

Overcoming the Spirit of Fear
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Fear is a big problem in the world right now. There is fear of getting sick and even dying from the coronavirus. There is fear about finances – of losing a job and not being able to pay bills. Evidently – there’s a huge fear of running out of toilet paper!

All of us know what it’s like to be afraid. Some people are afraid of snakes or spiders. For some of you it may be storms, heights, fear of flying, or fear of death.

Having fears is normal. For instance, there is a normal, healthy fear that causes you to take precautions so you don’t get the coronavirus. But the spirit of fear is something else altogether! It is a demonic spirit that wants to take over your thoughts and life!

That spirit is working overtime right now and that’s why I’m preaching today on Overcoming the Spirit of Fear. We must overcome fear or it will take over our lives. Hebrews 12:1-2 says:

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

God wants nothing to hinder or hold us back. And one of the biggest things that holds people back is fear.

Fear keeps you from entering into everything God has for you. We see this in the children of Israel. They had been in slavery for 400 years and God heard their prayers and set them free. He used many miraculous signs and wonders to deliver them. They saw His power first-hand time and time again. Yet when it came time to enter into the Promised Land – when they finally got to where they were going – they refused to enter in. Why? Because of fear. They were afraid. They sent spies into the land to check it out. When they got back, Numbers 13:30-33 says that Joshua and Caleb said:

We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

In Numbers 14:9 Joshua and Caleb said:

Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.

But the people did not overcome their fear and fear kept the children of Israel from entering into their destiny – their promise – their dream.

Is fear holding you back?

Is fear keeping you from entering into your destiny – promise – dream?

Is fear holding you back from risking anything?

Fear of failure causes many people to never try anything that is not completely safe – so they stay stuck in life.

I remember when we were praying about starting this church. Pastor Joe did not want to start a church because we had planted a church years ago that eventually died. He wanted to pastor an already established church. But I remember asking him, “Joe, what would you do if you knew you would not fail?” He said, “Start a church.” And I said, “There’s your answer.”

And if we had not overcome that fear and taken that risk, Grace Fellowship Church would not exist today. Not only does fear hold you back, but it can impact those around you.

Now - maybe you think you have no fears, but maybe you’re a worrier – constantly anxious over what may happen. If you look up the word “worry” in a thesaurus – you’ll find these words with similar meaning: anxiety, apprehension, nervousness, stress, fear. In other words – worry is just another name for fear.

All of us have fears that we need to overcome. If we don’t – it will hinder our lives.

Fear hinders relationships by keeping people from making the call to ask someone out and start a relationship or making the call to ask for forgiveness and restore a relationship.

Fear hinders careers by keeping people from going back to school or asking for a promotion.

Fear hinders blessing by keeping people from tithing by making them think, “I can’t afford to tithe.”

Fear hinders worship by keeping people more concerned about what people think than what God thinks! Satan’s desire is to steal, kill and destroy, and fear is one of his biggest tactics.

Overcoming fear is not theoretical to me – it’s something I’ve had to do! When I was young, I had a lot of shame in my life. Shame defined and controlled me on a daily basis.

I would wake up in the morning with this awful sense of shame hanging over me. I would go to bed at night with uncontrollable thoughts racing through my head:

Thoughts like:

You are such a loser.

You are so stupid.

Something is so wrong with you.
 No one wants to be your friend.
 I was so consumed by shame.

Almost every very time I had a conversation with someone I would feel an overwhelming sense of shame. I would obsess about the conversation, playing it over and over in my mind while telling myself how stupid I sounded. Eventually, I became terrified of having conversations.

I was so afraid of talking to people that I became afraid to leave my house. The technical name for this is agoraphobia, which is an irrational fear of being in public.

Through much prayer and counseling I did overcome this. Thank God I did because it was tormenting to live that way.

1 John 4:18 says that *fear has torment*. The word torment comes from the same root word as torture. It means to cause pain and suffering – physical, mental or emotional. Fear wants to stalk you, track you down and capture you. Fear will hinder you - limit you - paralyze you.

What fear has you bound? Whatever it is, this much I know: Fear is not from God.

The most common command in the Bible is “Fear not.” If God commands us not to fear – then it must be possible to not fear. 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

This verse tells us that fear is not of God. Fear is not like a cold where you can just let it run its course and will eventually get better. Fears only get worse. They don't just go away - They must be overcome. And God has given us the tools to overcome the spirit of fear. But fear must be resisted – it will not just go away.

So let's look at three ways we overcome a spirit of fear:

1- We Overcome the Spirit of Fear with God's Power

To overcome fear, we cannot deny it, hide from it, give in to it or run from it. We must face it with the power of God.

There is someone I know who had really high blood pressure, but was afraid to go to the doctor and get it checked. When the nurse tried to take to take her blood pressure, she would refuse. Even though she knew the consequences could be deadly, she was just too afraid. After many years of this she finally overcame her fear. She just did it afraid.

When you face your fear by doing what you are afraid to do, you break the power of fear in your life. 1 John 5:4 says:

This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

We overcome fear the way Jesus taught us to overcome: with the Word.

That's what I had to do to overcome a spirit of fear. Pastor Joe and I love to travel. We've flown hundreds of times with no fear. However, after having 2 MRI's, everything changed. An MRI is like a full-body X-Ray taken with you enclosed in a tube. I got very fearful in the MRI machine. In fact, Joe had to hold on to my foot and pray for me the whole time.

The next time we traveled – when I got into the plane – an enclosed tube - I was attacked by fear. As soon as the door closed, I felt like I had to get off the plane right then and there. But Joe did not let me off the plane. He knew the only way to defeat that fear was to face it. By then it was too late anyway – so the stewardess helped me find a seat on the aisle where I did not feel so closed in.

If I had given in to that fear, that would have been the last time we ever flew. So I faced the fear of flying and conquered it. How? I did it afraid. I flew afraid until I overcame my fear.

Courage is not the absence of fear – it is choosing to do it afraid! So I fought the way Jesus taught us to fight: with the Word. I found a Bible verse that I memorized and quoted. Psalm 56:3 says:

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

That's a great verse to quote when you're afraid.

You may say, "But I've tried to overcome fear and I can't." Well in your own strength that's true. Apart from God, we can do nothing. However, we must believe that through His power, we can do anything God wants us to. Philippians 4:13 says:

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

I can do what things? Everything! Including overcoming fear. Anything God wants me to do, He gives me the power to do. That power comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

Instead of being filled with fear, be filled with faith.

Instead of being filled with a spirit of fear, be filled with the spirit of God.

You can overcome fear with the power of God. We have the power of the blood of Christ, the power of the Word of God, and the power of the name of Jesus. Demons tremble at the sound of that name! When we resist the spirit of fear in the name of Jesus, it must flee!

So, overcome the spirit of fear with the power of God!!

2- We Overcome the Spirit of Fear with a Sound Mind

The Amplified version of 2 Timothy 1:7 says:

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control.

We see here an amplification of the phrase “sound mind.” A sound mind is calm, well-balanced, disciplined and self-controlled. A mind controlled by fear is the opposite of this.

- Instead of being calm, a mind controlled by fear is constantly stirred up and stormy.
- Instead of being well balanced, a mind controlled by fear is out of balance – totally focused on the bad not the good – the negative not the positive.
- Instead of being disciplined and self-controlled, a mind controlled by fear is out of control.

Fear will impact the way you think.

If you think fearful thoughts – fear will control your mind.

But if you think God’s thoughts – faith will control your mind!

If you speak fearful words – fear will control your life.

But if you speak God’s word – faith will control your life!

Most of our fears are the result of wrong thinking. That’s why God’s word says our minds need to be renewed. Romans 12:2 says:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

We need to renew our minds through the word of God. We’ve got to choose to believe God more than we believe circumstances. For instance, we hear voices all around talking gloom and doom.

We can either choose to be afraid OR we can trust in God and accept His word that He will protect us and meet all our needs according to His riches in glory.

We can live in fear of dying or we can overcome that fear by knowing 2

Corinthians 5:8 tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord in heaven – a much better place.

When we think Biblically, we have a "sound mind" – we have peace.

When we have a sound mind - fear just doesn’t make sense.

3- We Overcome the Spirit of Fear with Love

At first glance, it does not seem that love could be effective in conquering fear. You would think it would be something like faith. However, Galatians 5:6 says faith works through love. 1 John 4:18-19 says:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

We love Him because He first loved us. Fear and love cannot coexist. When one comes in – the other must leave.

Here's how this works: The more we love God, the less fear we will have. It's a matter of trust. When we realize that God loves us and will take care of us, it relieves our fears.

When we trust in His perfect love – it casts out all fear. The more secure we are in the fact that God loves us and works all things for our good, the less fear we will have. The Lord is with us wherever we go and His love casts out all fear!

Once we understand the perfect love of God, we have nothing to fear.

I don't fear death, because my Father has given me eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I don't fear lack because my Father meets all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!

I don't fear the devil, because greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

I don't fear the future because the future's in my Father's hands.

I don't fear what man can do to me because if God is for me, who can be against me?

I don't fear evil because what the enemy means for evil, my Father turns to my good.

I don't fear job loss, because Jehovah Jireh is my provider.

I don't fear sickness, because Jehovah Rapha is my physician – and He's the great physician.

Do you get what I'm saying today?

When you know the Lord – His perfect love casts out all fear!

when you know He is good all the time – Perfect love casts out all fear!

when you know He works all things for your good –

when you know that nothing can separate you from His love –

when you know that He will never leave you or forsake you –

And when you know that His perfect love casts out all fear – then there is no longer any room for fear!

You overcome fear by practicing the presence of Jesus. You do that by cultivating your awareness that God is always with you. You do what God told Joshua to do when he was about to lead Israel into a land full of giants. God told him in Joshua 1:9

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

That's the same thing God wants to say to us today: be strong and have courage. And do not be afraid. Why? Because God is with us.

We overcome fear when we know God is with us.
 We overcome fear when we know God is in us.
 We overcome fear when we know God is for us.

God has not given you fear, but He's given you the way to overcome fear: power, love and sound mind.

That means if you have fear – you are lacking one or more of those three things!
 You need the power of God to resist the spirit of fear.
 You need the word of God to renew your mind so you won't think fearful thoughts.

Or you need a revelation of the love of God that casts out all fear.
 All fear! Not some fear or most fear! All fear!
 Refuse to live in fear one more day!

Overcome the spirit of fear with the power of God, the love of God, and a renewed mind that resists the spirit of fear with the Word of God!

You have the power of the Holy Spirit and you can overcome the spirit of fear in Jesus' name!!!