



OVERCOMING FEAR

A Quick Guide to Small Groups





Summary

How to think biblically about fear and practical ways to come alongside others who are struggling with the paralyzing emotion of fear.



Small Group Commitment #1
Growing Spiritually



Five Minute Read



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We are living in a world consumed by fear right now. *What is this virus? How long will it last? How many people will die? Will there be a vaccine? Will the virus come back? How long will we have to stay isolated? Am I going to get it? Will my loved ones get it? Am I going to lose my job? How am I going to pay my bills? Am I going to get my job back when this is over? Have I lost all of my retirement savings?* The questions go on. How can we respond to all of these unknowns without spiraling into a pit of fear or losing our faith in God? How can we help the people around us to respond with faith instead of fear during these uncertain times?

God knows we struggle with fear. In the Bible, the words *fear*, *afraid*, *worry* and *fret* appear over 500 times. Yet, the most frequent command throughout Scripture is, *“Do not fear”*.

- 1. We’re all going to struggle with fear.** God frequently addresses fear in His Word because He knows it’s going to be a problem for us. Fear is real. God created us with the ability to feel afraid.
- 2. We don’t have to be afraid.** The commands *“fear not”* and *“do not be afraid”* remind us that we don’t have to, and shouldn’t, give in or dwell in fear. Fear should not rule our lives. The command *“fear not”* means it is possible to not fear! God isn’t setting us up for failure. He would not command us to do something that is impossible for us.
- 3. God wants to help us.** God knows we’re prone to struggle with fear and He wants to help us. This is why God addresses the topic of fear throughout Scripture and the same reason He gives us examples of people who struggled with fear. God wants to tell us and show us how to overcome fear.

Fear entered the world when sin slithered into the world. The first time fear is mentioned in Scripture is after Adam and Eve sinned. God came looking for Adam, but he was hiding. Genesis 3:10, *“Adam answered the Lord, ‘I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”* Before sin, there was no fear. Imagine how glorious that must have been!

Feeling the emotion of fear is not sinful unless we choose to *“pitch our tent”* over those fearful thoughts and end up dwelling in them.



Theological Truth

It’s not wrong to feel fearful in these times when there is so much that is unknown and changing. Many thoughts wander in and out of our minds all day. This is okay. It’s what we DO with our thoughts that can lead us onto a path of trust or down a path of paralyzing fear. While it is natural to experience fearful thoughts or wondering what’s going to happen, God doesn’t want for these thoughts to consume or control us. *“When I am afraid, I will trust in you”* (Psalm 56:3).

How can you come alongside others who are struggling with fear?

The first thing to say when someone tells you that they’re fearful is to relate to them. *“I know exactly what you mean. This is a scary time. There are so many things that are terrifying. What are you most fearful about?”*

This isn’t the time to heap guilt on someone for feeling afraid or scold them for how they’re feeling. Fear is a natural, human response. Instead, carefully draw out their heart by asking what they are most fearful about.

As you interact and talk with people in your small group about fear, be encouraged. You can do this!

Empathy. The more you learn about the people in your small group and understand what they're experiencing, God will soften your heart and deepen your compassion and ability to care.

Trust. By listening and asking thoughtful questions, you could gain permission to step into their life.

Prayer. The more you know about the situation, the more you can pray specifically for God's help.

Change. Instead of holding onto fear, we want to help them pour out and release their feelings of fear. This can be done through prayer, writing a psalm, journaling or confessing your fears together. Ultimately, we desire for the Spirit of God to replace these emotions with trust, hope and peace as we cling to God and His word. This is how people change: the Holy Spirit enables us to walk in truth rather than be gripped by fear.

Needs. Finally, after listening and praying together, you are now ready to discern the next steps. Think SOS:

- What is the *severity* of this situation?
- What is the level of *ownership* in this situation?
- How much *support* does this person have to grow and change?



Ideas to Consider

Start with God

We are often fearful because we struggle to understand and believe that God really is who He says He is. When facing fear, encourage your small group to remember who God is: He is sovereign, all-present, all-knowing, all-powerful, loving, kind, good, faithful, etc. A great resource is our sermon series Radiant God.

Go to Scripture

As you read Scripture, look first for what the passage tells you about God. Look for His character, actions, ways, how He responds/interacts with mankind and then how mankind responds/interacts with Him. Psalms is a good book to start with as you relate to the ups and downs of life.

Remember

I'm stunned by how many times God tells us to remember and not forget all He has done, yet we still forget. To overcome fear, it's important to remember and reflect on God's faithfulness from the past. Over the years, how have you seen God working in your life? Remember God's faithfulness; it is so easy to forget!

Take your Thoughts Captive

We live in a war zone and the battle is especially strong in our minds. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 tells us to battle fearful thoughts. This is not a "one-and-done" reality; it may need to happen many, many times a day. Through the Spirit, we can put fearful thoughts in chains, toss them in the dungeon and lock the door. Then, we need to replace those fear-filled thoughts with reminders of who God is, how He has worked in our lives in the past and trust-filled thoughts of His goodness, wisdom and power.

Other Practical Ideas

- Get off of social media. Turn off the news. If something earth-shattering happens, you will find out!
- Listen to God-exalting worship music or podcasts. One podcast I personally enjoy is *Knowing Faith*.
- Get physically active. Take a walk, ride a bike, work in the yard, organize your closets or basement.
- Serve others. Write notes of encouragement. Mow your neighbor's yard. Bake cookies and leave them on your neighbor's doorsteps. Pick up the phone and call someone.
- Phone-a-friend when you find yourself slipping back into fear. Ask them to pray with you. Ask them to help you remember who the Lord is and all that He has done.
- Read one of the following books: *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges, *Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God* by A.W. Pink or *None Like Him* by Jen Wilkin.



Theological Truth

You don't need special training or an advanced degree to point people to God and His Word. You have something far more powerful. You have the power of the Holy Spirit who is living in you! Cry out to Him and ask for His help. Depend on Him to give you the words to say. He is with you and He longs to help you!



Share this with Others

If you found this helpful, share it with others in your small group.