

# FEAR – FAMILY – FAITH 1

## “Fear Not!”

We live in a world where there are many fears...and many things of which to be afraid. Interesting though, we are born with only 2 innate fears: the fear of falling, and the fear of loud noises. This means then, that every other fear we possess...we have learned. Through some tragic or traumatic situations or circumstances, events or experiences; we have come to harbor certain fears. And if that is true, then every fear we face; can with the proper education; be unlearned!

Over the next 7 weeks we'll be exploring some of the more common fears people have. More importantly we'll be delving into how being part of a family helps us deal with our fears; and most essentially; how applying our Faith in God, to those fears, helps us relearn how to alleviate (or live above) those fears.

Fear plays a two-fold role in our lives doesn't it? Appropriate or proper fear helps us avoid pain and discomfort. We have a healthy fear (though we call it respect) of fire; knowing how damaging and painful fire can be to human skin and lungs. We have a respectful fear of water, and force ourselves to learn to swim, and take precautions when we are in or around water. We have some fear of death and disease that is healthy; which helps us (some of the time) avoid eating too much unhealthy food. See what I mean?

But fear also plays an illegitimate role in some of our lives. Most of us have some inappropriate or unhealthy or even dangerous fears. Some people have fear of small places and thus avoid elevators. Some people fear people, and thus shut themselves off from fellowship and the sharing of life. Some people fear public speaking, and thus seldom express their gifts or lives with others who might benefit from them.

And we have some folks who have an improper fear of death; who cheat themselves out of authentic living, while worrying or fretting about this one thing (among many) that is beyond our control. Do you see the point? Fear can be both positive and negative in our lives.

There is one predominant use of the word fear in the Bible. "**Fear Not**" is uttered in the different translations somewhere between 130 and 160 times in the Old and New Testaments. It can safely be said that the overwhelming message from God to us; regarding our fears...is to fear not...is to not live in fear; to not allow our lives to be defined by fear; to place our fears in a context of family and faith; and not live as helpless victims to the enslaving power of irrational or illegitimate fears. Any fear that keeps you from being all God wants you to be, or from enjoying all God has created for us to enjoy, or from experiencing all God has destined for us to experience...are illegitimate, unproductive, and eventually harmful fears.

So what can we learn from God's word for dealing with our fears? A couple things.

### **1. GOD IS NOT THE SOURCE OF OUR FEARS**

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline. (NLT) 2 Tim.1:7*

In this letter to his young understudy, Paul the great apostle is encouraging Timothy. He begins the paragraph by mentioning the helpful role his mother and grandmother have played in birthing and raising him in a context of family love. He continues the encouragement of this apparently timid Timothy by reminding him of a great lesson, we all need to hear at times: God is not the author of the spirit of fear or of timidity.

We most often use this text as an impetus to share our faith (one fear in the top ten list of most Christian believers...am I right)?

Though it's not entirely inappropriate there, the context is more about exercising and using ones spiritual giftedness to answer whatever calling God has placed on our lives. Timothy was saved and called by God to pastor a church. Paul was his mentor. Paul had laid his hands on Timothy, and now was exhorting a maximum effort by reminding him of God's providence: it is not from God we receive fear...it has some other source. No, God has given us a spirit of power and love and self-discipline.

I found that word interestingly rendered by a fairly large group of words: God has instead given us a spirit of power, love and sound judgment, self-control, prudence, reasonableness, well-balanced, with restraint, sober...all words used in various translations to capture this sense; that God has made us powerful and because we have received God's love, we must give and govern using God's love. And maybe as if saving the best for last; God has given each of us self-control (which by the way is the most effective natural antidote for fear...if you think about it). God has given us discipline, sound minds, well-balanced minds, prudence restraint and so on.

(clip from Coach Carter about our strength/power/ Mandela quote)

## **2. GOD'S LOVE IS THE SOLUTION TO OUR FEARS**

*We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our loves grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.*

*If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other, because he loved us first. If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters. 1John 4:16-21*

Herein lays the crux of the solution to our fears. God has planted (by the Holy Spirit), into the DNA, of all who give their lives to Jesus; the love of God. We who have received Jesus, who live with, in and for Jesus; have the perfect love which expels all fears.

That doesn't mean we who fear (hate) snakes must suddenly begin to pick them up or carry them around. It doesn't mean we'll never shudder again when the doctor announces surgery or states we have cancer. It simply means that when our fears come knocking...we'll send our faith to answer the door. When our world crumbles around us through death of a loved one, or the crash of the stock market, or the abandonment of a spouse, or the rejection of a child, or the broken trust of a friend...we'll fall on our knees and appeal to our faith, apply our faith, lean on our faith, trust in our faith...because God loves us; and that alone can dispel all other fears!

Here is the point. God and the apostle John in this text make it perfectly clear that all who say they love God...must love those others who say they love God. No exceptions for those who have different skin color, or attend a different church, or who believe a different doctrine. No exceptions for those who vote for a different political party; or those who watch FOX instead of CNN. No exceptions for those who are young and still learning the faith; or for those old who may have forgotten the faith. No exceptions for any. If we love God, then we must love our brothers and sisters; our family. If we can't love those we see...then we probably can't love God whom we can't see.

It is in the context of a family we work out our faith, we develop and grow our faith, we knock off the rough edges of our faith, we test and refine our faith. All that helps us understand and even process at least some of our fears. But ultimately it is in the fact that God loves us...and we love God that we find the solution to our fears. God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of faith and love and power and self-discipline. Within the context of our families, both natural and spiritual we find our fears addressed, and in the context of God's love, and our faith in Jesus we find our fears relieved.

I know that probably sounds simple...and I know that it often is not. Some of our fears are real...and won't go away easily. But go they must in the security of our family, and in the salvation of our faith. Fear Not my children. God loves you. AMEN

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**Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.**

**It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,  
gorgeous, handsome, talented and fabulous?**

**Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.**

**Your playing small does not serve the world.  
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.**

**We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us.  
It is not just in some; it is in everyone.**

**And, as we let our own light shine, we consciously give  
other people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.**

**Marianne Williamson**