

Do you remember this scene from The Wizard of Oz? “Hail to Dorothy, the Wicked Witch is dead!” Dorothy slays the Wicked Witch of the West with a bucket of water. After obtaining the witch’s broomstick, Dorothy strolls into the Wizard’s court, hoping to find a way home. The enormous head of the Wizard responds by hollering orders amidst flames, smoke, and peals of thunder, and everyone, including Dorothy, is terrified. But then, when all hope seems gone, Dorothy’s little dog, Toto, tugs on a curtain with his teeth. It opens to reveal a white-haired man standing before a control panel. Realizing he is exposed, the Wizard shouts, “Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain; the Great Oz has spoken.” But there was no Great OZ; it was merely an old man with a microphone. The charade was over, and Dorothy’s ruby-red slippers soon sent her home.

That is an excellent picture of fear!

## FEAR

Fear is a liar, a bully, and a charade. The Wicked Witch of the West was defeated with a simple bucket of water, and fear can be defeated by simply exposing it to the light. Even though, like The Mighty Oz, fear is a bully and may appear to be one thing, it is a charade, and once the charade is exposed, we will see it for what it is.

Fear is one of our enemy’s most common and effective strategies.

### Fear is destructive.

- Fear makes us think that those hard circumstances will never end or that we will never be able to cope with them.
- Fear makes it hard for us to think clearly and twists facts and truth to its whim.
- Fear exhausts us with what could happen and hinders our ability to walk with Christ.
- Fear keeps us up at night, exploring irrational scenarios, and it causes us to imagine the worst possible outcomes.
  - We worry about money; will we have enough?
  - We worry about our job: will I get laid off?
  - We worry about our kids; how will their friends and the culture influence them?
- Fear keeps us confined to a small box instead of stepping out in faith and trusting God’s sovereignty.

Fear can have tremendous power over us.

- Fear can debilitate us and create incredible anxiety.
- Fear of not having enough causes us to hoard what we have instead of being generous, creating a mindset that we will never have enough.
- Fear of what people think of us causes us to avoid any situation in which we may be judged or not accepted.

- Fear drives the political machine. I guarantee the strategy of the presidential candidates, whether it is Trump or Biden, is to appeal to your fears. Fear can be a powerful motivator, and our enemy knows that. And he uses that against us.
- Fear of what may happen to our kids has created a generation of helicopter parents who raised kids characterized by entitlement, a lack of self-discipline, and self-sufficiency.
- Fear of our culture has caused many churches to build walls and isolate themselves from anything and anyone that might contaminate the flock.

**Fear is a self-imposed prison that will keep you from becoming what God intends for you to be. You must move against it with the weapons of faith and love.**

**~ Rick Warren**

When the serpent deceives Adam and Eve, they hide from God when He comes to the garden looking for them. When God calls out to Adam, "Where are you?"

**Gen 3:10 (CSB)** - And he said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

Adam's shame fuels his fear, and he hides from the one being in the universe who loves him more than he could know. His fear causes him to hide from the omniscient God of the universe. Playing hide-and-seek with God? Really?

Fear causes us to do some irrational things.

Fear may feel real and overwhelming, but it is a lie, a trick, a strategy to mess you up. The enemy tells you a lie a bit at a time, getting you to believe it more each time you listen to the lie.

This is the most important thing you need to understand about fear.

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**Fear from the enemy is a lie.**

How do we deal with lies? We expose them by shining the light on them.

The truth, the light of God's Word, tells us that this fear is nothing. There is nothing behind it. It is an old man behind a curtain pulling levers and pushing knobs and shouting into a microphone to bend you to his plan. There is no reason for fear other than the enemy will always take what he can get. It's the whole, if you give a mouse a cookie, or a moose a muffin or a pig a pancake or a dog a donut.

The more we listen to the lie of fear, the more it gains a foothold in our lives.

Fear is a cheap trick by the enemy to hide the truth that we are more than conquerors.

**2 Tim 1:7 (CSB)** - For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

God hasn't given us a "spirit of fear." Caution, alertness, and preparedness are all appropriate responses to difficult circumstances. God has equipped us with these things but not fear. Rather, God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit inside us, is the Spirit of "power, love, and sound judgment."

There is a difference between sound judgment and fear. Sound judgment may cause me to lock my doors at night or keep me from doing stupid things.

More than 240 people die every year in America's National Park System. Many (not all) but many die because they ignore the warning signs. Many people die in Yosemite National Park because they go out on the viewpoints, past the signs and barriers to get the perfect picture for their social media, and they end up slipping and falling to their death. There is an Instagram Feed called Tourons of Yellowstone (tourist morons) that video and picture documents all the idiots who get too close to the elk, bears and bison and end up getting hurt. People who do that don't have a lack of fear; they have a lack of sound judgment.

God's spirit has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of power, love, and sound judgment, and it is His spirit of love and sound judgment that gives us power over our fear.

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**The remedy to fear is God's presence.**

**The presence of fear does not mean you have no faith. Fear visits everyone. But make your fear a visitor and not a resident.**

**-Max Lucado**

The goal is not to get rid of fear. If we just do that or try to ignore fear and pretend that it isn't there, then when it returns, we will be back where we started.

**The goal is to become so aware of God's presence and voice that we can feel and hear Him amid fear.**

The goal is to be so well acquainted with the Spirit of power, love, and sound judgment that lives within us that when fear creeps into our lives, we recognize it for what it is: a counterfeit and a lie.

**Ps 23:1-4 (CSB)** 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need. 2 He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

It doesn't matter what you are afraid of. It doesn't matter if what you are fearful of is logical or illogical. All that matters is knowing who is with you in the dark valley.

Regardless of our fear, we must face it while connected to God's presence. Facts and truth are essential, but without His presence, they are often twisted into a knot of fear.

**Ps 23:5 (CSB)** - You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

God does not set a table in the presence of your enemies because He wants to test your bravery or gloat at His enemies. God prepares a table in the presence of your enemies so that you can see what your enemies look like in His presence.

In His presence, our enemy is nothing.

**Col 2:14-15 (CSB)** - He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.

If God loves us, why does the Bible tell us to fear God?

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### **Fear God?**

**1 Jn 4:18-19 (CSB)** - There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love. 19 We love because he first loved us.

But then look at Psalm 111.

**Ps 111:10 (CSB)** - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his instructions have good insight. His praise endures forever.

Is that a contradiction? No. Let me give you an imperfect illustration.

I have been kicked by horses, bitten, stepped on, run over, bucked off, tossed through a fence, and fallen on by horses.

Olivia used to have a horse; his name was Milo ....

Every time I climb on a horse or go to trim a horse's feet, whether it is my horse or anyone else's horse, there is a bit of fear. Not fear in the sense that I am worried that the horse may kill me (even though I know that could happen), but I am mindful of the power of a horse's strength, size, and speed. I have a very healthy respect for the power of a horse. That healthy respect has kept me alive and out of the hospital (for the most part).

Our Father in Heaven is all-powerful. He is all-knowing, and He is always present. His power spoke the universe into existence and created the earth and everything in it, including us. His power gives sight to the blind, heals sickness, and brings the dead back to life. We who are small and fragile should fear that kind of power. We should stand in awe when considering who God is and what He has done. When we see the beauty of a sunset or hold a newborn baby, we should honor and worship Him because He is worthy. He is powerful and should be feared.

The horse illustration is imperfect because the horse will use its power to protect himself. The horse uses its strength, size, and speed for self-preservation, even if that means mowing me down.

My Heavenly Father, on the other hand, uses His power to protect me.

The greatness of God rouses fear within us, but His goodness encourages us not to be afraid of Him. To fear and not be afraid—that is the paradox of faith.

A.W. Tozer

Isa 41:10 (CSB)—Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.

God says, "Do not fear, " 365 times in the Bible. That is one "do not fear" for every day of the year.

Why 365 times? We need a daily reminder that the fear the enemy sows in our lives is a lie, and God is there to walk with us, protect us, and guide us through our fear. Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me.

Rom 8:31 (CSB) - What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

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I know that many of us struggle with fear. The enemy loves to tell you another lie, that if you struggle with fear and anxiety then you're weak and not a good Christian because you just don't trust Jesus enough. Don't let the enemy shame you because you struggle with fear. Overcoming the lie of fear is a process of recognizing the real truth and then trusting Jesus with whatever comes next.

Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway.

~John Wayne

That is what God has called us to do. Even though we all have fears, we can overcome them, step out in faith, and follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Even though we don't see the next step, we can take it because we know God is good and faithful.

Fear not!

Communion:

If Jesus were to walk in the room, what would He say to you about your fear?

Now, listen for His answer.