



## finding HOPE for what keeps you up at night

*“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” II Tim. 1:7*

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Session 1

“Nothing to be afraid of? Ridiculous!! There’s **everything** to be afraid of!....As with all of the other fears I have dealt with in my life (and likely you in yours), the central issue is the feeling that you aren’t in control. I guess that isn’t really accurate – I should say it’s the realization that you **aren’t** in control.” (Angie Smith, What Women Fear)

**Interesting:** Psychiatrists say we only have two innate fears: fear of falling and fear of loud noises; but medicine has identified more than 2000 fears that **are learned**.

### **Fear can be a healthy human emotion:**

Two levels of fear: (as defined by Rollo Maye, American psychologist)

- Fear = specific and constructive; specific threat and galvanizes you for action; good fear
- Anxiety = not specific; generalized; not specifically related to an event; not sure where anxiousness is coming from; debilitates and paralyzes you – unable to act.

Logically speaking....but fear is not logical – often understandable, but not logical.

Fear often turns into anxiety. Tim Keller describes this kind of fear as “a 34 degree drizzle all the time...and after a while it makes your soul mildew.”

**Satan hijacks our healthy fears**....and uses them to neutralize us spiritually. Experience often plants the seed of fear.

Two primary tactics that Satan uses against us:

- Discouragement = focusing on past mistakes = Rev. 12:10 “for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.” End result = loss of courage.
- Fear = focusing on the “what ifs” – puts us on our heels; defensive and reactive; renders us powerless; causes us to lose our focus. End result = self-absorption. Ex. Chaff

**Hope is the counteragent to fear:** (not just unique to believers!)

*The world's solution* = “Terror Management Theory” = developed by 3 social scientists based on work of Ernest Becker trying to explain how we cope with fear.

Ex. Effect of hope on our body

*Solution for believers* =

- Heb 6:19 “We have this hope as an anchor for our soul, firm and secure”
- “The discipline of emotions is the training of responses.” (Elizabeth Elliot)
- “.....we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...” (II Cor 10:3-5)

“Faith is unlearning the senseless worries and misguided beliefs that keep us captive. It is far more complex than simply modifying behavior. Faith involves synaptogenesis (making new nerve connections). Faith is rewiring the human brain. Neurologically speaking, that is what we do when we study Scripture. We are literally upgrading our minds by downloading the mind of Christ.” (Mark Batterson, In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day)

Synaptogenesis = defragmenting and rewiring our mind; creating new thought patterns.

**Spiritual tapping – creating new thoughts = Hope-full thoughts – has everything to do with the person of our focus:**

1. Confidence in God, His character and His presence as the foundation for all hope (the anti-fear).
2. Believing God’s promises and trusting His word as THE answer to all my fears.

3. Tools for learning to live in the tension of fear and hope without panicking!

**Not denial of our fears, but a different filter for processing our fear!**

Alan Redpath (English theologian who suffered with depression) = “I refuse to panic”

“There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing (No FEAR!) – that can ever touch me until, first of all it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky – as I left up my eyes to Him – and as I accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret – for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is. That is the rest of victory.” (Alan Redpath)

Henri Nouwen = (Dutch Catholic priest whose famous writing Inner Voice of Love written during his most severe bout of clinical depression and fear)... “Hope is willing to leave unanswered questions unanswered and unknown futures unknown. Hope makes you see God's guiding hand not only in the gentle and pleasant moments but also in the shadows of disappointment and darkness.”

**No fear is too big or too small**

Consider David when on the run and in hiding = Psalm 3:1-5

“Impossible situations are God's sweet spot.....God is not great because nothing is too big for Him. God is great but because nothing is too small for Him either.”  
(Batterson)

Proverbs 3:24 ***When you lie down, you will not be afraid; When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.***

**Think about:** What fears do you struggle with? What keeps you up at night?