



Group Leader Guide “Fear and Anxiety and Worry” - The New Normal April 25-26, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Message Summary

Jim Burgen continues our series **The New Normal** by tackling the issues of fear, anxiety, and worry in our lives. We all fear something (or many things). The goal is to be able to trust God with the things that we are afraid of, worried about, or out of our control. There are two responses we will have: fleeing (running from the fear and from trusting God) or fighting (standing up to the fear and circumstance with complete confidence that God will keep His promises to us, as written about in **Matthew 6:31-34**.)

// Biblical Background

Jim mentions several stories from the Old Testament where people fought fear with faith. Here I will provide you with where those stories can be found and some background information on them.

“Moses pinned against the sea with an enemy army closing in”: **Exodus 14**.

Traditionally thought to be around 1446 BC. God saves Moses and the Israelites by splitting the Red Sea and allowing them to cross on dry land. When the Egyptian army chasing them followed after the Israelites were safely on the other side, the sea collapsed on them.

“David facing a giant named Goliath”:

1 Samuel 17. Around 1024 BC. A young boy uses his immense faith in God to fight and defeat a giant that everyone else in the army was too afraid to challenge.

“Daniel being thrown into a den of lions”:

Daniel 6. Around 539 BC. Daniel’s faith in God causes him to be executed by lions. However, God protects him by not allowing the lions to devour him.

“Three young men being thrown into a fiery furnace”: **Daniel 3**. Around 585 BC. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three of Daniel’s friends, refuse to bow down and worship an idol. They are sentenced to death in a furnace, but God protects them by not allowing the flames to incinerate them.

// In Preparation

This week is the 9th week of 12 for this semester. Begin thinking of what you want the group to look like during the summer. Some groups like to take a break while others keep meeting. Some continue to meet weekly, while others decide to meet less frequently. There is no right or wrong way to do it, as long as you are getting some much-deserved rest at some point! Bring it up with your group if there is time and see what they want to do. No decision has to be made immediately, but it is good to start thinking about this before the semester is over.



Group Discussion Questions

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// Bible References

John 16:33; Psalm 56:3; Matthew 6:31-34

// Community Questions

1. What is something that really creeps you out?
2. What has God been teaching you through His Word this week?

// Core Questions

1. What is something that truly worries or scares you or causes you anxiety? Be as specific as you can, looking at what's really underneath the surface-level fears.
2. How have you dealt with your fear, worry, or anxiety in the past?
3. Has your old way of dealing with fear been working for you?
4. When something out of your control happens, how do you react?
5. Read **Nehemiah 4:14**. Who is it in your life that you would be fighting for if you fought your fear, anxiety, and worry by remembering God and trusting His promises?
6. How has your fear usually fallen out on them in the past?
7. How do you *want* to be able to react when you are afraid, anxious, or worried?
8. How can this group support you in facing your fears and trusting God?

// Challenge

It is sometimes hard to understand how to truly trust in God or what that even means. I want to return to the book I quoted from a few weeks ago to perhaps offer some encouragement:

Faith-trust-is the key that unlocks our readiness to receive God's sufficiency in our lives. Given how we commonly use these words today, it is helpful to replace all occurrences of faith in the Bible with trust. For example, "For by grace you have been saved through trust" (Eph. 2:8). To have faith in God is simply to trust God, to rely upon him in the face of all fears.

The best-known definition of faith in the Bible is this: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Substance means what stands under something (sub-stance or under-standing). Faith is the substance of things hoped for in this way: when we have faith, we act in relationship with God to bring what we hope for into reality. Faith is also "the evidence of things not seen." What are the "things not seen"? In the same passage, a few lines later, we are told that "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were



not made of things which are visible” (v. 3). The phrase “things not seen” refers to the word, or even energy, of God in action. When we have faith, that is sure evidence that the word of the unseen God is active in us. Faith is a gift; God creates it in our hearts.

...
Jesus... [encountered] a great commotion involving his other disciples, some religious leaders, and a man with a son troubled by a demon. The man had brought his boy in hopes that Jesus would heal him. In his absence, Jesus’ disciples had given it a try without success. Jesus asked the man how long this son had suffered. “Since childhood,” was his response, followed by the desperate plea, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (Mark 9:22).

Then comes the part where most of us want to crawl under a chair and hide. Jesus told the man, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes” (v. 23). All things? Really? Does this mean all things are possible to us too? Yes, it does. And we should feel free to speak right back to Jesus the words of the desperately hopeful father, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (v. 24). This was not a coldly analytic report about his cognitive state. We are told that he cried it out “with tears.” This beautifully expresses our condition.

A great part of faith lies in the intensity with which we want something, and the father’s tears expressed his deepest heart. I never worry about someone who wants to believe, because I know they already believe enough to want to believe more. If they did not already believe a great deal they would not even want to believe. That is why God says to us through the prophet Jeremiah, “You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). Why? Because only faith would lead you to seek God with all your heart.

The nature of faith involves love and the desire for good. When the father begged Jesus to heal his son, that was faith-love and desire-in action. When with tears he cried out, “Lord, I believe,” he did believe. He had just enough faith to make a fool of himself by coming there in the first place. You know what they were all saying back home: “Yeah, yeah. Old Josh. He took his kid up to see this wild preacher...” Yes, he did just that. With a great deal of desperation and tears he cried out, “I believe. Help my unbelief.” And Jesus did help, by healing his boy. The cup of the man’s faith only had a few drops in it, but you can be sure he left with a whole lot more. All things are possible to him who believes.*

Pray this week, like the father from **Mark 9**, that God will help you in your unbelief, and help you to trust in Him when life feels out of control or scary. Spend some time thinking about where your faith could use a boost, and pray specifically for that. Share with those in your group where you are having trouble believing. And give yourself grace because the fact that you want to believe more is proof that God is working inside you and in your life.

* Willard, Dallas. *Life without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23*. Pgs. 94-96. Thomas Nelson, 2018.