

A black and white portrait of a woman with curly hair, wearing a white blazer and a necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her hands are clasped in front of her.

NIKKI BROWN

AUDACITY

THE COURAGE TO LET GO AND LEAP

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Niki Brown

Audacity: The Courage to Let Go and Leap

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Books By Niki Brown

There Is More! 8 Steps to Embracing the Greater You
Audacity The Courage to Let Go and Leap!

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INTRODUCTION

DESTINY IS A DECISION



*“There is only one decision that separates those who
achieve success and those who just dream.”*

—Oprah Winfrey

IT WAS TIME. I HAD put it off long enough. With sweaty hands, I grabbed the pen and signed the contract to launch one of the largest business ventures in my life. At the time I was living on food stamps, close to broke, and it felt as if I was signing my entire life away. While I had accomplished many things, this by far was the most daring risk I had ever taken. What if I can’t pay for it? What happens if no one supports me? I’m already in debt. What will people say? What qualifies me to do this? Maybe I should wait a couple of years until things calm down in my finances.

Up until this point, I prided myself on being an astute planner. I knew how to organize the steps to accomplish a goal. I had perfected the art of always having a plan A, B, and C. If neither of those worked, then D, E, and F were never far away. But at that moment there was only plan A. If that didn’t work, I was going to fail

miserably and my family would suffer the loss. But no matter what I said to talk myself out of that moment, I had this undeniable, palpable sense that sitting in that management office was exactly where I was supposed to be and signing that contract was exactly what I was destined to do. This one decision caused my entire life to leap into an incredible season that is now changing the lives of women everywhere.

Sometimes the only thing standing between you and destiny is a decision. That's it. One unnerving, audacious, out-of-the-box step which can change the entire trajectory of your life.

Have you been there? Standing on the edge of your worst fear and possibly your greatest opportunity? You don't have the resources or experiences to take the next step and you're second-guessing whether you heard God's voice or your own. But somewhere a part of you is screaming, "Girl, you can do this—take the leap," while the other part is shouting in protest, "Are you crazy? What are you thinking?" You spend weeks agonizing over it. You call all your friends and spiritual counselors for their opinions and guidance only to come back to the same place where you started. Alone, carrying the burden of a decision that only you can make. A decision, which unlike others, has the potential to change...everything.

Your decisions determine your destiny. Your life right now is a product of a decision you made somewhere in your past. You might reject this idea because maybe, like me, you believed other people were responsible for where you ended up in life. In my book *There is More, 8 Steps to Discovering the Greater You*, I talk about how I blamed everyone for why my life was mediocre. I

spent years waiting for someone to open a door and give me the thumbs-up sign signifying I was good enough and qualified for the life I really wanted to live. No matter how desperately I searched for this person, he or she never arrived because he or she didn't exist. God revealed to me that greatness and success don't just happen; you have to create it. Moment by moment, step by step. Decision by decision.

Do you want the truth? Making a decision is not easy. In fact, it can be agonizing. I'm not talking about everyday decisions, such as what you will wear to work or eat for lunch. I mean those life-changing, fork-in-the-road, do-or-die decisions. Even as I write this book, I realize that I spent the last nine months trying to decide if I even wanted to write the book. In truth, I was nervous. Would people really buy a second book? Were they just being nice and supportive when I wrote the first one?

For nine months I became stalled on a road called "should I." It's where you question yourself on what you suspect is something you're being called to do. Should I really move forward with this new business? Should I get married now? Should I leave my job and venture into something new? What will people think? What steps should I take?

Sound familiar? I think we've all been stuck on the road of "should I," "what if," "maybe," and "let's wait and see." But at the end of that road you will find a town called "stagnant, mediocre and frustrated." In other words, this is what you will experience if you stand on the cliff of indecision too long.

You may be saying, "That's just not my makeup. I'm not daring. I didn't have the best upbringing. My parents were divorced. I was

raised poor. I didn't do well in school." Yup, I used to recite that list too. But one day God challenged me with a question: "What's the difference between you and Oprah Winfrey, or even Bill Gates?" I replied, "Okay, God, really? How about: Rich. Smart. Talented. Good Connections. Lucky breaks." He said, "No, it's none of those things. It's not their talents, gifts, connections or being in the right place at the right time. You can have all of that and remain stuck. The difference between you and them? They had the audacity to make a decision." That's it. They took a crazy, insane step to do something daring at the risk of their reputation, resources, and safety, guided by the belief that it was destiny.

I grew up in a charismatic religion where the word "audacity" was never used in a positive way. It was more like, "She had the audacity to stand up and say that?" Or "I can't believe you have the audacity to even think that was okay!" My generation and culture were taught to put our heads down, be quiet, and follow the rules. The idea of asking for more than we deserved was seen as self-aggrandizing. Taking risks without a solid fallback plan was foolish, and for heaven's sake don't even think about leaving your job if you don't have another one already. I'm convinced that a whole generation of gifted individuals are still living trapped in the mediocrity of the mundane. I adopted this mindset too and always wrestled with the unspoken question of "Who do you think you are?" whenever I attempted to do anything against the grain.

I had to do my own research on this word to understand why it created such a sense of contempt. What I learned is that audacity is a behavior that butts up against every rule and norm, so much

so that it makes others feel uncomfortable. So here's my definition of it: audacity is an unrestricted boldness to do something that is outside and beyond your comfort zone. It is a courageous vulnerability to put yourself out there in spite of the possibility that it just might fail. Audacity is not born out of your skill, competency or ability to do something efficiently. It's you making a decision to take a risk that you're not qualified to take—nor are you certain of the outcome. It's confidence in the face of no confidence, and as Romans 4:18 alludes to, it's "hope against hope."

This is why I don't believe audacity is a feeling but rather a belief system. It's a belief that goes beyond what you think you can achieve and taps into a greater source and undeniable conviction that says, God loves me, God is for me, and He wants me to win.

To be clear, audacity does not guarantee success no matter what. It's a posture that stands on the idea that in the face of possible defeat, I will embrace the truth of who I am, who God is, and what I feel destined to do in this moment.

I had to ask myself, where have I exhibited this kind of audacity? How have I been brave? What risks have I really taken in my life? Where have I disregarded normal constraints, thrown caution to the wind and done something truly daring? While I'd definitely had some daring moments, such as speaking in front of a crowd of several thousand or having a very difficult conversation, those moments didn't feel intentional or purposefully courageous. I was either assigned to do those things or felt pressured to do so. The ability to be audacious begins with a decision. An intentional, thought-out choice to do something that goes against every fiber of your being and challenges you to your core. I realized that I had

very few times where I made a conscious decision to be brave. It was easier to be unintentionally audacious and rely on others to push me so that if it didn't work out, it wasn't my fault.

When I signed the contract for my very first women's summit, I learned that God was calling me to be brave on purpose. But I had a problem with this. Why would God leave something so powerful as destiny in the hands of a decision I would or wouldn't make? Truthfully, it seems a little irresponsible on God's part. He's created this amazing plan for us which has the potential to change and impact people's lives. Why would it boil down to a decision? I don't know about you, but I've made a lot of dumb decisions, especially during an emotional crisis or circumstance in which I felt forced to make an unwise choice.

I found the answer in Romans 8:28, which says, "All things work together for the good of them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." God in His infinite wisdom and omniscience knew us before we were born. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born." He not only formed me, but He intimately knows me and every single step that I will take. He knew the tears I would cry, the victories I would experience and the mistakes I would make. I'm a firm believer that God is not passive in His approach to my life in that He sits back and watches what I will do. I believe He works sovereignly behind the scenes to bring my life to the place that He purposed all along.

Therefore, God will never force me to make the right decisions, but He doesn't cancel out my future from a bad decision either. In God's grace and mercy for us, He ensures that even the

negative decisions will be added in to work for our good. So no matter what detours your life has taken or mistakes you've made, Romans 8:28 tells me that you have the exact past God wants you to have and every step you take will work for your good in the end. In other words, where you are right now is exactly where God expected you to be.

If that's the case, why do you even need audacity? If God is going to fulfill His promise in your life anyway, why do you need courage? Why do you have to do things that are uncomfortable and scary? Truthfully, you don't. You can live passively and wait for things to happen. You can hope for a door to open in the areas you've been praying for or you can take steps that will manifest what's already waiting for you.

Audacity is a driving force that puts your faith into action and accelerates the results. Brene Brown wrote in *Daring Greatly*, "You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, but you cannot have both." You can't have both because courage creates movement in your life, while comfort creates mediocrity. Audacity breaks patterns. It demolishes routines. It moves the needle and forces a new normal to develop. I would dare say that audacity can expedite the accomplishment of your goals. What would've happened if I had risked writing this book nine months ago? I'm pretty certain I would be traveling on tour right now. Even though Romans 8:28 teaches us that in the end we will get to our destinations, how quickly we get there is up to us.

So let me tell you what this book will do for you and what it won't:

This book will not be a pep talk on how to live your best life.

Living with audacity means learning how to get in the ring with an opponent much bigger and stronger than you, whether that be your doubt, fear or inner critic. It's being willing to take some hits and even lose a few rounds, and then having the courage to get back in the ring and do it again. While that can lead to your best life, walking in courage is a journey—one that will require all your resolve, strength and faith.

This book will not help you overcome your fear. No, audacity finds out where fear lives and moves in with it. It's only when you look fear in the eyes that your courageous and daring self comes alive. It's when you stand toe to toe and wrestle with your greatest misgivings, insecurities, and shortcomings that you discover your power to win. I'm a big Marvel fan and realized that while each superhero had an amazing gift, it didn't start out that way. All of them were faced with their worst fears and crises, which stirred up their inner warriors. Your crisis is critical to your development. It's in your weakness that you will find your strength and courage.

Finally, this book will not be a step-by-step guide on how to obtain a quick miracle. While some courageous acts and prayer will produce overnight results, audacity is a lifestyle—one that starts in your mind, takes up residence in your heart and is manifested through your decisions.

What I pray this book will do is speak to your indecisions, whisper in the ear of inactivity, and challenge you to get up and face every excuse you've used to manage a life of mediocrity and hide behind a spiritual lingo that makes it okay to do nothing.

This book is to remind you of who you are as well as who God

is and has been in your life. He has your best interest at heart and will never and has never let you fall. He has created you for more and truly wants you to have the more you crave.

Finally, my hope is that you will meet Him back at the place where you abandoned your dreams, ideas, gifts, and talents due to fear, rejection, or not being seen as good enough, and that you will finally embrace your God-given destiny to let go...and leap.