

# Overcoming Fear

## Overcoming Fear

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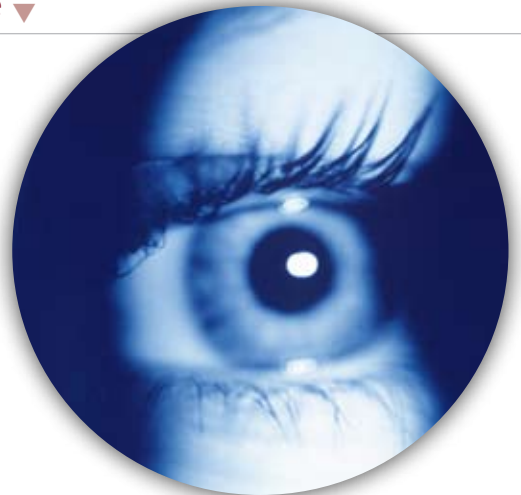
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# Overcoming Fear

## Introduction



### ***How to Use This Course for a Group Study***

*This course can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, follow these simple suggestions:*

- Make copies of the Participant Guide for everyone in the group. Or, if you would like them to have more information, you can give everyone a copy of the Leader's Guide instead. You have permission to make up to 1,000 copies for your church or group as long as you do not charge for them.
- Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting people to open up.
- When working through the questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for your group to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
- End each session in prayer.



# Overcoming Fear

Leader's Guide

## What Is Fear?

*Defining this universal emotion*

*Perhaps the most famous fear quote of all time came from Franklin D. Roosevelt at his first Inaugural Address, which occurred in 1933, in the middle of the Great Depression: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror, which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."*



*The Bible has a lot to say about fear. The word afraid is found over 200 times in the Bible, and the word fear is found 53 times in the Psalms alone. So what is fear? How do we define it?*

Scripture: [Psalm 25:15](#); [27:1–3](#); [Proverbs 29:25](#); [Hebrews 12:1](#)

Based on: [The Bible study "Overcoming Fear,"](#) by Charles R. Gerber



## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

**Note to leader:** Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study. Also, there are many verses of Scripture referred to throughout this study. Do not feel that you have to look up all of them.

### Discussion Starters:

**[Q]** There are many famous quotes on fear. After reading each one of the following, ask the group if they agree or disagree with the quote, and why:

*"Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark."* —Francis Bacon

*"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."* —H. P. Lovecraft

*"What we fear comes to pass more speedily than what we hope."* —Publilius Syrus

*"In politics, what begins in fear usually ends in folly."* —Calvin Coleridge

*"People who live in fear grow up standing at the end of every line."* —Denis Waitley

*"They that live in fear are never free."* —Robert Burton

## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

### Teaching Point One: Everyone experiences fear.

All people experience fear. But what does the word *fear* mean? Psychology frequently uses the word *phobia* when it refers to fears. Phobias are fears that have no basis in fact. They are abnormal or unusual in nature. The Greek god Phobos was called upon to frighten enemies, and the English word *phobia* comes from this Greek mythological figure.

Fear is based on the possibility, not the probability, of an event occurring. But to a fearful mind, what is possible seems probable. As will be discussed later, creativity of mind is one of the things that Satan uses to create fear. In the creative mind anything is possible. In the overly creative mind anything seems probable.

Fear prevents people from going on with their lives. It puts people in a "holding pattern."

**[Q]** Read Proverbs 29:25. How is "fear of man" a snare or a trap? Describe how it has been so for you at times.



[Q] Read Psalm 25:15. How does this verse counteract that fear?

[Q] Read Psalm 27:1–3. How does David describe his fear in these verses?

Fear is a heartfelt emotion! It begins with a thought.

### Optional Activity:

*Using a whiteboard or poster board, make two acrostics that can help us understand fear. Ask the group to come up with words starting with the letters F E A R to help describe our emotional response to fear. These are examples:*

<b>F</b> uture	<b>F</b> rustration
<b>E</b> nergizing	<b>E</b> ngaging
<b>A</b> nxiety	<b>A</b> ngry
<b>R</b> elentless	<b>R</b> esponses

*Or if you'd rather, write these two acrostics and ask the group to explain how each of these things is an emotional response to fear.*

### Teaching Point Two: Fear affects every area of a person's life.

The word *fear* and related words occur over 330 times in the Bible. Here is some of what the Bible teaches about fear:

- Fear is an enemy of the fruit of the Spirit—especially love (1 John 4:18).
- Fear affects every area of a person's life (Esther 5:9; Jer. 36:24).
- People can be free from fear (Job 21:9).
- Fear is emotional turmoil (Job 3:25–26).
- Terror can startle us and dog our every step (Job 18:11).
- Terror and fear can spread (Ezek. 32:23, 24, 26).
- Being afraid is linked to terror (1 Sam. 28:5).

[Q] Would you say fear is a consistent problem for you, or that it comes and goes?

[Q] Name something you are afraid of.



**[Q]** Which of the following best describes your emotional response to fear?

- Paralyzing terror
- Anger
- General anxiety
- Excitement
- Emotional chaos
- Other

**[Q]** Give an example of how fear affects other areas of your life.

**[Q]** Are you able to overcome your fear? If so, how? If not, why not?

### Teaching Point Three: Fear can become a personality trait.

Once fear becomes a personality trait, it is very difficult to destroy. This is because fear has entangled and hindered the personality, and the personality has adapted to it.

Fear is the mind's prediction or expectation of an unwanted negative event. Fear frequently motivates behavior. Fear stops some behaviors from occurring and causes other behaviors to occur.

Fear stimulates the adrenal glands and prepares the body for action. It causes the body to either flee or fight. People first try to flee, but when they cannot get away from the feared situation, they will usually fight. Most fighting that occurs within a relationship is a fear-based behavior. Fear causes people to misinterpret what is being said and done and to overreact to a situation.

Fear is made from a recipe with four ingredients; these are the roots of terror. Satan takes:

- 1) our limited knowledge of the future;
- 2) the creative capacity of our mind (Lev. 26:36);
- 3) a painful past event(s) (Isa. 33:18; 43:18); and
- 4) a threat of harm (Neh. 4:7–8);

then he puts them together to create fear.

Leviticus 26:36 states that people can be afraid of the sound of a windblown leaf. With a fearful, creative mind, what can a wind blown leaf sound like? Satan uses the gift of creativity to enhance and expand our fears. A rubber hose can look like a snake at sunset. A car tire sticking out of the



water can look like an alligator. Our minds are very creative and also very fearful. These two traits might go hand in hand.

**[Q]** If a person is not very imaginative, do they have fewer fears? What do you think? How does a good imagination give rise to fears?

**[Q]** Do you know anyone who you would say has fear as a personality trait? What is that person's life like?

**[Q]** Read Hebrews 12:1. How does this verse speak to being entangled by fear?

### Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Pastor Mike Breaux tells the following story of when his daughter Jodie answered God's call to go into missions work:

During her junior year of high school, Jodie struggled to find a faith of her own. She wanted to know in her heart that all of what she'd been taught to believe was true and that Jesus Christ was real. Honestly, she was headed down a dark road. But God pursued her down that road. She eventually found a faith of her own, and when she graduated from high school, she said, "I don't think God wants me to go to college right now. I want to take a year to go to Haiti, and I want to serve people in a medical mission down there."

I said, "Are you sure you want to do this? Jodie, it's 3,000 miles away from home. It's AIDS-infested and the poorest country in the western hemisphere. And do you know it's controlled by the voodoo religion?"

"I know all that," she said. "But I feel like God wants me to go and help those people." I said, "Okay. If that's what you want to do, we'll make it happen."

One of the hardest days of my life was putting my little girl on an airplane and watching it lift off, not knowing whether I'd ever communicate with her again.

One night I got an e-mail from Jodie. She wrote: "Dad, tonight has been the most remarkable night of my life. I got called out to this hut to deliver a baby. Dad, I've only delivered one, and that was with somebody. I'd never done this by myself, but I was the only one around. They called me, and I get to this hut, and there's this naked, screaming lady on the dirt floor. I got a flashlight, and I'm thinking, Here I am,



## Overcoming Fear What Is Fear?

### Leader's Guide

18-years-old, and I'm in a hut in a third-world country with a naked, screaming, pregnant lady. I have a flashlight, and I don't know what I'm doing—but I'm here. To make matters worse, this lady from the voodoo religion walked into the hut, dressed in her red and blue voodoo garb, and began to chant some voodoo incantation in Creole. She put some kind of oil on the lady's head, and when she started to walk away from me and the woman, she stopped at the woman's belly, put some other kind of salve there, and walked the opposite direction—all while chanting this Creole spell. I didn't know what to do. She stood at the head of this woman and stared a hole through me. When I was getting ready to deliver this baby, I just looked back at her, and I started singing. I knew she didn't understand English, but I just started singing: 'Our God is an awesome God, he reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power, and love, our God is an awesome God.'"

Jodie said that the voodoo lady became completely unglued. She grabbed all of her stuff and ran out of the hut. Jodie wrote, "That night I knew that that baby was going to be born with the blessing of God and not the curse of Satan."

As I read Jodie's e-mail, my fatherly side thought, You get on a plane tomorrow! What are you doing in a hut with a voodoo woman in the first place? But then my heart beat so fast for her as her brother in Christ. I thought, Way to go, Jodie! Way to make a difference with your life! Way to stop floating around accidental-like! Way to put your life in the hands of the destiny-maker! Way to make a splash! Who knows who that little baby she delivered that night is going to grow up to touch and who that person is going to touch—all because of one courageous girl who said, "Okay, God, I want to put my life in your hands; I want to make a difference."

In Mark 8:35 Jesus said: If you insist on saving your life—[if you insist on the comfort of playing it safe]—you're going to lose your opportunity for life! Only those who give away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it really means to really, really live.<sup>1</sup>

**Action Point: On your own this week, look up the following verses on fear: Deuteronomy 32:30; 2 Samuel 22:41; 1 Chronicles 12:15; Psalm 18:40; 55:4–8; 104:7; Isaiah 2:21; 21:15; 30:16–17; Jeremiah 4:6; 6:1; Nehemiah 6:11; Zechariah 14:5; Leviticus 26:36; Jeremiah 48:44; 49:24; Matthew 3:7. Write down after each verse what it tells you about the nature of fear. Write down what you fear and give the list to God, asking him to help you trust him more than your fear.**

— Study by Charles R. Gerber, with JoHannah Reardon

<sup>1</sup> Mike Breau, in a sermon at Willow Creek Community Church (5-26).





Participant's Guide

# What Is Fear?

## *Defining this universal emotion*

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## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Do you agree or disagree with the following quotes, and why:

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*“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear.”* —H. P. Lovecraft

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*“People who live in fear grow up standing at the end of every line.”* —Denis Waitley

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## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching Point One: Everyone experiences fear.**

**Teaching Point Two: Fear affects every area of a person's life.**

The word *fear* and related words occur over 330 times in the Bible. Here is some of what the Bible teaches about fear:

- Fear is an enemy of the fruit of the Spirit—especially love (1 John 4:18).
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- Fear is emotional turmoil (Job 3:25–26).
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**[Q]** Which of the following best describes your emotional response to fear?

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- Anger



- General anxiety
- Excitement
- Emotional chaos
- Other

### Teaching Point Three: Fear can become a personality trait.

Fear is made from a recipe with four ingredients; these are the roots of terror. Satan takes:

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## Part 3 Apply Your Findings

**Action Point:** On your own this week, look up the following verses on fear: Deuteronomy 32:30; 2 Samuel 22:41; 1 Chronicles 12:15; Psalm 18:40; 55:4–8; 104:7; Isaiah 2:21; 21:15; 30:16–17; Jeremiah 4:6; 6:1; Nehemiah 6:11; Zechariah 14:5; Leviticus 26:36; Jeremiah 48:44; 49:24; Matthew 3:7. Write down after each verse what it tells you about the nature of fear. Write down what you fear and give the list to God, asking him to help you trust him more than your fear.

— Study by Charles R. Gerber, with JoHannah Reardon



# Overcoming Fear

Leader's Guide

## Fear's Close Associates

*Anxiety, discouragement, worry, and panic can result from fear.*

*Fear perpetuates other problems in our lives. If it runs amok, it can move from being a mild annoyance to outright panic, which paralyzes us.*



Scripture: Deuteronomy 20:3–4; Psalm 94:18–19; Proverbs 12:25; Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:6–7

Based on: The Bible study "Overcoming Fear," by Charles R. Gerber



## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

**Note to leader:** Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Fear is frequently linked to discouragement in the Bible. Of the 15 times that the word *discouragement* occurs in the NIV translation, ten of those times are linked to being afraid (Deut. 1:21; 31:8; Josh. 1:9; 8:1; 10:25; 1 Chron. 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chron. 20:15, 17; 32:7).

Anxiety is also closely related to fear (Prov. 12:25). It is the body's physical response to fear.

Melanie Holmes wrote, "Anxiety is a little like that nervous feeling you get the night before the first day of school, except you have it all the time."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Earnest R. Hilgard, a past president of the American Psychological Association, said, "The causes of contemporary anxiety are complex: Two world wars within our century, and a cold war persisting since the last one; enormous mobilities of people, geographically and economically, disturbing the sense of rootedness; shifting values so that we are uncertain about child-rearing practices, about moral standards, about religious beliefs."<sup>2</sup>

The word *anxiety* comes from the Latin *anxius*, which means a tight feeling of the chest. Anxiety is what a person feels when, on a plane, the oxygen mask has just come down from the overhead compartment, and the stewardess tells the passengers to breathe normally. Yeah right!

Edward Everett Hale said, "Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three—all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have." This is a good definition of anxiety.

### Discussion Starters:

- [Q] What makes you feel anxious?
- [Q] How often do you think your anxiety and discouragement result from fear?
- [Q] How do you try to handle your anxiety?

<sup>1</sup> *Time*, July 1, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Psychology of Anxiety*, E. E. Levitt (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. 7.



## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

### Teaching Point One: Anxiety is a close friend to fear.

God can use fear and anxiety to produce repentance. J. Wallace Hamilton said, "We must not let fear overleap its purpose into pathological manifestations. We must make it a friend, let it lead us to repentance, spur us to righteousness and redemption. We must see God working in our fears."

What does the Bible say about anxiety? Read Proverbs 12:25; Psalm 94:18–19; and Philippians 4:6–7.

**[Q]** How can a kind word help ease anxiety? Give an example.

- How can a kind word lead to repentance?

**[Q]** How has God brought love and consolation to you as a result of an anxiety?

**[Q]** How can giving thanks transform your anxiety into peace? If you can, give an example.

### Optional Activity:

*Psychology describes GAD (generalized anxiety disorder) as a mental disorder. A person with GAD foresees tragedy and is overly troubled about finances, physical comfort, contact with others, or their career. Ask the group to look at the chart below and to consider if they might have this disorder. If they recognize these symptoms in themselves, ask them to tell you on their own after the group is over. Encourage them to seek professional help.*

Typical Symptoms and Behaviors Associated with Generalized Anxiety Disorder		
Psychological	Physical	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chronic worry about events that are unlikely to occur</li> <li>• inability to shut off constant anxious thoughts</li> <li>• feelings of dread</li> <li>• restlessness and inability to relax</li> <li>• trouble falling asleep or staying asleep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of energy</li> <li>• twitching or trembling</li> <li>• muscular tension, aches or soreness</li> <li>• stomach problems (nausea or diarrhea)</li> <li>• headaches</li> <li>• chest pains</li> <li>• grinding of teeth</li> <li>• dry mouth</li> <li>• sweating or hot flashes</li> <li>• dizziness or lightheadedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trouble concentrating</li> <li>• irritability</li> <li>• easy to startle</li> <li>• procrastination</li> </ul>

Source: [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/generalized\\_anxiety\\_disorder.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/generalized_anxiety_disorder.htm)



**Teaching Point Two: Worry is another emotion that is closely associated with fear.**

J. Gustav White said, “Small worries are like gnats; movement and activity disperse them.” In an article for *Discipleship* journal, Mike Bechtle has this to say about worry:

In some parts of my lawn, the grass is thick and green. In other areas, it's sparse and dry. There are even a few places where the grass is missing entirely.

When I mow the lawn, I notice that where the grass is healthy, there are no weeds. Where the lawn is sparse, there are a few. Where there's no grass, the weeds flourish.

Every time I notice the weedy spots, I think, I really need to pull those things. So I do, but within a few weeks they're back—and I'm pulling them again. One day it hit me: I don't have to pull weeds where the grass is thick. Instead of spending all my time pulling weeds, maybe I [need] to invest time making the grass as healthy as possible. The more grass I had, the fewer weeds I'd have to pull.

The same applies to worry. Worry is like the weeds. God's peace is the grass. Instead of just focusing on eliminating my worries, I [need] to cultivate God's peace.

What does the Bible say about worry? Read Matthew 6:25–34.

[Q] What are some things mentioned in this passage that we worry about?

[Q] How did Jesus tell us in this passage to deal with our worry?

[Q] What do you most worry about?

**Teaching Point Three: Fear's favorite friend is panic.**

Panic is something the Lord brought on Israel's enemies to help Israel defeat them (1 Sam. 7:10). But usually panic is of our own making. Consider this man's experience:

For four hours he held the cylinder, waiting for rescue or an immediate death. After digging up what appeared to be an unexploded WWI bomb, David Page held on to it, afraid that letting go would detonate the device.

While holding the bomb, the terrified 40-year-old from Norfolk, England, called an emergency operator on his mobile phone. He even used the call to issue his last words for his family. “The woman police operator kept saying it would be okay,” said Page, “but I kept saying to her, ‘You're not the one holding the bomb.’”

First responders rushed to the work yard in eastern England, and army bomb disposal experts finally arrived. But the drama came to an abrupt end when the “bomb” was identified. It was part of the hydraulic suspension system from a Citroen, a popular European car.

There are times we find ourselves frozen with irrational fear. We know that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world, but we forget the strength of our Protector while clutching our fear. Let go. It's not a bomb, and you're going to be okay!<sup>3</sup>

[Q] Give an example of how panic causes us to fail to think clearly.

[Q] Describe a time when you've experienced panic.

[Q] Read Deuteronomy 20:3–4. What solution do these verses give for defeating panic?

### Optional Activity:

*Pass out a marker to each person in the group. Have everyone take off one of their shoes and turn it over. With the marker, have them write one of the lies the Enemy has told them on the bottom of that shoe. Explain that every time they wear those shoes, they should repeat God's promise and literally walk the hell out of those lies.<sup>4</sup>*

## Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The Bene Gesserit are a key social, religious, and political force in Frank Herbert's science fiction series *Dune*. Their comment on fear is:

I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.

Fear has the potential to remove the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). Let's pray together that these qualities, rather than fear, will reign in us.

**Action Point: On your own this week, carefully and slowly read Psalm 55. Immerse yourself in the emotions of this psalm. Try to understand David's fears and relate them to your own. You may even try writing a similar psalm outlining your fears. Make sure to end it with, "But as for me, I trust in you."**

— Study by Charles R. Gerber, with JoHannah Reardon

<sup>3</sup> Robert Grove, PreachingToday.com; source: "'Bomb' of a Car Has Man Worried," Reuters (9-16-04).

<sup>4</sup> From Rob Bell, teaching pastor at Mars Hills Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.





Participant's Guide

# Fear's Close Associates

*Anxiety, discouragement, worry, and panic can result from fear.*

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**Teaching Point One: Anxiety is a close friend to fear.**

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Leader's Guide

## The Opposite of Fear

*The Bible gives us an idea of what this is.*

*Doing a web search on the question "What is the opposite of fear?" yields some interesting results. Some websites say love, another said happiness. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus, some antonyms of fear are: aplomb, assurance, boldness, confidence, self-assurance, self-confidence, courage, dauntlessness, fearlessness, and fortitude. This study will look at the Bible's answer to this question.*



Scripture: Leviticus 26:6; Psalm 4:8; 27:3; 34:1–11; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 35; Jeremiah 17:5–8; Malachi 2:5; Mark 4:40; 2 Corinthians 3:4–5

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## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

**Note to leader:** Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

In *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, Charles R. Swindoll wrote, "Courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much deeper and much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood."

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "You gain strength and confidence by every experience in which you really ... look fear in the face."

### Discussion Starters:

- [Q] So what do you think is the opposite of fear? Explain your answer.
- [Q] What emotions do you experience when you feel no fear at all?
- [Q] Recount a time that you've felt brave and courageous. Were you free from fear? Explain.

## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

### Teaching Point One: Faith, peace, and confidence are the opposite of fear.

So, biblically, what is the opposite of fear? There are numerous answers to this question. The first three we will look at are faith, peace, and confidence. All three depend on our relationship with and trust in God.

[Q] Read Mark 4:40 and Psalm 34:1–11. What do these verses tell you about how faith is the opposite of fear?

- How would you define what it means to have faith in God?

[Q] Read Leviticus 26:6; Psalm 4:8; and Malachi 2:5. What do these verses tell you about how peace is the opposite of fear?



# Overcoming Fear

## The Opposite of Fear

### Leader's Guide

- There is peace that is the opposite of conflict with another person, and there is inner peace that is the opposite of our inner conflict. Which kind do you feel you need most?

[Q] Read Psalm 27:3; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 35:4; and 2 Corinthians 3:4–5. Where does our confidence come from, according to these verses?

### Optional Activity:

*The verses in Teaching Point One are powerful. Instead of reading the verses above as we usually do, ask someone who has a dramatic and strong reading voice to read each of these verses out loud. If he or she can come to the group and read them, great. If not, ask him to record them for you. To set the scene for the drama of these verses, dim the lights and use candles. Give the group time to quiet themselves so that they will be ready for the emotional impact of these verses.*

Hebrews 10:35–36 states, “Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Marilyn vos Savant has said, “It is my observation that being beaten is often a temporary condition. Giving up is what makes it permanent.”

### Teaching Point Two: Trust, boldness, and security are the opposite of fear.

Isaiah 12:2 says, “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.” Proverbs 29:25 says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” Trust in yourself is not the opposite of fear; trust in the Lord is. Trusting in humans proves to be a curse, but trusting in God is a blessing. Read Jeremiah 17:5–8.

[Q] Give an example of when your trust in yourself or another human being was misplaced.

Jesus commands us to trust in God (John 14:1). David wrote in Psalm 20:7, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” He also wrote in Psalm 22:9, “Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast.”

[Q] Why is trust in God safe in a way that trust in humans can never be?

Proverbs 28:1 says, “The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.” The disciples prayed for boldness in their preaching so that they could present the



# Overcoming Fear

## The Opposite of Fear

### Leader's Guide

gospel clearly (Acts 4:24–30). After they prayed for this boldness, “the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). Fear is a hindrance, but boldness destroys this hindrance (Acts 28:31).

**[Q]** Give examples of both foolish boldness and good, godly boldness.

- How can we know if we have the right kind of boldness?
- How does the good kind of boldness defeat fear?

Security and safety are the opposite of fear. Psalm 4:8 says, “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

**[Q]** What makes you feel secure, and why?

- What is the limit of that kind of security? When does it fail?
- How can we feel secure in God no matter what our circumstances?

### **Teaching Point Three: Following God wholeheartedly and strength are the opposite of fear.**

When Joshua and Caleb joined the other men to scope out the land of Canaan (which was to become Israel), most of the men were terrified of the people they found there. However, Caleb said, “my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly” (Joshua 14:8).

**[Q]** What does it mean to follow God wholeheartedly? Describe what you think such a life looks like.

**[Q]** Have you ever been following God wholeheartedly, yet still felt afraid? Why do you think that is? Is that okay?

Strength that overcomes fear can only come from God. Read Isaiah 35. Jesus quoted part of this passage in Luke 4, and said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

**[Q]** How can a relationship with Christ give you strength to overcome fear? Give a personal example, if you can.



## Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The traits covered in this study sound a lot like the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). The Holy Spirit is key in helping us conquer fear. 2 Timothy 1:7 says God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power, love, and self control. If one of the goals of the Spirit is to free us from fear, then fear fights against the Spirit of God and tries to destroy its fruit.

We sometimes overcome fear by doing the very thing we are afraid of, as Pastor Lee Eclow recounts:

Around 7 p.m. on the evening of Friday, May 31, 1985, an F3-magnitude tornado swept through Beaver County, Pennsylvania, just north of Pittsburgh. We were at church for a meeting, and when we got word of the storm, we had no idea how bad it had been. When our meeting came to an end, we headed to the home of some friends, just as we had planned on doing.

My friend is a surgeon, and when we arrived at his home, one of his colleagues was already at the door. All the physicians in the area were being summoned to the medical center. My surgeon friend, Roy, ran to his car and left immediately. We stood there wondering what we could do. I thought, *I'm a pastor. Maybe I should go to the Medical Center, too.* But I did not want to go. I was frightened. I'd probably be in the way, I reasoned. What could I possibly do? They've already got people lined up for these things.

You may think pastors enter their line of work to help people, but that night I wanted no part of it! Finally, with God's sharp finger in the middle of my back, I reluctantly drove to the hospital.

The devastation was worse than we'd imagined. Phone lines were down. Traffic was at a standstill. Kids were driving around, and their parents had no idea where they were. It turned out that the hospital was the only place where worried people could think to go. Many had been injured and three people were dead. The lady in charge of the emergency room—a woman from our church—would call out from time to time: "Is there anyone from the Jack Smith family here?" Otherwise, folks sat and worried.

Having no better idea of what to do, I just started walking up to clusters of people. I would say, "I'm a pastor, and I wonder if you'd like me to pray for you and your family."

"Yes, please," they said. "That would be great."

No one asked me what church I served, and no one—not one person—even hesitated to accept my prayers. I think I was the only one at the hospital that evening praying for people.

It hit me later that night that I am an agent of Christ's compassion in this world, and that means going where people are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." And I do this not because I'm a pastor, but because I am a Christian. When others retreat from heartache and sorrow, we step in because we walk with Jesus.





Overcoming Fear  
**The Opposite of Fear**

Leader's Guide

**Action Points:**

- **Choose one or two verses from this study to memorize. Make sure they are ones that help you overcome your fear when circumstances are difficult. Ask another person in the group to listen to you say the verses in a week, so that you will be accountable to memorize them.**
- **Take time to read Isaiah 35 carefully and to meditate on it. Go through each paragraph and then simply ponder it for 5–10 minutes. Ask God what he wants you to understand from this passage.**

— *Study by Charles R. Gerber, with JoHannah Reardon*



Participant's Guide

# The Opposite of Fear

*The Bible gives us an idea of what this is.*

*Doing a web search on the question "What is the opposite of fear?" yields some interesting results. Some websites say love, another said happiness. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus, some antonyms of fear are: aplomb, assurance, boldness, confidence, self-assurance, self-confidence, courage, dauntlessness, fearlessness, and fortitude. This study will look at the Bible's answer to this question.*



Scripture: Leviticus 26:6; Psalm 4:8; 27:3; 34:1–11; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 35; Jeremiah 17:5–8; Malachi 2:5; Mark 4:40; 2 Corinthians 3:4–5

Based on: The Bible study "Overcoming Fear," by Charles R. Gerber

## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

In *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, Charles R. Swindoll wrote, “Courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much deeper and much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody’s looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you’re misunderstood.”

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “You gain strength and confidence by every experience in which you really ... look fear in the face.”

## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching Point One: Faith, peace, and confidence are the opposite of fear.**

**Teaching Point Two: Trust, boldness, and security are the opposite of fear.**

**Teaching Point Three: Following God wholeheartedly and strength are the opposite of fear.**

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The traits covered in this study sound a lot like the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). The Holy Spirit is key in helping us conquer fear. 2 Timothy 1:7 says God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power, love, and self control. If one of the goals of the Spirit is to free us from fear, then fear fights against the Spirit of God and tries to destroy its fruit.

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# Overcoming Fear

Leader's Guide

## Fear God

*Believe it or not, victory over our fears comes with fear of the Lord.*

*A paradox of Scripture is that to conquer the fears of life, we must fear the Lord. A memorial to Lord Lawrence in Westminster Abbey says of him, "He feared man so little, because he feared God so much." Psalm 19:9 says, "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever." So what is it to fear God and how does it chase away our other fears?*



Scripture: Exodus 20:20; Proverbs 1:20–33; Psalm 103:1–6, 17–18

Based on: The sermon "Fear of God," by Kevin Miller, [PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com)



## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

**Note to leader:** Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Kevin Miller recounts this experience:

A few summers ago, my family took a trip to the Grand Canyon. I have a real fear of heights; and as I stood at the south rim and peered 6,000 feet down to the bottom, there was nothing separating me from doom. As the guidebook states, every year, on average, four or five people die at the Grand Canyon—some from “overly zealous photographic endeavors.” The painful fact is over 50 people have fallen to their death at the Grand Canyon—and yet I could not stay away. It's so beautiful. It's so awe-inspiring that I felt I had to get near it. I knew I couldn't get too close or do anything too foolish near the edge, but I had to see it. I was captured and drawn in by the Grand Canyon.

That's a small glimpse of what the fear of God is like.

### Discussion Starters:

[Q] Have you ever had a similar experience to Kevin's—overwhelmed, yet in awe? If so, tell us about it.

[Q] How would you describe fear of the Lord?

[Q] Do you think fear of God is anything like Kevin's experience at the Grand Canyon? Why or why not?

[Q] Do you feel that you've had a healthy or unhealthy fear of the Lord? Explain.

## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

### Teaching Point One: First we must determine what it means to fear God.

When the Bible tells us to fear God—as it does multiple times—what does it mean? Most Christians would say, “When the Bible says, ‘Fear God,’ it doesn't really mean ‘fear.’ It means, ‘awe and reverence.’ You may have a thrill of reverence. You may have a sense that you should respect God—and you should. But there's no reason whatsoever to fear God. There's absolutely no reason to be afraid. So if you feel fear around God, that's irrational.”



But is that what the Bible says? In the first few pages, you run into Adam. Adam is the first human being to encounter God, and Adam says, “I heard the sound of you in the garden and I hid because I was afraid.” Then you flip over a few pages to Moses. Moses sees this bush that’s on fire, and he hears God’s voice speaking to him from out of the bush. Scripture says that Moses fell down and hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. Go a little further. The people gather at Mount Sinai, God comes down, and the mountain is covered in smoke and the ground rumbles underneath their feet. God speaks and his voice is so shattering, so awesome, that the people beg Moses, saying, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

Job flat out says, “I am terrified at God’s presence. I am in dread of him.” While Isaiah is praying in the temple, his prayer gets interrupted by a vision of God in his glory. Isaiah says, “Doom! It’s Doomsday! I’m as good as dead! Every word I’ve ever spoken is tainted—blasphemous even! And the people I live with talk the same way, using words that corrupt and desecrate. And here I’ve looked God in the face! The King! God-of-the-Angel-Armies!”

You may be thinking, *Well, okay*. Some people actually did feel fear—real fear—around God. But God is good, and he would not want us to feel that way. But Isaiah prophesies under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread” (Isa. 8:13).

Or maybe you’re thinking, *That is true, but that is the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus is revealed to us as “full of grace.”* That’s true. Jesus is full of grace. And here’s what Jesus said: “Dear friends, don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. But I’ll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he’s the one to fear” (Luke 12:4–5, NLT).

**[Q]** From this passage in Luke, why do you think we should fear God?

- How does fearing God take away other fears according to these verses?

**[Q]** Read Proverbs 1:20–33. According to this passage, what value is there in fearing God? What does it protect a person from?

### Optional Activity:

*Recording their answers on a whiteboard or poster board, ask the group to name as many things as they can think of that we are generally afraid of. Just ask them to call things out randomly. When they run out of ideas, ask them how fearing God might help with each of these things.*



### Teaching Point Two: Fear of God is more than just awe and reverence.

When the Bible talks about fearing God, it's not just talking about a sense of awe. It's not just talking about a little bit of reverence. It is talking about fear.

A. W. Tozer—the writer who pastored a church on the south side of Chicago in the 1960s—says:

In the old days, people of faith were said to walk in the fear of God and to serve the Lord with fear. However intimate their communion with God, however bold their prayers, at the base of their religious life was the conception of God as awesome and dreadful. Wherever God appeared to people in Bible times, the results were the same—an overwhelming sense of terror and dismay, a wrenching sensation of sinfulness and guilt.

Of course, we've long since outgrown that primitive emotion. Here's what Tozer has to say about that:

The self-assurance of modern Christians, the basic levity present in so many of our religious gatherings, the shocking disrespect shown for the Person of God, are evidence enough of deep blindness of heart. Oh, many call themselves by the name of Christ, talk much about God, and pray to him sometimes, but evidently do not know who he is. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, but this healing fear is today hardly found among Christian people.

When the Bible talks about the fear of God, it's talking about the kind of fear Kevin Miller felt at the Grand Canyon, where there is realistic danger. People who act foolishly and get near the edge can die. And yet it has such beauty, such awesome grandeur, that you are drawn to it. As Aaron Damiani says, "The fear of God is not a fear that drives you away; it's a fear that beckons you."

**[Q]** Does fear of God beckon you? Why or why not?

**[Q]** Why do reverence and awe not quite capture the fear of God?

**[Q]** Read Exodus 20:20. Moses tells the people not to be afraid, and then tells them to fear God. How do you explain the paradox in this verse?

### Teaching Point Three: Fear of God is healthy and restraining.

Why does the Bible tell us to fear God? The answer is captured in Exodus 20. The fear of God will keep us from sinning.



Let's face it: there is something inside us that will always try to get away with as much as we can. If your workday starts at 8:30, but you can come in at 8:45 and pay no penalty for that, you're likely to come in at 8:45. Suppose your brother-in-law was a high ranking official in the state police, and you knew no matter how fast you drove, if you got a ticket, your ticket could be adjusted and dropped. How fast would you drive? It's when you fear authority that you act the way you should. It's when you fear authority that your best self comes out.

The Bible sees the fear of God in that same way. It is a healthy, restraining fear and force in your life. People who fear God do what he says. The person who does not fear God thinks, *I know this isn't really right. I probably shouldn't be doing this. But I know God will forgive me, and it will be okay. He's full of mercy.* It's true that God is full of mercy. It's absolutely right that God will forgive you. But the moment you use his grace to excuse or allow your sin, you are deluding yourself, because you are no longer relating to the real God—the God who inspires fear. Read Psalm 103:17–18.

[Q] Give an example of when fear of some authority caused you to behave better.

[Q] When does a healthy fear of God turn into an unhealthy fear? Give an example of someone who has an unhealthy fear of God.

[Q] How can fear of God actually assuage your own fears? For example, how did Paul's fear of God help him in his circumstances when he was being beaten and imprisoned?

#### Teaching Point Four: Fear of God leads us to mercy.

Even though we'd all admit that a healthy fear of God can keep us from sinning, from hurting other people, even from ruining our lives, our hearts have to ask a question that directly affects the kind of relationship we can have with God. If God is so "fear-inspiring," why would I want to draw near to him? Why would I want to get even remotely close to a God of that nature? That's a very good question. Read Psalm 103:1–6 for the answer.

Does that surprise you? When you come to him humbly, and when you come before him knowing you don't deserve anything, all of a sudden you find, "He is showering me with benefits! He is showering me with things I could not have asked for or dared to expect. And yet here they are!" He forgives all your sins. Isn't that amazing?

If you're ever having trouble with humility, you can do "the Jumbotron test." What you do is imagine you're in a huge arena, and up there on the Jumbotron, in the center of the arena, is a rolling film clip of what you've thought and done in the past week, things you've said to people and about people. All of that's up there, being played back in public on a giant screen. How long could the film roll before something appeared that you'd feel an absolute sense of shame,



embarrassment, and horror about? God sees all of that in your life. He is the Jumbotron. And yet he forgives all your sins.

This realization of God's great mercy caused a Christian in the 600s, Marterius, to say this:

Let us just ponder this, how we who are mortal beings, continually bespotted with the mud of sins, have been held worthy to stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who dwells in the resplendent light that none can approach, to whose honor thousands upon thousands and myriads and myriads of angels and archangels minister as they stand before him in fear and trembling, before whom even the heavens are not pure. Even though he strikes wonder in his angels, yet he condescends to speak with weak and wretched human beings who have rendered themselves unclean by sin.

**[Q]** How does praise for God chase away your fears? Have you ever had a time when you practiced that? Tell us about it.

**[Q]** Why do we need to understand both God's love and that we should fear him? What happens if we leave either one out?

**[Q]** How can our fear of life and circumstances run amok when we don't fear God?

### Part 3 Apply Your Findings

On a day that we do not know and when we least expect it, Jesus Christ will return in absolute triumph. This will be the royal Christ—Christ the imperial. He will come, Revelation says, as a mighty conqueror on a white horse. And when he returns, every knee will bow to him in awe and reverence and—yes—fear. Then a voice will issue from the throne of God, declaring, “Praise him! Praise your God, all you his servants, all you who fear him, both small and great!” And your heart will lift up and your soul will lift up and you will say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul! Bless the Lord, all you angels of his! Bless the Lord, all you works of his! Bless the Lord, O my soul!” And all your fears will evaporate like mist before the bright sun.

**Action Point:** Write down one thing that you are really afraid of. Then, using a Bible concordance or BibleGateway.com, look up as many verses as you can find on *fear*. Write down why you can fear God instead of the thing that presently causes you fear. Ask him to make that a reality in your life.

— Study by Kevin Miller, with JoHannah Reardon

Participant's Guide

# Fear God

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Scripture: Exodus 20:20; Proverbs 1:20–33; Psalm 103:1–6, 17–18

Based on: The sermon "Fear of God," by Kevin Miller, [PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com)



## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Kevin Miller recounts this experience:

A few summers ago, my family took a trip to the Grand Canyon. I have a real fear of heights; and as I stood at the south rim and peered 6,000 feet down to the bottom, there was nothing separating me from doom. As the guidebook states, every year, on average, four or five people die at the Grand Canyon—some from “overly zealous photographic endeavors.” The painful fact is over 50 people have fallen to their death at the Grand Canyon—and yet I could not stay away. It’s so beautiful. It’s so awe-inspiring that I felt I had to get near it. I knew I couldn’t get too close or do anything too foolish near the edge, but I had to see it. I was captured and drawn in by the Grand Canyon.

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Overcoming Fear  
**Fear God**

Participant's Guide

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# Overcoming Fear

Leader's Guide

## Get Rid of Fear

*We don't have to let fear rule us.*

*We can get rid of fear and anxiety by recognizing that God doesn't want us to be enslaved to our fears and that he is greater than they are. We also can learn to avoid what causes us to fear and even laugh at our fears.*



Scripture: Psalm 91; Proverbs 4:23; 15:13–15; 1 Peter 3:13–14

Based on: The Bible study "Overcoming Fear," by Charles R. Gerber



## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

**Note to leader:** Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Ever hear about the dihydrogen monoxide hoax? It's been around for a while, but it got a lot of media attention in 1997 when a 14-year-old student named Nathan Zohner circulated a petition to ban the substance as part of a high school science fair. According to Zohner, dihydrogen monoxide "may cause severe burns, accelerates the corrosion and rusting of many metals, and has been found in the excised tumors of terminal cancer patients." Despite these risks, he further noted, the nefarious chemical is often used "as an industrial solvent and coolant, in the production of Styrofoam, and as a fire retardant."

By now some of you have figured out that dihydrogen monoxide is the technical name for H<sub>2</sub>O, also known as water.

Nathan Zohner's story is a humorous one, but it illustrates two important truths: 1) We often fear what we don't understand, even when the object of our nervousness has no power to harm us. 2) Reactions that are based on fear can be embarrassing, and even damaging.<sup>1</sup>

Consider this poem by Wordsworth:

*What are fears but voices airy?  
Whispering harm where harm is not.  
And deluding the unwary  
Till the fatal bolt is shot!*

### Discussion Starters:

- [Q] How are fears often "voices airy, whispering harm where harm is not"? Explain.
- [Q] If you've ever overcome fear in the past, what worked for you?
- [Q] Why are some fears worse than others for you?

<sup>1</sup> Sam O'Neal, "What the Bible Says About God," in the introduction to the SmallGroups.com newsletter.



## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

### Teaching Point One: Recognize that God wants to free you from your fears.

Before beginning to get rid of fear, it is important to recognize that God does not want you to fear anything but him. Fear is a form of mental idolatry, potentially a yoke of worshipping something other than God. Matthew 6:24 says, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” Fear of anything other than God will cause us to bow down and worship what we fear.

Brandon O’Brien shares this story of overcoming his natural tendency to worry:

I hail from a long line of worriers. From my dad, I inherited an inability to sleep until I resolve whatever issue is currently on my mind; from my mom, I received a proclivity for stomachaches before exams.

It’s not all bad, I suppose; worry has historically been a powerful motivator for me. One Saturday night I went to sleep unprepared for the sermon I was set to deliver the next morning. I dreamed all my biblical studies professors, previous pastors, and mentors arrived at church to hear me preach, only to discover that I was shooting from the hip. I woke up in a cold sweat and worked on my sermon till morning.

I’d like to think that my tendency to worry is evidence of my unwavering sense of responsibility. Truth is, worry reveals a deep-seated self-reliance. I might say with Oliver Cromwell, “Put your trust in God; but mind to keep your powder dry.” But when I remember God’s faithfulness in the past, and remember that he alone has brought me through, I am able to replace worry with worship. This simple action ensures that my faith is not in my keeping the powder dry, but in God’s promise to secure the victory.

**[Q]** Give an example of how your own worry about something was actually just self-reliance, rather than trusting God.

**[Q]** How might worshipping God replace your worry or fear?

**[Q]** Read 1 Peter 3:13–14. Why should we not fear according to this passage?

### Teaching Point Two: Realize that God is an ever present help in times of trouble.

Realize that God is your strength, fortress, and refuge. Read Psalm 91.

Yield to God and trust him. Don’t yield to what you fear. When a person trusts in God, he will never be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23). David writes in Psalm 28:7, “The Lord is my strength

and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.” In Psalm 46:1–2, the writer states that “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

Realize that God is greater than anything you can possibly fear (1 John 4:4) and that he's with you. Psalm 118:5–7 says, “In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.”

But what if we feel that we are crying out to God, remembering how great and powerful he is, yet he still is not answering our prayers as we want him to? In his book *The Pressure's Off*, psychologist Larry Crabb uses a story from his childhood to illustrate our need to delight in God through adversity:

One Saturday afternoon, I decided I was a big boy and could use the bathroom without anyone's help. So I climbed the stairs, closed and locked the door behind me, and for the next few minutes felt very self-sufficient.

Then it was time to leave. I couldn't unlock the door. I tried with every ounce of my three-year-old strength, but I couldn't do it. I panicked. I felt again like a very little boy as the thought went through my head, “I might spend the rest of my life in this bathroom.”

My parents—and likely the neighbors—heard my desperate scream.

“Are you okay?” Mother shouted through the door she couldn't open from the outside. “Did you fall? Have you hit your head?”

“I can't unlock the door!” I yelled. “Get me out of here!”

I wasn't aware of it right then, but Dad raced down the stairs, ran to the garage to find the ladder, hauled it off the hooks, and leaned it against the side of the house just beneath the bathroom window. With adult strength, he pried it open, then climbed into my prison, walked past me, and with that same strength, turned the lock and opened the door.

“Thanks, Dad,” I said—and ran out to play.

That's how I thought the Christian life was supposed to work. When I get stuck in a tight place, I should do all I can to free myself. When I can't, I should pray. Then God shows up. He hears my cry—“Get me out of here! I want to play!”—and unlocks the door to the blessings I desire.

Sometimes he does. But now, no longer three years old and approaching sixty, I'm realizing the Christian life doesn't work that way. And I wonder, are any of us content with God? Do we even like him when he doesn't open the door we most want opened—when a marriage doesn't heal, when rebellious kids still rebel, when friends betray, when financial reverses threaten our comfortable way of life, when the prospect



of terrorism looms, when health worsens despite much prayer, when loneliness intensifies and depression deepens, when ministries die?

God has climbed through the small window into my dark room. But he doesn't walk by me to turn the lock that I couldn't budge. Instead, he sits down on the bathroom floor and says, "Come sit with me!" He seems to think that climbing into the room to be with me matters more than letting me out to play.

I don't always see it that way. "Get me out of here!" I scream. "If you love me, unlock the door!"

Dear friend, the choice is ours. Either we can keep asking him to give us what we think will make us happy—to escape our dark room and run to the playground of blessings—or we can accept his invitation to sit with him, for now, perhaps, in darkness, and to seize the opportunity to know him better and represent him well in this difficult world.<sup>2</sup>

**[Q]** Why is knowing and trusting God so vital to overcoming our fears?

**[Q]** Most people would say that they believe God *can* do anything, but are not sure he will do what we ask. Why is it all the more important to trust him even if we don't understand why he acts as he does?

- Give an example of when you or someone you know trusted God, even when circumstances didn't make sense.

### Teaching Point Three: Get away from that which feeds your fear.

Proverbs 12:26 says, "A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." David writes in Psalm 119:63, "I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts." This is good advice when it comes to making friendships!

Get away from any materials that would make you afraid. This means books, television, video games, and movies. Read Proverbs 4:23.

One study found that "horror movies frighten weeks, years later"<sup>3</sup>:

Did you swear you'd never go swimming again after seeing *Jaws* or take a shower after watching *Psycho*?

Weeks or even years after watching a horror movie, many viewers say they are still disturbed by the nightmarish scenes ... "These effects were more serious than jumpiness at a slammed door or the need to use a nightlight," said study co-author Kristen Harrison of the University of Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Crabb, *The Pressure's Off* (WaterBrook Press, 2002), pp. 222–223.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Arbor, Michigan, study, Reuters, March 10, 1999.



“They ranged from an inability to sleep through the night for months after exposure, to steadfast and continuing avoidance of the situations portrayed in the programs and movies,” she said.

In the study, about 26 percent of the 150 college students in Michigan and Wisconsin said they suffered long-term emotional and behavioral problems from watching a horror movie or television programs.

About a third of those said they felt fine in less than a week, but another third said they still suffered more than a year later.

The younger the students were when they saw the scary movie, the longer the effects lasted, according to the study ... Participants said the most frightening scenes involved blood, physical injury and pain ... One participant had bloody nightmares for about two months after seeing the killer shark movie *Jaws*, and is still scared of blood.

**Leader's Note:** Give your group participants time to think over these questions silently.

**[Q]** Is someone in your life feeding your fears, constantly making you worry and feel frightened? If so, can you avoid spending a lot of time with this person? If not—for example, if it's a family member—what do you need to tell yourself when this person is causing your fears to increase?

**[Q]** What books, games, television shows, or movies feed your fears? Why do you think you are so drawn to those things? Might you need to take a fast from them to see if your fears are laid to rest?

**[Q]** Does keeping up with daily news cause you to fear? We are so inundated with the world's cares. How can you be reasonably informed without constantly being reminded of world problems? What might you change in your habits to help this?

### Teaching Point Four: Learn to laugh at your fear.

Learn to laugh at what you fear. Laughter is a great way to get rid of fear. Read Proverbs 15:13–15.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to make your fear ridiculous. Ask yourself the question, *What's the worst that can happen?* Make the answer funny! Now ask yourself, *What is the chance of this happening?*

One way to remind yourself of how to get rid of fear is by remembering the three Ls:

- Label the fear appropriately (it more than likely is a lie)
- Laugh at the fear
- Lordship of Jesus (he is greater than any fear)



**[Q]** Think of something you are generally afraid of or worrying about. How might laughing at this fear help? How does that diminish its power over you?

### Optional Activity:

*Form pairs. Ask each person in the pair to share one thing they worry about or are fearful of. Going through each of the teaching points in this lesson, apply each of those things to the fear. Tell the other person what you need to change in your behavior or in your thinking to overcome this fear.*

## Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Timothy George shares this story:

When I was a student at Harvard Divinity School, I learned preaching from Dr. Gardner Taylor, a pastor in New York City. I'll never forget those lectures. I remember him telling us a story from when he was preaching in Louisiana during the Depression. Electricity was just coming into that part of the country, and he was out in a rural, black church that had just one little light bulb hanging down from the ceiling to light up the whole sanctuary. He was preaching away, and in the middle of his sermon, all of a sudden, the electricity went out. The building went pitch black, and Dr. Taylor didn't know what to say, being a young preacher. He stumbled around until one of the elderly deacons sitting in the back of the church cried out, "Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!"

Sometimes that's the only time we can see him—in the dark. And the good news of the gospel is that whether we can see him in the dark or not, he can see us in the dark.<sup>4</sup>

### Action Points (to do on your own this week):

- **Admit to God you are afraid. Tell him that you are tired of the effects fear has on you. Cast all your anxiety on him. Pray specifically about the fear (Psalm 34:4; 56:3; 62:8; 1 Peter 5:7). Apply each of the teaching points in this lesson to your fear.**
- **Ask another person to check up on you now and then to see how you are handling your fears. Ask them if you can call them to pray with you when your fears seem to be winning.**

— Study by Charles R. Gerber, with JoHannah Reardon

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Timothy George's sermon "Unseen Footprints," PreachingToday Audio (Issue 290).



Participant's Guide

# Get Rid of Fear

*We don't have to let fear rule us.*

*We can get rid of fear and anxiety by recognizing that God doesn't want us to be enslaved to our fears and that he is greater than they are. We also can learn to avoid what causes us to fear and even laugh at our fears.*



Scripture: Psalm 91; Proverbs 4:23; 15:13–15; 1 Peter 3:13–14

Based on: The Bible study "Overcoming Fear," by Charles R. Gerber

## Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

Consider this poem by Wordsworth:

*What are fears but voices airy?  
Whispering harm where harm is not.  
And deluding the unwary  
Till the fatal bolt is shot!*

## Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching Point One: Recognize that God wants to free you from your fears.**

**Teaching Point Two: Realize that God is an ever present help in times of trouble.**

**Teaching Point Three: Get away from that which feeds your fear.**

**Teaching Point Four: Learn to laugh at your fear.**

## Part 3 Apply Your Findings

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