



Some Common Struggles and Questions About Fear ...

1. Fear? I'm Not Fearful!
2. Fear? What do you tend to fear?
3. Is my fear sin? If yes, why?
4. What should I listen for?
5. What should I explore to get to the root of my fears?
6. How can I proclaim the gospel into my fears?
7. What does repentance and faith look like in the face of my fears?

1. Fear? I'm Not Fearful!

Are you fearful? If you say "yes," let's move on to the next point.

If you say "no," let's stop for a moment and think broadly. Do you **worry**? Do you find yourself **anxious**? Do you find yourself **obsessing** about something? Do you struggle with being **restless**? Do you find yourself **suspicious** of others? Do you struggle with **panic** attacks? Are you **apprehensive** in certain situations? Do you find yourself in **dread** or **distress** over something you need to do? What about being locked down with despair or depression?

Well, if you answer "yes" to one or more to the above questions, then you struggle with fear.

2. Fear? What Do You Tend to Fear?

Fear and God—God does not care for or love you—You don't measure up—He won't forgive you.

Fear and Others—they might **judge** me—they might **reject** me/not **accept** me if they only knew or if I don't **measure up**—No one will ever **love** me—I'm **not as good** as everyone else—my children will not **turn out** the way I want—my children will not experience God's saving grace—It's so hard to **confront** others or let others know what I really want—He/she will never **change**—I get **defensive** when someone corrects me or disagrees with me or thinks I'm wrong.

Fear and Circumstances—What if I have a chronic or terminal disease? What if I lose my job or do not get promoted? What's next after I graduate or after this job assignment is over? Can I provide for myself, for my family? Can I be a good wife? How can I pay next month's bills? What if I fail?

Fear and Time/Reality—We either fear a **present reality** or a **future possibility**.

The Dynamics of Fear

- **I Feel** (these feelings) ⇒ **I Listen** (to these feelings). **[Freak Out]**
- **I Think** (these thoughts & scenarios) ⇒ **I Believe** (these thoughts & scenarios will come true). **[Forget]**
- **I Respond**—My **Feelings & Thoughts & Scenarios** Seem So Real ⇒ It Must Be So. **[Loose Faith]**
- Our fears reveal ...
 - Our **focus**—what is at the center of our field of vision, at the center of our story.
 - Our **"fists"**—what we hold with clenched fists.



3. Is Fear Sin?

Yes and no.

Fear is not sin when there is an actual situation that presents a danger to our lives or situation or to someone else’s life or situation. God created our emotions and gave us the capacity to fear so that we can respond as needed to a dangerous or life-threatening situation in which we are vulnerable. Ultimately, God created our emotions so that we might **reflect** and **trust** him.

Fear becomes sin when fear drives us more than faith. Fear becomes sin when it drives us to despair, anxiety, and obsession rather than to hope in God. Fear becomes sin when fear drives us inward, focused merely on our circumstances and ourselves, rather than upward to God and outward to others in love.

The Spectrum of Living Out the Gospel

Reflecting and Trusting in Christ as Our Living Hope

Driven by Fear	←—————→	Repentance	→—————→	Driven by Faith
Driven to Despair, Anxiety, Obsession	←—————→	Repentance	→—————→	Driven to Hope
Driven Inward	←—————→	Repentance	→—————→	Driven Upward & Outward to Love

God’s most frequent command in the Scriptures is do not fear/be afraid. This command occurs over 300 times throughout the Bible. If you also include the commands such as “Take courage,” “Be strong,” “Do not worry / do not be anxious”—we get the picture that God is trying to tell us something pretty huge! Such repetition points to the fact that God knows we can be driven by our fears and He wants us to believe, without a shadow of doubt, that He is our provider and protector. The great news is that the God of the gospel is the One who commands us, “Do not fear, do not be afraid.” Remember, only God has the authority and power to back up such words. Remember, God enables what He commands when we trust him and not our circumstances or ourselves.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matt. 10:28)

One of the most beautiful, yet powerful passages in Scripture explains the reason behind God’s command to not fear (in the ultimate sense) in an intimate, relational way,

¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. (1 John 4:15-18).

4. What should I listen for? (see Table)

5. What should I explore to get to the root of my fears? (see Table)

6. How can I proclaim the gospel into my fears? (see Table)



We need to **understand** our need for the gospel and how to **proclaim** the gospel to ourselves. We do this by being aware of what is going on in our heart and in our relationships. When we learn how to do this for ourselves, we can better help others to do the same.

Understanding My Heart	Understanding My Relationships	Proclaiming the Gospel
<p>Fear Drives My Emotions ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I struggle with fear, dread, being overwhelmed, being out of control. ▪ I find myself in panic, full of anxiety, and restless. ▪ I struggle with a sense of loss and sense of danger. ▪ I find myself getting angry in the midst of my fear. ▪ I get really defensive and angry when anyone corrects me or doesn't agree with me. 	<p>Fear Drives How I See God ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I'm so fearful, I forget about God. ▪ Why does God allow such things to happen? Is He out to get me, to punish me? ▪ God, why don't you do something about it! Why can't you _____ ? ▪ God, you're not enough or big enough. ▪ God, you don't care. ▪ God, you haven't protected me. ▪ God, your ways don't help and aren't the best for what I'm dealing with. ▪ I am tired of waiting on God and for my circumstances to change. ▪ God is punishing me ... 	<p>The Gospel and Fearful Emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My fears reveal what I value, what I trust, where I seek refuge, and what I love. (Intimacy) ▪ Listen to God, draw near to Him, make Him my single desire. ▪ God knows—"do not fear, do not be afraid, do not be anxious about anything, etc." ▪ God is always with me—"I am with you ... I love you ... My Son died so you might live, there is nothing that can ever separate you from my love, etc." ▪ Jesus calls, "Come to Me all who are weary and burdened, I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).
<p>Fear Drives My Thoughts ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My mind races and I start obsessing about different scenarios & outcomes. ▪ What will I do if ___? ▪ How can I ever live with/without _____? ▪ I am struggling with doubts—they are springing up everywhere, in every way. ▪ The degree, magnitude, severity, abnormality or uniqueness intensifies—total destruction, death, etc. Overanalyze. ▪ I find myself with suspicious & superstitious thoughts. ▪ My fears drown out my thoughts—but I don't want quiet because of what I might hear! ▪ Nothing is rational. Nothing makes sense! 	<p>Fear Drives How I See Myself ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why is it always me? ▪ "I know what will happen!" [We are convinced we can predict the future!] ▪ I'm not strong enough, smart enough, or tough enough! ▪ I am in danger! I am vulnerable! ▪ I am afraid I won't get what I need. ▪ I might die! I can't deal with it! ▪ I need to be the rescuer. I need to help everyone but I don't see how. ▪ I can't take it anymore! 	<p>The Gospel and Fearful Thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My fears reveal how I see and think about God & myself. (Identity) ▪ Lord help me to believe in what is true, what is real, what is certain. ▪ Be still and know I am God (Ps 46:10)—I am with you, I am your God, you are my child. ▪ God's power is made known in my weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10). ▪ I'm outwardly wasting away, inwardly being renewed (2 Cor. 4:16). ▪ I'm like a weaned child resting on his mother's breast (Ps. 131:2).
<p>Fear Drives My Will & Actions ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leads to apathy, inaction, indecision. ▪ My fear causes me to over-react. ▪ I'm either talking to everyone or no one. ▪ I withdraw out of shame, fear, despair. ▪ My heart races, I experience dizziness, shortness of breath, tenseness—my body suffers. ▪ I work or push harder or slack off & do nothing at all. ▪ I rest too much or too little. ▪ I overprotect myself or risk it all. ▪ I loose all control or try to gain all control. 	<p>Fear Drives How I See Others ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I can't trust anyone! I question everyone's motives. ▪ I blame others for my situation and pain. ▪ I fear what others may think or say if they see me this way. ▪ I am always comparing myself with others. ▪ I don't love and pray for others because I am struggling so much. ▪ I avoid and withdraw from others for various reasons. 	<p>The Gospel and Fearful Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My fears reveals where or to whom I turn. (Imitation) ▪ Be still and know I am God (Ps 46:10; Ps. 62). Rest in God. ▪ I am called to live by faith not fear (Gal. 2:20; Heb 11:6). ▪ God wants me to trust in Him and not in my circumstances. ▪ Lord, give me the grace to turn to Christ and follow Him. I want to be compelled more by His love than my love for myself and my fear.

"The issue isn't so much whether or not we are afraid and worry. Scripture assumes that we will be afraid and anxious at times. What is important is where we turn, or to whom we turn when we are afraid" (Welch, *Running Scared*, p. 69).



7. What does repentance and faith look like in the face of my fears?

Psalm 27 provides a helpful guide in knowing how to repent from sinful fear.

<p>Psalm 27 of David</p> <p>¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?</p> <p>²When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.</p> <p>³Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.</p> <p>⁴One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek; That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.</p> <p>⁵For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.</p> <p>⁶And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.</p>	<p>⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me.</p> <p>⁸When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."</p> <p>⁹Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!</p> <p>¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up.</p> <p>¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD, And lead me in a level path Because of my foes.</p> <p>¹²Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, For false witnesses have risen against me, And such as breathe out violence.</p> <p>¹³I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.</p> <p>¹⁴Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.</p>
---	--

i. Be Fearless, God Is On Your Side (vv. 1-3)—One God

- We sin when our fears and worry looms bigger than our God and we forget God is on our side.

ii. Ask The Lord For One Thing—Hide In His Presence (vv. 4-6)—One Desire

- We sin when our one desire is to alleviate the anxiety rather than to seek Christ.
- We sin when we hide in ways other than in Christ and we fail to praise Him.
- Desire One Thing—Be in the Presence of the Lord & Gaze Upon His Beauty (v. 4)
- Hide & Be Safe In Christ (v. 5)
- Shout with Joy (v. 6)

iii. Listen To God, Seek Him With Your Whole Being (vv. 7-8)—One Command

- We sin when we listen to our fears more than God.
- God’s prescription for fear is offered in His one command—“Seek My Face.”

iv. Believe In God’s Goodness (vv. 9-13)—One Thing

- We sin when we believe fear’s lies more than God’s goodness and promises.

v. Wait On The Lord (v. 14)—One Action

- Wait—Be Strong—Take Courage--Wait
- **So what does it mean to wait on the Lord?** Waiting on the Lord means to trust and rest in the Lord: your **emotions** do not plunge and twist like a roller coaster when (fill in the blank) ... your **mind** does not race to extreme scenarios while the future is uncertain, perhaps about a medical test or treatment, or finances/job, or a dating relationship, even a troubled marriage ... you **stand firm** and confident in Christ even when your circumstances or relationships do not change.