you don't want to go to end up being the best for you." That's it.

And she's always right. When I feel resistance, it means something is about to happen.

So I've been switching up my prayers these days. I've been making them compact but honest. I've been straight-out telling God, "I'm afraid I won't add up in this place. Help wipe out this fear and see what you need me to see instead." It's a good prayer. It's working. But I have to pray it all the time. For me, it's not a onetime prayer but a ballad I keep reciting to God every time I encounter a new hurdle.

I lived for too long believing that showing up was ineffective if I was still afraid. The fear may still linger, but there is power in ignoring the fear and taking that first step anyway.

When in spite of your fear you choose to go after the things that matter to you, you're actively saying to the fear, "I know you want to try to hold me back from this, but I am going to show up, no matter what. So you can go and pick a better subject, but I won't be subdued by your efforts anymore."

## Just Show Up

When you start showing up, you learn that some of the most beautiful things only happened because you found the courage to exit your own head and just do the next necessary thing.

This was the essential lesson I learned when I pushed my fears aside and just slapped a smile on my face for the occasions coming up on my calendar. When I stopped going to the grocery store with headphones in my ears, trying to tune out other people. When I became open to the things God wanted to do with my day instead of scheduling so tightly that nothing miraculous or wonder-filled could get in.

Sometimes you show up, and you keep showing up, because of someone else. Someone who needs you and what you bring to the table. Someone who looks at you and at how far you've come and says, "I want to be like that." Consistency is like espresso down the hall: it comes with an aroma that other people can sense and will gravitate toward. I've learned that if I am going to be any kind of person by the end of my life, I want to be the consistent kind.

You'll start seeing shifts in tiny ways. You may be tempted to discount the movements because the change will be so small, but don't move so quickly. Step back. Jot down the small "showing up" miracle.

I was in the grocery store just the other day, getting groceries for the week. I was picking out some hummus, and a woman came alongside me and asked, "Why should I eat this?"

"Excuse me?" I was caught off guard by her question.

"Why should I eat this?" she said again. "And how? With crackers?"

"I like it with crackers," I tell her. "Or carrots. I love to dip my carrots in hummus."

"Hmm," she said to me. "That's a good idea."

## Get Ready, Get Set

A few minutes later she was alongside me again as I went through the cheese aisle.

“What’s that?” she asked me, pointing to the little log of cheese in my hand.

“It’s goat cheese,” I tell her. “With little berries in it.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed. “Now I like that! Which one should I get?”

She proceeded to tell me she had gone to the doctor recently, and he had advised her to start eating better. The problem was she didn’t have any experiences to go off of; she didn’t know the first thing about eating healthy, and the doctor hadn’t really equipped her.

She just arrived in the parking lot of the grocery store, went in, grabbed a basket, and showed up with anticipation. And there I was. A woman who usually has her headphones in but didn’t that day.

I started showing her what was in my basket and what I loved to eat on a daily basis. I watched as her face glowed with new ideas—how happy she was to encounter someone who didn’t dread vegetables.

The exchange was small and almost insignificant, but I know it helped her. I know it made her more confident in those new changes she was making.

You never know when you’re showing up somewhere because someone else needs you. Because they have questions. Because they walked into that day unsure of how it would unfold. This is the beautiful part of life—we need one another to make it all the way through the story.

I think there is such power in showing up, even when you’re not sure about what you offer or whether you can make an impact. My husband, Lane, is a part of the student ministry at our church. He leads a pack of ninth-grade boys, which I can

## Just Show Up

bet is not an easy age group when it comes to trying to get them to open up and share their feelings. When he made this commitment, he was nervous. Unsure of himself. Unsure of what he had to offer. They'd all been meeting up for a long time, and he was the new one in the group. I can only imagine how hard it is to walk into a group that has already formed a strong bond and insert yourself. Yet he's been showing up for the last six months.

At the moment of this writing, Lane is somewhere in South Carolina in a minivan packed with those ninth-grade boys on his way to a Weezer concert. The concert doesn't start until 8:00 p.m., and he likely won't get back to Atlanta until two or three in the morning. Everything he's experiencing right now sounds like my personal nightmare, but I can't tell you how proud I am of him for driving the minivan, for taking those boys through the McDonald's drive-through at one in the morning.

We grabbed breakfast before he left for the trip, and he opened up to me about how there was a time when the boys didn't even acknowledge him. How it wasn't until he spent a weekend with them that he felt like they knew him or wanted to be around him. We talked about how one day, if not this day, it was going to mean something big to them that he was one of those consistent forces in their lives. That they would never forget that one time they got the chance to pile into a minivan to travel one state over to see a band in concert. You don't forget those experiences. They become a part of your growing up.

"People remember people who stay," I told him.

I think we all remember the people in our lives who were consistent with us. That's one of the cool side effects of showing up, no matter the cost. Because eventually, when you get so good at the showing up, you become a person who stayed. And that will mean so much to someone one day.

## Get Ready, Get Set

All the good love stories have only ever happened in this world because two people stayed.

All the good friendships have only ever withstood the tough seasons because two people stayed.

All the inspiring transformations have only ever stayed in the “after” instead of slipping back into the “before” because someone stayed.

They became fluent in the art of showing up.

It won't always be easy. And you may go through times when you feel like you're the only one who shows up consistently. Keep flexing that muscle. Out of consistency grows trust. Out of trust grows loyalty. Out of loyalty comes the steady ordinary. You may not see it right now, but the ordinary is the gold of this lifetime.

Before we move forward, you need to know this truth: You are not alone. You—at the starting line or picking up where you left off years ago—are not alone. It's tempting to believe everyone else has it all together and is moving forward with no difficulty at all, but we're all overcoming hurdles and roadblocks in our own ways. You are surrounded, even if you don't see it. You are capable of showing up to the things that are right in front of you today.

So here's to first steps.

To lacing up the shoes and taking that first run.

To sending the text or writing that first paragraph.

To filling out the application or saying that first prayer.

You don't have to see the whole story of how things will unfold outlined in front of you. It's much simpler than that. Just decide to show up to this day—this very hour—with everything you have. And then repeat the same thing tomorrow. You never know how close to the breakthrough you actually are. Don't quit before the miracles start to happen.