

## Introduction to the command - Fear Not

Various verses

Final Draft

A woman who had just returned from a trip to Mexico called the Los Angeles police to report that a rattlesnake was loose in her overnight bag. Police went rushing to the scene with sirens screaming. They approached the bag which the woman had heaved out of a window onto the sidewalk. Cautiously, they scattered the contents of the bag - only to find that the rattle was caused by an electric toothbrush, accidentally turned on!

We are in a sermon series about fear. So to help me have an idea of what to focus in on – **what are some of the fears** that your neighbors, family and friends give voice to?

### **What are some ways you have used and tried to manage, conquer and control fear?**

The story about the woman being afraid of her electric toothbrush is funny, but it illustrates that we live in a fearful world. Fear is all around us. We all recognize and fear that our lives can be changed by one simple act. Someone said, "The person who knows no fear, is not only a gross exaggeration, they are a biological impossibility."

Carol Kent, in the July/August 2002 issue of Discipleship Journal, shares a portion from her book, *Tame Your Fears*. She says there are basically three types of fear: holy fear, self-preserving fear, and slavish fear.

**Holy fear** comes from our reverence for and awe of the God who created us and loves us. This is a regular theme in the Bible. It's a respectful, honoring worshipful fear. This is a good fear to have, but it also can overtake our view of a Holy God and cause us to start believing strange things about God and religion, and warps our view and relationship with our Creator and Savior.

**A second fear, Self-preserving fear** is the God-given instinct, to run from danger, avert an accident, or protect ourselves and those we

love. This wise form of fear causes us to take responsibility for ourselves and others. It provides the motivation to teach our children to look both ways before crossing the street and to use caution on a bicycle. This fear causes us to drive more carefully – most of the time. A quip about old age is, the speed limit isn't a challenge any more – it's a law that seniors finally respect.

Then the third type of fear is **Slavish fear**.

This is the negative type of fear that kills expressions of love, plugs lines of communication, imprisons victims of abuse, taunts with ridiculous phobias, controls by manipulation, and erodes all security & confidence. These kinds of fears imprison us.

They cause us to be stuck. Most of these kinds of fears are real, like fearing bullies; or an employer who is manipulative and mean; or panic when we see a spider; or we had a real bad experience with someone of another race or religion and so in a similar situation, we freeze. We don't know what to do. We become extra cautious. Often we know we are a slave to a particular fear when we feel powerless, helpless, and unable to respond in an appropriate way. These 3 major categories of fears are a helpful way for us to understand the dynamics of fear. When fear is helpful and when it's harmful to us and others.

I believe it is no accident God announced the birth of his Son Jesus Christ by the words, Fear Not. In the angels appearance to Joseph, the first words were, do not be afraid. When the angel spoke to Zachariah he said, Fear Not. Mary also heard the words, do not be afraid. When the angel appeared to the shepherds the first words were: "Do not be afraid." followed by, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Fear not is not just a NT command. It is given to us throughout the whole Bible. Psalms 56:3-4 declares: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals

do to me?" Psalms 23:4 reminds us: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." God commands us not to fear, or worry or be anxious. The phrase "fear not" is used at least 80 times in the Bible, because our Creator knows life events cause us to fear, various experiences make us frightened, and our enemy Satan uses fear to decrease our hope and limit our victories and keep us from Kingdom of God living.

Some people say that words like do not be afraid, fear not, do not worry or be anxious, and so on, occur over 300 times in the Bible and arguably 365 times, one for every day of the year. I don't think this is true, even stretching different phrases and using different translations. But it sounds good. Plus, if we include those traits that are the opposite of fear, that counter fear, and the stories where people overcome fear, the number of "fear not" messages in the Bible, in various forms increases.

We do know fear is a debilitating emotion and we often have real reasons to be cautious. In a group it can be catching like a cold. So we need encouragement to fight and manage fear, while we learn to understand what we should appropriately fear.

This is why the Bible encourages us to conquer fear. There are a variety of ways. But what I want to lift out today are some Bible verses that we can use when the feelings and realities of fear rise up. We do know that when we try to ignore fear, deny it, push it aside, it tends to grow and hinder our thinking, emotions, and actions. So the best way through is face our fears.

Here is some wisdom from Jessica Kastner. When we think about the root cause of so many mistakes and spiritual pitfalls in our lives, the source seems to be the one and only, the ugly, fear. Fear will cause us to buckle and settle for less than God's best. It will cause us to disobey

after diluting our trust in Him, and even when we do stay strong, it will rob us of our peace and joy.

Here are some of the best scriptures helping us overcome fear by increasing our faith. In **Deuteronomy 31:7b-8**, Moses was turning over the leadership of Israel to Joshua and he said to Joshua, in front of the people of Israel **"Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."**

When we fear a situation or an emotional challenge, envision God saying this, just to you. Our Savior is on our side. No matter who leaves after promising forever. When friends, family members or co-workers disappoint you, Our Sustainer will never turn on you. Probably most of you can share that your lowest, most painful moments in life have also turned into your closest times with the Lord. You can share stories of crying in disappointment after a loss, and feeling the presence of God's comfort and love like never before. It was so powerful where the Holy Spirit was real. And when we are facing change, a new situation, or a challenge, we are invited to move forward with courage. A sense of this verse, burned into your heart as you know: God was with you. You would be okay, leads you on.

Another verse that offers us comfort and strength is this familiar one from **Romans 8:28**. **"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."** This verse comes from a chapter where the Apostle Paul teaches about Life in the Holy Spirit. Then he talks about present suffering and future glory. And ends up telling us that we are more than conquerors with such logic as, "If God is for us, then who can be against us?" and nothing can separate us from

the love of God in Christ Jesus.

So much fear is based on the wrong assumption that when we've made a mess of a situation, it's too late for God's help. I think each one of us is living proof that God specializes in fixing our mistakes. We have stories to tell. Can you imagine that after Jesus greets you in heaven, he says, "Back in such and such a year, you had me worried," as you are embraced. God has not only forgiven you after some blatantly unwise, selfish choices, but Our Creator has been quick to open doors, answer prayers and pour out more blessings than you could ever deserve. God is good – all the time. So fight fear by believing the Holy Spirit will turn situations around for good, simply because no amount of blunders or degrees of sin can hinder being cared for.

Another favorite verse comes from **Isaiah 43:1**. **"Don't fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine."** What a privilege we have – we are Gods! God actually commands us not to fear, or worry because Our Maker knows the enemy Satan, uses fear to decrease our hope and limit our victories. Part of maturing as a follower of Jesus is growing in awe that God who created the universe, cares about every detail of our lives.

You & I belong to an all-powerful, all-knowing, victorious father who cares deeply about us. When we really meditate on this truth, it's hard to remain fearful about the trials we face. By focusing on The Almighty and how He considers us his prized, redeemed ones, our focus naturally shifts from fear to faith. Jesus himself expressed fear to the point of sweating blood, so God understands fear is natural. But whatever we are afraid of - a family problem, financial struggle, health issue or violence - focus on the power of a God who calls you by name, who has redeemed you, and commands fear to flee from your heart.

**1 John 4:18** is another verse to cling to when worries, anxiety, and distress occupy our minds. **"Perfect Love Casts Out All Fear."**

We often think it's very difficult to conquer or even to just manage fear. But when we really meditate on this scripture, and trust these words, and let its truth soak in, we discover how God's love has power to make us less fearful through life. Overcoming dread can be as simple as reminding ourselves, God is love. God has perfect love. And the closer we come to our Savior, the less power fear has over us, because we feel God's continual presence. We find Jesus' strength, his comfort, and his guidance.

We probably all remember experiencing a scary situation as a kid, feeling terrified, but then a parent's touch or the right words, helped us feel protected. We appreciate good parents who gave us the belief that whatever was happening – they were there for us. When faced with even the deepest most crippling of fear, we need to trust God with the confidence a child ascribes to a loving parent. The key is abiding in that love, on a daily-even hourly-basis. It has to be more than a Biblical truth in our lives. We need to cultivate it to experience it continually.

And our last verse for today, for focusing on when we need to banish fear is **Psalm 18:2**. **"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer."** These are images used often in the Bible for us to put our trust in. Rock, fortress, deliverer, go along with hiding place, stronghold, refuge, and shield, are images given to us to help us grasp that Almighty God, is the type of God we can go to for safety, protection and comfort.

We are given this scripture and the others, and more besides these to help us through hard times. And to cultivate in the good times so that we are prepared to trust, and have faith and follow a loving God. As we speak and pray and reflect on these words over and over, they help decrease our fears. This works. The old saying, Garbage in, garbage out, leads to garbage coming out of our minds. But taking the promises of God into our thinking, leads to

living out the power of God in each of our situations when fear comes.

Taking the time to worship with scripture, with music or whatever method, works to conquer fear. We can set ourselves up to refusing to fear, not by denying it, but by facing it and praising instead. This absolutely works. We were not saved and redeemed only to limp through life riddled with fear and anxiety. God can only be our rock if we let him. Trust him to deliver you from every fear coming against you that wants to invade your life and your peace. May we trust in our Creator's truth, in his ability and in his desire to deliver us.

There is a story of a family who visited the Carlsbad Caverns. They had a boy 11 years old, and a girl 7 years old. As always, when they reached the deepest point in the big cave, the guide turned off all the lights to show how completely dark and silent it is below the earth's surface.

The little girl, suddenly enveloped in utter darkness, was frightened and began to cry. Immediately was heard the voice of her brother: "Don't cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights."

We have a God who is the Light of the World. At Creation he turned on the lights. From Jesus we receive these words, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12) Fear leads us to dark places. But living in Jesus light means fear has no place in the heart or mind of a believer. Ask God to increase your trust and faith in his willingness and ability to deliver you completely from fear and anxiety. Ask for a deeper revelation of his love, and watch how powerfully he moves.

When you are absolutely convinced how much God (and Jesus) loves you, it will drive out every fear you have. (Wayne Jacobson)

The five scriptures used come from an article by

**Jessica Kastner, Contributor.** Author of "Hiding from the Kids in My Prayer Closet" Top 5 Scriptures That Banish Fear