

**CONQUER
STRESS, FEAR,
AND ANXIETY IN**

EASY STEPS



Overcoming Fear Is Possible

Doing the very thing that makes you afraid can be God's way of helping you overcome that fear.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Psalm 27:1

I remember the first time that I went to Zimbabwe to evangelize out in the rural areas of the country. That first day was a little scary (to say the least). The person driving me around dropped me off in the middle of nowhere! I was with a young teenage boy who had been in the area before, but there was nothing familiar in sight. We could not see any villages, there were no roads except the one we were on, and we were very near the Zambezi River where all the wild animals go for water during the day.

I would be lying if I said that I was not a little bit anxious and fearful. I didn't even know where I would be at the end of the day or who was coming to pick us up. As the day got later and began to cool off, the wild animals started to move around more and my anxiety increased all the more.

You can probably imagine why I was not optimistic about my evangelism trip at this point. I did not even speak the language of the people that I was there to evangelize. However, after a week of walking in 100-degree heat every day, nearly 200 people had come to Christ. The next week I stayed with them and disciplined them every day for about eight hours and a church was started.

So, what did I learn through that experience?

This trip was one of the greatest lessons of my life. I learned that I could trust God completely to help me reach people that needed Christ and that He was my protection at all times – even in a very dangerous setting. It strengthened me that I could trust God – especially when I was afraid. By the end of the first couple of days in the country I found that I no longer felt afraid, and eagerly wanted to return to the rural areas and start evangelizing the next day. It was great. No wonder David could say in Psalm 27:1 “Whom (or what) shall I fear?”

Learning how to overcome fear is one of God's spiritual tools.

Everyone has certain things in their life that make them afraid. However, doing the very thing that makes you afraid can be God's way of helping you overcome that fear.

I remember the first time that I ever flew. I was very nervous, and every time the plane encountered turbulence, I would become anxious. I would immediately think “Are we going to crash?” However, I have been flying for many years now, and I rarely even notice the turbulence, and I certainly am not afraid or anxious about flying.

Many people seem so fearful to share their faith that they never talk to anyone about Christ. They wonder what someone will think of them, or they think that they cannot answer all of their questions. The best way, though, to overcome that fear is to talk to someone about Christ. Your faith in God's power and presence in your life will give you the help to overcome your fears of witnessing to someone. Listen to what God told Joshua in Joshua 1:9:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

What a great promise! In difficult times that make us afraid, God's truth becomes our comfort and our strength. His truth gives us all of the reasons to have hope because our God is a great God, an all-powerful God.

Is there anything else that can help me trust God through my fears?

Any time that we are facing fears that seem to cripple us and paralyze our life, they are always harder to face when we face them alone. Sometimes we have to face them alone, but other times we need someone else in our life to encourage us and give us hope as we face our fears. Recently I had to speak to a group of people who were going on their first ever mission trip to Madagascar. It was a very long trip, and most of them had never been on a mission trip.

They knew nothing, and it frightened some of them. However, simply listening to me sharing with them about the many times I have gone to new places to minister Christ to people became a great encouragement to them. The encouragement that we can find from sharing our fears and anxieties with other believers can be a great source of strength in our life.

Devotional Prayer:

Father, in those areas of my life that make me afraid, will you please bring someone into my life that can help me face those fears? I know that I need a spiritual helper that can be there to encourage me when I feel those fears coming on me. Amen

God's Solution to Fear and Anxiety

How to face our fear and anxiety is clearly laid out in scripture.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

Everyone has fears, everyone becomes anxious, and everyone experiences very stressful moments in their life. Just because someone is a Christian does not exempt them from the stressful events or from the effects that fear and anxiety can produce in their life. For instance, medical science has been saying for a long time that stress, fear, and anxiety are very harmful to the body because they destroy a person's immune system. So, the more that someone worries about things that they often cannot change, the greater will be the negative effects on their life. Stressful events are more than able to take a person's focus off of God and to place it on their difficult circumstances. So, what we want to do is to see what God's Word says about how a believer can actually win their battle over fear and anxiety.

What does it really mean to be “anxious”?

The word “anxious” means to become troubled, unsettled, and deeply concerned about something. It means to constantly be worrying about something that most of the time that we cannot change. It refers to the person who seems to worry about everything. Something happens in their life and they begin to worry about it so much that it consumes their thought life. They cannot rest for worrying about something. It affects their sleep and their eating, and the fear of something negative that may happen begins to control their life.

Several years ago my oldest son was working in a very dangerous part of the world. He had to travel every day on what was considered at that time as the most dangerous 10 miles of road in the world. Obviously, it was something that made our family very anxious. However, it was during that time that God began to teach me about Philippians 4:6-7 and it became one of my two life verses. What I learned was how to handle that which made me anxious.

So, what is God's solution to fear and anxiety in our life?

God's solution is simple. It is to bring our concerns to Him in prayer and He will provide His peace in our life – which He did for me about my son's daily safety. These verses do not say that God will change our difficult and stressful circumstances, but rather that God will provide an inner and supernatural peace that will “guard” and protect our heart and mind so that our difficult

circumstances will no longer consume our life. Rather than always being anxious about my son's safety, I simply began to pray each morning for God to protect him. Rather than worrying about something that I could not change or control, I began committing my son into God's care each day. Once that happened, God's supernatural peace began to deeply influence my heart and mind and helped me to rest in His control over all things.

What does it mean to “guard” our heart and mind?

The word “guard” means to keep someone safe with a military guard. Everywhere that the President of the United States goes, he always has people guarding him. That is the idea with the word “guard”. It is knowing that God will always protect the believer's heart and mind so that worrying and being afraid will not consume their life. Some people seem to worry about everything in life. Almost anything can make them anxious, and as soon as something goes wrong, they begin to worry. What that anxiety does is to immediately take their heart and mind off of God. In reality, God is always the believer's solution to anxiety and fear. Jesus provided a great encouragement in Matthew 6:25-26:

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

So, what God does when the believer comes to Him in prayer is to “guard” their heart, protect their heart, and shield their heart from things that He knows can hurt them. He is always wanting us to trust Him in every difficult circumstance of our life.

Can fear or anxiety be a good thing?

It is important to understand that some level of fear and anxiety often can be a good thing because it forces us to be more careful and to be much more cautious. I love to work with wood and have been making things for over 40 years. Several years ago I was working next to a wood machine, my hand too close to it and part of my thumb was cut off. Today, I am so respectful of that saw that I will never make that same mistake again. In fact, I have made a guard and I use it every time I have to use the wood machine. So, in my case, having a healthy fear is a very good thing. It is the fear of what the saw can do to me that actually keeps me safe. So, what we want to see in this series is how God actually uses the things that make us afraid as His supernatural tools to strengthen our life to trust Him in every circumstance of our life. Coming to God in the midst of troubling and stressful situations is always God's solution to fear and anxiety.

Devotional Prayer:

Father, will you please help me to see how you are able to use the stressful moments of my life to draw me closer into your supernatural peace? Amen

How to Overcome Anxiety

Facing our fear and anxiety.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

We are creatures of habit; and more often than not, it is difficult to get us to change our habits. We love our routine. We like schedules and disciplines and can find great spiritual value in them. In fact, for most people, it would be very difficult to survive without them.

The problem with our busy lives, however, is that it can also become a habit to worry and fret about things over which we have no control. Worry never solves problems, but only makes them worse and creates problems that God never intended for us to have.

So, how does someone actually overcome this anxiety?

Overcoming anxiety means allowing the Holy Spirit to overtake your life in a very practical way. That is easy to say, but not easy to do. Having the patience and the personal resolve to order our life this way is something that requires a kind of spiritual sensitivity to God, to His Word, and to His purposes that can become easily lost in the normal routine of our lives.

What is interesting is that Paul clearly provides a spiritual remedy for worry. He says it is to “let your requests be made known to God”, through “prayer and supplication”. The man or woman who has learned to pray, and not just during the difficult times, but as a lifestyle, will not be prone to being overly anxious. Why? Because they have a very high view of God and believe there is no problem that is too great for him to handle. That is why they pray to Him as a normal part of their life.

What happens when someone ignores God in prayer?

Not praying to God as a way of life is always an indication that the individual is not living by faith. The Christian life must be lived out by trusting God, by believing in God’s promises, and by demonstrating that trust by coming to Him in prayer. What happens to the person who experiences anxious moments but is not accustomed to seeking God in prayer is that they very quickly forget how great their God really is. It is very difficult to trust God in the very trying and anxious moments if the person has never learned to trust Him in the less stressful moments of their life. Faith in God is not something that a person can just have at will. It has to be learned by maintaining a very meaningful fellowship with God. To ignore Him when things are easy means that a person will not be trained to go to Him when things get hard. These difficult moments are unavoidable, so it is critical to learn how to walk with God before they become a reality.

What does Paul mean when he uses the word “thanksgiving”?

The greater the discipline of faithful prayer that is developed in the believer's life, the greater their ability to respond to the problems that life brings with “thanksgiving”. Thanksgiving is simply giving thanks to the person who has given you something. For the person who has developed this discipline of prayer and making their requests known to God, they will actually give God thanks for their trials.

Why? Because they know God's character and they understand the greater purposes that He wants to achieve in their life through their trials. In fact, the mature believer will be grateful for their trials. They understand that God is overseeing their life and they do not question His wisdom as He works deeper spiritual qualities into their life. This is a great place to be spiritually, but it still requires a certain level of focus and willpower to choose a life of meaningful prayer. It is the cure for anxiety and fear and should be developed in every believer's life.

Devotional Prayer:

Father, would you please help me to see the importance of making it a way of life to constantly be coming to you in meaningful prayer? I need your help to be focused on what is spiritually important as You develop the character of Christ in my life. Amen

Do Not Fear

Living in Confidence Because God is With Us

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

Deuteronomy 31:6

What's the most common command in the Bible, appearing in one form or another, more than 300 times?

“Don't be afraid.”

Why should we not be afraid? Because, as God told Joshua in Deuteronomy, if we are a follower of Christ, God is with us. In fact, one of Jesus' titles is “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14)

What or who do we often fear the most? People. But God's word says we should fear God, not people.

Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.”

Here are some different kinds of fear, and how God's word helps us combat them:

People can insult us

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” (Matthew 5:11)

Jesus says that we are BLESSED when people insult us for His sake. Why? Because it means we are following Jesus in a way that people actually notice, and that some will react against (see also John 15:18-19; 1 Peter 3:14)

People can harm us

In Acts 5, the Apostles were put on trial for preaching the gospel. They were sort of acquitted, but then they were beaten. Then “they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). And what did they do right afterward? “Every day . . . they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:43).

People can kill us

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28

These words of Jesus were not just theoretical; most of His disciples wound up being martyred.

Even today, in rare cases, people can be killed because of their Christian faith. But in light of eternity, as long as we are headed for Heaven, even losing our life is not that bad. And dying for Christ's sake is a high honor.

In Matthew 28:18-20, when Jesus commanded the disciples to take His message to the end of the world, he reassured them (and us) by saying, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

What are some other fears that can hinder us?

Fear of imagined circumstances

"The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!'" (Proverbs 22:13) Our fears are often much worse than what actually happens. A "sluggard" is a lazy person; so this verse tells us that yielding to imaginary fears can actually be a way to avoid responsibility.

Fear of displeasing people

Galatians 1:10 says, "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

The bottom line is, when we are fearing people, it's because we are insecure about ourselves. Strangely enough, insecurity about ourselves stems from pride – being preoccupied with what others think about us.

And yet, our issues usually go unnoticed because most people are too busy thinking about themselves. It's like a teenager who thinks everyone is staring at a flaw on his face, when actually most people don't even notice or care about the flaw.

When we truly have confidence in our right standing before the Lord, we won't give much thought to what people think about us. Passages like this will describe us:

"So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:6)

And finally, one of my favorites. Pray this for your friends and ask them to pray that the Holy Spirit would make it true in your life as well: "The righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1b).

Devotional Prayer:

Father, thank You that You are always with me. Thank You, Jesus, that You are Immanuel, God with me. Help me to live in the confidence that comes from knowing that You will never leave me or forsake me. Amen.

Here's How to Grow in Courage

How courageous are you?

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:8-9

How courageous are you? Are you winning the battle with fear? How do you respond when God leads you to a role that is beyond what you can do in your own strength?

When God gives the vision, He also gives the provision. In the Bible, God has a track record of challenging men to fully rely on Him. Walking by faith means dropping our pride and finding supernatural resources. Joshua and Gideon are two men who learned how to accomplish great victories for the Lord. Let's learn from their experiences as we grow in our faith and bring glory to Jesus today.

Your Assignment

God gives an assignment to every man. Have you found out what God has called you to do in this season of your life? Your assignment probably has many parts. Loving your family, serving your church, using your spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ, giving generously, reaching the nations, sharing your testimony, praying for your neighbors, being His ambassador in the marketplace, raising children, tackling injustice, and inviting people into your home are some examples of ways God asks us to expand His kingdom. When God guides you, it is always for His glory and our good.

Joshua was given an assignment from heaven to lead God's people into the promised land (Deuteronomy 34:1-9). Following an amazing leader like Moses, uniting and inspiring about 2 million people, miraculously crossing the Jordan River during flood season, surviving fierce battles, and staying close with God through countless trials was difficult. In addition, no one had ever done this before. Being the first one to do something or accomplish what other people failed to do can be intimidating. Joshua also had to form a new team after the old leaders died in the wilderness. Can you imagine having his responsibility? Can you relate to any elements of his mission?

Gideon was very surprised that God chose him to rescue people. He was careful about accepting his assignment. He felt like God selected the wrong person. The nation was in danger. Spiritually,

people had turned away from God often. They wandered away from God. There were many military threats from other countries, and invasions were devastating. Would you want Gideon's assignment? Where would you find hope to overcome all of your insecurities? Is your walk with God solid enough to bring healing to a nation?

Your excuses

Do you come up with excuses in your own mind? What do you tell yourself? Is fear trying to steal your peace and threaten your assignment? How would you live for Jesus if fear was not a factor?

Wrestling with worry and insecurities are common. In the Bible, men like Joshua, David, Paul, Moses and Abraham are very honest about their struggles. Are you trying to dodge or hide from God's calling on your life?

Gideon had a long list of reasons why he should not be faithful with His assignment. (Judges 6:1-18) He wanted more reassurance from God and more miraculous signs to confirm his calling. We should not put God to the test. Being demanding when God has made it clear in His Word is unhealthy. Gideon was discouraged about the present circumstances, but God made it clear He was with Gideon. Gideon felt like his family was dysfunctional and he was the weakest one in his clan. God listened to Gideon but then said that Gideon was a mighty warrior. God's view of Gideon was far more encouraging than how Gideon saw himself. Sometimes we need to shift and simply receive and agree with God's perspective. It's the only way to overcome our lame and stubborn excuses. Are you willing to be in alignment with God's Word instead of remaining loyal to cowardly excuses? God wants to bring you a new courage that is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

Your Strength

Joshua learned to stay in the presence of God. He stayed in the Tent of Meeting to worship, to listen and to receive God's strength (Exodus 33:9-11). Joshua had a mentor named Moses, and he would watch as Moses communicated with God. Do you have a mentor in your life who will help you go deeper with God? Are you learning how to draw near to God and find encouragement in Him?

Joshua won the battle in his mind. He did this by meditating on God's Word. (Joshua 1:6-7) The most intense spiritual battle is often in your head. The devil tries to plant lies and discouragement into your thinking. (John 8:44) The Holy Spirit will help you. He is stronger than the darkness in this world. The Spirit and the Scripture are always in alignment. Read and memorize the Bible because it is your sword in the battle against darkness. Remember to live out what you learn. Studying the Bible is not merely an academic exercise. God moves mightily when you are obedient with application, too. (Ezra 7:10) God's Word is truth and builds up your courage. How much time are you spending in Scripture during the week? How can you increase your intake of God's Word?

Gideon learned to accomplish victories God's way. He defeated the Midianites with lanterns and trumpets. (Judges 7:19-25) What kind of a military strategy is that? God's wisdom is not always the popular, likely, or logical way. Many people hear a clear assignment from God but then try to achieve the results with their own plan. That is a recipe for disaster and heartache. It is very important to rely on God for the "what" and the "how" of the mission. Good intentions and good effort alone will not be enough. You need heavenly wisdom and insights (James 1:5).

A Joyful Reset

Today can be the start of a new season in your life. There is new hope and power through Jesus. God is with you and goes ahead of you. Start this new adventure in your life by putting your trust in Jesus as the savior and leader of your life. You can not do life or eternity without Him. As you follow Jesus, make some key shifts in your life. Grow in your faith by spending more time in prayer, including listening to God. Also, find other courageous Christians (like Joshua and Gideon were) in a healthy church and serve Jesus together. Lastly, devote time to reading and applying the Bible. It is your playbook, and the results will be amazing when you honor God's Word. You are a courageous man in the Lord. Don't settle for anything less than your calling. The Holy Spirit will write the script and empower you to accomplish the assignment. (Acts 1:8) Many lives will be transformed, including yours because God is trustworthy and good.

Devotional Prayer:

Lord, I want to be courageous for you like Joshua, and faithful to obey you like Gideon. Forgive me when I only rely on my own strength. Please lead me with your Word, prayer, the power of your Holy Spirit and fellowship with others who courageously follow you. Amen.

