

INTRODUCTION

- We've been talking about emotions that compete for control of our lives.
 - Emotions are a gift from God. They help us experience life to a greater degree. They help us connect what's going on in the world around us to what is going on inside us.
 - We may all feel and express emotions at different levels, but we all have them.

FEAR

- All throughout the Bible, we are told to not be afraid (over 100 times in the KJV). The first instance of this saying is directed at Abraham in **Genesis 15:1**.
- Even after all these admonitions from God, we still struggle with fear. All of us experience fear. No one is exempt.
- Fear can be a good thing. God created the limbic system to protect us from imminent danger.
- Along with protecting us from imminent danger, it also causes us to be more prudent.
- Fear, while it can be a good thing, can also control our lives and become the boss of us.

ELIJAH

- There is a story in the Bible that is such a great example of how fear can set in.
 - Israel was not following God. Ahab (the king) and Jezebel (the queen) led Israel into idol worship. God told Ahab, through Elijah, there will be no rain for several years except at God's command. After three years, Elijah tells Ahab God is going to end the drought.
- Elijah is so confident! He mocks the false prophets of Baal, promises the king a miracle, watches God provide the miracle, and cleanses the land of the prophets of Baal.
 - Then, in the very next chapter, something happens that flipped a switch in Elijah's head, and he is suddenly afraid for his life! (See **1 Kings 19:1-4**)
- How could Elijah go from taking on the king and 450 prophets of Baal to running for his life from the queen because of one threat she made? He apparently took his eyes off the One who just performed a miracle and put them on the one who was threatening him.
- Not all fear looks the same. It may be an immediate threat that causes the limbic system to kick in, it might be gnawing anxiety, or it might be a phobia—maybe one that isn't even rational. Fear makes things seem worse than they really are.

THE FEAR WE FEEL IS ALMOST ALWAYS GREATER THAN THE DANGER, OR PERCEIVED DANGER, WE FACE.

JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES

- An important part of Jesus' training of the disciples was to not be afraid—to "Fear not."

When the disciples were afraid, Jesus taught them through this experience:

Matthew 8:23-27 (NLT) ²³Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. ²⁴Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm. ²⁷The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!"

- The disciples saw their circumstances and panicked, but Jesus didn't panic.
 - God doesn't panic. We panic.
- Jesus calmed the storm and asked why they had so little faith.
 - God had been faithful in providing everything they needed up to that point. I wonder how often God thinks the same thing about me when I don't trust Him!

When the disciples see what Jesus does, it blows their minds! In Mark's account of the story:

Mark 4:41 (NLT) The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

- The Greek word for *terrified* here is "*Phobos*." It's the word we get phobia from.
 - Their fear of who Jesus is was greater than the fear of the storm.
 - You don't have to let fear overwhelm you because there is someone more powerful and capable than your fear.

Before Jesus sends out the twelve disciples, He tells them the cost of following Him—physical persecution, hatred, and imprisonment. But then He says:

Matthew 10:28-31 (NIV) ²⁸Do 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. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

THERE IS A RIGHTEOUS KIND OF FEAR: THE FEAR OF THE LORD—AWE AND REVERENCE FOR GOD.

- But this passage tells us we don’t have to be afraid because God sees us. And He cares for us!
 - Jesus didn’t tell them life would be carefree. He just said He sees us, cares about us, and will protect what is most important: our soul.
 - The disciples experienced one of these trials in **Mark 6:45-52**.
 - They go through yet another storm, and Jesus has to go save them.
 - They didn’t have to be afraid. The wind was still wailing, the seas were still rough, but Jesus was there. Notice Jesus came to them in the storm. He didn’t make the storm go away.
 - The absence of the storm doesn’t determine the presence of the Lord.
 - You can’t watch your circumstances to decide if God is with you.
 - The disciples feared over and over, but something finally changed them. Something happened that would allow them to be the boss of their fear rather than their fear being the boss of them. They went to the tomb and realized that they didn’t need to fear anyone who can kill the body. There is One more powerful than death.
 - From that day on, every day was Resurrection Day. It’s what gave them the courage to take on everything they went through—not because there was nothing to be afraid of but because their eyes were on the One greater than whatever was the cause of their fear.
 - When we feel fear setting in, we know that isn’t from God. (See **1 Timothy 1:7**)
 - Many of us have heard that verse, but we’ve missed the two preceding it. (See **1 Timothy 1:5-6**)
 - The cure for fear is faith. If you are fearful, get to know God more. Ignorance of God, and not fear, is the biggest faith-killer. If we have a true appreciation of how immensely powerful and caring God is, and how interested He is in us, our faith is bound to grow.
-
-
-

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Psalm 23; Matthew 8:23-27; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18

- Something stood out to you in the sermon—what was it?
 1. What joys or wins did you experience this week, particularly in the area of taking thoughts captive?
 2. Read Psalms 23 and Matthew 8:23-27 **OR** choose a passage from the sermon. Read them twice. A) What do you discover about God in these passages? B) What do you discover about people and life in them? C) What do you discover about fear?
 3. How do you typically respond when you sense fear? B) What kind of patterns do you see in things that can bring fear to you?
 4. What are you discovering or understanding more about trusting God in the midst of feeling fear or other emotions? A) How do you recognize and grow in “the fear of the Lord”?
 5. What are ways that help you recognize when fear might be driving others? Think about family, friends, and co-workers.
 6. What have you discovered about yourself and the beliefs and emotions that could be the boss of you in this series? A) What adjustments are you seeking to make?

Bonus: Read 1 Peter this week.

Passages to prepare for next week’s new marriage and family series, Built to Last: Matthew 7:24-25; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Psalms 127:1