

Fear . . . Friend or Foe?

Fear can be your foe or your friend. When you find yourself in the path of a frightening storm—whether figurative or literal—fear can be a paralyzing force spiraling you down into the depths of darkness . . . or a propelling motivator moving you to higher ground. As the storm approaches, fear can be like a deadbolt lock keeping your mind confined . . . or like a loud alarm warning you to move to safety. What role does fear have in your life? Immobilizer or energizer . . . foe or friend? What you do in the face of fear identifies its role in your life. Instead of being paralyzed by fear, allow your fear to move you to entrust your life to the Lord. Come to see the Lord as your only place of safety. He promises that He will not only be with you, but that He will also lead you through your fear.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”
(Isaiah 43:1–2)

The Truth Will Set You Free

The first step in applying truth is to identify the lies behind the fears you are experiencing and to replace those lies with facts.

- **Fear:** “I can’t help this feeling of intense fear!”
Fact: This feeling is a bluff to my mind and body. It is not grounded in truth. (Psalm 27:3)
- **Fear:** “I have this feeling of doom—a feeling that I am going to die.”
Fact: The time of death is in God’s hands. I will choose to trust Him. (Job 14:5)
- **Fear:** “I am hopeless and can never change.”
Fact: In Christ, I am a new person. Nothing is hopeless. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- **Fear:** “To be safe, I must be in control.”
Fact: God is in control of my life, and He is with me step-by-step. (Deuteronomy 31:8)
- **Fear:** “I’m afraid of what others are thinking about me.”
Fact: My peace comes from pleasing God, not from pleasing man. (2 Corinthians 5:9)
- **Fear:** “I feel trapped with no way of escape.”
Fact: God always makes a way of escape. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

*“You will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”*
(John 8:32)

Move from Fear to Faith

Begin with a healthy fear (reverential awe) of God.
(Proverbs 1:7)

Be aware that living in a “state of fear” is not part of God’s plan for you. (Psalm 56:4)

Be willing to analyze your fear honestly in order to discover the real source of your fear. (Proverbs 29:25)

Be aware of the power of God’s love for you.
(Jeremiah 31:3)

Be committed to developing your faith in the Lord.
(Psalm 1:2)

Be involved with other believers. (Proverbs 27:17)

Begin using truth from God’s Word to rein in your imagination the moment it starts spinning out of control.
(Psalm 46:1)

Be willing to face the situations you fear through faith in the power of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Become free from your fear and strengthened in your faith. (Colossians 2:6–7)

*“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.”
(Proverbs 14:27)*

Common Sense Suggestions for Overcoming Fear and Anxiety

These tips may seem so simple that they lack significance, but they can be the foundation on which to build an effective plan for overcoming unwanted fear and anxiety.

- Get adequate sleep.
- Get regular exercise.
- Get sufficient fun and recreation.
- Get continuous encouragement.
- Eat healthful foods and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Live one day at a time.
- Listen to Christian music.
- Imagine the worst and consider why it wouldn’t be so bad after all.

Key Verse to Memorize

*“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)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 23

Decrease Your Fear with Desensitization¹

If you are overly sensitive to an object or a situation, desensitization can be the key to open the door to freedom. After repeating one individual step day-after-day for a week or two, move on to the next step.

- Gradually increase your exposure to the fear.
- Practice facing your fear.
- Repeat each step over again until it evokes little reaction.

Example:

Social Phobia—fear of initiating conversation

- Practice asking a salesperson questions.
- Initiate saying hello with a smile.
- Listen carefully to what is said by others.
- Ask others simple questions about themselves.
- Make brief comments about yourself.
- Develop a genuine interest in others.

Note:

For serious phobic reactions, the process of desensitization is almost always used in combination with medical assistance.

*“Preparing your minds for action,
and being sober-minded, set your hope fully
on the grace that will be brought to you
at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
(1 Peter 1:13)*

Do's and Don'ts of Support

Fearful people need fearless friends to come alongside them to walk the road to freedom with them.

- **Don't** become impatient when you don't understand their fear.
Do . . . Understand that what fearful people feel is real. (Proverbs 14:29)
- **Don't** be critical or use demeaning statements.
Do . . . Be gentle and supportive and build up their self-confidence. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Don't** make them face a threatening situation without planning.
Do . . . Give them instruction in positive self-talk and relaxation exercises. (Proverbs 4:13)
- **Don't** act disappointed and displeased if they fail.
Do . . . Encourage them and compliment their efforts to conquer their fear. (Proverbs 3:27)

Related Topics . . .

- Depression:
Walking from Darkness into the Dawn
- Guilt:
Living Guilt Free
- The Holy Spirit:
Living Free in the Power and Peace of the Spirit
- Suicide Prevention:
Hope When Life Seems Hopeless
- Worry:
The Joy Stealer

1. Shirley Babior and Carol Goldman, *Overcoming Panic Attacks: Strategies to Free Yourself from the Anxiety Trap* (Minneapolis, MN: CompCare, 1990), 59–62.

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

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Fear:
Moving from Panic to Peace.

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