

What our Faith Says about Fear
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The scriptures record the very first instance of fear in the third chapter of Genesis after Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the “forbidden” tree and discovered their nakedness.

The record shows that when God entered the garden and called out to Adam, “Where are you?”

Adam responded by saying: “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

The inference from this account suggests that the introduction of fear came as a result of disobedience to God and of course, this disobedience led to banishment from the garden and a separation from intimacy with God.

We have come to accept fear as a natural condition of human existence and so it is.

From scientific exploration, we learn about the physiology and the psychology of fear.

From studying the sociological impact of fear we learn about the manipulation of society in a culture of fear.

Together we did some of that and in the process, learned some fascinating facts and were confronted with some provocative concepts about fear.

Nevertheless, as we turn to scripture, it appears clear that we are to have a different approach to fear.

Proverbs 1:7 says: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” suggesting that to “know” God, to be in intimate relationship with God is the way to govern one’s life.

Such a path is the foundation of faith and faith is God’s antidote to fear.

In his book, “If You Want to Walk on Water You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat”, John Ortberg says:

“The single command in Scripture that occurs more often than any other-God’s most frequently repeated instruction-is formulated in two words: and other similar phrases: Those two words are: “Fear not. The corresponding phrases are: “Do not be afraid.” Be strong and courageous. You can trust me. Fear not.”

Following that statement, Ortberg then asks the question:

“Why does God command us not to fear?” (page 117-118),

I believe many reasons can be offered as to why God tells us to not be afraid.

One reason God says “fear not” so often is because fear is the number one cause of temptation that keeps us from living out God’s will.

Fear often keeps us from doing what God wants us to do.

Fear traps us like a turtle inside its shell.

God does not say “fear not” to people and then remove the cause of their fear.

Most often God takes them through the very situation that caused their fear in the first place.

God’s primary motivation is not to spare us emotional discomfort and pain.

For our faith frequently grows the most through difficult circumstances—circumstances we fear or those that challenge us to move beyond our comfort zones.

The struggle between trust and terror, faith and fear is not uncommon in the believer’s life however; it should have decreasing occurrence as we grow in spiritual maturity.

Trust says, “Jump!” Terror shouts, “Don’t do it!”

WHEN FEAR SAYS “NO” FAITH SAYS “GO!”

The single command that occurs more often than any other instructs us to “fear not’.

The scriptures also give us some insight into why we should not be afraid and provides ways in which to overcome our fears.

I’m drawn particularly to 2Timothy 1:7 which says: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind.”

Although fear is a natural condition of human existence, there are different kinds of fear.

An unhealthy, irrational fear is not from God.

This kind of fear keeps us from God, causes us not to trust God’s faithfulness, love and power.

It is the kind of fear that will stop us cold in our tracks causing a certain unwillingness to take steps of obedience.

Unhealthy fear can harm our relationships with one another and impede our ability to forge ahead claiming our destiny according to God's purpose.

This scripture from 2 Timothy names some of the spiritual tools God has provided to set us free from our fear.

If we read the instructions and apply them to our lives, God releases us to stick our necks out ... get out of our shells and learn to live our lives free from fear.

God has given us a spirit of power through Christ Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This is power enables us to face into our fears with confidence that God is with us and will provide for us as we navigate the waters and make it through the storms in our lives.

Through the power of Christ we are able to have hope and to live a life overflowing with joy and peace! • *Romans 15:13 (NIV)*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God has given us a spirit of love.

We have all had our immersion retreats, and much has been learned from the experiences.

I suggest however, that nothing can quite compare to being immersed in God's love.

Let God immerse you in His love.

When you get lost in God's love your fear will get lost, love will banish fear from your heart.

• *1 John 4:16-18 (NIV) [16] And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. [17] In this way, love is made complete among us . . . [18] There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

With God's love we have nothing to fear because nothing will ever overpower God's love for us.

Romans (8:38-39) [38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

• *Romans 8:28 (NIV)*

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

To set us free from the spirit of fear God has given us a Spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind.

Being of sound mind, having self-discipline and self-control is to live your life under the control of the Holy Spirit!

Self-control comes when we are no longer in our 'right mind' instead we take on the mind of Christ!

• *Romans 12:2 (NIV)*

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

He has empowered us by His Spirit to be self-disciplined not only in our words and actions, but also in our thoughts.

Therefore, we are able to be free from fear and can live in peace.

Remembering the words of the Prophet Isaiah who said:

• *Isaiah 26:3-4 (NIV)*

[3] You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. [4] Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

In his book, *Finding Intimacy in a World of Fear*, Eric Law says fear of God was implemented through the covenant to enable the Israelites to form respectful communities.

According to Law, Jesus invites us to focus on our relationship as daughters and sons of God, moving beyond fear to love, knowledge and intimacy with God.

Our faith says: Fear Not. Do not be afraid. Be Strong and Courageous. You Can Trust Me. Fear Not.