

# What About Fear?

By Terry Sutton

## Introduction

As a counselor and minister, I deal with people on a regular basis who wrestle with challenging physical, emotional and spiritual problems. Until 1999 I had not discovered how to help these people trust the Lord to effectively and consistently apply scriptural truths to their lives to bring victory and liberation. Though a doctoral student with a Masters Degree, and with 20 years experience in the ministry, I had always followed the "company line" in dealing with hurting people and saw limited lasting results, though I loved the Lord and tried to help people believe and obey God's Word. My eyes began to be opened when I fully considered the truth and implications of Jesus' mission statement of Luke 4:18-19. The Lord began to teach me through my own study of Scripture and through others who were obediently walking with Him. In this short teaching I want to deal with one of the most significant issues that is a factor in the hurting people with whom I minister, fear. Obviously, this topic can only be briefly discussed here and there is still much to learn. I'm praying you will be encouraged and helped through this teaching.

## What Is Fear?

There are different types of fear. Not all fear is bad. The fear of God is good. It is the beginning of wisdom (Pro. 9:10). This is a reverential awe of God and does not mean to be scared or frightened of Him, unless of course you do not know Him. A fear response to evil (Pro. 8:13) or to a threatening situation is not wrong either. God designed us to react appropriately to dangerous or harmful situations. For the benefit of this teaching I want to deal with the destructive kind of fear, fear that is spiritual in orientation and that can exist independently of a threatening situation. This kind of fear is sin (Pro. 1:33). The person trapped in this may not even understand that they are a captive of fear, for example, the fear of people (Pro. 29:25) or of death (Heb. 2:15). These can put a person in bondage.

## Fear and Faith

Fear is the opposite of faith. They cannot coexist. Just like faith, fear demands to be fulfilled. It projects into the future. Irrational fear must be dealt with or it will control your future and destroy your life. This kind of fear brings torment (I John 4:18).

## The Evidence of Fear

In my experience, there are clues to let me know that a person may be trapped or dominated by fear. Some of these clues are obvious, some are not, and must be discerned both spiritually and by getting to know a person and their history. The fear of specific things such as spiders or heights are rather obvious. While it is certainly prudent to be wary of dangerous or injurious situations, when these feelings become debilitating and obsessive it is not normal. Many times it is a person or an event that is the source of fear. Sometimes there is no cognitive awareness of it, though it is there. When a person feels victimized or taken advantage of, they can have a fear response. One clue I look for in ministry is the presence of unloving attitudes that manifest in unhealthy relationships. These attitudes can include rejection, depression, guilt or self-hatred. There are also physical maladies that can point to a fear component such as fibromyalgia, migraines, skeletal disorders, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, Environmental Illness, asthma, sleep disorders, skin irritations, digestive dysfunction and even some autoimmune diseases (not a complete listing). When people come to me with their affliction I set out to help them find any open door through which the devil has come and has brought this dysfunction. Living in this situation is clearly outside the promised blessings of God. If, in fact, a person's disease has a spiritual root such as fear, it must be dealt with spiritually. Another indicator of fear can be pain (Is. 13:8). When the source of fear is discovered real healing can then take place. Hey, we all have "stuff." But, when the "stuff" has us it is a problem.

## Dangerous Fear Operates in the Spiritual Realm

The Bible does not identify this bad fear as a concept or as an innocuous entity. In II Timothy 1:7 it is called a *spirit* of fear. In my experience, a person's response to a situation with anything but faith can be an open invitation for an invasion from sinister forces. Our approach deals with fear on this level, and it works! The manifestation of this spirit of fear can have dire physical, mental, emotional and spiritual consequences.

## Sources of Fear

If debilitating fear exists in a person's life there must necessarily have been an entrance. Because we are commanded to give no place to the devil (Eph. 4:27) and we are to help people recover from the snare of the devil (II Tim. 2:26), we must identify where the enemy came in and shut that door! Sources can include:

- Painful or disappointing experiences
- Victimization (real or perceived)
- Generational sins or tendencies
- Unrecognized spiritual/occultic influence
- Unconfessed sin (guilt brings fear)
- Lack of knowledge (the unknown)
- Lack of faith (opposite of fear)
- Lack of genuine love

This listing is not complete and it is not enough to just know the source of your fear. It must be both discovered and then lovingly dealt with God's way.

## God Made Us To React To Fear

God created us wonderfully. He made us with the capacity to react to dangerous and threatening situations. However, when our fear is spiritual (or emotional) in nature, our body still goes through a prescribed response to the threat, called the *General Adaptation Syndrome*, but without a specific course of action or a tangible enemy. The physical result on our bodies can be catastrophic.

Without going into great detail here, let me give you a sense of what can happen when we live under a perceived threat based on fear. In the *General Adaptation Syndrome* three stages of reaction to a stressor or enemy can occur. The initial stage, the **Alarm Stage**, can last from two minutes to two hours. It is characterized by the immediate release of epinephrine (adrenaline) and the corresponding rise in heart rate, respiration and blood pressure. Our digestive and reproductive systems immediately slow down and the subsequent release of PTH (parathyroid hormone) starts retrieving calcium and phosphorus from our bones. In the second stage, the **Reaction Stage**, which can last up to two months, secondary hormones are released including the adrenal glucocorticoid, cortisol.

Cortisol effectively inhibits proper function of our immune system. Though much more complex than what is stated here, just these partial physical/chemical reactions can greatly effect our health. Our homeostasis, sleep patterns, breathing, bones, joints, immune system, digestive system, reproductive system and skin are affected. As long as the "stressor" is present, the *G.A.S.* will continue until the third stage is reached, the **Exhaustion Stage**. Because fear is a perceived enemy that never really goes away, a person trapped in fear can have physical abnormalities which do not respond to common medications or modalities of treatment. Our bodies give us a vital clue as to what is happening in our hearts and minds.

### Women More Than Men

Since the beginning of 2000 I have been ministering to a community of people sick with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Environmental Illness, commonly known as MCS/EI. Because of their illness, these people are forced to live in "safe" houses or in remote living areas. They are allergic to many things and are unable to lead normal lives. (Around all of us are people who have hypersensitivities or super-allergies, but who manage to maintain a somewhat normal lifestyle. Sadly, many are chronically sick.) While this specific family of diseases is dealt with in other publications, one interesting factor is that 90% of those affected are women. Each person with whom I work has had a common component. As we minister to them they reveal directly, or indirectly, that they feel they have been victimized. This victimization, either as a primary or secondary response, causes them to fear a person, event or "stressor" that has victimized them. This family of diseases has symptoms that are progressive and debilitating. In reality, their victimization is couched in fear. As we have helped people face their fear and operate in forgiveness, repentance and faith they improve. God's primary design for women is to be nurtured and "covered," first by their fathers, and then their husbands. When this is not there they can be vulnerable. However, God will be both your Father and your husband if you let Him. While there are many variables and the circumstances of life can be multi-faceted, almost without exception fear and unforgiveness toward a person, towards God or towards themselves is evident. Sometimes this sense of fear is innate because it is there through heredity. In any event, the solution is the same; forgiveness and faith.

## Facts About Debilitating Fear

- Fear is spiritual (II Tim. 1:7)
- Unresolved fear is a sin (Prov. 1:33)
- God commands us not to fear (Is. 41:10)
- Fear brings torment (I John 4:18)
- Fear tethers you to a person or event
- Fear can be generational (Ex. 20:5)
- Fear is associated with unloving feelings:

Rejection

Self-hatred

Phobias

Guilt

Depression

Obsessiveness

Inadequacy

Lack of self-esteem

Perfectionism

Immorality

## Freedom From Debilitating Fear

God tells us in II Timothy 1:7 that He has not given us a spirit of fear. He has given us power, love and a sound mind. These three attributes are a picture of God. Power is through God the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Love is of God the Father (I John 4:8). A sound mind is through the Word of God, Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 10:4-5; John 1:1). Only through God can anyone be rescued from debilitating fear. Are you a Christian? Have you received God's free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ? Are you living in submission to Jesus as Lord of your life? Are you willing to repent and confess all known sin? We would like to help you settle this and discover God's wonderful plan for your life. Our email and number are listed in the Contact section of our web site.

In I John 4:18 we read that perfect love casts out fear. That is the real issue, finding your completeness and victory in the Lord! You are loved! That love must be received. At the same time you are to refuse to let the enemy "love" you. His "love" brings cursing, sin, hopelessness and, unfulfilled expectations and desires. John 10:10 says that the enemy has come to kill, steal and destroy, but that Jesus has come to give life, and life more abundantly. It really is your choice.

## God's Prescription For Wholeness

We help people on a regular basis discover freedom in Christ using a series of Biblical steps we call *God's Prescription for Wholeness*. With fear it involves recognizing the fearful spirit at work in your life and being willing to take responsibility to follow Christ for freedom. It involves repentance of sin, reconciliation with others and renouncing the devil's right to your life. On a daily basis we are to resist the devil and walk with God in prayer, fellowship, obedience and in scripture. The teaching on *God's Prescription For Wholeness* is also on this web site. Please consider the simple and encouraging steps that are listed. You can be whole and fear free!