

When fear is near The downside of Fear

Intro: Adrian Rogers, the late pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, once told about the man who bragged that he had cut off the tail of a man-eating lion with his pocket knife. Asked why he hadn't cut off the lion's head, the man replied: "Someone had already done that."

We have all dealt with fear. Maybe we were successful in dealing with it, and maybe we were not, but we have all been there so let's take another look at it today. Let's begin by looking at

I. What fear is

It is a upsetting emotion aroused by approaching danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined. It is closely tied to worry, which is a concern about something that threatens to bring bad news or results

In other words, fear is often irrational, unfounded, or unreasonable and is the result of giving power to those objects of irrational belief, letting them rule us rather than us ruling them. Fear is the disabling beliefs you carry in yourself that prevent you from living a productive, healthy, and growth-enhancing life.

Fear is the underlying motive behind many of our actions, and lack of action, that block our thinking, problem solving and decision making abilities.

II. Types of fear

A. Proper Fear

1. The fear of God

This is not a terrifying fear but one that remembers that He alone controls the universe and that all knees will one day bow before him either in homage or judgment

Psalm 111:10 says *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;*

Psalm 115:11 also reminds us *All you who fear the LORD, trust the LORD! He is your helper; he is your shield.*

2. The fear of sin

This is a proper fear because God does not want us to perish or be destroyed and disillusioned by sin

3. The fear of danger

This is a built in fear that protects us. For example you don't stand in from of a train and not move unless you are emotionally unstable

B. Improper fear:

This is a fear that has no redeeming qualities and is only interested in robbing a person of joy and victory. It is something that causes anguish, sleepless nights, and upset stomachs.

Lloyd Douglas said concerning an improper fear that, if a man harbors one it makes him landlord to a ghost. One man who was asked what robbed him of the most joy in life responded with this, The fear of things that never came to pass.

Improper fear causes a person to have a lack of initiative to try new things and causes isolation because a person would rather be alone than risk the fear of being embarrassed by failure.

III. What fear does

1. Fear can easily immobilize decision making. We can't make a decision because we are afraid we will make a mistake or fail
2. Fear can also prevent us from overcoming our insecurity, prevent us from trusting in others, and prevent us from being willing to become vulnerable in order to grow.
3. Fear can also prevent us from being willing to let go of old habits or ways of thinking in order to change.
4. Fear can even make us resistant to all offers of help from others. For example, we may be afraid of being taken advantage of them if we allow someone to help us
5. Fear can even go so far as to terrify a person and make them unwilling to venture out into the world, making them a prisoner in their own home. This is often referred to as *Agoraphobia- Fear of open spaces or of being in crowded, public places like markets. Fear of leaving a safe place.*
6. Fear can smother your motivation to pursue an education or a career OR Keep you locked in self-destructive behavior.
7. Fear can be the roadblock to change and growth; And if not overcome, fear becomes the patterned way of living an unhealthy life-style.

IV. How fear speaks to the receptive mind

It whispers, things are always going to be this way, so there is no use in trying.

It suggest to them things like, I'll never change. It is just a waste of time to try.

It hollers in an intimidating voice, I'm so scared of these things.

It is impossible to feel differently.

In an accusatory voice it suggests that I am a useless specimen who deserves no better than this.

It intimidates with things like it takes too much work to overcome all of these fears, so just forget it.

It plays on the emotions and reminds you, I've never been able to get rid of these fears, and I can't do it now.

It ridicules with statements such as: fear is an unacceptable feeling or behavior; anyone who has fear must be crazy, so I am crazy and I might as well give up.

V. Where fear comes from

It can come from a misunderstood picture of who God is. The fact is, He is the only one in all the universe that can be trusted in every fearful instance we will ever face.

It can come from natural events. A person who was in an auto accident is going to be afraid of riding in a car for fear of another accident.

It can come from outside influences such as the terrorism fears in our modern life in America. All of Govt. plays on these fears and in playing politics they add to the fear in the county. And sadly that fear is used to erode our civil rights and freedoms

VI. How to cope with fear

What can a person do so that they can get out of this pit that they have fallen into when they find themselves controlled by fear?

A. Remember that at the heart of fear is self. It is nothing more than self-preservation. Sometimes the preservation of our physical selves, but more often the preservation of our ego.

If we come to love and believe in a great cause and give ourselves wholly and completely to it, it is obvious that our minds will be removed from ourselves. This is why all of us need to commit ourselves a new and a fresh generous dedication to God. As long as self sits on the throne of our hearts we will know fear.

B. Identify the fear and label it because, Richard Bach has observed, "The answer to every fear is knowing... It is only the unknown that is fearful"

C. Think of the thing you fear, as a bully and then attack it. Why, because we know that a bully will bully you as long as you let him but when you stand up to him he is a wimp.

D. Tune out negative remarks by others. Don't forget, fear, other than the fear of God, sin and physical danger is all based on negatives. Negative remarks are given by others because they have lived with you in the neighborhood called fear and they are afraid to be positive

Lets use David as an illustration. Every one standing there was negative concerning Goliath but David tuned them all out. He tuned them out, then he went out to meet the enemy. David looked Goliath eyeball to eyeball, then he looked a bit to the right and over Goliath's shoulder and he was able to look right into the face of God, the one who knows no fear. Then in God's power he did God's business, quickly, cleanly, confidently and without fear. So much for the negative talk of others

E. Avoid negative self talk. This is very important because you are what you tell yourself.

If you tell yourself you are afraid, you will be afraid.

If you tell yourself you are brave, even in a trembling shaky voice it will give you the power to be brave

F. Stop or "turn off" obsessing thoughts about the feared objects or events The more you think about it the more it controls you

G. Face the fears head on

- If you are afraid of snakes for example go somewhere that they have non poisonous snakes and with a handler touch one or hold one with the handler helping you.

- Another example, When it is public speaking which affects most people look at this way.
Be afraid, be nervous, be hesitant, but do it anyway.

H. Decide to move from your neighborhood. Don't forget who lives in your Fear neighborhood. Neighbors like Worry, Anxiety, Paranoia, and Suspicion.

Don't forget God doesn't want you living in that neighborhood. II Timothy 1:7 says *For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

In closing: Eddie Rickenbacker once said, Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared.

But if you are still struggling with this thing of fear because the ship of your life has been riding the waves of a restless sea listen to these words of comfort.

Fierce was the wild billow,
Dark was the night;
Oars labored heavily;
Foam glimmered white.
Trembled the mariners,
Peril was nigh;
Then said the God of Gods,
"Peace! It is I."

Ridge of the mountain wave,
Lower thy crest.
Wail of the stormy wind,
Be thou at rest.
Peril there none can be;
Sorrow must fly,
Where saith the Light of Life
"Peace! It is I."

Mary Anne Radmacher pretty well sums it up with this: Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.

So don't give up, and don't give in, just keep saying I'll try again tomorrow, and each consecutive tomorrow, to ride the wild waves that would try and sweep over me until I finally get out of this pit. I can do that, in the knowledge that the Great Sailor of life's roughest seas goes with me