

Steve Whitacre
**SESSION 1 | Fearful Hearts,
Fearsome World**

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS FEAR?

DEFINITION: Fear is "an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat."

Also:

- **Anxiety**
- **Worry**

III. SOURCES OF FEAR

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'" (Genesis 3:8–10).

"There is a close connection between what we fear and what we think we need.

If we need comfort, we will fear physical pain.

If we need approval from others, we will fear being criticized.

If we need love, we will fear rejection.

If we need admiration for our attractiveness, we will fear getting fat.

Whatever you need is a mere stone's throw from what you fear." Ed Welch, *Running Scared*, 41.

"This is where fear gets interesting. Danger points at the threatening world around us. Vulnerability points to ourselves. If fear were only about dangerous people and difficult circumstances, we would just take precautions and live the best we can. But fear is about us... Will we abandon the myth of independence and seek God? Fear, control, God—they are all linked together." Ed Welch, *Running Scared*, 40–41.

IV. CHARTING A COURSE FROM FEAR TO FAITH

We've entitled this class Fear Not! because that phrase, or some variation of it, is the most common command in the Bible. Did you know that? I was surprised to learn that. Fear not! Do not be afraid! Fret not yourself.

Here's what I've discovered about fear and I'm sure you have, too: you can say whatever you want to fear, but my heart doesn't so easily obey.

- Brute force self-control doesn't work.
- Logic and carefully reasoned argumentation does work.
- Ignoring our fears doesn't work.
- Distracting ourselves with diversions doesn't work.

We need a biblical method to confront our fears.

1. Review and rehearse truth about God.

- God is near
 - “fear not, **for I am with you**; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10).
 - “**do not be anxious about anything**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6).
 - “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. **The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:5–6).
- God is powerful
 - “fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, **I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**” (Isaiah 41:10).
- He is a God of peace.
 - “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7; cf. Rom 15:33, 16:20; Phil 4:10; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20).
- He cares.
 - “During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for

rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.**” (Exodus 2:23–25).

“The odd thing is that fear and anxiety are running away from something, but they don’t know where to run *to*. They know danger, but they don’t know where to find peace and rest. If fear slows down for a minute, it realizes that peace and rest can only reside in *someone* rather than *something*...” Ed Welch, *Running Scared*, 63.

2. Come to Christ

- “At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:25–29).

3. Cast your cares

- “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6–7).

4. Trust and do good.

- “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.” (Psalm 37:3).

V. CONCLUSION

Going deeper:

- Ed Welch, *A Small Book for the Anxious Heart*
- Ed Welch, *Running Scared*