



## **Play with Fire: Discovering Fierce Faith, Unquenchable Passion, and a Life-Giving God**

*Bianca Juarez Olthoff*

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*Play with Fire*, the debut book by popular speaker and teacher Bianca Juarez Olthoff, is the reminder that God isn't waiting until you have more resources or a spouse or a job so he can use you. He's ready to use you *now*.

Using the mythical creature, the Phoenix, which was also referenced by early church leaders, she parallels this story with God's work in her own life, highlighting the beauty of reinvention with fire as both the impetus and the method for change. Olthoff reminds us that we serve a God who is redemptive and can take the worst situations and use them for His glory.

*Play With Fire* is a bible-infused message that will help women discover:

The way out of the middle is moving forward

The personal and powerful nature of the Holy Spirit

The power and sacrifice of transformation

The unique calling and purpose of life involves transformation

With Olthoff's distinct style, strong storytelling gifts, and powerful bible teaching, *Play with Fire* will remind readers that God has huge dreams for them. In Bianca's words, "He's whispering in the wind and speaking through the fire and shouting in silence the extraordinary dream He is birthing in you. His dream for you is far greater than the dream you have for yourself. It's not your identity or income or influence that will make this happen. Like Zechariah 4:6 says, 'It's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord." It's time to play with fire.

## Play with Fire: Discovering Fierce Faith, Unquenchable Passion, and a Life-Giving God Details

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## **From Reader Review Play with Fire: Discovering Fierce Faith, Unquenchable Passion, and a Life-Giving God for online ebook**

### **Janice Smith says**

I read this book to get ready for a women's small group study. It was really more of a memoir than a book with practical techniques and ideas for developing fierce faith. From that perspective, it was an interesting read learning about Bianca's upbringing and the challenges that she has faced. That said, I wished she would have given a bit more application. She did make some good points, especially about trying to control everything like "Control is a manipulator. She promises what can't be had. She promises perfection." Looking forward to the DVD video study!

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### **Alice Carter says**

With a name like playing with fire, I was expecting this book to focus on the Holy Spirit, and be exciting and inspiring.

Unfortunately it didn't quite live up to expectations. It is more a memoir of the authors life. As I was reading I was expecting something really big to happen, but it never quite did. I kept on reading because the author writes beautifully, but i don't think that she's quite ready to write her autobiography. Yet. I get the impression that in a few years time she may have more to say, as she seems like a woman really passionate about Jesus. I think that this book will probably find some people who love it, it just doesn't have as broad an appeal as many other Christian books.

Finally, to end on a positive, this book does contain lots and lots of references to scripture.

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### **Kathy says**

I discovered author and speaker Bianca Juarez Olthoff while watching the Propel series. While Christine Caine hosted the series, Bianca was one of the Christian leader participants. I enjoyed listening to her views on women and biblical truths. I also am following along with the Play With Fire Propel Book Club on Facebook. The first 2 books the book club covered were by Caine and by Alli Worthington. Both excellent books. I really enjoyed Bianca Juarez Olthoff's Play With Fire as well.

Play With Fire is a stand alone book but I also noticed that there is a study guide and a DVD. I recommended Christine Caine's Unashamed to my ladies bible study group and we are studying it this Fall. I would also recommend Play With Fire.

Play With Fire is a good read for women who are beginning their walk with Christ. Bianca goes through her life story with us and we travel through grief, desperation, and pain with her. But we also get to celebrate her victories with her. And her search for a purpose. I liked her A-ha moment in Chapter 1 where she decides to transform her life...she gets her butt off the couch and gets out there. She realizes that she needs to do something important with her life. It is a good lesson for all of us. And in the end she realizes that everything she been through in life is preparing her for her life as a Christian speaker, pastor's wife, stepmother, and now author.

I like Bianca. She is real and honest and a devout Christian. She has shared her life story with us. She is encouraging. By sharing her story with us we are encouraged to believe in ourselves and get moving. We need to find our own Promised Land.

I like that at the end of the acknowledgements she writes: And if you read this page too, thank you for staying through the whole journey. You are my favorite.

Well Bianca, you did great job with your first book. I am looking forward to many more.

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### **Brooke Fradd says**

In discussing vanity and body image issues, Olthoff's words felt like a friend putting her arm around me saying "me too, but it doesn't have to be this way." Play with Fire tells of her own life experiences, but as she intertwines them with the Bible's teaching on the Israelites in the wilderness, the book isn't so much a memoir but encouragement to those who are seeking a life on fire for God.

Recounting her mother's battle with cancer had me tearing up, and reaching for the phone to call my dad (who's own cancer diagnosis shook my life, faith included).

I received an advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. My opinions are my own.

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### **Julius McCarter says**

Bianca Juarez Olthoff's Play with Fire: Discovering Fierce Faith, Unquenchable Passion, and a Life-Giving God brings together Olthoff's spiritual memoir with a rich guide into the depths of the Christian spiritual life. Olthoff reminds readers of the idea that God's biggest desire for their lives is to know him personally. She weaves together the story of the Israelites with the story of a season of her own life when she struggled to hear God amid the voices of her own perfectionism and the pain of watching her mother battle cancer.

Drawing on her own story and scripture, Olthoff encourages readers to allow the Holy Spirit to transform them from the inside out, replacing hopelessness with an awareness of all that God can do through a life surrendered to his desires.

Her ability to weave those biblical stories and the stories of her own life gives us a rich tapestry of the transformation that God brings.

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Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookLook Bloggers book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR,

### **Rachel Dawson says**

I really really try to like books by Christian authors that are geared toward women, I promise I do. But almost always, I find them to be pretty light, pretty uninteresting, and pretty average. I really want to LOVE them and get fired up by them, but I'm just realizing they're not my preferred books and that's okay. This one was a great story of Bianca's life and journey of faith, but I didn't really have any great takeaways from it and honestly even now, I can't remember too much about it a couple days later. I've heard good things about this one from other friends though, so maybe I should just stop reading these books and giving them mediocre reviews and actually read books I LOVE instead. Yeah, I'll do that. Don't listen to my thoughts on this one.

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### **Kaitlyn Bouchillon says**

I think Bianca is a great speaker! She has a fiery passion that is impossible to miss, and so I couldn't help but begin this book with great anticipation. From the description of Play with Fire, as well as several interviews in which I heard Bianca talk about the book, I believed that she would write about The Holy Spirit - who He is, what He does, and how fire and the Holy Spirit often go together in the Bible. I thought she might mention a few life experiences and examples, but that the book would help readers "discover fierce faith, unquenchable passion, and a life-giving God." (AKA, focus on The Holy Spirit and not on Bianca's life story.)

However, the book is a summary of Bianca's life. There are mentions to fire - fires that she has walked through and a few places in the Bible that mention fire - but mainly it's her story of growing up. It's 200 pages about how SHE discovered fierce faith etcetc, but not how readers can do so. By the end, everything has worked out. Although life isn't easy, her mom survived and Bianca gets married. (To which she says in getting married "I was finally living His promises" (page 186). To a single girl, that's hurtful. But I won't go into that because it isn't the message of the book.)

Knowing that the manuscript of final edits was lost at the last minute and Bianca had to start over again, I have so much sympathy for this endeavor. I do believe, though, that it explains why the book repeats itself over and over again. Within even just two pages, I would read the exact same idea or train of thought. It often left me thinking, "does she just assume that I'm not reading this, that I don't understand her point the first time?"

As an example, this paragraph is at the bottom of page 182: "Faced with a division, Joshua gave the order. Yes the land was still full of giants. The land was still filled with the unknown. The land still contained impenetrable enemy walls. But the promise of God remained true. This time, the Israelites walked into that promise, as frightening as it may have seemed."

In the middle of the very next page (183), there is this paragraph - which has an incomplete sentence: "Joshua, the new leader, commissioned by Moses to take his place when he passed away. Charged to lead his people into their destiny, Joshua relied on God's promise. Yes, the land was still full of giants. The land was still shrouded by the unknown. The land still contained impenetrable enemy walls. But the promise of God remained true. This time, the Israelites walked into that promise, as frightening as it may have seemed."

An editor should have caught that. In fact, an editor or copyright editor should have caught dozens of typos and grammatical mistakes throughout the book. I would also love to know why, on page 108, they suddenly decided to start making some sentences in the book bold.

Until the final chapters (there are 18), the book really isn't about playing with fire. Bianca writes about fires she has walked through and how she's messed up or not believed/lived out XYZ, but it isn't until the very end that she even talks about playing with fire. Honestly, I still don't know what the looks like to her. I don't know what it means. I know she encourages readers to walk through the fires of life with faith, but that's all I know from the book. I was hoping for much more.

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### **Celene says**

This book is written with such heart. It is a story of transformation from the inside out, about how sometimes God needs to take you through the fire to show you the path to what His purpose for you really is. Juarez Olthoff writes with fervor, with humor, and most of all, with a pure and open heart for what God is calling her to share with the world. I'd recommend it for anyone who just needs a little push into the fire, trusting that with God, we are going exactly where we need to be.

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### **Anne says**

#### **POWERFUL & REAL**

I never would have read this book based on the synopsis on the back. I love listening to Bianca speak and teach but this book looked elementary and trite. But when two friends told me I HAD to read it, that it was changing their lives, I knew I had to at least give it a try! This book comes to me in the midst of my own desert, where Jesus is teaching me things about Himself I never could have comprehended before. This book is so real and vulnerable and relatable and empowering! It's truth speaking to people who are truly walking through the fire from someone who's been there and who has allowed God to transform her and let her know Him. I would recommend this book to anyone who is struggling to wrap their minds and hearts around a good God who allows suffering. This is amazing! Well done, Bianca!

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### **Alexandria Wildflower says**

I usually stick with fiction books. I am not a non fiction type of gal. Especially, Christian fiction because a lot these books are dry and boring, even though the information is amazing. Bianca killed this book! She makes you feel so many emotions in one chapter. You will laugh, giggle, maybe cry, pause, reflect and so much more. I love that she tells her story while craftfully attaching bible stories and scriptures as support and guidance. She was raw and intentional. She didn't sugar coat her problems or blamed them on anyone, and I very much appreciate that.

If you ever listened to her sermons or heard her speaking and was pleased, you can expect the same thing. She added her Latina spice into her book with her love for God. The book is far from boring. And though it had its humorous moments, there are many deep revelation and truth.

Anyone in any season of life, can pick up this book and relate.

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### **Gretchen says**

Not what I was expecting, but I loved it! A compelling testimony, Biblical truth, and Bianca's trademark sassy yet classy style! ❤??❤??❤?

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### **Nathan Albright says**

[Note: This book was provided free of charge by BookLook/Zondervan. All thoughts and opinions are my own.]

This book is a hot mess. It comes in with its somewhat bracingly casual tone, showing up like a slightly overweight and obsessively dieting friend in yoga pants, breathlessly talking about life's drama and struggles, even including an afterword that somewhat apologizes for its state by commenting on the fact that the author's final edits were somehow lost shortly before the book was to go to print. It's the sort of work that one is not harsh to because one has compassion on the author, even if one wishes the book was better put together. Still, this book is not one that one altogether rejects, not least because the author does strike one as a genuinely friendly person who is worth getting to know in the pages of a book, someone who may in fact resemble oneself in many ways, and given that most of us have somewhat messy and complicated lives and personal histories and struggle with the balance between the revelation of God in scripture and the personal revelation and divine providence that come through hints and suggestions and insight on a personal level, this book is written from the place of someone who has been where many of the readers of this work are.

The contents of this book reflect a somewhat hybrid origin for the theory of the book. The opening chapter and title of the book reflect the author's desire that fire be a source of renewal and transformation like the heathen myths of the phoenix, which is definitely not a point in the book's favor, but the rest of the book looks at a period of the author's life, and not a short one, as being a wilderness experience of solitude and feeling unloved and unwanted and stuck without progress towards stability in life and marriage. I cannot be critical of this feeling, having it in massive and overabundant qualities as well. Indeed, most of the book, with its discussion on coping and on bad relationships and on the misery of finding that one's family and friends and exes are getting married while one remains an increasingly aging virgin with a disastrous dating was particularly painful reading because of my high degree of empathy. Yet towards the end of the book, right around the 75% mark, one gets the feeling that everything will end up alright--noticing the fact that the author's name reflects that she is married, and realizing that even before she married she turned her considerable efforts at awkward self-revelation into serving and encouraging others, which bodes well for her success in life whatever happens. This is a pretty tell-all kind of memoir, and one whose honesty and candor allows the reader to overlook its general messiness.

As someone who reads a great deal of works on the field of divine communication with believers [1] as well as memoirs of singlehood [2], it should come as little surprise that there were a lot of ways that I could relate to this book from an intellectual as well as an emotional level. In many ways, this book provides a variety of interesting insights, including a defense of the popular habit of women's retreats, a view of a childhood and young adulthood by a thoughtful and sensitive Hispanic woman struggling with questions of identity as well as belonging and love. As many people struggle with these matters, it is little surprise that this work, with all

of its messiness and imperfection and even its hint of heathen origins, will resonate with many people who long for a positive representation of fire to represent their own fierce passions as well as the refining fire of trials that they can see when they look at how God has operated in their lives. Without a doubt, these are matters that I myself can relate to, and that is without being a part of this book's intended audience of young to middle-aged women who struggle, like the author, with feeling loved by God and others and with the general messiness of an honestly admitted life in our contemporary world. Yet, like many books, for all of its flaws, this is a book that hits a far wider target than it aims at, and there is a lot to be said in praise for that, and for the author's willingness to be so painfully honest about herself and her own life and background without slamming others.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

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## **Create With Joy says**

In *Play With Fire*, Bianca explores how God has worked the miracle of redemption and transformation in her own life. She does this by studying how fire is used thematically throughout the Bible to represent God and His ability to refine us through fire, to deliver us from fire, and to transform us by fire.

As Bianca walks us through the places of heartbreak, grief and desolation in her life – and takes us on a biblical journey with the Israelites, with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and with Jesus and His followers – we'll learn how to grow and stretch our faith when we find ourselves in the dark places and seasons in our lives.

Play With Fire is a powerful and inspiring book. Read it with a highlighter in hand.

This review is an excerpt from the original review that is published on my blog. To read my review in its entirety, please visit [Create With Joy](#).

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book from the publisher for review purposes. The opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own, based on my experience with this book.

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### **Jeanne says**

I saw Bianca at a woman's Christian conference in Brookfield, Wisconsin. Her message was encouraging, strong and motivating. I purchased her book and got to meet this energetic, beautiful woman. I just finished reading her book and loved every page. I'd read again and even highlighted phrases along the way. She is a true testament that God is with us every step of the way if we believe!!!

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### **Kaytee Cobb says**

Bianca's personal story and heart are so evident in this, her autobiography and faith journey. I was brought to tears and got chills multiple times as we saw the places God is and was working in her life. He is powerful and awesome and present, and there's no way to read this book without coming away with that as very apparent.

Only reason I don't bump this up a star is because I'd like to see a bit more "application" other than the epilogue. She has had such an interesting life, and has learned so much, but we just get this little glimpse at the end as to why we should CARE about her story instead of reading something else instead. I've heard her speak and know her to be a powerful speaker that MOVES people, and I would have liked to see more of that here.

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\*I received an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review\*