

Fear

By Pastor Alan Utting

'Feed your faith and your fears will starve to death.' Corrie ten Boom

Many biblical leaders grappled with fear. For instance, after Moses fled Egypt due to a fatal incident, he settled as a shepherd until God called him to free the Israelites. Moses resisted because of his age and speech impediment, saying, 'Lord, please send someone else' (Exodus 4:13 NLT). Ultimately, he accepted, showing that fear can remind us to depend on God for courage, allowing Him to receive the glory.

An online search will reveal the top five common fears people have:

Death – Fear of one's own death or the death of loved ones,

Illness or Injury

Social Rejection or Public Speaking

Financial Insecurity

Loss of Safety

Consider which of these fears apply to you but remember to keep things in perspective. Trusting in the Lord's promise of peace, as stated in Hebrews 10:35 'So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded' can provide reassurance in difficult times.

Biblical Perspective

The word 'Fear' appears 274 times in the Bible showing it's a significant subject.

'For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV).

'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand' (Isaiah 41:10).

The importance of hope in counteracting fear:

'but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint' (Isaiah 40:41). Thank you Lord.

Observations

1. Spiritual growth often happens during difficult times, pushing us to depend more on God. Use these experiences to mature you. As Augustine of Hippo says, 'Work as if everything depended on you. Pray as if everything depended on God.'
2. C. S. Lewis makes an interesting observation after the loss of his wife. 'No one ever told me that 'grief felt so like fear'. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid.'
3. During the storms of life Jesus often appeared to his disciples declaring 'PEACE'. Examples: Mark 5:34, Luke 2:14, Luke 24:36, John 14:27, John 16:33. His peace does not come through trusting a formula but in knowing Him personally! 'Draw

near to God and He will draw near to you'! He is the author of peace. Do you know Him?

4. Memorisation of Scriptures is a way of counteracting Satanic opposition when he attacks us with fear. 'Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17). I'm so glad that as a youngster I learnt the importance of memorisation of Scripture while at Sunday school. I still memorise not simply 'words' but 'truth' which I receive in my heart.
5. Sharing burdens makes the load lighter. 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2). Sin and shame try to keep things hidden in the dark, but that is a deception from Satan. Bring hidden struggles into the light so they can be dealt with and offer support to those who lack close friendships.
6. Pray for those who cause you anxiety, 'as perfect love removes fear' (1 John 4:18); this helps both them and you. Directly address difficult situations at the right time instead of ignoring them.
7. If you feel anxious, distract yourself with exercise, reading, socialising, or other enjoyable activities.
8. It's easier said than done, but why worry! Jesus tells us 'So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them' (Matthew 6:31,32). It is good to ask ourselves, 'is my fear based on a certainty, a possibility or a lie we tell ourselves?' Remember, that most of the things we worry about never eventuate.

Some useful hints in ministering to people bound by fear:

1. Invite individuals to express their concerns, listen attentively, and respond with empathy. Avoid using platitudes.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a discerning spirit.
3. I pray with authority for those facing certain bondages, but approach fearful individuals gently and with discernment. Regular 'soaking prayer' is also an option. Avoid rushing the process.
4. Encourage them to surrender their life to the Lord and draw upon comforting scriptures to give them hope.
5. Encourage them to address their fears and support them in seeking professional help if needed. Allow them space for this process and avoid taking it personally.

We should constantly pray for persecuted church members as they rely on God's mercy and grace to face difficult and fearful circumstances.

Resources

John Piper - *Fear and anxiety* <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/fear-and-anxiety>