

Overcoming Fear

What are peoples' greatest fears?

6. Sickness and death. 5. Deep water. 4. Financial problems. 3. Insects. 2. Heights.
1. Speaking to a group. This proves that people really would rather die than give a public speech. One of my greatest fears as a young boy was going through a cemetery in the dark.

This lesson is about overcoming our fears. God said "do not fear" 51 times, "do not be afraid" 48 times, and "fear not" 11 times as recorded in the New King James Version. We are commanded many other times throughout the Bible to be courageous and trust our heavenly Father. We are disobeying God when we give in to fear. God's people have always struggled with the sin of fear. That is why this lesson is so important to us today.

Jesus spoke about our misdirected fears and said we worry about the wrong things. He also taught us how to redirect our fears.

Matthew 10:26-31 ²⁶ "Therefore **do not fear them**. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. ²⁸ And **do not fear those who kill the body** but cannot kill the soul. **But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ **Do not fear therefore**; you are of more value than many sparrows."

We need to fear what really matters most. We need to fear what we can control, not what we cannot control. We need to focus our energy, effort, and time on what we can do, not on what we cannot do.

Try this the next time you face one of your fears.

First, think what is the worst thing that could happen?

Then, ask if it is likely to happen? Usually the worst thing never happens. So why worry about it?

Finally, ask what if the worst thing did happen? Can you do anything about it? If not, why waste time worrying about something you can do nothing about?

Jesus drives fear from our hearts by replacing it with His peace.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, **My peace I give to you**; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Verse one of this chapter says to "believe in God, believe also in Me." Fill your heart with faith and you will replace your fear. Peace and faith both come from reading and trusting God's Word.

Paul's fear almost caused him to stumble in his faith near the end of his second missionary trip while in Corinth. He had faced great opposition and resistance, his life had been threatened, and he often felt tired and alone.

Acts 18:9-10 ⁹ "Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, **'Do not be afraid**, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ **for I am with you**, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Even strong Christians like Paul wrestled with fear and needed God's reassurance just like we do.

Paul told Timothy what can replace the spirit of fear.

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of **power and of love and of a sound mind.**" Fear does not go together with power, love, and a sound mind. A sound mind implies good sense, self-discipline, and self-control. When we fear something, we need to get control of ourselves. (Sometimes a person may have a medical condition or extreme stress that requires medication or counseling.)

Perfect love casts out fear.

1 John 4:18 "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."

Moses told the Israelites why they should not be afraid.

Deuteronomy 31:6-8 ⁶ "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, **He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.**

⁷ Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. ⁸ And the Lord, **He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you;** do not fear nor be dismayed."

Moses promised that God would not "fail" (NASV) His people.

God gave Joshua a reason not to be afraid. Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your **God is with you wherever you go.**"

David reassured Solomon regarding fear. 1 Chronicles 28:20 "And David said to his son Solomon, 'Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord **God - my God - will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you**, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

David told Solomon to take action, "do it." When you act on your fears, your fears often go away. The Nike slogan - "Just do it." - is good advice for overcoming fear.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Do the thing you fear to do and the death of fear is certain."

God provides strength to overcome our fears. Isaiah 41:10, 13 ¹⁰ "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. **I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you** with My righteous right hand. ¹³ For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'"

David says we need not fear evil even in the face of death. Psalm 23:4 "Yea, 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 is always with us. We are not even alone when we die.

We should fear no one. Psalm 27:1-3 ¹ "The Lord is **my light and my salvation**; Whom shall I fear? The Lord **is the strength of my life**; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. ³ Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident." God is my "defense" (NASV).

There is no reason to fear. Psalm 46:1-2 ¹ "God is **our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** ² Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;"

In light of all this assurance, why do people still live in fear and deny the promises of God?

1 John 5:10 "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, **because he has not believed** the testimony that God has given of His Son."

Take Action! What will you do to face your fears?