

Talk It Over

Do Not Be Afraid

SMALL TALK

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 what is your anxiety level with regard to the coronavirus [COVID-19]? 1 being “unafraid” and 10 being “terrified”.

VIEWPOINT

2. What are some of God’s reasons for allowing bad things to happen? (Galatians 6:7-8; John 9:1-8; Luke 13:1-5; 1 Peter 5:10; James 1:2-3).
3. Are all “natural disasters” “acts of God”? (Mark 4:39)
4. Are we safe? (Psalm 46; Romans 8:37-39)

GETTING PERSONAL

5. If things get worse and look really dark...what kind of responses shine?
6. Where do we find peace and security? Courage and strength?
7. What difference does it make to you that Jesus has authority over all the powers and forces of our world?
8. Can you isolate any lies that are hidden behind any of your fears that undermine the truth about God?

MAKING PROGRESS

9. Would memorizing a few key texts be helpful to you at this time, texts like Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27, or Romans 8:37-39?

March 15, 2020

“Do Not Be Afraid”

It's now clear that COVID-19 is a deadly serious global pandemic, and all necessary precautions should be taken. Still, C. S. Lewis's words—written 72 years ago—ring with some relevance for us. Just replace “atomic bomb” with “coronavirus.”

[C.S. Lewis — “On Living in an Atomic Age” (1948) in *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays*] “In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. “How are we to live in an atomic age?” I am tempted to reply: “Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.”

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation...

In Mark 4 you can read about how the disciples were afraid of a storm that was about to drown them, even when Jesus was in their boat.

*Mark 4:39 (NIV) He got up, **rebuked** the wind and said to the waves, “**Quiet! Be still!**” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

Was there something here to be rebuked? Does a storm hear a rebuke? Not all “Natural disasters” are “acts of God”. And here Jesus addresses a darkness in this world with a rebuke. There is a darkness behind this cursed world. The one who holds the power to bless and reverse the curse has more control and power in his voice than any power on earth, or in any unseen realm, whether cosmic, spiritual, or microscopic.

Mark 4:40 (NIV) He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

This seems like a dumb question.

“Uh, well, because we were going to die?”

But it’s a fair question after what he has done. And it is a fair question for us. It is a question that is addressed only to those who are in the boat with Jesus. We have nothing to fear. The storm is out of our control, but not his!

Mark 4:41 (NIV) They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

The disciples recognize that Jesus himself has more power than the storm they feared moments ago. There is something bigger in their boat than what was seemingly big that was threatening their boat and their lives!

REFLECT: There is only one fear that can displace all other fears, and that one fear is light that displaces all darkness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

How can a fear take away all other fears? Is there such a thing as a fear without fear? Yes.

Maybe an example will help. I like a fire in a fireplace on a rainy day. But if I don’t fear that fire, and I don’t respect that fire enough to maintain an appropriate relationship to that fire, it can harm me. Standing in right relationship to fire is helpful. An inappropriate relationship with fire is harmful. Are you in the boat

with Jesus in a storm or out of the boat? If we are in the boat with Jesus then “Do not be afraid.” If you are not in the boat with Jesus, well there is every reason to fear. When I say in the boat I mean in an appropriate relationship with Jesus who is greater than any other fear!

My Faith Declarations...

- I am not stuck in worry because I trust Jesus who gives me peace.
- I am more than a conqueror.
- I am the light of the world.
- I am strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.
- Jesus is the center of my life; I exist to serve and honor Him.

I’ve been using these declarations for over 2 years, and please notice that the one that starts my list is the one about worry. I am not speaking to you as someone who never struggles with fear, but as someone who has struggled with worry and fear over things I cannot control. However, I have found what helps, and I want to share with you where to find strength, courage, and security.

I. What you believe about GOD affects your FEARS!

If you believe God is distant and disinterested, you will be ravaged by fear.

II. God is INTIMATE and INVOLVED

*Psalm 139:1-3 (NIV) You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. {2} You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. {3} You discern my going out and my lying down; **you are familiar with all my ways.***

God loves you. Talk to him. Faith is the antidote to fear. Worship is the antidote to worry.

If you believe God is insensitive and uncaring, you will be ravaged by fear.

III. God is KIND and COMPASSIONATE

Psalm 103:8, 14-18 (NIV) {8} The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... {14} for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. {15} The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; {16} the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. {17} But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, ...{18} with those who keep his covenant ...

How much does he love you? He loved you enough to send his son to die for you. He came to offer you a NEW COVENANT in HIS BLOOD. If you are in covenant with God through Jesus, you are in the safe boat!

IV. God is your SHIELD and REWARD

Genesis 15:1 (NIV) After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Psalm 16:8-9 (NIV) {8} I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. {9} Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

V. God will never LEAVE you nor FORSAKE you.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 (NIV) {7} Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. {8} The LORD

himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

There was a storm of a different kind Joshua had already seen, and was going to see again. The cities were fortified, their men were massive, their armies huge. The Israelites felt like grasshoppers by comparison, and they looked like grasshoppers to the power of the people in the land.

Matthew 28:20 (NIV) ... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

John 14:27 (NIV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) {6} Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. {7} And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:37-39 (NIV) {37} No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. {38} For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, {39} neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Faith is stronger than fear.

Worship is bigger than worry.

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- Jesus is the center of my life; I exist to serve and honor Him.

This is our opportunity to shine!