FINDING FREEDOM

Finding Freedom From Fear

Overview

When God created mankind, he called us “very good!” This means that God created all the emotions we can feel for a good purpose. Throughout the bible, we read the words “do not be afraid” or “do not fear.” However, God designed a good and healthy fear to help keep us safe When we experience a real threat, fear kicks in to help us survive! If you step off a curb and see a speeding car approaching you, fear takes over in a heartbeat. Adrenaline is released to give you a burst of energy to protect yourself through either a fight-or-flight response. In the case of a speeding car, jumping out of the way (flight) would be your best option!

Fear is a great response mechanism designed by God to protect us from real, immediate, and credible threats. However, it can also be a very destructive force within us that drives us to fight-or-flight responses in too many situations where no real, immediate and credible threat exists. Our occasional, or ongoing, fretting, worry, insecurity, anxieties, and phobias, likely fall into this camp of potentially destructive fearful responses.

Fear paints a pessimistic, negative picture of yourself, others, God, and outcomes on the canvas of your mind. These “bad pictures” often become the sole perspective of your future reality. The coping mechanism for dealing with our fear is control. We frantically search for whatever actions we can take to attempt to get a handle on the person or situation that is scaring us, or we look to distance ourselves from the perceived problem. We react with a fight-or-flight response. Neither of these is a particularly good strategy when it comes to building strong, lasting relationships!

I often hear people say, “that person has a real control problem.” While that is an accurate assessment, the truth of the matter is the person has a fear problem, and the fear problem is fundamentally based on lies. This is why you’ve heard the saying, “fear is a liar.” We know the devil is the father of lies. When you have a belief system wrought with fear-based thoughts, you fundamentally have a belief system that is not grounded in God (or Truth). Fear-based thinking is fundamentally void of faith, hope, and love. This is why God warns us over and over in His Word, “Do not fear.” Left unchecked, fear will steal, kill and destroy the blessings God desires to pour into your life!

For example, say a woman had a boyfriend who cheated on her in the past. In the midst of the hurt and pain of her situation, the voice of fear said, “all men will cheat on you.” This lie gets firmly entrenched in her belief system and further locked in place with a spirit of fear. Hence, as the woman enters into new relationships with other men in the future, she is unknowingly hauling along her fear-based perspective that all men will cheat on her. All it might take for her “fear button” to get pushed is for the guy she is dating to get a text from another woman. Before she knows it, she is convinced he is cheating on her. Whether she verbally rakes him

over the coals with accusations (fight), or drops him like a bad habit (flight), her fear has won another battle in her soul.

Keys to Breakthrough

Breaking free from fear comes down to one simple strategy - identify and renounce the lie(s) empowering the fear! The strategy is simple however, executing it is not always as easy as it sounds! It's relatively easy to identify fear when you are emotionally gripped by anxiety, but often times it's a lot more subtle. Often, I find people don't even recognize that fear is operating in their lives.

Reflecting on how you responded to a specific circumstance is one way to see if fear is influencing your life. If your reaction to a troubling situation has any hints of a fight-or-flight response, the odds are, fear is at work. The other telling sign of fear in your life is control. When the behavior of others scares and threatens us, our response is often to try and control them. Some people have learned that anger is a useful tool to get other people "back in line", and they don't even realize it's a form of control. Anything you do to manipulate another person to get what you want is control. Guilt, crying, threatening to leave, and emotionally shutting down, are all tactics people use to get their way. I'm not saying that you are trying to control others any time you act like this, but you might be. The only way to really know is to A.T.L. - Ask The Lord!

Monitoring your thoughts, and emotions is another sure way to identify if you are facing a fight with fear. One question you might start with is: "Do my thoughts sounds like faith, hope and love?" If you are feeling like God has abandoned you, doesn't care about you, your situation is hopeless, or you are all alone, and no one loves you, fear is likely the culprit! When I sense fear may be influencing a person's life, the first question I often ask is: "What's the bad picture in your mind?" I find most people can quickly articulate the bad thing they believe will happen. Understanding the "bad picture" helps you identify what you fear.

There is an endless list of fears that impact people's lives. Fears of failure, rejection, being wrong, being single, getting married, getting divorced, growing old, flying, and snakes are just a few off the top of my head. If you find yourself feeling anxious and fearful, but are not sure what you're afraid of, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you. Understanding what you fear takes you one step closer to identifying the lie(s) which empowers it.

You've likely heard one of the acronyms for fear is **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal. Fear plays on our imagination to convince us that bad things that are uncertain will certainly come to pass in our future. Of course, this totally opposes a faith-filled view of our future. Understanding the fullness of your future fatalistic view can help you call fear's bluff by revealing how it is fueled by fear and not faith.

So how can you call fear's bluff? One way to do this is by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the answers to two simple questions "Why am I anxious? And then what might happen?".

Here is a personal example: The day they announced that the refinery where I worked was being put up for sale, I found myself dealing with some serious anxious thoughts. To call fears bluff, I started with the first question, "Why am I anxious?" The first answer quickly popped into my head: "The new company may have their own person to do my job". I followed that question with the second question: "And then what might happen?" "I'll get laid off." "And then what might happen?" "I won't be able to support my family." "And then what might happen?" "I'll lose my house and all I have worked for." I could go on, but I think you get the picture.

As I reflected upon my answers, it was obvious that my hopeless view of my future was not grounded in faith. Some of my answers were almost laughable when I thought about them. Did I really believe that I couldn't find another job even if I got laid off? When I contrasted my answers to a faith-filled perspective, it became glaringly obvious my answers were filled with extreme hopelessness, almost to a level of ridiculousness! It also revealed to me where I had placed my security. It wasn't in God. My security was in my job and my material possessions. When I got real honest with myself, I had to acknowledge deep down there was a part of me that didn't trust that God would be my provider and protector. Now there are some lies I could begin to pray into!

Once the lie or lies are clear, the prayer part is fairly straightforward. You begin to contend for your victory over fear by confessing any fight, flight, or controlling actions as sin. Follow that prayer up by asking your Heavenly Father to forgive you for believing in these fear-based lies that have been operating as your truth. If you stop and think about it, you have been putting your faith in fear and lies, and not God and His Truth. Once you have covered the confessions, it's time to take a stand and renounce each lie that has been empowering your fear(s). After breaking the lies, you can move right into exercising your spiritual authority by firmly rebuking the spirit of fear. Do not overlook taking the time to break the spirit of fear. I regularly find the spirit of fear present and active, keeping people entrapped in their fear-based perspectives. The final step of your prayer time is to wholeheartedly declare His truths over yourself and your situation. As a part of your declaration prayer, I encourage you to ask God to release His promise contained in 1 John 4:18, which says, "perfect love casts out fear." Deep down, a heart gripped by fear is really in need of the Father's perfect love. His love, which contains the fullness of the Truth of who He really is and who you are, will bring the healing and peace your heart yearns for.

Many prayer sessions are not a "one prayer wonder" and will take a few swings of your spiritual ax to chop out the roots of your fears and lies. You may find some additional revelation is needed to effectively find a breakthrough from some deeply held and strongly rooted fears. In these cases, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the entry point(s) of the fear may very well accelerate the breakthrough process. If the Holy Spirit shows you an event from your past that was a key entry point for empowering this fear in your life, just take it to prayer like you would if it happened this morning!

Fear Prayer

I want you to pray the following prayer out loud. I don't want you just to read it. I want you to do your best to make these words a heartfelt prayer to God. To do this, I suggest you first read over a section of the prayer silently to familiarize yourself with what the prayer says. Then pause, still your heart before God, and pray the words out loud to Him from your heart.

Confess Dear Heavenly Father, I ask You to forgive me for putting my faith in fear and not trusting You. Forgive me for taking control and allowing this fear to reside in my heart and in my mind. Right now, I ask that You forgive me for [*fight, flight, or other controlling actions*].

Renounce: Father, forgive me for buying into these fear-based lies that have undermined the Truth of the way I see You, myself, others, and my circumstance. Today I renounce the lie that [*specific lies empowering the fear*]. I ask You to break this lie in the name of Jesus. *(repeat for each lie)* I hate how these lies have deceived me, and I disown them today!

Declare Father, reveal to me the Truths that You know my heart needs to hear. (*Pause and listen)*. I declare [*Truths that contend against the lies about God, yourself, others or situation*]. Thank you for revealing to me Your love and Truth. Write these upon my heart today Jesus, that they may become the Truths I will live from.

Forgive *If the lie/destructive thoughts came into your life when someone spoke critical / devaluing words over you, confess any hate, anger, and unforgiveness you've held against that person, and forgive them for their hurtful devaluing actions and words.*

Jesus, forgive me for holding anger, hatred, and unforgiveness towards *[name]*. I forgive *[name]* for the hurtful things they did and the devaluing words they spoke over my life. I declare these words are not true and ask You to fully break the power of these words over my life in Jesus' mighty name.

Rebuke I rebuke the spirit of fear right now. Spirit of fear, I command You to release and go now in the name of Jesus.

Declare Father, I ask You to begin to release Your perfect love that casts out fear. Fill my heart with Your perfect love. (*pause and receive His Love)*. Lord, today I choose to put my faith and hope in You! I ask You to reveal to me the way You see me and this situation. *(pause and listen. Finish the prayer by declaring what you sense God is showing you.)*

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