

FEAR

A Care + Counsel Resource

Fear is a common struggle for many.

A 2018 survey reveals 80% of churchgoers say they live with moderate to severe levels of fear. Many legends of the faith in the Bible struggled with fear - Abraham, Moses, and Peter. Timothy had an internal struggle, a mental struggle with fear. And this internal, mental struggle is real for many people. If you struggle with fear, you are not alone. And you don't need to struggle alone.

For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. | 2 Timothy 1:7

Common Fears

Failure	Loneliness	Death	Uncertainty	Being judged
Love	Rejection	Illness	Abandonment	Getting caught
Getting hurt	Loss	Commitment	Financial loss	Change
Something bad	Losing control	_____		

Can you identify with any of these common fears? Can you locate your fear?

I don't need to fear.

This verse is not talking about short-term, situational fear.

Imagine driving across the train tracks, your car stalls as a locomotive is barreling toward you. Your brain receives the warning that danger is imminent and orders your body to release a number of hormones, including adrenaline. Your muscles begin to tense up, your heart rate quickens, your hearing and vision is more acute. When our bodies sense danger, God has created us with the ability to recognize and survive in a dangerous world.

The problem is not short-term, situational fear. The problem is when fear is imagined or irrational. The problem is when fear is perpetual, prolonged, and paralyzing.

Personal history can contribute to fear, especially if you have experienced significant trauma in your life from living in a fallen world marked and marred by sin. We don't minimize your experience nor the effects of your experience. We are sorry for whatever you went through.

But know this: God wants to heal your hurts, free you from your pain, and give you victory in areas where you were victimized so that you no longer need to live in perpetual and paralyzing fear.

As humans, God created us as two parts - material and immaterial; body and soul; biological and spiritual. Sometimes there are physical issues related to fear that need to be addressed by a medical professional. However, fear can relate to issues of the soul.

We are focusing on the spiritual side of fear. Because the Bible addresses fear, worry, and anxiety, there is a spiritual aspect to each of these.

Fear is being afraid of something - real or imagined. Fear tends to be specific.

Worry is being worried about something. Worry tends to be general, assuming the worst.

Anxiety is when our minds get stuck dwelling on fear and worries - like a one loop roller coaster or a soundtrack stuck on repeat.

Can you identify with any fear, worry, and anxiety in your life?

These terms are similar, but different. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, the root of worry and anxiety is fear.

I don't need to fear ... I can rely on *power* from God.

God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. - 2 Timothy 1:7

The Greek word "power" is "dunamis" from which we get the word "dynamite." Think about all the power contained in a stick of dynamite. God has given us His power. We don't just have access to His power, His power is in us.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you. | Romans 8:11

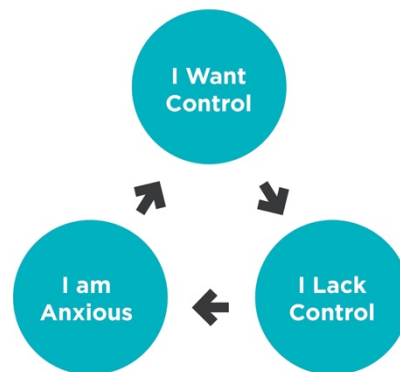
⁷ *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* ⁸ *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;* ⁹ *persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed* | 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. | 2 Corinthians 12:9

No matter what you face - a medical diagnosis, a financial hardship, a tragic loss, a strained or broken relationship, a past hurt, an unmet expectation, an extended season of trouble and trial, an unknown future - God's grace is sufficient. In our weakness, in our weak moments of suffering and struggling, God is strong. His power is perfect in our weakness.

To rely on the power of God requires releasing control and believing His grace and power is sufficient.

The root of fear is control. We want to control *circumstances*, control *people*, control *outcomes*. This is a common cycle of fear -



Being fearful, worried, anxious is an endless cycle that is on repeat - until we release control and rely on the power of God in us.

The Bible contains more than 300x commands to not fear. Perhaps you hear these verses as angry commands from an angry Father. But there is another way to understand these verses. Instead of angry commands from an angry Father, receive them as loving commands from a loving Father.

Parents often say to their child “be careful”? Technically it’s a command. But it’s not “be careful because I am angry with you.” Instead, it is “be careful because I love you and want you to be safe.” This is the same heart behind the 300 commands to not fear - not to admonish, but to encourage, to give courage.

Fear, worry, and anxiety are reminders and opportunities. Like a notification on your phone to remind you to pick up milk on your way home, when you feel fear, it’s a notification to trust God. Fear is not only a reminder, but it is also an opportunity to rely on the power of God in you.

*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust;
I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? - Psalm 56:3-4*

Does David say when I am afraid, I will remain fearful. No. Instead, what does he say? When I am afraid, I will put my trust in God and praise God. It’s a personal choice.

When you are filled with thoughts of fear - do you run to God or from God?
Do you turn to God or turn to your ability control an outcome?

I don't need to fear ... I can rest in the *love* of God.

God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. - 2 Timothy 1:7

Paul reminds Timothy that He has been given the spirit of love. And God has given you the same - a spirit, a disposition, a capacity to love.

The enemy of love is fear. Fear grows in the soil of shame.

When our mind is filled with shame, we fear love. We hide from people & we try to hide from God.

We fear: if we are fully known, we will not be fully loved. But the reality is: you are fully known by God and you are fully loved by God.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. | 1 John 4:18

God's love is not a punishing love. It's a perfect love and a perfecting love.

God knows all about you. And He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your past. He knows your struggles. Yet God loves you.

*You are not your darkest moment, your biggest regret, your worst mistake.
You are not what you have done. You are not what was done to you.
You are not what others say about you. You are not what you say about yourself.
You are who God says you are.*

When you embrace who you are in Christ and rest in God's love for you - you will have the ability and capacity to love God, to love others and to be loved, and to love who you are in Christ.

Fear drives us to isolation, not community. God is community - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And He created us in His image to be in community with Him and with others.

I don't need to fear ... I can receive *self-control* from God.

God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. | 2 Timothy 1:7

What is the opposite of self-control? Out of control. Undisciplined. Some Bible translations say, "sound mind" or "discipline". This reference to self-control relates specifically to your mind.

Have you discovered your mind can have a mind of its own? A mind that has a mind of its own is an undisciplined mind. An undisciplined mind wanders ... spirals ... dwells in the valley of fear, worry, and anxiety.

Did you know that research shows 97% of what we worry about are exaggerations and misperceptions? What's on your worry list today? What worries are consuming your mind? How much of your worry list is imagined, irrational, worst-case scenarios?

Have you heard the phrase - you are what you eat? If you eat healthy, you are healthy. If you eat items that are unhealthy, you are unhealthy. I guess this means ... if you eat kale, you are kale. If you eat Twinkies, you are a Twinkie.

As a person thinks in his heart, so is he - Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV)

In other words, if you think anxious thoughts, you will be an anxious person. If you dwell on fear, you will be a fearful and fear-filled person.

God has given you self-control to control your mind ... to discipline your mind ... to prevent it from wandering & spiraling. Let's look at a few verses about the need to control our minds.

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.
Isaiah 26:3*

²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. | Lamentations 3:21-23

fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. | Isaiah 41:10

Why fear not? Because of His presence, His power, His promise.

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own. | Matthew 6:34 (NIV)*

Perhaps this verse isn't very encouraging. But it's a reminder to live in the present, not the future. When we live in the present, we remember His grace is new each morning.

*⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:6-7*

Is your mind anxious? What do these verses say? Bring your anxiety to the Lord in prayer. And the peace of God will guard (protect, defend) your heart from fear. When we pray, the peace of God is like having a personal bodyguard guarding my heart and my mind wherever I go.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. | Psalm 34:4