

Managing My Fear

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Take God's Word and open to Psalm 19:9. That is where we will begin our study on managing our fear. Every one of us has fears. Some of you fear losing your health, fear losing your friends, or fear losing your job. Some fear the dark, some fear rejection, and some fear embarrassment. Some are afraid of losing control. We all have fears of some kind. As a boy, I feared clowns. They made me nervous. I feared sleeping in the dark. I always knew there was something creepy and monster like that lived in my closet and under my bed (that's why I never had a part of my body hanging off the bed because I knew something would grab it and pull me down). As we grow older our fears change, but the emotion is the same. Some fear is good and some is unhealthy.

As a Christian, part of your spiritual growth is your emotional development. If you are serious about becoming more like Christ and representing God in a way that honors Him you must mature in your emotional development as a Christian. God says we are to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul. When you do a study on the heart, mind and soul in the Bible you discover they are all connected to your emotions. Especially, the word "soul."

Today we are going to talk about managing fear. We are going to try to grow in our understanding of what the Bible says about fear by looking at its description, then looking at some debilitating fears that Christians wrestle with, and we will conclude by looking at some ways to defend ourselves against unhealthy fear.

Description of fear

Let's start with the description of fear. In the Bible we see two different types of fear. There is the fear you want and the fear you should avoid.

The first type of fear is a helpful fear. This is a healthy fear. This is the type of fear used to describe our attitude toward God. **Psalm 19:9** says, “The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.” The fear of the Lord is a fear that is unpolluted, untainted, wholesome and innocent. It is a pure and holy fear. It is a good fear. **Psalm 33:8** says, “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him.” Here the words “fear” and “revere” are synonyms. To fear the Lord is to admire, respect, look up to, and worship Him. When you have this kind of fear you place yourself in a position to grow spiritually and receive from the Lord. **Psalm 110:10** says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding.” Then **Psalm 128:1** says, “Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways.” This healthy and helpful characteristic of fearing the Lord was a major description of the New Testament church and should also be known of us. **Acts 9:31** says, “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.” All fear is not bad. All fear is not sin. If you have the right kind of fear it will protect you and help you.

The second type of fear is a harmful fear. This is the fear I want us to focus on today. This is the type of fear that debilitates, disorganizes, demoralizes, and destroys. This is the kind of fear mentioned in **Proverbs 3:25**, “Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, (26) for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.” As a child of God you don’t need to live in fear of disaster. Even if a disaster happens God will take care of you. Some believers live in such fear of tornados, thunderstorms, rain, or other natural disasters that when they talk about it you can tell they have no trust or faith in God with it. This fear debilitates them spiritually.

We are talking about harmful fear. Another aspect of this fear is seen in **Proverbs 29:25** which says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” Some believers are afraid of people in various degrees. This is why many Christians don’t tell others about Jesus because of their fear of what they may think or how they will react. Some believers will not stand up for Jesus at work or school or church simply because they are afraid of what others will do. That fear has become a snare to them.

This harmful fear can manifest itself in many ways. It shows up in the form of dread, panic, worry, anxiety and various phobias. As a matter of fact, the two primary Greek words for “fear” are *phobos* and *phobeo*. A *phobia* is a persistent, irrational fear of an object or situation that, in reality, presents no real threat. Let me give you some examples of phobias. Let me give you some I thought were interesting fears and then let me give you some fears that affect your ministry and life.

- *Zoophobia* is the fear of animals, characterized by a sense of danger in the presence of even nonthreatening animals. If you get around a hamster and you feel nervous you have zoophobia. If you see a mouse run across a room and you scream you have zoophobia. If you see a lion behind a cage and are afraid you have zoophobia.
- *Peldophobia* is the fear of bald people. You bald people are making me nervous.
- *Phalacrophobia* is the fear of becoming bald.
- *Caligynophobia* is the fear of beautiful women.
- *Alektorophobia* is the fear chickens.

Debilitating Fears

Let’s take a look at some known fears that Christians struggle with that keep them from serving God at their maximum level.

- **One fear is the fear of anything new** (neophobia). Remember, a phobia is a persistent, irrational fear of an object or situation that, in reality, presents no real threat. Some Christians don’t try new ways of ministry or new ministries because of a fear they have toward anything new. God likes doing new things. In Psalm 33:3 He wants us to sing a *new song* to Him. In Isaiah God says “See, I am doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19). In Lamentations we are told God’s compassion and mercy is *new every morning* (Lam. 3:23). In Acts 5 an angel of the Lord told the apostles to tell the people the full message of this *new life* in Christ (Acts 5:20; Rom. 6:4). In 2 Corinthians we are told “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). In Ephesians we are to told “to be made new in the attitude of our minds” (Eph. 4:23). According to 2 Peter we, as Christians, “are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13). Don’t be afraid of anything new. Some believers are

hindered in their impact for God's kingdom because they are afraid of new ways of ministry. Throughout the Bible, you find God calling His people to do things that have not been done before.

- **Another fear we have to be careful with is the fear of criticism** (enissophobia). Many believers will not do what God has called them to do because they think someone may criticize them or make fun of them for doing it. Don't let the thought of criticism hinder you from doing what God has called you to do.
- **Another fear we struggle with is the fear of failure** (atychipobia). Some believers want try a ministry or talk to someone about Jesus because they are afraid they will fail.
- **Another fear some believers fight against is the fear of flying** (aviophobia). Some believers will never go on an overseas mission trip because of their fear of flying.

Satan will use all kinds of fears to keep you from doing what God is wanting you to do or to use you to stop others from doing what God wants them to do. Don't let your fears of losing control or the fears of the unknown become a hindrance in what God is wanting to accomplish through you.

As God's people we have no real reason to be afraid of anything. We are not to be afraid of failure, criticism, anything new, flying, bald people, becoming bald, heights, thunder or anything else. We are not to be afraid like the world is afraid. **1 Peter 3:13** says, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? (14) But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.'" Don't let any fear keep you from doing whatever it is God wants you to do.

Defense Against Fear

I don't know what fear or fears you have that Satan tries to use in your life, but over and over again God encourages us to not be afraid. Over and over again we find God telling His people to not fear and not be afraid. God told **Joshua** to not fear, **Joseph** to not be afraid, **Mary** to not be afraid, and **Paul** to not fear. He tells us to not be afraid. But how

do we defend ourselves against fear? God tells us. He gives us guidance and direction on this subject.

Let's begin with 2 Timothy 1:7 where Paul is giving Timothy some advice that you and I need. **2 Timothy 1:7** says, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity [fear], but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." A "spirit of timidity" (deilia) is an attitude that is characterized by a cowardly, shameful, and fearful perspective. A fearful, timid, cowardly approach to the Christian life does not come from God. God did not give you a spirit of timidity. He gave you something else and that something else combats and resists that spirit of timidity. So what did God give you to fight fear?

First, God gave you power. God gave you a "spirit of power" to defend yourself against fear. This "power" (dunamis) refers to effective, productive energy. God provides us with His power in order for us to be effective in His service in the face of many possible fears. Now listen, as a child of God, you don't need to be given this power you already have this power. In **Ephesians 1:18** Paul is praying for the Ephesian believers and listen to what he prays about: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, (19) and His incomparably great power for us who believe." That power was given to you when you were saved and received the Holy Spirit in your life. **Acts 1:8** says it like this: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses...." You have the power of the Holy Spirit working in you to give you the courage and boldness you need to do whatever it is God wants you to do. **Ephesians 3:20** echoes this when it says, "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us." The reason you can face any situation as a Christian without fear is because God has given you a spirit of power. He has given you the strength and energy through the Holy Spirit to overcome that fear.

Another defense against fear is love. Look at **2 Timothy 1:7** again, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love...." If you have an attitude of love toward someone you will do anything for them regardless of what you face. This is why parents who love their children will run back into a burning building to get their kids. It's like their love for their children drives out all fear. Missionaries who love God and have a calling on their life will place themselves in extreme danger over and over again because

they love God and they love the people. Their love overrides any fears. This reminds me of **1 John 4:18** which says, “There is no fear in love.” The more you love God and love people the less you will fear people and fear situations that hinder you from doing what God wants you to do. As you increase in love, your fear will decrease. One of the reasons why some Christians are afraid to do something for God is because they don’t love God enough or they don’t love the people they are called to enough.

Another element of defense God has given to us is discipline. **2 Timothy 1:7** says, “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” The phrase “self-discipline” (sophronismos) carries the literal meaning of a secure and sound mind based on the proper priorities. This “self-discipline” and sound mind allows you to experience success without becoming proud, to suffer failure without becoming bitter, and to face danger without becoming fearful. This disciplined mind applies godly wisdom to every situation. It’s a person who has a prudent and sensible approach to life’s situations. Because of your sound mind you are at peace with people and situations that would cause most to be afraid, driven by fear and anxiety.

One note on this self-discipline and sound mind: this is not natural abilities or something you are born with. You don’t learn this in a classroom and you don’t pick this up from your environment. This is a gift and blessing from God. According to verse 7 God has already given this to you on the inside. God has “given” you a spirit and attitude of self-discipline. As a believer, you just need to learn how to use it.

Another aspect of our defense against fear is the presence of God. When you know that God is in you, with you, and ahead of you it breaths confidence into you regardless of what happens around you or to you. Your knowledge and awareness of God’s presence is a mighty weapon against fear. We see this truth all through God’s Word.

David said in **Psalm 23:4**, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [why?], for You are with me....” The reason David and you can be courageous even in the face of evil is because of God’s presence.

God wanted to comfort Abram about something in his life that he was afraid of and in **Genesis 15:1** we read, “The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be

afraid, Abram. I am your shield....” God was telling Abram and reminding us that He will be with us and will be our shield, therefore we do not need to be afraid.

Then in **Isaiah 43:5** we hear God saying, “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” The presence of God is a mighty weapon against fear.

When you and I are fearful we are not practicing the presence of God. When we walk in faith, courage, hope, peace, and confidence we are practicing God’s presence as God’s people. When you are afraid remind yourself that God is with you. He is your shield. Let His presence bring you boldness.

A fifth element in our protection against fear is preparation. Some fears in your life could be removed with acts of prevention. In describing the wife of noble character **Proverbs 31:21** says, “When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.” Why is she not afraid of the winters of life, because she is prepared to meet them. Some people are afraid of the future because they are not getting ready now for it.

One more weapon God has given to us to protect us from fear is prayer. **Philippians 4:6** says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Whatever you are fearful about, anxious about and nervous about talk to God about it. He promises you that His peace will protect your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.

When it is all said and done, God has given you, equipped you and provided you with everything you need to conquer fear. Listen to me, you have no excuse to be controlled by unhealthy fear. God has given you a spirit of power to serve Him without fear. God has given you a spirit of love to bless others without fear. God has given you a spirit of self-discipline to focus your life according to His will without fear. He has provided His presence and prayer to bring you peace rather than fear. He has given you wisdom to prepare for things to help remove fear and a host of other things we didn’t even talk about. **Hebrews 13:6** summarizes this, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”

Conclusion

I want to end our time together by looking at one more fear that people have and that is specifically mentioned in the Bible. **Hebrews 2:14** says, “Since the children have flesh and blood, He [Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – (15) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Some of you are afraid to die, but Jesus came to give you peace and to set you free from that fear of death. How does He do that?
[Explain salvation]