

# Overcoming Fear

*For I hold you by your right hand – I, the Lord your God.  
And I say to you, “Don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.”  
Isaiah 41:13 (NLT)*

*One of my childhood memories was when I was between 5 and 10 years old. My family was at an amusement park, which was pretty unusual for us. We didn’t really travel or vacation a lot growing up, and our small town didn’t have anything as amazing as an amusement park. My mom, my sister, and I were standing there in this place that’s all about fun. As we were looking up at the roller coasters, I was amazed by how the cars flipped around and the screams of delight. My mom said to us, “I don’t like those rides that flip around and turn upside down because people can fall out of them.” Suddenly, in this place of fun and amusement and intrigue, fear was introduced and overpowered any sense of adventure or interest. The message was clear: “You always need to be on guard for what could go wrong. Even a place of fun is a dangerous, scary place.” That message was reinforced over and over again in my growing up. Sometimes it was after a scary situation (Mom’s purse stolen, house broken into), but mostly, it was fear of situations that were statistically unlikely to happen (roller coaster malfunction, carjacking in a town of 13,000 people, house burning down because of a washer or dryer left running, and many others). The culture and spirit of fear profoundly affected my life, especially when combined with my sensitive/emotional temperament.*

*Duan*

## Defining Fear

What are we talking about when we refer to fear? In Proverbs, we read that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). So, isn’t fear a good thing in this context? That type of fear (reverence or respect) is not what we are focusing on. It is valuable to be reverent and respectful of God. Instead, our focus is the “unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger” (Merriam-Webster). Our working definition of fear in this lesson is:

**Fear is an emotional response that makes us want to run away from a situation in order to preserve our life.**

Why did God give us the ability to feel fear? He intended it to warn us of actual dangers in our lives and to get us to act. Fear can cause us to run away from a dangerous situation and preserve our lives (flee) or cause us to take action in a situation that needs our engagement (fight). The problem comes when we classify something as dangerous that really is not. Even though it may feel like we’re going to die as we have that honest conversation with a friend or spouse, the reality is that it will be difficult, and we will survive.

## Fear is All Around Us

There are many things that can evoke fear in our lives and relationships. There are obvious situations, like life changes (loss of job, financial stability, health, spouse, friend) or dangerous situations (accidents, war), and there are non-obvious situations. Anxiety in unknown or new things is a form of fear.

**Our sexual struggles are partly the result of unmet genuine emotional needs. Our attempts to meet these needs apart from God have only led to a life of frustration and futility.**

Insecurity in who we are or in relationships is a form of fear. Even as we look around in our day-to-day lives, fear reigns. “If you don’t have this or that product, your life will be incomplete.” “If you don’t buy this service, you will be ‘unprotected’ and ‘vulnerable.’ Thieves will attack, take, destroy . . . your life.” Advertising tends to be very fear-based. Politics can be the same. “If you don’t advocate for this or elect this person, our way of life will be totally destroyed.” Are we intended to be controlled by fear?

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.*  
Romans 8:14-17 (NLT)

We are not the only ones who feel fear. In the Biblical narrative, we see many examples of fear. Here are just a few:

- **Eve** is fearful that she is missing out on something and that God is holding out on her (Genesis 3)
- **Israelites** are in fear throughout their journey in the wilderness and beyond (Exodus)
- **Joshua** as he is becoming the leader of Israel and taking the people into the Promised Land, “be strong and courageous” is mentioned multiple times, suggesting he needed the reminder (Joshua)
- **David** expresses many emotions, including fear throughout his writing in the Psalms
- **Jesus’ Disciples** are fearful of the crowds, the Romans, a storm, etc. (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- **Priests and Pharisees** are fearful of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- Most times when an **angel** appears in Scripture, they begin with “Do not be afraid,” which suggests the person receiving the message is fearful

## Effects of Fear

Living and operating out of a place of fear can cause us to make choices and do things that we later regret and ultimately don’t want to do. Fear can also cause us to avoid things God has invited us into, which results in us missing God’s best for us. Because of their fear, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years before going into the Promised Land (Numbers 14). Even after seeing God move in amazing ways in their journey away from Egypt, they were still controlled by fear. When they came to the Promised Land and saw there would be challenges in taking the land, they let their fear win:

*Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. “Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”*  
Numbers 14:1-4 (NLT)

How might the Biblical narrative have been different if others allowed fear to control their decisions? If the Apostle Peter had not followed God’s lead to minister to the Roman Centurion Cornelius and take the Gospel to the Gentiles, where would that leave us? If the next generation of Israelites had also not gone into the Promised Land, how might history be different? If David didn’t face his fear and fight the Philistine giant Goliath, would the Philistines have controlled Israel? King David’s lineage was also the lineage of Jesus.

## Responses to Fear

As we experience fear, we often have one of two responses: We either avoid or control. The first option is based in the belief that avoiding certain situations or relationships will relieve the fear in us. If we just don't step into scary situations, then we won't feel fear. The second option is similar. We believe if we can control situations or people, then we can guarantee a particular outcome that we desire, rather than embracing the reality that the outcome is unknown. Both of these responses are lie-based and will not resolve the fear. Instead, because we are allowing fear to control us - our actions and decisions - the fear grows bigger, which requires us to avoid even more things or establish "better" methods to control situations and relationships. The fear continues to grow and the process repeats.

**What are ways you tend to respond to fear? Use the extra space provided to add any of your own responses that aren't listed.**

- Withdrawing from relationship
- Withholding parts of yourself in relationship
- Using work to avoid relationship
- Being busy with activities to avoid certain situations
- Not taking appropriate risks relationally
- Not taking appropriate risks in life
- Using anger to keep people away
- Attempting to control others
- Excessive cleaning or organization
- Using sexual behavior to relieve fear
- Avoiding appropriate sexual behavior
- Blaming God for your life not being different
- Blaming others for your problems
- Trying to please others to avoid fearful situations
- Adopting a negative self-identity to avoid risk - "I can't ..."
- Obsessively engaging with your phone or social media in an effort not to miss out on what's happening around you (referred to as FOMO: Fear Of Missing Out)
- Stepping back from valuable things at the first sign of resistance
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## In the Beginning

*"... but from the beginning it has not been this way."  
"... but it was not what God had originally intended."*

*Matthew 19:8b (NASB)  
Matthew 19:8b (NLT)*

These words of Jesus are referencing God's design for marriage. Jesus points back to "the beginning" – the very beginning: the creation of the world – and even quotes from Genesis (see Matthew 19:5 and Genesis 2:24). The beginning of the story of humanity paints a picture of what

God intended with his creation in many areas. Jesus points the religious leaders (and us) back to that original design.

*“Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.” Genesis 2:25*

**We were made by God, for God. Our lives have meaning and value because of His love of us. He desires an intimate, passionate relationship with us.**

In the next chapter, we learn that God would come and walk in the Garden of Eden with them in the cool of the evening. This is an incredible picture of relational intimacy between the man and woman. They can't hide anything (naked) and aren't trying to, and they feel no shame. And in this place of intimacy and vulnerability, they are interacting with God.

What does this have to do with fear? We seem to forget God's heart toward us when we are in the midst of fear. We forget that he wants to be close to us, even in our fear. We forget that he wants us to vulnerably come to him and cry out in our fear. He loves us deeply, and ultimately, the only solution to our fear is to engage with him.

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)*

**What thoughts and feelings does this passage evoke in you?**

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*Cheer up, Zion! Don't be afraid! For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs. Zephaniah 3:16b-17 (NLT)*

**What thoughts and feelings does this passage evoke in you?**

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*God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first. I John 4:16b-19 (NLT)*

**What thoughts and feelings does this passage evoke in you?**

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## Interacting with Fear

Fear exists in our lives and tries to press in at every opportunity. This sounds like a strategy of the enemy (Satan), who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” What does it look like to have what Jesus offers: “a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10)? We must interact with our fear, rather than trying to avoid or control it. There are three simple-to-remember steps that we will explore in more depth as you interact with this lesson over the rest of the week. It bears saying: though these steps are simple-to-remember, they are often not simple to do. But we have “the Spirit of truth ... [who] will guide [us] into all truth” (John 16:13).

**Step One: Acknowledge** the fear, feelings, and lies we believe

**Step Two: Engage** with God in it

**Step Three: Face** it

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

*II Timothy 1:7 (NLT)*

**God calls us to obey Him and His Word.  
Obedience is an act of faith,  
believing that God is the  
rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.  
Although we may not always understand “why,”  
we trust that He has our best interests at heart.**

# Reflection & Journaling

## Day 1 - Acknowledge the Fear and Feelings

The first step to addressing an issue in our lives is to acknowledge that it's a problem and to define the problem. With fear, it's helpful to name what we are actually fearful of. Sometimes that simple act can reveal how fear is misleading us.

Throughout the Psalms, we see David (and the other Psalm writers) pouring out their hearts to God. They express emotion and verbalize false beliefs (lies) they are struggling with, as they engage with God about their situations. One example (among many) is in Psalm 27. David expresses a number of things about his current situation: fear (v1-3), enemies who surround me (v6), be merciful and answer me (v7), do not turn your back on me (v9), do not reject me (v9), don't leave me (v9), don't abandon me (v9), enemies are waiting for me (v11), accuse me of things I've never done (v12), threaten me with violence (v12).

**As you have been contemplating this topic of fear, what fear(s) have come to mind? Focus on the one(s) that are at the forefront. If you feel you have lots of fears, contemplate the prominent ones and see if there is a common thread. A couple examples have been provided.**

*Example: I'm fearful of losing my job, losing my house, and my marriage. The common thread in all of those is a fear of failure and being rejected because of that failure.*

*Example: I'm fearful people would reject me if they really knew me - my thoughts, feelings, desires, likes, and dislikes.*

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**We are called to die to our old nature.  
In order to know newness of life,  
we must intentionally  
put to death our sinful behaviors.  
God calls us to not just manage our problems,  
but to surrender them to Him.**

What are you feeling emotionally as you look at these fears? Circle the words you relate with below or write some of your own.

Sad	
apathetic	hurt
burdened	lonely
despairing	lost
despondent	mournful
disappointed	pitiful
distressed	somber
downcast	sorrowful
embarrassed	uneasy
grieved	unloved
helpless	unwanted

Angry	
aggravated	hostile
agitated	indignant
critical	inflamed
disgruntled	irate
dismayed	livid
enraged	outraged
exasperated	provoked
frantic	revengeful
furious	spiteful
hateful	unrestrained

Confused	
anxious	jumbled
bewildered	misunderstood
bothered	panicky
chaotic	puzzled
disorganized	scatterbrained
disoriented	surprised
doubtful	trapped
embarrassed	uncertain
flustered	unsettled
forgetful	unsure

Scared	
alarmed	rattled
apprehensive	shy
distrustful	stunned
dreadful	terrified
frightened	terrorized
harassed	threatened
insecure	timid
intimidated	tormented
jumpy	uneasy
nervous	worried

Weak	
deflated	inferior
defective	lethargic
delicate	passive
disabled	powerless
exposed	quiet
fragile	timid
helpless	unable
inadequate	unfit
incapable	useless
ineffective	vulnerable

Draw a picture that represents the fear and what you are feeling. You don't need to be artistic or have something highly developed. Stick figures are acceptable or lines and symbols may better represent the fear and what you are feeling.





## Day 2 - Acknowledge the Fear and Feelings

Our emotions are indicators of what we believe in our hearts. This is different than intellectual belief, where we rationally believe something. For instance, we may truly believe that God is good, and in the midst of a difficult situation, our emotions tell us that God has abandoned us. We do genuinely believe that God is good. Our emotions have just led us to another belief that feels true (a lie). Lies we believe tend to fall into one of three categories: lies about God, lies about ourselves, or lies about other people.

*“The Devil attacks with threats about the future. ‘You will suffer tomorrow.’ ‘You will be rejected tomorrow.’ ‘You will be destitute, alone, forgotten ...’ The story Satan is writing about the future is different than God’s future for us.”*  
Alejandro, YWAM Argentina

**Look again at the fear(s) you wrote down yesterday. Are there any lies you are believing **about God**?**

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**As you reflect on your history, where do you think that lie(s) originated?**

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**Are there any lies you are believing **about yourself**?**

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**As you reflect on your history, where do you think that lie(s) originated?**

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**Are there any lies you are believing **about other people**?**

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**As you reflect on your history, where do you think that lie(s) originated?**

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## Day 3 - Engage with God in the Fear

*Hear me as I pray, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me!  
My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."  
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."*


*Psalm 27:7-8 (NLT)*


Our Heavenly Father desires to spend time with us and speak into our lives. He speaks in different ways that seem to acknowledge our different personalities and temperaments. He uses the Bible, which also is the filter for other ways that he speaks. If something we think we are hearing conflicts with Scripture or is not consistent with God's nature, it's not from God. In addition to speaking through Scripture, God sometimes speaks in words to us. Other times, we may get an impression or a feeling in our spirit that reveals God's perspective in a situation. Some people get pictures that communicate a truth or an aspect of God's character. All of these are ways that God speaks to us.

Today, we want you to take some time to pray into the emotions and lies that have come up as you have interacted with this lesson over the last couple days. What is God speaking to you? We will also take some time when we gather together as a group to pray into these emotions and lies, so if you are struggling with this exercise, it's okay.

- 1. Find a quiet space where you can interact with God, apart from distractions.**
- 2. Begin with thanksgiving for who God is and how he relates with you.**
- 3. Express a fear to God, along with the related emotions and lies you have believed.**
- 4. Ask God some questions, and wait for a response:**

 *"God, what's your perspective about the belief (lie) that ..."*

 *"God, where were you in that situation?"*

 *"God, where are you with me now?"*

 *"God, is there anything you want me to know about this situation?"*

**If you sense or see or hear or feel anything, record it below. If it was in the form of a picture, feel free to sketch it in the space provided on the next page.**

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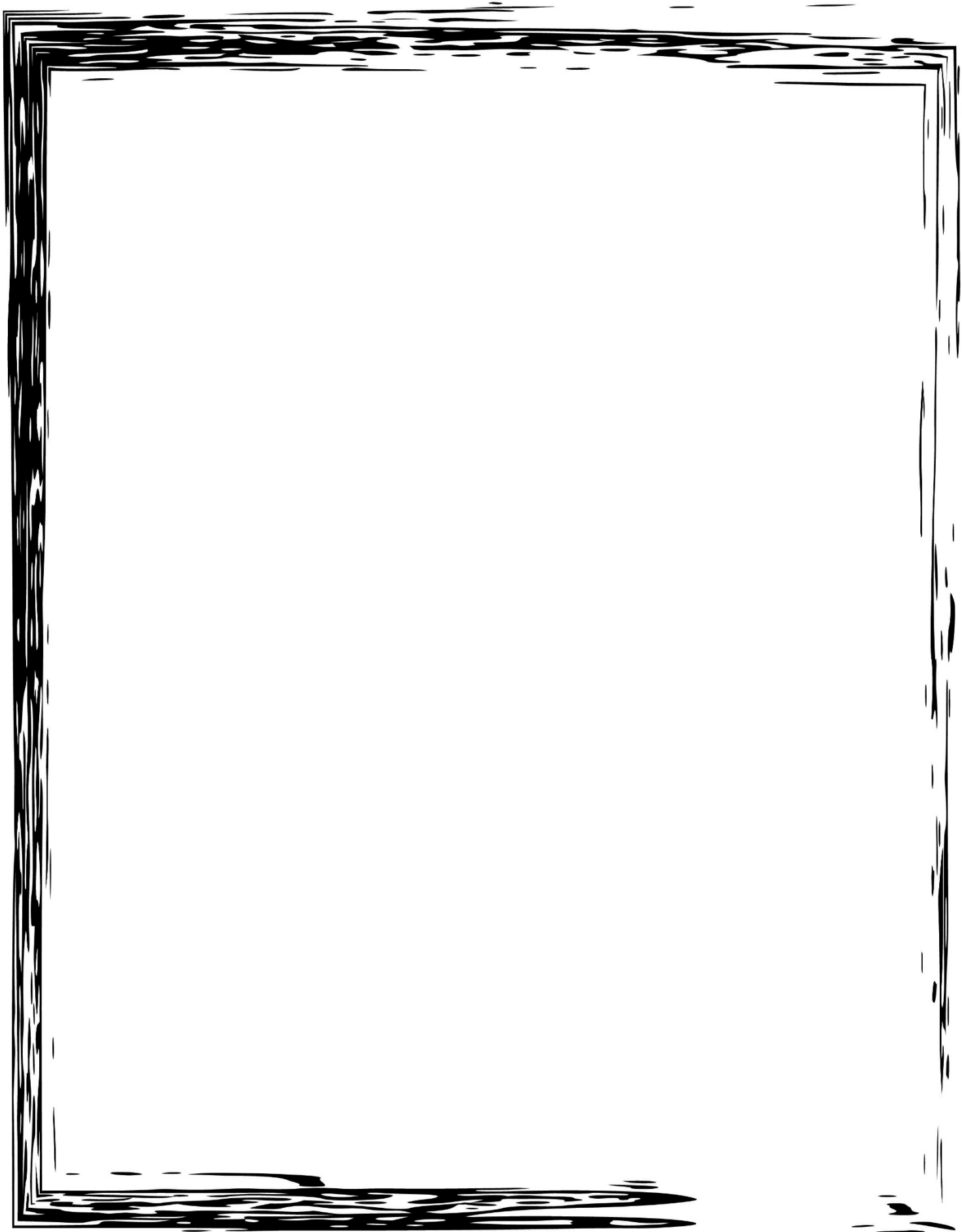
**What are you feeling emotionally now?**

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## Day 4 - Face It

*Teach me how to live, O Lord. Lead me along the right path, for my enemies are waiting for me ...  
Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.*

*Psalm 27:11 & 14 (NLT)*

Over the last few days, you have been exploring the fear you experience, the related feelings, and the lies you have believed. Yesterday, you had the opportunity to hear from God about some of those things. As we interact with God in our fear, it begins to displace the fear. However, if we never face the fear, it will not truly be resolved. In the end, we must step into the fear. Identifying the fear helps us understand where it's coming from. Interacting with God gives us confidence to face the fear. But in the end, we must face it.

**What does it look like to face or engage the fear you wrote about?**

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**What is one tangible step God is asking you to take?**

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**What will it cost you if you don't take that step?**

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**What is your plan for taking that step (when, where, how)?**

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**Who will you allow to keep you accountable to take that step?**

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## Day 5 - Final Thoughts

In the battle with fear (and many other things), Scripture is a powerful weapon. It can be very helpful to identify and memorize a few verses that you can have ready when fear inevitably strikes. Following are two Psalms. Take some time to read through them, preferably multiple times, and then identify verses or phrases that resonate with you. Journal your reflections next to each passage.

### **Psalm 27 (NLT)**

- <sup>1</sup> *The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
so why should I be afraid?  
The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,  
so why should I tremble?*
- <sup>2</sup> *When evil people come to devour me,  
when my enemies and foes attack me,  
they will stumble and fall.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Though a mighty army surrounds me,  
my heart will not be afraid.  
Even if I am attacked,  
I will remain confident.*
- <sup>4</sup> *The one thing I ask of the Lord—  
the thing I seek most—  
is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
delighting in the Lord's perfections  
and meditating in his Temple.*
- <sup>5</sup> *For he will conceal me there when troubles come;  
he will hide me in his sanctuary.  
He will place me out of reach on a high rock.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Then I will hold my head high  
above my enemies who surround me.  
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,  
singing and praising the Lord with music.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Hear me as I pray, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me!*
- <sup>8</sup> *My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."  
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."*
- <sup>9</sup> *Do not turn your back on me. Do not reject your servant in anger.  
You have always been my helper.  
Don't leave me now; don't abandon me, O God of my salvation!*
- <sup>10</sup> *Even if my father and mother abandon me,  
the Lord will hold me close.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Teach me how to live, O Lord.  
Lead me along the right path,  
for my enemies are waiting for me.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Do not let me fall into their hands.  
For they accuse me of things I've never done;  
with every breath they threaten me with violence.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness  
while I am here in the land of the living.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Wait patiently for the Lord.  
Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.*

**Psalm 91 (NLT)**

- <sup>1</sup> *Those who live in the shelter of the Most High  
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*
- <sup>2</sup> *This I declare about the Lord:  
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;  
he is my God, and I trust him.*
- <sup>3</sup> *For he will rescue you from every trap  
and protect you from deadly disease.*
- <sup>4</sup> *He will cover you with his feathers.  
He will shelter you with his wings.  
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies in the day.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,  
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Though a thousand fall at your side,  
though ten thousand are dying around you,  
these evils will not touch you.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Just open your eyes,  
and see how the wicked are punished.*
- <sup>9</sup> *If you make the Lord your refuge,  
if you make the Most High your shelter,  
<sup>10</sup> no evil will conquer you;  
no plague will come near your home.*
- <sup>11</sup> *For he will order his angels  
to protect you wherever you go.*
- <sup>12</sup> *They will hold you up with their hands  
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.*
- <sup>13</sup> *You will trample upon lions and cobras;  
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!*
- <sup>14</sup> *The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.  
I will protect those who trust in my name.*
- <sup>15</sup> *When they call on me, I will answer;  
I will be with them in trouble.  
I will rescue and honor them.*
- <sup>16</sup> *I will reward them with a long life  
and give them my salvation."*