

FIGHTING FEAR

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

We live in an unpredictable world. Everyday brings new reports of things which people fear most, actually happening. Besides the experiences of others, there are those events that have already taken place in our own lives to remind us of how vulnerable we are.

The Bible has much to teach us about this area of fear. II Timothy 1:7 states, ***"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*** We are to be free from a life dominated by fear.

In this booklet, we will see what God has to say about fear and how we can have a victory over it.

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UNDERSTANDING FEAR

Fear is a God-given emotion that every person experiences. **It is a feeling aroused in us when we perceive something as a threat or a danger to our lives.** We can feel fear in physical, emotional, financial, social and spiritual areas.

Whether our fear is justifiable or not depends upon our response to these two questions:

Q. Is there a real threat or danger? ___Yes ___No

Q. Is our fear in balance with the threat or danger. ___Yes ___No

Fear is a positive emotion when there is a real danger, and the level of fear is in balance with that danger. Such fear is realistic and under control.

But there is a problem! **Most of us have fears that are not based upon a real danger,** or our feelings are out of proportion to the threat. We are overcome by the “*spirit of fear*” whenever we consider certain possibilities or have to confront specific situations.

Some fears even develop into phobias (something you dread) such as fear of crowds, bridges, or the dark. All such fears plague our lives and rob us of the peace we are promised in Christ. Our discussion of fear in this booklet will center on these unrealistic fears.

THE CAUSES OF FEAR

Unrealistic fear is fear that is not based on a real danger or is out of proportion to the danger involved. What might be a realistic fear to the unbeliever could often be unrealistic to the Christian, considering our relationship to a loving and sovereign God.

For instance, it would be realistic for a non-Christian to fear death, while such a fear is unrealistic for a believer. Other unrealistic fears would be: financial fears, the fear of man, fear of the future, etc.

Here are some of the major causes of fear:

1. Parental Influence — Some of our fears have been learned from the fears of our parents.

2. Past Association — A bad experience from the past can cause a fear in some area of our life. The memory of what happened causes a fear to persist in that same area.

3. Guilt — Proverbs 28:1 states, “*The wicked flee when no one pursues.*” Many difficulties with fear come from a guilty conscience. **Unresolved guilt can produce fear** in different areas of a person’s life. **Only honesty and repentance can correct the problem.**

4. Attention-Getting — Some fears begin with an attempt to get attention. At a young age, a person may develop a fear of the dark, mice, insects, etc. He exaggerates his fear so much it becomes even stronger.

THE EFFECTS OF FEAR

1 John 4:18 puts it well when it says that **"fear involves torment."** It affects our entire life.

We become preoccupied with ourselves and our problem. We become anxious, tense, and irritable. Our mind is gripped by thoughts about the fear. Our spiritual life is drained by our self-preoccupation

Even our physical well-being can deteriorate through headaches, increased pulse rate, high blood pressure, ulcers, etc.

Our social relationships with other people can also be seriously affected.

SOME FACTS ABOUT FEAR

There was a time you did not have the unrealistic fear that now plagues you. This fear grew as you carried your bad experience from the past into the present. Here are some facts about fear:

1. Your **fear is real**, even if it is **not realistic**.
2. Because it is not realistic (the danger is not genuinely there), **you are the one who is feeding the fear**.
3. Your **fear is more related to "what if's"**, than it is to certainties.
4. **The more you look at it, the more it grows**.
5. You become **preoccupied with the fear** and, consequently, with yourself.
6. The power of God and the truth about the situation become **less meaningful** than fear.

THE FEAR CYCLE

Once we are gripped with a **fear**, it **begins to perpetuate itself**. The fear grows through a self-producing cycle. Because of our preoccupation with the fear, we **end up creating the thing we feared**. Here is a description of the “fear cycle”:

1. We have had a **bad experience** that **causes hurt** or pain.
2. We begin to **fear it will happen again**.
3. Our **fear preoccupies our attention**, disabling us from reacting properly to the situation.
4. **We have another bad experience**.
5. **Our fear** is encouraged and **enlarged**.

6. **We become unable to separate the fear from the facts** of the situation.
7. **We try to avoid the situation** so that we will not repeat the bad experience.
8. **We begin to fear the “fear experience”** as much as the idea of what could happen.
9. If we can't avoid the situation, our increased fear and **self-preoccupation causes the cycle to repeat itself.**

The fear cycle usually takes a period of time to develop to a place of intensity. At its peak, it can be a debilitating experience, crippling our ability to relate normally to life's situations.

FEAR CAN BE OVERCOME

*“But thanks be to **God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (I Cor. 15:57).*

Yes, you can have the victory over your fear! You may have lost many battles until now. You may have gone into retreat and isolated yourself from whatever you fear. You may have lived in the “fear cycle” for a a long time. It does not matter.

What matters is that you now want the victory. God also wants you to have the victory. He has made it possible through Jesus Christ. **If you are willing to face the enemy again and enter the arena God’s way, you can triumph.**

Fear does not give up easily, but light always dispels darkness. We must remember that unrealistic fear is not based upon reality. We are the ones who produce such fear. Therefore, **the keys to seeing it overcome lie in your relationship to God and the fear.**

Until now, your attention has been on the fear. This has produced a self-preoccupation in this area. Sin always prevails when our attention is on ourselves.

You must now turn your attention to God. Your confidence should be *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13).

There are **four areas of response** that work together to give us victory over fear. We will look at these on the following pages.

TRUTH OVERCOMES FEAR

*“If you abide in My word ... you shall know the truth, and **THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE**” (John 8:31, 32) .*

It is very important to bring truth into our area of fear. First we need to understand the cycle of fear that goes on inside of us. We must see also that we are facing a fear and not a fact.

We should identify the facts and hold fast to them. **We should find either a promise from the scriptures or a spiritual fact that we can use to counteract the fear.** Whenever we begin to dwell upon our fear, we must immediately turn our mind to the truth.

A SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE

David and Goliath — In I Samuel 17 we read the amazing story of young David's triumph over Goliath. David would have been overwhelmed by fear if his attention had merely been on the natural facts. Instead, **he saw the situation through the eyes of God. Next to God, Goliath looked small.**

His truth was based on the fact of God's favor toward Israel. In verse 45 he cries, "***I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.***"

God has claims on our lives that the Goliath of fears has no right to challenge.

LOVE OVERCOMES FEAR

*“There is no fear in love; but perfect **LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR**”*
(I John 4:18).

Love is more powerful than fear. Fear is centered in ourselves. Love is centered in God and others. We must turn our concern from the fear, to seeking to do that which pleases God and helps others.

Fear acts selfishly. We must commit ourselves to act responsibly, in love, even if we must encounter another fear experience in doing so.

We must direct our mind to think in terms of love, rather than of fear. Instead of trying to stop fear thoughts, we need to turn our attention to thoughts of truth and love concerning the matter.

JESUS CHRIST — A SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE

The most powerful example of love prevailing over fear is seen in Christ facing the agonies of the crucifixion. Along with the physical suffering, He would also have to bear the sin of the entire human race.

So how did He triumph over such fears? He triumphed through love for God and others! In Matthew 26:39 he cries, *“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”* He resolved to please God first. In Hebrews 12:2 we are told that Jesus, *“for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”*

Fear could not prevail over His desire to please God and to bless others. We must follow His example.

FAITH OVERCOMES FEAR

*“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**”* (Heb. 11:6)

Faith reasons from God and His Word. Fear reasons from self and circumstances. Our fears can seem very reasonable. they have proven to be very powerful in our lives.

But now we must see that God has made us new creations. We belong to Him. We are being conformed to the image of His Son. I Thessalonians 5:24 claims, **“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

Take hold of the truth. Make your prime motive to please God and bless others, then faith will work by this love (Gal. 5:6).

A SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE

Sarah - We are told in Hebrews 6:12 that we **"through faith and patience inherit the promises."** Whatever God has for us is ours if we will move forward in faith and continue in patience.

Sarah conceived a child when she was long past childbearing age because **"she judged Him faithful who had promised"** (Hebrews 11:11).

Our victory will probably not be instantaneous. But as we are patient, looking to God, moving forward in faith, and doing what God's Word says to do, we will see our fears steadily fade away.

COURAGE TO ACT OVERCOMES FEAR

“BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE; DO NOT BE AFRAID, NOR BE DISMAYED, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

We can know all of the facts and still be afraid to act. Until we step forward in faith, with the right motive, armed with the truth, we will not see victory.

David “ran toward the army to meet the Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:48). We must be willing to **step into the situation** associated with our fear. **The real enemy is fear, not the situation.**

As we step forth, our focus should be on God being glorified. As we act courageously, **He will give us the strength** and assistance we need.

A SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE

Queen Esther — In the book of Esther, the Jewish people of the Persian Empire were facing annihilation through a decree of the king.

Queen Esther had kept her Jewish identity a secret. Because of the crisis with her people, she was forced to act. She had to approach the king, even if it meant her death. In Esther 4:16, she says "***And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!***"

She committed her fate into God's hands and faced her fear. This act of courage brought the salvation of the Jewish people.

WHAT IF I FAIL

TRUE failure is allowing the fear to prevail over your life. Victory always involves a campaign against the enemy. We must not accept the tyranny of fear any longer. The road to victory may involve some defeats. If so, we must regroup, re-affirm the truth, and go forward.

The fear of failure is part of the problem. Put it aside. It will only cripple you from making an effort. Remember, temporary failure is no worse than what you already have. God will even use your failures to show you the right direction to go in order to achieve ultimate victory.

CONCLUSION

Full victory over your fear may take some time. You should **re-read this booklet in order to fully understand this area.** It is essential to become familiar with the steps to victory.

As a final reminder, **your attention must move from seeing fear defeated, to seeing God glorified - whatever gets your attention, gets you.**

If you need additional help, we suggest that you contact your pastor.

For a brief examination of the main points in this booklet, please re-read the boldly printed words on each page.



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