



WALLS

WHY EVERYBODY'S STUCK
(and nobody has to be)

RYAN RUSH



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Walls: Why Everybody's Stuck (and Nobody Has to Be)

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All of us will hit the wall; it's just a matter of time. And, when we do, there's no "quick fix." Ryan Rush is a passionate storyteller, and woven between his very personal stories is a challenge for each of us to experience a Faith Breakthrough. He offers no neat formulas but life-changing principles.

VERNON BREWER

President/CEO, World Help

My friend Ryan Rush is one of the most effective voices I know in helping individuals and families move beyond obstacles to experience spiritual breakthroughs. Read *Walls* to discover why.

KURT BRUNER

Pastor of spiritual formation, Lake Pointe Church;
author of *It Starts at Home*

Ryan knows what it takes to break through walls, both from his personal experience and as a pastor who has helped many bust down those invisible barriers that hold them back from God's best. This book can help you identify and push past the most imposing wall in your own life.

JOHN BURKE

Author of *No Perfect People Allowed: Creating a Come-as-You-Are Culture in the Church*

As the walls of Jericho crumbled by the power of God, so do the walls in our lives, which keep us from experiencing all God has for us. With grace and precision, Ryan Rush shows us that escape from our man-made prisons is not found in physical fortitude but in a poverty of spirit that trusts in the only One who can set us free.

MATT CARTER

Lead pastor, Austin Stone Community Church

Authentic. Relevant. Humble. Passionate Christ-follower. Put those together, and you get Ryan Rush. Read *Walls* and get ready to say good-bye to yours.

WILL DAVIS JR.

Lead pastor, Austin Christian Fellowship; author of *Pray Big*

Ryan, a gifted storyteller, reveals our tendency to be masterful wall builders. He brings us face to face with the walls we unknowingly build. He then reveals the biblical principles available to us when we decide to put on the demolition hat and go to work tearing them down.

RON HUNTER JR.

Coauthor of *Toy Box Leadership*; cofounder of the D6 Conference; executive director and CEO, Randall House

Walls will help you make sense out of this beautiful mess we call “under the sun” living. Ryan’s fresh and humble approach to life’s obstacles is refreshing and rewarding. This book will change your life!

RANDY PHILLIPS

Phillips, Craig & Dean; lead pastor, Promiseland West

Walls is a practical and honest book that connects faith with reality. This book will change lives.

KEN DAVIS

Author, speaker, consultant

Using a dynamic and motivating approach, Pastor Ryan reveals both how to reach heaven and how to live on earth. *Walls* is a constructive and enlightening book that explains how to overcome obstacles using two key elements: faith and action. After reading this book, you will never again be a mere dreamer but will become a dream maker.

CARLOS VARGAS

Founder of Hope of Life International, Guatemala

After stepping on a land mine that ripped both legs from my body during the Vietnam War, I was sent to a naval hospital, where I saw much bitterness and anger. What happened to so many on that hospital ward is emblematic of what so many people in our churches experience. People get in a rut, and life seems hopeless. Well, the good news is there *is* hope. Without suggesting it’s easy to get out of the rut, Ryan Rush explains the biblical way to escape. This book is a must-read for *everyone* in the church!

TIM LEE

Evangelist

When God brought a “barrier wall” into Ryan’s life, he forced Ryan to go deeper in Jesus Christ than ever before. Before God could use him in ministry, Ryan had to learn his own limitations, understand the power of God, and discover that all our resources are in Jesus Christ. As God changed Ryan Rush, may He change you.

DR. ELMER L. TOWNS

Cofounder and vice president, Liberty University; dean, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and School of Religion

Ryan’s vulnerability is timely, as many of us struggle when our faith is challenged. His biblical view on our need for a new, healthy perspective is freeing! If you are facing a tough situation, this book is for you.

JIM WEIDMANN

Coauthor of *Spiritual Milestones* and *The Focus on the Family Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children*; founder, the Family Night Movement

I love this book. *Walls* has helped me deal with personal challenges we all face in our lives. This is a book everybody should read and study.

ART WILLIAMS

President, the A. L. Williams Company

Ryan Rush is a powerful preacher who now displays an equal ability as an author. I predict his new book *Walls* will be an immense aid, helping readers realize, identify, and break through their unique walls.

DR. HAROLD WILLMINGTON

Bible teacher; author of *The Outline Bible* and *Willmington's Bible Handbook*

Some books ignite movements. I believe this is just such a book. Not only can it help you tear down the walls you're facing, it's a message and tool you'll want to share with your family, church, and community. Ryan has helped hundreds of people tear down even the most difficult walls holding them back from experiencing God's best. Let him show you how God's promises can go to work on any walls you're facing as well.

JOHN TRENT, PH.D.

President, StrongFamilies.com and The Institute for the Blessing at Barclay College

Ryan Rush has taken a thoughtful look at the challenges we face that can seem insurmountable at times. Without casually dismissing these hardships, he admonishes us to find, with God's help, the confidence and strength to break down the walls in our lives and to move the mountains in our paths with the sheer power of perseverance and faith.

JERRY FALWELL JR.

Chancellor, Liberty University

When Ryan Rush's daughter Lily is a little older, I want to meet her. I want to look her in the eyes and say, "Your life is full of meaning and purpose for a thousand reasons. But among those reasons is this—your early years enriched and refined the mind of your daddy. You helped him learn how to tell all of us how to bring down the walls in our lives through faith grounded in God's promises. Every time a wall comes down somewhere, you were part of that. I am so glad you are on earth." Each person who reads *Walls* will understand those words, and will probably stand in line with me to speak to Lily.

RICHARD ROSS, PH.D.

Professor of student ministry, Southwestern Seminary
(www.RichardARoss.com)

Ryan Rush has clearly identified the barrier standing between the life we presently have and the life God designed us to live according to his promises. You will cry as you recognize your personal walls, and you will be overjoyed as you discover freedom, hope, and a new way of living. *Walls* is a must-read for every person feeling stuck and in desperate need of a breakthrough.

DR. BRIAN HAYNES

Senior pastor, Bay Area Baptist Church; author of *Shift: What it Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*

We all know what walls feel like—walls of discouragement, habitual sin, or deception. Pastor Rush reminds us that the truth that God has revealed to us in the pages of Scripture “can prove to be the turning point in our lives.” When we take God’s Word to heart, breakthroughs are not far behind!

DR. ROB RIENOW

Family pastor, Wheaton Bible Church; founder of Visionary Parenting (www.VisionaryParenting.com)

Authentic. Proven. Practical. Ryan’s words truly empower people who feel “stuck,” using real-life stories of Christ’s power to create a doorway beyond the walls that hold us back. Consider this book your biblical sledge-hammer to break through the barriers that keep you from the freedom God has intended for your life.

DANIEL HENDERSON

President, Strategic Renewal

Walls present different challenges in the eyes of their beholder. To some, they hold captive; to others, they protect; but to the person of faith, they are to be scaled and overcome. In this delightful book, Ryan Rush chooses to overcome and encourages all who read it to accept their reality and then scale that wall to freedom.

H. B. LONDON JR.

Vice president, church & clergy, Focus on the Family

Without my wife and children, there would be no book. Your sacrifices, conversations, and living examples have given me the confidence and inspiration to stay on this course long enough to make it a reality. I love you.

Lana, thank you for not only walking this breakthrough path with me in recent years (and recent days!), but for allowing me to show the world some of our deepest hurts and struggles.

Ryley and Reagan, thank you for being such incredible young women of faith, and for making your mom and me look so smart. God has great things in store for you!

The ultimate dedication of Walls, however, would be incomplete if it were not directed toward our Lily—the one who has been through so much in her short life and taught us so much about God's promises. You are a miracle and a blessing, and our Lord has unimaginably incredible plans for your life! You have already changed ours for the better.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the emotional investment of a lot of people.

The congregation of Bannockburn Baptist Church is full of living examples that Faith Breakthroughs work. Thank you for your willingness to walk in God's promises and to walk with me as we have enjoyed this glorious experiment together.

The staff of Bannockburn Baptist Church has worked, dreamed, planned, rehashed, prayed, and cried together in asking one simple question: How can we develop a process that will allow our people to carry God's promises home? These are your ideas as much as my own. Thank you for your passion and your partnership.

Dr. John Trent's heart for the American family has had a greater impact on our culture than most will ever realize until we are in heaven. His fingerprints, insights, efforts, and wisdom are found throughout this text. I can never adequately express my gratitude for his "above and beyond" work to make this book all that it could be. Thank you for pushing me to dream bigger.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My parents and in-laws have exemplified what great parents are supposed to look like, and the legacy they have passed on to my own family went a long way in shaping our home life—and in turn, the truths in this book. Thank you for your steadfastness and love.

The entire Tyndale House family has made me feel welcome, and I will always be grateful. I have witnessed firsthand the eternal mind-set with which you carry out your mission, and I am honored to associate my ministry with yours.

INTRODUCTION: THE DAY MY WALL BECAME REAL

This book was supposed to be about a formula for overcoming the walls that hold us back. It has been twenty years in the making.

Then I hit my own wall, and the formulas went out the window.

I have spent my entire adult life trying to help people improve their lives by connecting their spiritual journeys to their everyday existence. It has always troubled me that our home lives seem so severed from what we know of God. Most churches are fighting this battle for spiritual authenticity: we speak of God's truth and his provision, but the evidence of that faith being lived out in everyday life seems far more absent than anyone would like. I've seen fathers who claim God as their own, but neglect to love their children; young adults who were raised in good churches who simply walked away; and even senior adults who begin to drift from a passionate walk with God to a regimented set of rules.

I set out to discover a better way. That's where I came upon the exhilarating, life-giving idea of Faith Breakthroughs,

which I've seen help hundreds of people face their own walls and move past them to a better life.

In the years I hammered out the concepts you'll find in this book, my family was unusual in all of the good ways. Lana and I were nearly two decades into a happy marriage. Our two daughters were loving, low maintenance, and living as much of the good life as is possible in middle school. I was pastoring a large church, with a sold-out staff behind me and pews full of great people in front of me each Sunday. Each week I got to teach men and women the 1-2-3s of making Faith Breakthroughs. Thankfully, by God's grace, we heard incredible, encouraging stories of walls coming down in everyday people's lives.

But then God brought us Lily, a surprise baby after a decade away from such things as diapers and feeding schedules.

Lily was born with a host of medical problems, including a large hole in her heart that would, without imminent open-heart surgery, eventually threaten her life. I remember thinking of how many people—even well-known pastors I'd met—had suddenly come face-to-face with a major trial and loss. For many, I knew it had made them stronger and more effective in their faith and work. I wish I could tell you that in those early days of hospital stays and sleepless nights, I heroically thanked the Lord for all the heartaches. Instead, I did something more honest. I said, "God, if this is in any way about helping me become a better father, or husband, or minister, or author, or speaker, or person . . . then I quit."

All I wanted was for the pain to go away—most of all for my precious child. But God did not give us that option. All I

wanted was to keep on helping others with their walls. What I had to face were walls of my own.

So here I am.

I believe with all my heart that in the pages before you there are powerful, biblical tools you can use to tear down the walls that have kept you, or your loved ones, from living the life God intends. Unfortunately, I can no longer in good conscience write a book that promises to take all the pain away in the process.

What I can share with you is what's worked in my life. What's given us sleep on sleepless nights and hope and courage during the toughest of days. I can testify about what has torn down the spiritual walls we've faced, and what I believe can do the same for you.

If what you're looking for is a simple, painless plan, you won't find it here. If your goal is a way to break through that glass ceiling and get the promotion you just know you deserve, it may not happen. Or if what you seek is a guaranteed, "no tears" way of tearing down an uncaring spouse's walls in three easy steps, you have come to the wrong place.

But what I can give you is something richer: a new way of navigating through, and past, the challenges of life. Even past that terrible wall you're facing today. I can share with you a way to experience breakthroughs even in the midst of confusion and doubt, hardship and bitterness (yes, even bitterness, if we're honest). I can do that because I now know more about walls than I ever wanted to know, and I understand that even once-conquered walls can keep springing up again. But, with truth, they can be torn down.

It's not just my story I'll share. In this book, you'll find

amazing stories of everyday people I've met in our church who have used the power of Faith Breakthroughs in their lives. People who, if you sat down and heard them share their experiences, would leave you shaking your head over how they moved from the wrong side of the wall to the freedom, life, and hope they're experiencing today. I pray these stories will leave you filled with hope and courage that your wall can be torn down as well.

—*Ryan Rush*



1

**FACING OUR
WALLS**





(chapter one)

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STUCK ANYMORE

Do you ever have the feeling that you are missing out on something important?

It's probably because you are.

You are separated from blessings so incredible, in fact, that if you realized what you were missing, you wouldn't stop until you had them in your possession. Those blessings are as real as the book you hold in your hands, and they are waiting for you! But you will never enjoy them if you remain where you are right now. You are stuck, and you don't have to be. There are walls that hold you back and keep you from living your life to the fullest. And those walls don't crumble through sincere effort or positive thinking.

I discovered through my own trials that overcoming walls

is not always that simple. For me, that struggle came from the most unlikely place.

Lily changed everything.

Lily is now a four-year-old firecracker. Her therapists have nicknamed her “the Texas Tornado” because of her uncanny combination of energy and speed. In a matter of seconds she can playfully dismantle objects that once seemed indestructible. There is no barrier from which she cannot escape, and the word *childproof* is lost on her, but she can weasel out of trouble in an instant with the most beautiful smile you’ve ever seen. With big, bright blue eyes and floppy brown hair, Lily is the cutest little girl you’ll ever lay eyes on. We call her Lily-bird because, well, it just stuck somehow.

If you ever meet her, though, you may sense that something is not quite right. That’s true. In four short years of life she has accumulated an entire file box of medical records. Lily-bird’s life has been a roller-coaster ride, and the adventure isn’t over yet. But the highlights and heartaches of this one adorable little girl have shaped our family more than I ever thought possible.

Lily has brought me face-to-face with my own walls. Her struggles for life caused me to question not just the beliefs I held dear, but the reasons I held on to those beliefs. My journey with her has helped me realize just how important it is for people to face the walls that hold them back.

The lessons in this book are straight from the Bible, and I am totally convinced that they are effective and true. But I’ll have to admit that I underestimated their profound impact on real life until I lived them myself.

If you are like the rest of us, there’s a good chance that

something has challenged your understanding of God, and there's a strong possibility that those struggles have affected every other relationship in your life. Even so, I have great news for you, news that has the power to change everything: *there is a way past the walls that are holding you back.*

But before you overcome the walls in your life, you have to understand what's happening around you that has the potential to ruin you.

You have been robbed, and you might not even know it. Millions of people throughout history have been robbed in the very same way, but that doesn't make it any more acceptable to have something taken from you that is rightfully yours.

***There is a way past
the walls that are
holding you back.***

You may be like one of the unwitting victims of Albert Gonzalez. You've probably never heard of him, but there's a chance he has heard of you. Albert was the hacker behind the largest credit card theft in U.S. history, swiping data from more than 130 million accounts and making off with nearly 200 million dollars before his arrest in 2008. With that many accounts involved and that much money stolen, there is a good chance you or someone you loved was a part of that number without knowing it.

But that's not the robbery I'm talking about. I'm referring to a much larger heist with a far greater consequence.

Chances are good that at this very moment you are being robbed of a breakthrough—a breakthrough that would lead you to a life God designed you to enjoy. This breakthrough has already been promised to you. You were created to experience it, to walk in its freedom, and to comprehend its power.

Just as walls come in all shapes and sizes, so do the breakthroughs that move you beyond them. You can have a breakthrough financially and receive a raise at work. You can experience a breakthrough in a relationship and marry the person of your dreams. But a far more significant breakthrough is waiting, one that ultimately paves the way for a whole new life of victory.

This is what I call a Faith Breakthrough, and I am praying that there is one in your very near future. A Faith Breakthrough is the act of overcoming a life barrier by learning to trust in, and intentionally pursue, God and what he has promised you.

A Faith Breakthrough is the act of overcoming a life barrier by learning to trust in, and intentionally pursue, God and what he has promised you.

As a pastor, daily radio show host, and national speaker, I have had the privilege of coming into contact with tens of thousands of people across America, and I have yet to meet someone who hasn't faced walls. It turns out, as far as I can tell (and unless you are the first), that we are all stuck in some way. By "stuck" I mean that we tend to find ourselves caught in a place where no progress is made for an extended period of time—even when we know

instinctively that more lies just ahead. This is true in our personal lives, in businesses, in churches, and in entire communities.

Of course, I have had a front-row seat to one of those groups. I have spent long days and nights trying to figure out the reasons for the frail faith of the modern church—a group

of people who seem to be better at talking a good game in a building once a week than truly walking with God in daily life. I have witnessed what happens to families when parents fake their faith on Sundays and then forget it at home. I have looked at the pervasive inconsistency between most people's stated goals and their actual schedules. I grow even more frustrated when I witness the sincere desire of the wonderful people in these households to live life as they should. The inconsistency is rarely a defiant act of hypocrisy, but instead a sense of confusion about how to fix the problem or an inability to see that problem at all.

I have looked at all the "quick fixes" for home life and been left wanting more. I am convinced that the problem goes deeper than giving people a few simple lifestyle adjustments and hoping all will be better. Nope—most of us are beyond the Band-Aid phase. It's time to stop settling for business as usual and to pursue the spiritual life we've always dreamed of.

EVERYBODY'S STUCK, AND NOBODY HAS TO BE

If we're enjoying all God really has for us, then our faith will overflow into every nook and cranny of our lives, transforming every relationship we have, every perspective we perceive, and every legacy we leave. That's the magnitude of a Faith Breakthrough—and the secret to overcoming every unseen wall that is holding us back.

I'm not promising it will be easy to face the regret of having been robbed for this long or to realize what could have been. I am only promising that you don't have to be robbed any longer if you take ownership of what God has in store for you.

Albert Gonzalez and his band of hackers were able to rob so many of so much because they were invisible to the victims. His electronic scams were taking place without detection because nobody knew he was there. It's much harder to steal something when the owner is holding it in his or her clutches and there is a sense of loss. It becomes a lot easier when the owner never knew what was missing in the first place.

Maybe you never knew you were stuck behind a wall or missing out on your breakthrough. You've heard about God's promises perhaps all of your life, but you never quite grasped just how personal they were to you—until right now. And that's why there is so much opportunity in store for you in the pages ahead.

As a pastor, there's nothing more disappointing than seeing someone I care for who has fallen victim to the lies of the enemy. I've known drug addicts who decided it was too late to change, who ultimately wrote their own death sentences. Fathers who determined they had already wasted too much of their relationships to reconcile with their grown children. Sinners who decided they were far too guilty to seek forgiveness.

They were robbed of the blessings awaiting them, distracted by the lies holding them back.

On the other hand, there is nothing more gratifying to a pastor than watching walls come crashing down.

The Carpenter family will never, ever be the same again. Brad's bout with prescription painkillers had started years earlier when he was dealing with a work-related injury, but the dependence on the pills extended far beyond the medical need and eventually dominated his thoughts, his motivations, and his very existence. After being stuck for years behind a

Wall of Discontent and Shame, Brad was about to give in to all of the pressures he was facing and run away from it all. Instead, he cried out to God—and cried out for help from some close friends in his congregation. They shared with him the truth about his walls and the opportunity he had for a genuine breakthrough. As the principles in this book began to permeate Brad’s life and family, what happened next was nothing short of a miraculous transformation. I’ll never forget a recent Sunday morning service when Brad told the entire church about his walls, the addiction that those walls brought about, and the powerful forces of change that had totally transformed his family, his future, and the way he looked at life. He looked out at that crowd, eyes welled up with tears, and proclaimed something to every person in that auditorium: You don’t have to be stuck anymore.

Brad wants you to know the same thing, and I want you to know that there is an opportunity before you that might just be greater than you ever imagined.

Jesus warned his disciples in John 10:10 that just such a robbery was a genuine threat to them: “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.”

You don’t have to be stuck anymore.

It is important to remember that the life you’re missing out on is not being taken from you by accident. Believe it or not, the Bible tells us we have a very real enemy who is out to deceive the people God loves so dearly. You’ve heard him called the adversary, the devil, Satan, and Lucifer, to name a few. Just know that this enemy is real, and he has a heartless plan to rob you and leave you lifeless, trapped forever behind your own walls with all your breakthrough opportunities left

in a garbage heap along the way. He is in the business of creating barriers of deception that are intended to hold you back, and many of these walls are cleverly disguised as very enticing alternatives: Comfort. Revenge. Ignorance. Entertainment. He intends to do only one thing: to con you out of the life God has in store for you.

But you don't have to settle. There is so much more beyond the walls! The passage in John 10:10 actually has great news after that solemn warning. After telling his followers about the thief, Jesus continues to tell them something better: "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."

In the context of this book, Jesus might have said, "The thief comes only to place you firmly behind a wall that will rob you of everything I have planned in your life. But I have come that you might have life—the life that's waiting after your Faith Breakthrough!"

If you were made for a breakthrough—for "a rich and satisfying life," as Jesus himself said—then that should happen naturally. You don't have to attain some great stature or learn some secret to enjoy it. You need only to tear down the walls that are keeping you from it. Like a healthy plant that has not grown beyond the confines of its pot, you may have walls that are keeping you stuck in a no-growth pattern that won't change until you address the problem.

I need to warn you right now, however, that there will be times in the pages ahead when you will be waiting for me to offer you an easy formula. I'll be very clear: I find no indication in the Bible that this is simple or easy. Instead, I find that it is *natural*. And because you were made to live life beyond the wall, I can assure you that it is absolutely worth it.

It's time for you to tear down the barriers that are holding you back. Now that you know how much is at stake, it is time to recognize just what you're up against. It's time to face the wall.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We live in a “quick fix” world that often tries to reduce problems to something less than they really are. For example, when people are in financial debt, some try to solve the problem by borrowing money—even though more money is not usually the heart of the problem. Can you think of an example of a problem that goes deeper than what people seem to be addressing?
2. Satan often offers enticing, but counterfeit, alternatives to God's best for our lives. What are the greatest temptations that people face today, and why do they seem so attractive?
3. Ryan talks about lies that can hold people back from the life God intended and gives several examples. How have commonly held “lies” kept you from what God has intended for your life?
4. Have you or someone you loved ever been robbed? How did that experience change the way you saw the world around you or how you behaved in the days that followed? Did you find that you had been robbed of something beyond the physical goods that were taken? If so, explain.

NOTES

1. Information on the Berlin Wall comes from Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and Frontiers of Power*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 113, and Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961–1989* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 94ff.
2. Ken Gire, *Moments with the Savior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 116.
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5. “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, June 12, 1987.” Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, www.reaganfoundation.org. Retrieved September 1, 2010.
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7. Alok Jha, “Isaac Newton’s Falling Apple Tale Drops into the Web,” *The Guardian*, January 18, 2010.
8. Information on Alvin York comes from John Perry, *Sgt. York: His Life, Legend and Legacy: The Remarkable Untold Story of Sergeant Alvin C. York* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997). The State of Tennessee maintains a state park in York’s honor, where Andrew York (Alvin’s son) is one of the park rangers (<http://www.tennessee.gov/environment/parks/SgtYork>).
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NOTES

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