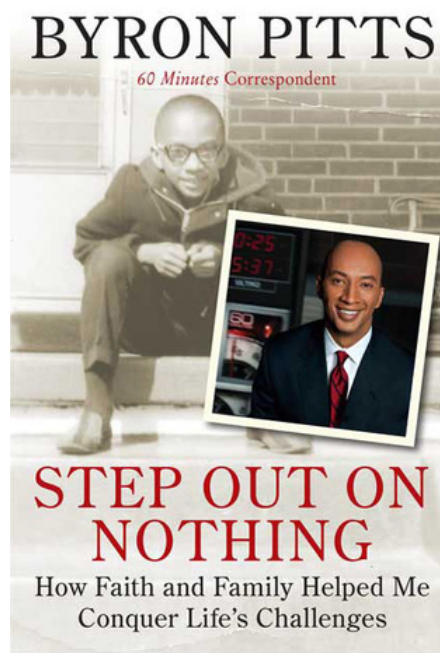




## Step Out on Nothing: How Faith and Family Helped Me Conquer Life's Challenges

*Byron Pitts*

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*It was August 25, 2006, my first on-camera studio open for the CBS News broadcast 60 Minutes. Executive Producer Jeff Fager poked his head in the dressing room. "Good luck, Brotha! You've come a long way to get here. You've earned it."*

*. . . If only he knew. My mind flashed back to elementary school, when a therapist had informed my mother, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Pitts, your son cannot read."*

In *Step Out on Nothing*, Byron Pitts chronicles his astonishing story of overcoming a childhood filled with obstacles to achieve enormous success in life. Throughout Byron's difficult youth his parents separated when he was twelve and his mother worked two jobs to make ends meet he suffered from a debilitating stutter. But Byron was keeping an even more embarrassing secret: He was also functionally illiterate. For a kid from inner-city Baltimore, it was a recipe for failure.

Pitts turned struggle into strength and overcame both of his impediments. Along the way, a few key people stepped out on nothing to make a difference for him from his mother, who worked tirelessly to raise her kids right and delivered ample amounts of tough love, to his college roommate, who helped Byron practice his vocabulary and speech. Pitts even learns from those who didn't believe in him, like the college professor who labeled him a failure and told him to drop out of college. Through it all, he persevered, following his steadfast passion. After fifteen years in local television, he landed a job as a correspondent for CBS News in 1998, and went on to become an Emmy Award-winning journalist and a contributing correspondent for *60 Minutes*. Not bad for a kid who couldn't read.

From a challenged youth to a reporting career that has covered 9/11 and Iraq, Pitts's triumphant and uplifting story will resonate with anyone who has felt like giving up in the face of seemingly insurmountable hardships.

## Step Out on Nothing: How Faith and Family Helped Me Conquer Life's Challenges Details

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## From Reader Review Step Out on Nothing: How Faith and Family Helped Me Conquer Life's Challenges for online ebook

### MaryHelen says

This autobiography was very well written and quite interesting. Byron Pitts was born into a lower income minority family to parents who eventually divorced. In addition to his family's lack of finances, he struggled with stuttering, functional illiteracy, an absentee father, and numerous other challenges during his life. A hard worker who had help along the way, he eventually graduated from college and achieved his dreams, becoming an unqualified success as a broadcast journalist and 60 MINUTES correspondent. I found his life story inspiring and his writing style enjoyable.

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### Jackie Kelly says

This was a great read, it should be read by high school students who can't see any way out. Very inspirational

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### Lori says

An uplifting book about Byron Pitts and his struggles. Loved it.

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### Janet Maisel says

I was looking for a book on cd to listen to while commuting to work. This was a random choice simply because it was a biography. I love it! I am only on the first CD but when i pulled into the parking I check to see how many CD's there are to listen to and was sad to see that there are only 5!. Byron Pitts is well known for his spot on 60 minutes. There are many things that intrigue me about this so far - there is a spiritual (christian) connection, which I didn't know until I started listening He grew up in Baltimore, raised by a single mother after a divorce, attended Archbishop Curly, had a stutter until he was 20, he was told he was functionally illiterate and maybe even retarded when he was child. Yet he managed to work himself up to a coveted position of fame. All the while giving credit to those who deserve it for helping him in life. Can't wait to get into this more. Finished the book. I would like to go back and write down some of his bits of wisdom, quotes, etc into my journal. Though I thought maybe it was a bit too long after all, I still looked forward to getting in the car to listen to it. I had one disappointment at the end when he gave the commencement speech for his college but I won't say what it was. I will save that for my book discussion group.

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### Veronica says

I found this book in a good thrift store brand new. I could not believe this gem was in the store because it is a must read for young adults who think the world ends over day to day crap. Get off of junk media and read a book.

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## Nancy Kennedy says

I read this book after hearing Byron Pitts speak about his struggles as the child of a single mom growing up in a poor section of Baltimore. It is no spoiler to say that this respected journalist struggled to overcome stuttering and had to face the fact that as a teen he was functionally illiterate.

This is Mr. Pitts's story about starting over again as a reviled "basement boy" in remedial classes and his ensuing struggle to overcome severe learning difficulties. At a time when little was understood about how children learn to read, he was given a "reading machine" whose microfiche slides he spent hours memorizing. Combining determination with faith -- not to mention the force of nature that was his mother -- Mr. Pitts achieved his greatest dreams, graduating from college and eventually working at the pinnacle of broadcast journalism, CBS's 60 Minutes.

Despite Mr. Pitts's immense likeability, it is truly his mother Clarice who steals the show. Endlessly energetic, tireless in her advocacy of her children, deeply loving and utterly convinced of the power of prayer, Mrs. Pitts pushes her son to achieve more than he ever thought possible. He writes humorously about her infamous temper. Overwhelmed by the demands of college, he considers dropping out. She writes him a letter that starts: "Dear Mr. Brain Dead, Have you lost your \*\*\*\*\* mind?"

This book is Mr. Pitts's paean to his mother, as well as to all the adults who "stepped out on nothing" but their faith in him. He writes lovingly of high school teachers and coaches, college professors and roommates, priests and pastors -- everyone who had a hand in getting him where he is today. I've never read the words of someone so deeply grateful and so devout in his faith. It is the rare publisher who allows an author to write boldly about his or her Christian faith. "God held me in the palm of His hand. His Son, Jesus Christ, died so I might live." Yes, Byron Pitts says this.

Still, I felt the narrative suffered somewhat from the outpouring of gratitude. The story flags as the accolades pile on; the old saw that a journalist should show and not tell could have been put to better use here. And, I was puzzled by the silence about his family. He mentions his wife and children a few times, but you learn nothing about them, not even their names. I enjoyed the stories of his work as a reporter, and of course it is his work that ties in most closely to his struggles with literacy. But bypassing his family seems an odd omission for an author who is so eager to credit the influence of those closest to him. Nevertheless, everything the author does tell us is uplifting and life-affirming. It's all that a good book should be and proof that literacy can be the key to great things.

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## M. says

This is an autobiography about perseverance and hard work to overcome what appear to be overwhelming difficulties. Byron Pitts couldn't learn to read although he hid it well for several years. He also had a stutter which kept him from speaking up in class or anywhere else. He was sent "to the basement," the class for kids who couldn't learn, who had behavioral problems, etc. With the help of a very determined mother and a lot of other people, he finally learned to read, finished high school, and went to college where one of his professors told him he wasn't college material and his attending college was "a waste of the professor's time and the government's money." With each new discouraging comment, he found people who encouraged him to work hard to overcome the obstacles. He finished college and ultimately became a journalist for the TV show 60 Minutes.

This isn't a book about self-pity. It's about succeeding by discounting discouragement, trusting that God has a plan, and choosing to believe people who have encouraging words and offers of help. It's about making plans, sticking to them, and working hard. The book isn't maudlin and it isn't sanctimonious; it's a straightforward success story simply told.

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## Colette Byfield says

And I thought all 60 Minutes anchors were required to be die-hard skeptics. Byron Pitts indeed steps out on untraveled territory in a soul stirring, heart wrenching autobiography of his personal struggles to a coveted anchor position on 60 Minutes.

An illiterate, skinny stutterer from a broken home for much of his early life, Pitts was an unlikely candidate for any significant position, let alone one as a television journalist, but as Pitts tells it, his faith brought him over every obstacle he encountered, including bullies, a cruel college professor, and his own debilitating self-deprecation.

Pitts startled me with these revelations because I assumed he was likely an Ivy League educated journalist groomed from birth for his current position in life. He isn't afraid to amuse the reader with comical self-assessments of his appearance and laid-back attitude to life and achievements. His writing, filled with anecdotes, confessions, and regrets, belies a gentle and humble character, softened by the terrible blows of his childhood and teen years.

His mundane existence might have remained thusly if not for the invention of Catholic priests in high school and a slew of overbearing (yet loving) family and friends who urged and encouraged him; A colorful tapestry of relatives, self-described weirdos, and strangers who, ignoring the evidence in front of them, helped propel Mr. Pitts to the top.

Pitts' faith in Jesus explains faith as we Christians understand it-an actionable and unexplainable series of events that cohere to produce frequent Hallelujahs, similar to "Produced by Faith" by Christian film executive, DeVon Franklin.

To the skeptics: if you read this book and can still conclude that faith had nothing to do with a nearly illiterate child, doomed to years of remedial classes, successfully rising through the ranks of one of the most competitive industries on the planet, then I challenge you to tell me what did.

"Step Out On Nothing" is a warning to the high achiever to acknowledge the "loser" in class, an admonition to you naysayers who love to stomp all over other people's dreams, and a written pat on the back to those who have stopped believing. You can do it.

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## Tiffany says

Mom, I'm finally reading this one! It took forever for it to become available at the library. I'm not a regular '60 Minutes' viewer, so I'm not that familiar with the author, but I look forward to finding out more about this inspiring story.

I am so ashamed that it has taken me this long to post my review of this book, which I finished over a month ago. For some reason, I thought I had done it but I guess not. This book came highly recommended by my Mom, so I went to it with high hopes. Overall, I would say that it was inspiring just missing a little something. I can't quite pinpoint what exactly I found missing. I think overcoming illiteracy to eventually become a '60 Minutes' correspondent is outstanding, I just don't think he actually revealed what took him from point A to point B. There were so many incredibly helpful people along the way, from teachers to college friends that it almost seemed too good to be true. In some ways, this book read like a fairy tale, because everything he needed to work out in his favor eventually did. I also wished he had gone into more detail about his personal adult life, like his wife and children.

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### **Pam says**

Inspirational and hopeful.

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### **Deb says**

We heard Byron speak at the Celebration of Reading in the fall. His is a story of determination, faith, and people in his life who made a difference. When he was about to give up or give in, people helped and encouraged him. He is an optimist and a Christian whose belief got him through the tough times. Amazing story of a boy who was functionally illiterate until age 12 and a stutterer until his twenties who became a national correspondent. He certainly did not have a happy homelife, but he had a mother who was the force behind his success. I especially enjoyed reading about his journalistic stints on 9/11 and in Afghanistan and Iraq. He paid his dues and earned his way to the top of his game. His relationship with his father was heartbreaking but he learned how to turn it into a positive influence. I truly admire the man and his "angels."

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### **Renee says**

My eldest dd had Byron Pitts speak at her college so she brought home this book for me to read. Great story.

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### **Ariana says**

He came to speak to our 8th graders and he is amazing.

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### **Sundi says**

Such an inspiring story to keep moving forward in pursuing your dreams, no matter how hard. Byron Pitts could've believed the world when they told him he needed to quit, but he didn't. It inspires me to keep

moving forward in pursuing my God-given dreams, despite adversity.

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## Ice says

Byron Pitts chronicles his astonishing story of overcoming a childhood filled with obstacles to achieve enormous success in life. Throughout Byron's difficult youth—his parents separated when he was twelve and his mother worked two jobs to make ends meet—he suffered from a debilitating stutter. But Byron was keeping an even more embarrassing secret: He was also functionally illiterate. For a kid from inner-city Baltimore, it was a recipe for failure.

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