

Back and Forth

Also by Fon James

A Mother, Her Son, and THE Father,
a short story appearing in *The Triumph of My Soul,*
an inspirational anthology

Back and Forth

A Novel

FON JAMES

Tucker House Publishing

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The scriptural verses cited in this book were taken from Biblegateway.com

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Praise for Fon James and *Back and Forth*

“Fresh, unique, and thought-provoking...sheds insight and wisdom on the consequences of straddling the fence!”

—Stephanie Perry Moore, author of *Flame, A Lova' Like No Otha'*, *Chasing Faith* and *Wearing My Halo Tilted*

“*Back and Forth* should be required reading. I applaud Fon James for a novel that is sure to inspire, educate, entertain.”

—Mimi Jefferson, author of *The Single Sister Experiment*

“*Back and Forth* eloquently tackles many of life’s battles, with skillful dialogue, heart-pounding drama, and an inspiring, intricately woven storyline of forgiveness, redemption and the acceptance of God’s unconditional love.”

—Elissa Gabrielle, author/publisher of *Peace In the Storm*; editor *The Triumph of My Soul*; CEO of *Greetings from the Soul*: The Elissa Gabrielle Collection

“I simply could not put this book down as I was drawn into the lives of the characters who show us, even when we fall down, God is there to lift us up and give us the strength to try again.”

—Linda R. Herman, author of *A Time for Love* and *Consequences: When Love Is Blind*

“*Back and Forth* is an incredible story of triumph! After reading this book, a fresh outlook will be adopted by all who are open to achieving a new beginning.”

—Lynel Johnson Washington, Freelance Editor
E-mail: LMARIA23@HOTMAIL.COM

Don't straddle...

15 *“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! **16** But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!”*

—Revelation 3:15-16; New Living Translation

Author Dedications

This book is first and foremost dedicated to my mother, Faye.

Ma, I love you so much for all your support. You were the one who kept asking me when the book was coming. I got tired of hearing: Have you written any on your book? What's going on with the book? I was watching Oprah and Fon, you need to get your book done (LOL). Well, Ma, the book is finally done and I want to give you the biggest thank you for pushing me to do what thus said the Lord. I love you always for being my number one fan. You're the best mother a girl could ask for.



I also want to dedicate this book to the memory of my dear college friends: Kisha Jones and David “Wavy Dave the Tiger” Chambers. Kisha, yes girl, I’m still writing, just not for the newspaper. Wavy, you were the best mascot in the world and the games will never be the same without you. May you both continue to rest in the arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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My brother Brent, my little brother (okay, we know you're actually way bigger than me), but to my Brent, you have grown into such a handsome young man. I know that we don't talk everyday, but you know that I love you so much and your big sister has got your back always. I know that I used to treat you like my own child because Ma would let you run around the store and hide under clothing racks and I would get after you because I didn't want anyone to kidnap my little brother (I watched way too much TV), but I am glad that you let me think I was your play mother. Thank you for always supporting your big sister. I know that I moved away and I wish I could have been there for you more, but I am glad that my absence didn't stop you from growing up to be a humble, respectful young black brother who knows how to be kindhearted and true. Brent, you're a talented and very deep brother who can dissect the heck out of any subject! We argue about the littlest things, but it's just our way of showing love towards each other. It's just the two of us...I love you forever bro...

Now, it seems like my acknowledgments are going to span the pages and I have been known to write long-winded,

but I am thankful to God for this opportunity to give thanks to those that have helped me make it, so here goes....thank you to my grandparents, **Callie and Lemon Franks** and **Ludie and Clifton Trice**, my aunts, uncles, first cousins in both the **Franks** and **Strong families**. Much love to the **James Family**. To my line sisters **43 D.Q.D.C.C.**, Delta Pi Spring 99, I love you ladies always. To what I would consider my other “line,” my Houston chapter sorors, the infamous **HAC StepTeam** (that never stepped), And to my current chapter, the **Houston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority**.

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To My Readers: Thank you so much for purchasing this book. I pray that you will continue to march forward in righteous living for God. If you are going back and forth, remember don't straddle the fence, give your struggles over to God, no matter what they are, and watch him fight your battles! Much love!

If I missed anybody, please charge it to my head and not my heart. Just fill your name in here _____, mail this back to me and I will get you in on the reprint!!!!
LOL

Love always,
Fon

Back and Forth

Freshman Year

Chapter One

Don't do it!" they all shouted as Gavin pulled his car into the small parking lot. There were several cars in the lot and only two available spaces left. Gavin whipped his late model Toyota Camry into one of the vacancies on the end. He had been holding Faith's hand for the duration of the ride.

"Well, I guess this is it, Gavin. Are we sure this is what we want to do?" Faith looked into Gavin's eyes, studying the windows to his soul, hoping something in them would give her a signal that this was not the right decision.

"Faith, we've already talked about this for two and a half weeks straight. There is no other way. We don't have a choice. We are just too young to handle such a huge responsibility like this. I mean, we are pretty much kids ourselves. Let's just do this and get it over with."

Faith stared at her boyfriend and searched for answers. She loved him so much. He had to be right...right? What other options did they have? She knew it was wrong, but it was the only *right* she and Gavin knew at the time. From the moment she'd discovered her plight, it had become the focal point of all of their conversations. Faith lived and breathed her predicament.

"Gavin, it's Faith. Um, we need to talk. Can you meet me in your lobby in about fifteen minutes?"

“Faith, you know I’m getting ready to leave campus so that I can catch my flight. Girl, you know I love your butt, so don’t be trying to make this little mini-Christmas vacation a big deal. I’ll be back in two weeks and like I said last night, umph...last night.” Gavin thought about his Christmas gift from Faith and briefly paused to reflect before finishing his statement. “I will call you every day.”

“Gavin Tremaine Roberts, would you just listen!” Faith nearly screamed into the phone. We have to talk before you go. I know what you said last night, but I have to tell you something before you leave and this cannot wait. It’s really important okay, baby?” She quieted her voice as she felt herself about to cry. “I’ll be right over, okay?”

Faith nervously snapped the purple top back on the pregnancy test and slipped it into her jacket pocket. She tried to zip it closed, but the pocket wasn’t shaped right for the stick. “I’ll just hold it in my hand, so I can be sure it won’t slip out while running. Should I even be running?” She talked to herself, as the positive results of the test came rushing back to her remembrance. Slipping her feet into her shoes, Faith rushed out the door. Even after nearly screaming at Gavin, her best friend and roommate, Chrissy, was still sound asleep, so she didn’t even worry about locking the door to their dorm room.

As she made her way across the campus to the men’s freshman dormitory, she wondered what her boyfriend’s reaction was going to be. She said a quick prayer and asked God to help her make it through this.

Gavin was standing on the curb as though he was waiting on a bus. “Faith, girl, you are really tripping. You gonna make

me late, over here waiting on you like this. What it do, baby? Hit me with the info quick or I'm gonna miss my flight."

Faith thought about it and realizing that she had little or no time for antics, she blurted out, "Gavin, I'm... I'm pregnant." As tears began to roll down her cheeks, Gavin dropped his bag in shock.

He instantly grabbed Faith and pulled her close as he stared into the morning sky. Today was supposed to have been a great day. He was going to see his family in the next couple of hours and celebrate the Christmas holidays. Engulfed by shock and anguish, Gavin mouthed a silent oath.

Gavin's best friend, Remi, pulled his red Chevy Blazer up to the curb where the couple was standing, still embracing one other. "Man look, ya'll ought to have enough of each other, all that sex ya'll been having lately. If we gonna make this flight, we have to go now." Remi chuckled, but quickly noticed that neither of his friends was laughing with him. Faith pulled away and looked at Remi with tearful eyes.

"What? What's wrong, man?" He noticed that Gavin's eyes were slightly watered too. "Man, would somebody please say something?"

"Remi, give me a minute with Faith, then we can go."

Remi was about to object, but the seriousness in Gavin's face told him not to. He knew that Gavin would tell him what was going on during the ride to the airport.

"Faith, sweetie, we will get through this together, okay? I am so sorry I did this to you. I knew I should have used a condom. I am really sorry. I am even sorrier that I have to leave you, but I have to catch this flight if I want to get home for Christmas. I

will call you as soon as I get home, okay, so that we can talk. I love you, sweetie.”

And just like that, he and Remi were off. Faith stood shivering in the cold with her hands still clenching the pregnancy test. She watched as Remi’s SUV disappeared.

While Gavin and Faith were getting out of the car, they were greeted by the protestors that were still shouting, “Don’t do it. Don’t kill your baby. It’s already a human life.” Graphic, poster-size signs of unborn fetuses were held up by the shouting, angry demonstrators, who were standing at the entrance gate to the facility, in hopes of convincing one person to save a life. Then one person shouted, “Choose life, your mother did.” It was that outburst that made Faith stop dead in her tracks. Reality hit her head on. *What am I doing here?* The anxiety she felt made her hands sweat and her heart beat faster. Her breathing became heavy and she immediately felt angry at Gavin for making this happen. Leaning over, Faith held onto the back of the car and tried to catch her breath.

“Faith, are you okay?”

“Not really, Gavin, but I’ll make it. Let’s just get in before they start shouting again.”

Faith and Gavin scurried across the parking lot, entered the building and went to the receptionist desk. The lady sitting there greeted them with pleasantries and looked like she was all too familiar with the somber expression of teenagers who were facing the dilemma of being parents before their time. Faith hesitantly filled out the paperwork, not even caring that she was in fact putting her parents’ actual address and her real age of eighteen on the forms. She was in such a state of utter disgust

and anguish for even letting it get this far, that she gave no real thought to her actions. After finishing, Faith bowed her head in embarrassment and turned in her questionnaire. The lady behind the counter gave her a white pill and water in a disposable cone-shaped cup.

Faith returned to her seat and Gavin continued to hold her hand, trying to comfort her, as they waited. As she scanned the room, Faith couldn't help but notice all the women in the clinic. Why had they all chosen this as the solution to their problem? Why was she choosing it as the solution to hers?

"Ms. Walker, Ms. Faith Walker?" The nurse's voice broke Faith out of her trance. That was her. She got up and headed back with the nurse, and turned around, giving Gavin a look of last chance. His emotionless face showed nothing, other than regret and possible confusion. As she obediently followed the nurse, Faith stared at the panels beneath her feet. The white sterile floor seemed clean enough to eat off. That was the last thing she remembered, counting the floor tiles as she went down the long hallway to the last door on the right.

Oh, no. God, what have I done? Faith opened her eyes. The inevitable was upon her just like the bright light shining down on her. The loud machine that sounded like a vacuum had just shut off, but she wasn't sure if they were finished or not. She felt someone stuffing a soft, small pillow type object between her legs.

"You are all done, Ms. Walker. If you want to just lie here on the table for a minute, we'll put you in the recovery room for the next hour and then you'll be ready to check out if all your vitals are okay. Have a good day and try to take it easy for the next few days, okay?"

Have a good day! Are you kidding me? Faith thought to herself as she repeated what the foreign man said. He had a red dot on his forehead, and was dressed in a three-quarter length white coat. She kept looking at the ceiling, hoping she would wake up like she had done the previous nights, but as she laid there, it dawned on her that this was no longer a dream. The day had come and the irreversible damage had been done. Unfortunately, there was no turning back.



It had been a week since the abortion procedure, and other than the guilt and regret she was harboring, Faith was beginning to feel better, physically. She had followed all of the post-operative instructions and nothing out of the ordinary had given her any cause for alarm. Gavin really hadn't been around much and she was kind of glad. She didn't know how to feel about him, right now. Random thoughts entered and exited her psyche. Contempt. Rage. Anger. Disgust. Love. Hate. Hurt. Regret. When it came to Gavin, she couldn't pinpoint one emotion. While she knew it wasn't his fault entirely, he *was* the one who insisted they *not* use a condom because according to him, they were too uncomfortable. Unlike Gavin, Faith's best friend, Chrissy, had been right by her side since she returned to the dorm from the clinic. Faith had given Chrissy the keys to her car, so Chrissy could chauffeur her around. She had taken Faith to get her post-operative prescription filled, brought her chicken noodle soup, and consoled her when she cried at night while thinking about what she had done.

"Chrissy, I really appreciate you taking care of me like this on a Saturday. Having you as my best friend is such a blessing.

You've always been there for me, ever since high school. Remember when we used to...?"

"Oh my goodness, here we go again. Girl, you love to reminisce, don't you?" Chrissy interjected. "Every time I turn around, you start talking about how we met at Provine High School on the dance squad. How we out-danced everybody else in high school; how you used to do this, how I used to do that. If I had a dime for every time you brought up the past, I would quit working at Chili's, because I'd be rich!"

Faith laughed at her friend. They both knew it was the truth. Faith liked living in, and hanging onto the past, especially when it was good. She and Chrissy had been through a lot together and nothing had ever come between them, not then and certainly not now. They never had a problem with boys either, because Chrissy was into the more thuggish fellas and Faith was into the "pretty boys." Of course, double dating was always interesting with the two, because the boys never got along and always wanted to prove their unique style was the best. But it didn't matter to Faith and Chrissy. They always respected each other's likes and dislikes. Faith loved her friend, Chrissy. It was at that low moment in her life that she realized Chrissy was a real true friend.

"Chrissy, would you have done it?" Faith questioned and stared at her friend who was preparing to go to the shower stalls down the hall. Chrissy, except for the almond shaped eyes, looked like a young Halle Berry with light, golden sun-kissed skin and short, naturally curly, jet black hair. Her creole heritage gave her that biracial look, while her hazel green eyes added to her unique beauty. Chrissy seemed to be so focused on getting her loofah sponge and selecting from her collection of *Bath & Body*

Works smell goods, that she appeared not to have heard Faith's question over the music blaring from her iPOD earpiece.

"Chrissy, I know you hear me. Would you have done it?"

Chrissy spun around to her friend in slight angst because she really didn't want to answer the question. "I don't know, Faith. I really don't know what I would have done. I mean, you never know what you will do until you get in a situation like that, which I honestly never hope to experience; no offense, girl."

"None taken," Faith said, while slowly retreating back under her lavender comforter. She knew her friend didn't mean anything by the little comment, but it still stung like a sweat bee on a hot summer's day. Words can cut like a knife.

Faith would have never thought *she* would be the one to have an abortion. Not that she was any better than anybody else; she had just been in church all her life and knew it was wrong. If anybody would have even thought of such a thing, it would have been Chrissy, who came to Christ a lot later than she had. But Chrissy wasn't the one lying in bed right now, looking for a way to move on with her life. It was her. And why wasn't she able to talk *herself* out of it?

Faith shot straight up in the bed. "Sometimes I just can't believe I went through with it, Chrissy. I mean, I am a Christian and we don't do stuff like that. You know what I'm saying? I never really thought I would have done anything like that. But I just didn't know what else to do." Tears flooded Faith's eyes and when Chrissy saw them, she placed her bath products down on the bed and went to console her friend.

"Faith, you did what you had to do. You and Gavin made the decision to do what you both thought was the best option at the time. Hey, I probably would have made the same choice, I

guess.” Chrissy really wasn’t being honest. She gave an answer that would pacify her friend. Ever since Faith had told her about the procedure, she knew she would never, in her right mind, do anything like that, but she couldn’t say that to her friend. Now wasn’t the right time.



Faith had missed church the Sunday after her procedure, telling her Aunt Jackie she must have had some sort of stomach bug or something. She knew her favorite aunt would be wondering why she wasn’t at church. But she was definitely not going to miss another Sunday. A part of her needed to be around other Christians, plus she had a strong desire to repent.

Sunday came and Faith woke up bright and early. She wanted to get to church on time so that she could release herself from the pressure of sin that had started to weigh on her. She needed to be as close as possible with her Lord so that she could start to feel whole again.

“Come on, Chrissy, get up. We gotta be on time for church.”

Chrissy knew she needed to go to church. She had not been in the last month; and she had promised Faith that she would go with her during one of the talks they’d shared while Faith was recovering. She now wished she hadn’t made the promise, because all she wanted to do at the moment was stay in the bed.

“Alright already; dang Faith, you are a little too excited about church this morning. We’re going to make it on time, don’t worry.” Chrissy rolled over toward the gray brick wall in their small ten-by-ten dormitory room, hoping to catch a few

more minutes of sleep, but Faith, who was too energized to hear her fussing, sat on her bed and nearly smashed her arm. “Faith, seriously, we’re going to make it on time. I am about to get up. Just give me a minute. I don’t know why you acting all brand new, like you don’t know that I am so not a morning person. You’ve known me long enough to know that I don’t like to be forced to get up. Now chill, girl, before I have to . . .” Her words turned into mumbles as she drifted back to sleep.

Faith was eager about getting back to church. She knew that if she just went to the altar and prayed for forgiveness, everything would be alright. At least that’s what she hoped. She had learned in church, and her Aunt Jackie had always confirmed the Bible’s teaching, that if she just confessed her sins to the Lord, He would forgive her and wipe the slate clean. She thought about Gavin and wondered if he felt the guilt weighing down on his heart the way she felt it weighing down on hers. Was his conscience getting the best of him? *Probably not*, she smirked. He had only called her a couple of times to check on her and when she mentioned the culpability, he always diverted the conversation with an excuse and immediately ended the call. Faith knew Gavin believed there was a God, but he wasn’t one to attend church regularly. She also knew that she would have to walk on the road to redemption alone.

Faith and Chrissy arrived at church right before the noon service was to begin, and were ushered to the singles ministry event in the fellowship hall.

“I didn’t even know they were having a singles ministry fellowship today,” Faith muttered while glancing over at Chrissy, who was now rolling her eyes because she had simply wanted to get through a normal church service so that she could go back to

their dorm room and rest. She and Faith had been up talking until two in the morning. All she wanted was to keep her commitment to her friend, and then make her way back to her comfortable twin bed in their dorm room.

Faith also had intended to just go to regular service, repent for her sins during the altar call – even though she didn’t have to wait until then – and after laying everything on the altar, sit and listen to her favorite pastor, Reverend Miles Jones. Pastor Jones always peppered his sermons with messages geared toward the church’s youth. He had a preaching style that grabbed your attention and he was able to minister to the young folks. Faith always learned a lot from his teacher-style approach to preaching. She didn’t expect to be in singles ministry either. *Hopefully, this won’t be a session where they have one of those abstinence talks.*

“Welcome to the singles ministry of St. Matthews Baptist Church. We are glad you all decided to join us today for our presentation. We hope that you enjoy it and most importantly, we hope that you receive this Word from God, albeit in an alternate fashion, from Pastor Jones’ preaching,” the short stout lady, affectionately known as Minister Merryweather said while smiling. Returning to her seat, she held the remote to the projection screen in the air, and the panel began to roll down from the ceiling. It was show time.

“Faith, what are we about to watch?” Chrissy whispered. “I would have brought popcorn if I knew we were coming to the movies. I hope this is not some video that is going to scare us into believing. Remember when we went to that one church and they showed us that movie, *A Thief in the Night*? I was so scared after watching that, I knew that I had to get right,” Chrissy giggled

as she thought back to that moment when she and Faith were in tenth grade, attending Vacation Bible School at a sister church.

“Girl, you are crazy. I don’t know what it is, but I do hope it’s good and I don’t fall asleep on it.” Faith smiled, all the while wishing she could sneak out into the sanctuary for altar prayer.

The movie started playing and the title appeared on the screen: Prophetess Juanita Bynum - *No More Sheets*. A black woman came out and started talking and preaching. She passionately revealed some of the most intimate details of her life. Everybody in the room had their eyes glued to the screen. Mesmorized, members of the singles congregation listened attentively, grasping onto the woman’s every word. The prophetess talked about becoming free from the bondage of sexual sin, and used real bedroom sheets as an illustration. Every sheet represented a man that she had slept with. Faith looked around and observed women all over the fellowship hall, dropping to their knees, crying. The word from this prophetess had touched everyone in the room; provoking heartfelt sobs from all who were affected by her words. She, too, cried because she felt the Word that God was delivering through this video. Sleeping with Gavin was a mistake. She lost her self-respect, and respect for her own body. God had certainly not intended for her relationship to be like that. It was totally outside the boundaries of marriage and the way God intended for sexual relationships to be.

When the film ended, Faith looked over at Chrissy who was still staring at the blank screen with tears in her eyes. Their eyes met, and silently touched and agreed, and from that moment, both women knew that things had to change in their lives. No more sheets, no more sex, no more nothing. That video had made an incredible impression in their hearts and minds, and forever changed their outlook on relationships, sex, self-worth and following the Word of God.