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GARY LEE MILLNER

Foreword by Kevin H. Turpin



Slaying Life's
Dragons
and Beasts

A Practical, Biblical Guide to
Overcoming Life's Pains, Obstacles,
and Addictions

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A Practical, Biblical Guide to Overcoming
Life's Pains, Obstacles,
and Addictions



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Slaying Life's Dragons and Beasts

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Endorsements

In this insightful book, Gary Millner takes a practical approach to resolving many of the struggles of the Christian life. His own story is interwoven in such a way that we are drawn into the journey. It is an invitation to take a deeper walk with Christ.

—Paul Hardy
Recovery for Life
<http://www.r4ci.com>

Gary's desire is that the Father would use his journey from bondage to freedom as a path for others who struggle. I am sure you will find his story inspiring and his counsel helpful. Choosing to live the abundant life that Christ promised requires that we allow Him to give us victory over our past. I am sure this book will help you do just that.

—Bob Perdue
Author of *Ten Life Choices*, *365 Days of Life*
LifeNow Ministries
<http://lifenowministries.com>

Slaying Life's Dragons and Beasts is an excellent book. It combines many practical yet biblical ideas into one single source. I recommend it to anyone struggling to gain victory over sin, negative thoughts and emotions, and addictions.

—Stephen Bialowas
Minister, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

This book tackles the issues that are relevant for today but not discussed much within the church. Gary does a great job of exposing the besetting sins that hold so many in bondage and gives hope by walking the reader through the steps to set one free. A must read for anyone who has felt alone in their struggle and afraid to seek help.

—G. Douglas Dowdey,
Founder, G. Douglas Dowdey Ministries, Inc.
<http://dougdowndeyministries.org>

Dedication

This book is first and foremost dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is my life.

To my beautiful and wonderful wife, Joanne—my treasure.

“The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord.”

Proverbs 18:22 (NLTSE)

To my beautiful and wonderful children, Matthew and Malinda.

“Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows in a warrior’s hands. How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them!”

Psalm 127:3-5 (NLT)

To my wonderfully awesome parents, John and Helen Millner, who did their best to train me up in the ways of the Lord.

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- Tom Conant
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Foreword

Millions of people battle depression, addiction, and other mental and emotional disorders in various forms each year. These disorders often rob individuals of their dignity and will invariably alter their future. Every so often you connect with a person who is familiar with the battle and finds that path to freedom. Gary does a masterful job connecting with the reader as he defines common disorders and offers real solutions.

I know Gary personally and, as one of his pastors, friends, and counselors, can attest to the fact that this book has been birthed out of a long, hard fight for stability, peace, and a sense of well-being. Gary is more than a survivor; he is a testimony of God's grace and is being used as a tool to help others confront their challenges through a practical application of God's Word.

As a counseling pastor of a multi-ethnic megachurch in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and a professor of psychology, I am intimately involved in the lives of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds who battle a myriad of mental and emotional disorders. Many books and articles have been written about these infirmities, but few are as personal as *Slaying Life's Dragons and Beasts*.

Gary takes the reader on a candid journey of his personal battle and provides a practical and biblical understanding of how to overcome these strongholds. His honesty and frankness are refreshing and his personal story of freedom will inspire you. Get ready to laugh, cry, and rejoice as he shares his story.

Kevin H. Turpin

Senior Associate Pastor

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Virginia Beach, VA

<http://www.newlifeprovidence.com>

<http://www.lecnorfolk.org>

Assistant Professor of Psychology



In order to be truly helpful to the reader, the information contained in this book is oftentimes quite explicit. The goal is that through honest, transparent communication, the reader will be encouraged to face his or her issues head-on and to receive the healing that only Jesus can provide.

Introduction

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered...” (Hebrews 5:8).

Obtaining total freedom in Christ is a process. It is not something that happens overnight or when we accept Jesus into our hearts—at least not in the physical realm. It is a process that may take weeks, months, years, or even a lifetime. I believe that a common misconception among Christians is that they think when one accepts Christ, then the struggle is over. They think that total victory has been achieved—victory over anything and everything that the person struggled with before. This is simply not the case. It is a lie from the evil one.

The lies that we believe about ourselves—I’m ugly, I’m not smart enough, I don’t have what it takes, etc.—and about others, anger, un-forgiveness, pride, codependency, self-hatred, and our various addictions are all part of living in a fallen world.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, God forgives us of our sins, washes us in the precious blood of his Son Jesus, and makes us new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, very little happens in the area of our minds. Don’t get me wrong; there are some who get set totally free from a particular struggle (such as anger, un-forgiveness, or drug addiction) when they accept Christ. Unfortunately, I believe that this is more the exception than the rule. More often than not, what happens is that the person wakes up the next morning and still has the same “stinking thinking” and various other problems and addictions that they had before they received the free gift of eternal life. I believe that this is why the Bible tells us that we should renew our minds. Romans 12:1-2 reads (emphasis mine):



Therefore, I urge you, *brothers*, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

If our minds were completely renewed at the point of salvation, then why would the scripture tell Christians (brothers) to renew their minds?

Even Jesus had to go through the process. Hebrews 5:8 states that even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. Can you imagine that? Even the Son of God had to suffer in order to learn obedience! It wasn't something that was automatically bestowed upon him because he was God's Son. Jesus had to go through the process just like everyone else.

This book is about my struggle to obtain that *true* freedom in Christ that I believe every Christian is entitled to. Regardless of your circumstances, problems, or struggles, God's Word is full of rich, abundant promises for his children. Promises such as eternal life, peace, joy, healing, long life, meeting all of our needs, protection, comfort, answering our prayers, deliverance, rest, forgiveness, grace, mercy, love, compassion, hope, success, wisdom, and more. The list is seemingly endless.

If you haven't experienced the *true* freedom that Christ died to bring you, then this book is for you.

His son,
Gary Lee Millner

P.S. E-mail from readers is welcome; my address is
garyleemillner@gmail.com.

CHAPTER 1

From Danville to... Dragon Slayer

I grew up in the relatively small town of Danville, Virginia. My parents came to know the Lord at a little church not too far from my childhood home. It seems as though we attended church whenever the doors were unlocked. In fact, on one occasion when I was very young, my Dad and I walked to church in about three and a half feet of snow! I was underdressed with the cold snow hitting me in the face. I was miserable. We arrived at church only to find that the Sunday morning service had been canceled. After warming up for a few minutes, we had to turn right around and walk back home! This was a difficult experience for me as a child and one that I will remember for as long as I live. However, little did I know, this would be nothing compared to the difficulties that I would face later in life.

I was a shy, introverted child who was basically a “mama’s boy.” No one taught me self-esteem, social skills, or any life skills, for that matter. I did not learn them at home, at church, or at school. I was left alone to figure them out for myself.

In fifth grade, because of my extreme shyness, I remember that one particular girl used to tease me, acting as though she liked me just to see me blush. I think the boys put her up to it. I also remember getting slapped in the face while in the cafeteria by a different girl. However, perhaps the most damaging event that occurred in middle school (fifth, sixth, and seventh grades) was one that came from someone whom I thought to be a friend. This girl, all of a sudden, seemingly out of the



blue, called me “ugly.” I thought that we had a pretty good relationship up until that point, but apparently I was wrong. Perhaps she was just having a bad day. I did not respond to this insult but instead just quietly took it to heart, believing that it was truth.

This was how I handled these kinds of situations. I wouldn’t fire back any choice words or try to initiate a fight, but rather I would just take whatever abuse was given and ponder it in my heart asking, “Could this be true?” Unfortunately, the answer that I concluded was almost always an overwhelming yes. I never discussed these events with anyone. I suppose that I thought I was all alone in these situations and that no one could empathize with me, understand me, or help me.

Sadly, these situations continued throughout high school. Specifically, I was called “ugly” several more times in high school—even once by my own uncle! This just served to reinforce the apparent truth behind these statements.

The idea that I was ugly just devastated me. I felt rejected, unacceptable, worthless, useless, powerless, and hopeless. I already had severe acne and was very self-conscious. This was all I needed—the icing on the cake—the precipitating factor that would drive me over the edge.

In an effort to ease my pain, I turned to many bad, self-destructive, and addictive behaviors. I believe that it is natural for a person to seek pleasure in an effort to balance out or ease the pain in their life. Regrettably, this “pleasure,” or answer that we create, usually causes more harm than good.

The remainder of this book is about the pains, obstacles, and addictions (dragons and beasts) that I have faced in this life and how God has enabled me to overcome (slay) them.

By the grace of God, I now have consistent victory over fear, anxiety, depression, lust, pornography, masturbation, un-forgiveness, anger toward God, self-hatred, anger toward

people, pride, and many other negative behaviors, emotions, and mindsets.

My prayer is that by sharing my story, you will be provided with the tools necessary to slay the dragons and beasts in your life.



Appendix One: How to Receive Eternal Life

The Short / Simple Answer

“...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:30-31).

It’s really that simple. You (and I) must believe that God loved us so much that he gave his one and only Son Jesus (to die on the cross for our sins) so that whoever believes in him (Jesus) shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16 paraphrased).

It can be summarized in this way:

- Heaven is a free gift that is not earned or deserved.
- Man is a sinner and cannot save himself.
- God is loving and merciful and doesn’t want to punish us. Yet he is also just and therefore must punish sin. See the apparent dilemma (God really doesn’t have any dilemmas)?
- Jesus Christ is God who became man. He solved this apparent dilemma by dying on the cross and rising from the dead to pay the penalty for our sins and to purchase a place for us in heaven.



- This free gift can only be received by faith. Faith is *not* mere head knowledge or temporary faith. It is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life.⁵⁵

The Longer Answer

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through *faith* in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified *freely* by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:20-24 (emphasis mine)

The above scripture says that righteousness from God (eternal life) is a free gift that is received through faith (belief) in Jesus Christ. It's really that simple. The above scripture also states that no one will be declared righteous by observing the law. This means that we do not receive eternal life by doing anything other than believing in Jesus Christ and confessing him to be our Lord.

That if you *confess* with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and *believe* in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Romans 10:9-10 (emphasis mine)

Here we see that the requirements for receiving the free gift of eternal life are confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

That's it. There is no requirement to keep the law (i.e. the Ten Commandments—do not steal, do not commit adultery, etc.) perfectly. However, keeping the Commandments will be a natural outworking of your faith in Jesus.

Likewise, there is no requirement for us to change our behavior before coming to Jesus. He takes us as we are and transforms us over time into his likeness: "...he who *began* a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6—emphasis mine).

This good work begins when we receive the free gift of eternal life. It continues until the day the Lord Jesus Christ returns for his people.

In addition, there is no prerequisite to do good works in order to receive eternal life. Ephesians 2:8-9 reads (emphasis mine), "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — *not by works*, so that no one can boast."

Every religion in the world except Christianity requires that you do good works in order to earn your passage into heaven. The problem with this is how do you know when you've done enough? And how could you ever do enough to deserve to live forever in heaven?

Not only does God allow us to live forever with him, but he also gives us the many promises that are in his Word—the Bible. Promises such as peace, joy, healing, long life, meeting all our needs, protection, comfort, answering our prayers, deliverance, rest, forgiveness, grace, mercy, love, compassion, hope, success, wisdom, etc. The list is seemingly endless.

Why would anyone choose not to take advantage of all these wonderful promises?

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith Through Prayer

Prayer is talking to God and allowing him to talk to you.



God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as he is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer to be prayed (preferably) out loud:

Dear Jesus,

I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe you died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Lord Jesus, please come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins and save me. I repent of my sins and now place my trust in you *alone* for my salvation. I accept the free gift of eternal life. Please make me into the person that you want me to be.

In Jesus's name I pray,
Amen.

Does this prayer express the sincere desire of your heart? If it does, I invite you to pray it right now and Christ will come into your life just as he promised.

What Do I Do Next?

First, I would encourage you to visit the following website: <http://4laws.com>. This website will give you a deeper understanding of the gospel, what it means to be a Christian, and the steps that should be taken next.

Second, tell somebody. Remember that one of the two requirements for receiving eternal life is to confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord." If you prayed the above prayer out loud then you confessed with your mouth to Jesus that he is your Lord. However, it is also important to confess this with your mouth to another human being. I would suggest that you confess this to someone whom you know (or at least suspect) to be a Christian. Otherwise, you may not get a very favorable

response, which could be very discouraging to a new Christian. Finally, remember the words of Jesus in John 15:18-21:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

Being a Christian is not easy. It’s not for the faint of heart. It means going against the grain of this world in which we live. The world hated and persecuted Jesus first. So it stands to reason that the world will also hate and persecute Jesus’s followers or disciples.

But be encouraged because the benefits far outweigh the costs. Can we put a price on eternal life? Can we put a price on all of the promises listed above (peace, joy, healing, etc.)? Can we put a price on *not* having to go down to the pit (hell) for eternity where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:49-50)?



Appendix Two: Prayer for Serenity

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

—Reinhold Niebuhr



Appendix Three: Updates to This Book

One thing that we can count on is change. There are parts of this book that may change. For example, the URLs and other information in the Recovery Resources chapter could change as website content is updated or other events occur.

If there are major changes to any content in this book, the author will post these changes on his website at *garyleemillner.com*. This service will continue until these changes are incorporated into the 2nd Edition.



Appendix Four: About the Author

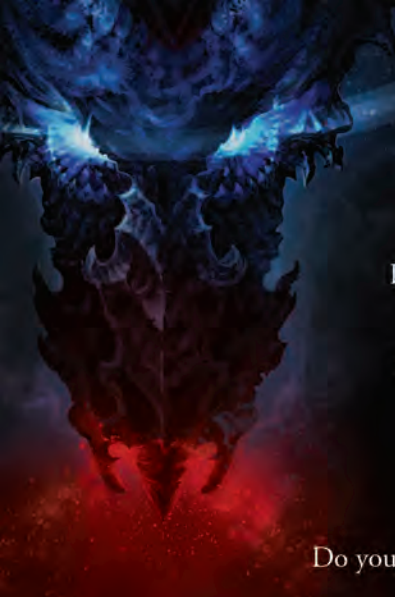
Gary Lee Millner possesses a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering Technologies (BSMET). He also passed the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam and earned the Engineer-In-Training (EIT) designation from the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, he has held numerous computer related certifications including the Microsoft MCSE, Cisco CCNP, and many others. He currently holds the (ISC)² CISSP certification. Gary works as a Network Security Engineer.

Gary has served in the music ministry of the church for over twelve years (guitar, drums), has served on the pastor's advisory board, and has led a small group ("Connection Group") that met in his home for more than two years. He also served in a leadership role in the Celebrate Recovery ministry at his former church.

Gary is passionate about opening the eyes of the blind, setting the captives free, and releasing those who sit in dark dungeons (Isaiah 42:6-7). His life mission is to comfort those in any trouble with the comfort that he has received from God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He teaches others how to practically apply sound, biblical truths so that they may obtain the *true* freedom that can only be found in Christ Jesus.

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Have the raging waters of this life almost taken you out?

Do you struggle with fear, anxiety, or depression?

Do you have a behavior that you just can't seem to get rid of?

Are lust and/or pornography problematic for you?

Have you been rejected or abandoned repeatedly in this life?

Have you been regarded as having no worth or value?

Do you have difficulty loving and accepting yourself?

Are you guilt and shame ridden?

Do you have bitterness and resentment in your heart toward others?

Are you angry with God?

Are you the spouse of one who has an addiction?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, this book is for you.

Life is hard and everyone has issues that result from living in a fallen world. Some have issues that are more pronounced, others have issues that are more subtle. Regardless of where you find yourself in life, freedom, hope, and a more abundant life are available to you in Christ.

Slaying Life's Dragons and Beasts: A Practical, Biblical Guide to Overcoming Life's Pains, Obstacles, and Addictions can get you started on that path toward a more abundant life in Him.



GARY LEE MILLNER lives in the southern part of Virginia with his wife, Joanne, and two children, Malinda and Matthew. Sparky, their black and white Shih Tzu, brings much joy to their family. When Gary is not working as a Network Security Engineer or writing books, he enjoys spending time with his family, playing guitar, billiards, and snow skiing.



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