

Neutralizing Fear

Introduction

One of the most common phrases in scripture used by God and angels when engaging with people was, "Do not be afraid." God hasn't changed. He is still saying that to us today, even when we look strong on the outside and are doing all sorts of things overcompensating for the fear within us. A lot of people today have become friends with fear. So many sicknesses are rooted in fear and anxiety. We need to call out fear for what it is and understand that it has negative consequences. Sadly, many people have embraced fear as part of their identity and personality. Therefore, we need to neutralize the power of debilitating fear in our lives. Debilitating fear is fear that stops us from getting things done. The good news is that there is no fear from which the Lord cannot deliver you. The key is that we must seek Him and see Him as our solution.

Ps 34:4

I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.

Shyness is linked to fear and anxiety. It is one thing to be quiet it is quite another to be shy. Fear and anxiety are not part of the born again human spirit.

Debilitating fear has negative consequences. We cannot be friends with fear and expect to remain in a neutral state.

Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Fear causes you to ruminate and worry. This robs you of today's opportunities. Worrying is one of the biggest time-wasters for most people. If you don't know how much you worry, do an emotional log over the next week and you will see.

If you continue in fear you can end up opening a door to deep levels of terror. Fleshly behaviour opens doors to spirits that make it worse.

Jer 1:17

"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.

To neutralize is to make something ineffective by applying an opposing force or effect.

To make something ineffective.

To counteract the effect of something or someone

To kill or destroy

FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real. What mind games are at play in your life?

Many people today live in a constant triggered state. What are you allowing to trigger you? People who struggle with stage fright will often say that they don't have a problem when they are sitting down with people talking but it is often when they feel that they are the centre of attention that they feel mortified. They want to crawl under a grain of sand. Why do people have seemingly irrational emotions that are debilitating? It is largely because they are operating from their emotional centre and not the pre-frontal cortex of their brain. Whenever you feel you are in fight, flight or freeze mode, make a decision to start asking questions that get you to use the logical and rational part of your brain. When you get emotionally triggered you are flooding your body with cortisol, your stress hormone, and therefore can't be productive. Someone I was helping to overcome anxiety on public speaking mentioned to me

that he experienced a breakthrough when his MD said to him, "Remember, we are your friends." We must remind ourselves daily that, "God is actually for us." Learn to get your spirit to command your soul.

Ps 43:5

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,...

Questions to ask when someone is overwhelmed with debilitating fear

- Have you been in this situation before?
- How have you dealt with this in the past?
- What choices do you have right now?
- What is your first step?
- What is the next step after that?
- How can you break up this situation into parts?
- What is the root cause of this situation?
- Whose assistance do you need?
- What else could be true?
- How can you avoid being in this situation again?

1 Pet 3:13-14

¹³*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened."*

What triggers you into fear? Is it words, phone calls, or what you see? Is it their voice or their face?

Today we will focus specifically on debilitating fear. The type of fear that stops you getting things done.

Fear is often based on illegitimate needs. If you have the need for someone's validation and approval then you will live in constant fear of their disapproval.

If you are addicted to my praise then you will live bound by the fear of anticipated criticism from me.

If your identity is in your bank balance then you will live in constant fear of losing all your money.

In attempting to get rid of fear in your life it is important to examine misplaced and illegitimate needs.

1. Fear of Failure

Often what people call the fear of failure is more accurately understood as the fear of what they perceive failure will bring. So it can be the fear of ridicule and embarrassment. On other cases it manifests as the fear of blame. Some people think the pendulum will swing the other way when things are going well. They have faith for failure. Fear is faith in reverse. You have faith for negative things and what you fear comes to pass because of this. For a lot of people, their minds have been programmed to more readily accept failure than success.

Job 3:25

What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

Examine your relationship with failure. What story do you tell yourself when you have failed?

Failure and setbacks are ingredients for success. Success is often experimental involving a lot of trial and error. If you see failure as a permanent state it becomes very difficult to achieve ultimate success.

2 Cor 4:8-9

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

Paul did not see setbacks as a permanent state. How you define setbacks and apparent failure is crucial.

Don't see failure and setbacks as permanent states but rather as your learning journey to success.

Often the fear of failure comes in the form of the fear of evil tidings. This is the fear of receiving bad news. This is why some people feel nervous when the phone rings. Their default is that bad news is coming.

Ps 112 speaks of the blessing of the righteous with regards to this.

Ps 112:6-7

Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. 7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

Ps 23:4

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Despite your outward circumstances you can still walk in inner peace. We need to ask ourselves certain questions when we think we have failed so that we neutralize the potential trauma.

Questions to ask people when they feel like a failure.

- What have you learned from this situation?
- Are you being hard on yourself?
- Have you been in this situation before?
- Of what are you afraid?
- Do you know others who have been in this situation?
- How could it have turned out worse?
- How could you have done better?
- How have you improved from previous times?
- Why do you see it as failure?
- What were you expecting?

“The things we fear most have already happened to us.” Robin Williams in the One Hour Photo.

Fear is what we learned here. Someone once said that children are born with two fears, the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. All other fears are learned. We need to unlearn these fears.

2. Fear of Success

A lot of people are afraid of the responsibility that comes with success whilst others are afraid of the attention that comes with success. Dare to dream, Dare to commit, Dare to love, Dare to love again, Dare to lead and Dare to step into uncharted territories. Sometimes we are bound by misbeliefs like “Competition is bad, someone always gets hurt.” Sometimes people

begin to criticise that which they are avoiding. They are bound by the fear of intimacy and vulnerability but they begin to say, "All men are dogs; I don't need a man in my life." This is the fear of relational success. It reminds me of someone I know who is used to believe he was unworthy of receiving awards at work. When he did receive awards he would reinterpret it as "my bosses are using this to manipulate me." His outer reality had to match his inner misbeliefs. When I was coaching him he communicated that he has a fear of the responsibility that comes with success. I had a friend who was physically handicapped and a common friend told me that this guy said "Paul is just nice to me because he feels sorry for me". His insecurity was causing him to reframe his external world. Are you pushing success and love away because of your misbeliefs? Are you hiding from love?

I believe that in the parable of the talents the debilitating issue might have been the fear of success.

Matthew 25:24-30

²⁴ "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' ²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The fear of success causes us to settle and is often fuelled by false humility. We can also become self-righteous and judgmental towards those that are successful. The saddest summary of a life contains three descriptions: could have, might have and should have. When a person is on their deathbed it is unlikely that they will regret taking too many risks over the years. They are more likely to wish that they had taken more risks. Faith is spelt R-I-S-K. Their story does not have to be your story. Don't let other people's negative experiences become the predictor of your success or failure.

3. Fear of Man

To whom have you given illegitimate power? Who have you placed on a pedestal and given so much power to? Have you de-authorised yourself where you literally feel that you don't have any power? Who are you afraid of? Who intimidates you? How big is God in comparison to that person?

When you live in constant fear of rejection from man then you have not yet grasped and internalised the significance of God's acceptance of you. This is what we must meditate on, as opposed to the latest theological conspiracy theory. Some people spend more time meditating on version 503 of the Anti-Christ than on the relentless love of Jesus. I have a friend who made an inner vow that he will never place himself in a position where he can be mocked or ridiculed. This was after he grew up with a father who would mock him when he made mistakes in sport. The impact of this fear of being mocked and ridiculed was that he remained in the background for many years. The Lord is saying to you today, "You don't have to be bound anymore by the fear of humiliation based on childhood issues."

Isaiah 54:4

"Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

There is a place in the kingdom for the healing of memories.

Ps 27:1

The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

Ps 118:6 6

The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

Ps 56:3-4

³When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise— in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

People who are fearful of man have not meditated long enough on the otherness of God.

Matthew 10:28

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Antidotes for fear

You don't get rid of fear by just saying, "Don't fear, Don't fear, don't fear." Fear has some antidotes. There are things you have to build into your spirit in order to overcome fear. Fear has to be displaced by these antidotes. There are a few things for us to meditate upon if we are going to neutralize fear. Knowledge helps us to overcome fear. If you are afraid of snakes, gain knowledge about snakes and how many are actually venomous and it might help you. Roughly 11% of the 173 species of snakes in Southern Africa can be considered deadly and these include mambas, cobras, Puff Adder, Gaboon Adder, Boomsnake and the Twig Snake. In 1989 I was in Malawi on a choir tour and the gentleman rowing the dugout canoe was baffled by my fear. He kept asking why I was so afraid. He had knowledge that gave him peace. Sometimes God is baffled by our fear too. When you have knowledge about certain cultures you tend to fear them less. When you gain knowledge about God's nature and heart toward you, you begin to overcome fear. So, what must we meditate upon to displace the ruminating and worry that goes with fear?

Meditate on the access you have to the Prince of Peace

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

We are stewards of peace so we can also impart our peace to those around us.

That's why when Jesus sent out the disciples He gave them the command to do the same for those who would host them.

Meditate on the fact that you belong to God

Isaiah 43:1

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Meditate on His presence with you

Deut 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

God is not an absent father. (Unlike me who is sometimes on the phone while my kids are scoring goals at a match). God is even better than cheerleaders who are often more interested in their dance routine than the actual game.

Meditate on God's love for you

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Pet 5:6-7

⁶*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

⁷*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

It is an active process that you have to engage in.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Meditate on the nature of the born again spirit

2 Tim 1:7

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Romans 8:15

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Meditate on God's truth

Eph 6:14

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist

Truth about yourself, truth about God, truth about others and truth about how the world works. Fear thrives on lies.

Your subconscious does not distinguish between fact and fantasy. If you believe a lie, that lie will affect your emotional state and your physiology, which in turn will impact how you relate with the world around you.