

Conquering Fear Every Day (2 Peter 1:19, Isaiah 9)

What a truly amazing time to be alive and witness the impact of a worldwide pandemic... how rare are we? Not that we would choose this strange honor, yet really how unique to have to push through shock and fear and collectively find our bearings to endure and hopefully thrive within these new risks and restrictions. I would like to share some wisdom from the scripture – the Holy Bible; God’s crisis playbook lately... filled with priceless admonitions and truths to support and guide us. I hope this short study will help establish 3 things for us:

Understanding Fear / Replacing Fear / Conquering Fear

Obviously, we are all shocked and alarmed by this virus: sickness, death, scarcity, finances... It’s so many things. Part of why we are overwhelmed is because our minds and hearts can keep jumping endlessly from one concern to another. Take 10-15 minutes with pen and paper or your journal, and try to write out your fears as specifically as you can. Be descriptive letting words capture your feelings and thoughts...

So, hopefully you feel a bit clearer about what exactly is troubling you. Now we can begin to understand and interrupt the distress with something greater- more powerful than fear.

And here we go, ... **write down underneath your list, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5:**

This is our battle plan; our strategy to understand, replace, and conquer our fears with the weapons our God gives us to take these thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ.

Let's consider some common struggles woven into the fears of these times especially and most times generally...

Lack of control / Scarcity / Powerlessness

Even when I follow all the guidelines of handwashing, social distancing to reduce exposure and I have enough supplies and food to stay in, this doesn't reduce fear. This is often when we give into feeling overwhelmed which can lead to unhealthy coping- overeating; abusing alcohol/substances; escaping in porn or media; lashing out in anger. We really want to re-establish our sense of control, ability to have needs met, and sense of self-sufficient power. Good luck with that!

What can actually help? ... (Sunday school answer!) - Jesus, of course! And more specifically the true Jesus who graciously let's us know Him better through the Holy Bible. Lets go there now.

I read an older version of NIV and have ever since I became a Christian in 1989, so I think in that version... Feel free to use this guide with whatever accurate translation you use- and don't worry about exact word for word answers... go for the spirit of the text.

Read and Fill in the blanks: Ephesians 1:17. (my prayer for you!)

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the _____ of _____ and _____ SO THAT you may _____.

Ahh, I feel better already. The Lord wants to be known and will help us as we genuinely seek Him...

Jeremiah was written for his people being taken away from their homes and everything familiar in life as they knew it, to begin a period of exile in a foreign land. Chapters 29-33 are especially strengthening and full of hope. Chapter 29 is a commonly shared graduation verse, encouraging us to have hope in the Lord's plans for our future. What often is overlooked is the future in this context is talking about when the hard times of exile pass and they get to come back home. So God tells them to settle down in the unfamiliar place, and focus on planting crops and building community while they wait, trusting God to keep His promise to restore them. When He does bring them back, what does He want them to do?

Read Jeremiah 29:12,13:

Then you will _____ and come and _____. And I will _____. You will _____ and _____, when you _____ with all your _____.

And Jeremiah 33:3: Call to me and I will _____ and tell you great and unsearchable things you _____.

I believe He will answer us also as we seek His help in coping with our distress. So your list helps you know what you're afraid of, but do you also know what makes you feel strong? This is important to consider and check how healthy your coping tools are. I'm not interested in judging you, the important question is are your coping tools in agreement with what God is giving you to use? Do they add balance, strength, and hope to your life? Here are 3 possible sources of strength that God allows us to have to manage distress and anxiety...

The Word / Counsel of the Holy Spirit / Worship

Let's let God speak for Himself. Psalm 23 is familiar and loved by many – The Lord is my Shepherd. Often this reminds us that we are like sheep (cute, but kinda stupid) and that He takes care of us; generally knows where He's going; and expects us to follow Him.

Read Psalm 23:4:

_____ though I walk through the _____ of the _____,
I will _____, (Why??) for _____ are _____.

Also, when Joshua had to take over command of the Israelite nation when Moses passed on, his challenge was similar...

Read Joshua 1:9: Have I not commanded you? Be _____ and _____. Do not be _____, do not be _____, (Why??) for the _____ your God will be _____.

Also, **Isaiah 41:10:**

So, do not _____ for I am _____; do not be _____, for I am _____.
I will _____ you and _____ you; I will _____ you with my righteous right _____.

So what do these verses mean to you?

2 Timothy 3:16 says All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So pause and reflect, ...what is the Holy Spirit teaching you?

This is how we receive the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14:16 and 26 When Jesus was preparing to die, He told the disciples:

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another _____ to be _____
(how long??) _____ - the spirit of _____.

26: But the _____, the _____ whom the Father will send in _____, will
_____ you _____ and will _____ you of everything _____
to you.

(-really worth reading the whole chapter!)

So this is how I see a battle warring against us especially when stress and fear run high... we are pulled between opposites – opposed points of focus. Whatever we tend to focus on wins our well-being. Anxiety and fear are not of the Lord meaning He doesn't desire that to be the fruit of our time, attention, or energy. Yet how do we achieve the desired outcomes of faith that He seems to think are possible for us to reach and secure? Ephesians 6 refers to the devil's schemes. Have you noticed what schemes you are most susceptible to? Tend to emotionally believe or agree with almost automatically – some would describe that as our "fleshly nature." (see Ephesians 2:3 and Galatians 5:22-25)

As a Christian personally and as a counselor professionally, I have noticed our enemy is not creative. He tends to repeat himself- again and again. I think that's why disorders can be diagnosed because they are so similar from person to person. This is SO unlike our Almighty creative Creator! Like snowflakes and DNA and fingerprints and sunrises... He's endlessly creative and inexhaustible in reproducing unique design... glorious. So the spiritual schemes of

the enemy can only be cheap counterfeits – he’s not creative, just sly. So one common scheme I see over and over when we struggle with fear and anxiety is...

we believe we don’t have any choice.

It certainly feels that way and is deeply convincing when we are overwhelmed and can’t think straight and our self-sufficient, self-righteous, self-pitying flesh says -I know! I’ll just trust my feelings as the best source of truth and decision making! Ugh! Been there done that a million times! Never – never helps! And here lies one of countless sweet, generous, perfect blessings our heavenly Father never stops giving us. – Himself and His Word.

Read one of my favs- Psalm 138:2 I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your Name for your love and your faithfulness, for You have exalted above all things _____ and _____.

Ok so we can discuss the amazing ability to choose in another study (maybe on Deuteronomy 30:19 or such) but for now let’s just go with the strong possibility that we all have and make choices everyday – maybe because we are made in God’s image... but when we are knocked down under fear, we think and act as though we are incapable of making choices, or believing we have choices, or can at least choose what to focus on. We “feel” helpless, powerless, passive... basically victims all around. So the important question becomes does God agree? And we can find out through His word.... And then push ourselves to agree with God- not relying on our own opinions or feelings.

Beliefs we choose to believe:

I am helpless.

I can't handle this.

God has abandoned me.

God wouldn't want me. He knows what I've done

_____ - (your favorite lie... I mean belief ;)

Replacement beliefs if we think have a choice:

X I am helpless.

Read Exodus 15:2, 13

The Lord is my _____ and my _____; He has become my _____. He is _____ and I will _____...

13- In Your _____ you will _____ the people You have _____.

In Your _____ You will _____ them to Your _____.

X I can't handle this.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8b -10 ... We were under _____ far beyond our _____ to _____, so that we _____ even of _____. Indeed in our hearts we felt the sentence of _____. BUT this happened that we might NOT _____ on _____ but on _____ who _____ the dead! He has _____ from such a deadly peril, and He will _____ . On _____ we have set our _____ that He will continue to _____.

X God has abandoned me.

Read Romans 8:32-38 ... or whole chapter!

He who did not spare _____, but gave Him up for _____ - how will

He not also, along with Him _____ give us all things?...

35 Who shall _____ us from the _____? Shall _____ or _____ or _____ or famine or nakedness or _____ or sword?...

37 No, in all these things we are _____ through _____ who _____. (!!!!Yippee!!!!!!!!!!!! Hallelujah!!!!!!!!!!!!)

38 For I am _____ (that's the choice part!) that neither _____ nor _____, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in _____ will be able to _____ from the _____ that is in _____.

X God wouldn't want me. He knows what I've done.

Read John 3:16-21

For God _____ the world that _____ His one and only _____ that whoever _____ in _____ shall not perish but have _____. For God did not send _____ into the world to _____ the world, but to _____ the world _____ Him. Whoever _____ in _____ is not condemned, but whoever _____ believe stands condemned already _____ he has not _____ in the _____ of God's one and _____.

19 this is the _____, Light has come into the world, but men loved _____ instead of light because _____ were _____. 21 But whoever lives by the _____ comes into the light, _____ it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done _____.

I believe we underestimate our ability to endure. Like salvation – we don't achieve it through trying hard and doing good things (Ephesians 2:8,9). We likewise receive our strength to endure through faith in Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you _____ as _____ (read that part again!) continue to _____ in Him, _____ in the faith you were taught (in the Bible!), and overflowing with _____.

Don't kid yourself, Colossians and generally the new testament were written to Christians hiding out in dire suffering and being severely persecuted for their faith. Being told to be thankful was not because their circumstances were comfortable or safe. I dare you to dig deep into what your thankful for that has nothing to do with our circumstances. You will you're your freedom and peace there.

This dear friends is why **Worship** is the last and most important resource of power, weapon against evil, limitless well of treasures for our souls if we are to be those people who do not shrink back (**read Hebrews 10:39**) and stand firm to the end (**read Matthew 24:13**). This is because the Lord God has graciously invited us to abide in Him through the communion possible by Christ's shed blood, and so share in His power.

Check this out! **Ephesians 2:4-7**

But because of His great love for us, _____, who is rich in _____, made us _____ with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions (meaning because of our sin, we all deserve eternal separation from God in hell, but Christ died for us even before we believed - Romans 5:8) ,for it is by _____ you have been _____. AND God _____ up with Christ and _____ with Him in the _____ realms IN _____, in order that in the coming ages _____ might show the incomparable riches of His _____, expressed in His _____ to us IN _____.

do you know the old Motown song.... You didn't have to love me like you did, but you did, but you did..... and I Thank You!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxQM7GXA8Tc> I Thank You – Sam and Dave ;)

so funny – that came out the year I was born! And they called themselves the Soul Survivors!!! Ha! I call it our new battle cry!!! And here is worship. He is a mighty loving generous God who deserves our thanks and praises endlessly because of Christ – His holy sacrifice willingly given to ransom us to be His forever! He really didn't have to love us! We would never deserve His love. Thank Him with me and find our peace here as we focus on Him, His love, and our eternal hope! 1 John 3:18-20; 4:4; 4:18; 5:4,5

Romans 15:4; 5:13 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture -fill in the blank- Answers:

Ephesians 1:7 Spirit of wisdom and revelation/ Know Him better

Jeremiah 29:12,13 Call upon me; pray to me; listen to you; / Seek me; find me; seek me; heart.

Jeremiah 33:3 answer you; you do not know.

Joshua 1:9 strong; courageous; terrified; discouraged; Lord; with you wherever you go.

Isaiah 41:10 fear; with you; dismayed; your God; strengthen; help; uphold; hand

John 14:16, 26 Counselor; with you forever; Truth; Counselor; Holy Spirit; my Name; teach;
all things; remind; I have said.

Psalms 138:2 your Name; your Word

Exodus 15:2, 13 strength; song; salvation; my God; praise Him; 13- unfailing love; lead;
redeemed; strength; guide; holy dwelling.

2 Corinthians 1:8b-10 great pressure; ability; endure; despaired; life. Death; rely; ourselves;
Him; raises; Him ; hope; deliver us.

Romans 8:32-38 His own Son; us all; graciously; 35 separate; love of God; trouble; hardship;
persecution; danger; 37 more than conquerors!; Him; loved us; 38 CONVINCED;
death; life; all creation; separate; love of God; Christ Jesus OUR LORD!!

John 3:16-21 so loved; He gave; Son; believes; Him; eternal life; His Son; condemn; save;
through; believes; Him; does not; because; believed; Name; only Son.

19- Verdict; darkness; their deeds; evil; Truth; so that; through God.

Colossians 2:6 received Christ Jesus; live; rooted; thankfulness.

Ephesians 2:4-7 God; mercy; alive; grace; saved; raised us; seated us; heavenly; Christ Jesus.