

When Fear Wells Up Inside Me

On Sunday we continued our sermon series on “Managing Our Moods” by considering what God wants us to do with our fear.

1. Warm-up Question: People have lots of different phobias – fear of heights, snakes, needles, confined spaces, etc. What’s one of your phobias?

2. The Bible says, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” II Timothy 1:7. But the Bible also says, “Happy is the one who is never without fear,” Proverbs 28:14, and “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Proverbs 9:10. So clearly there’s both good fear and bad fear.
 - a. Looking back over your life, tell us about a time when God used fear to move you in a good and healthy direction.

 - b. Jeff cited several verses that might help us distinguish good fear from bad. I John 4:1 says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. . . .” John 16:13 says, “When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all truth.” And Matthew 6:16 says, “You will know them by their fruits. . . . Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.” From these verses, we drew a first principle. When fear wells us inside us, we should: **Test the Spirits – by prayerfully considering whether the fear coming from God or another source.** When trying to distinguish good fear from bad fear, what might be some factors we should consider?

 - c. In your life right now, what is your biggest fear? Do you sense your fear is coming from God or from another source?

3. Often times, fear bears bad fruit in our lives, tearing us down, holding us back, binding us up, keeping us from doing something God wants us to do. When that happens, we should do what Jesus did in the Garden. Read Matthew 26:36-39 and Luke 22:42-47, as printed out on p. 3.
 - a. In the Garden, Jesus was clearly dealing with powerful emotions, including fear of what would happen to him on the cross. Does it bother you to picture Jesus being afraid? Why or why not?

 - b. Sometimes we’re taught that, as Christians, we should always put on a brave face, so as to be a “good witness to others,” model examples of faith and peace. But in the Garden, Jesus did the opposite. He didn’t hide his fear from his disciples. Why?

 - c. From Jesus’ example in the Garden, we drew our second principle for managing our fear: **Face Your Fear – spend quality time with God and trusted others exploring your fear, familiarizing yourself with it, feeling it, processing it.** Let’s practice that principle right now. Have someone in the group tell about

something that's causing lots of fear in their life right now. Let them explain it, then ask them questions that help them process and explore their fear.

- d. After completing the foregoing discussion, as the person who shared their fear to respond to this question: How did sharing your fear make you feel? Did it help? If so, how?
4. Jesus didn't just share his fear with God and his disciples. He also took another critical step. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that, "Jesus . . . for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." In other words, imagining what lay ahead in heaven helped Jesus get through the torture of the cross. From this we drew our third principle: **Re-write the Script – counter your negative imagination with positive imagination.**
- a. Most of us have a natural human tendency to get stuck in our fears and catastrophize. Can you think of a time lately when you caught yourself catastrophizing? Tell us about it.
 - b. Have someone else in your group remind everyone of their greatest fear in life right now. Then have that person describe the worst case scenario they can imagine.
 - c. Next, have that same person imagine aloud how the situation they fear could lead to wonderful things. Romans 8:37 says, "We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us." Have the person describe what it might look like for them to conquer the situation they fear.
 - d. The Bible says, "As a person thinks in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. What does this verse mean? And why is it so important we envision positive things even when wrestling with our fears?
5. In the Garden, we're told Jesus also experienced the presence of angels. That points us to a fourth principle for managing our fear: **Feel the Presence – expect to experience the supernatural presence of God in the midst of your fear.** Jeff shared some stories about people who sensed the presence of God in powerful ways during their most fearsome ordeals. Have you ever experienced "the Presence"? Or have you ever witnessed someone else who did? Tell us about it.

Matthew 26:36-39 and Luke 22:42-44

Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. He said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them.