

CONFRONT YOUR FEARS

Don't be afraid for I am with you (Isaiah 41:10)

There are different kinds of fears. There is the kind that warns you to stay away from fire. There is the kind that cultivates respect for God (Psalm 2:11). Oswald Chambers said, 'when you fear God, you don't have to fear anything else.' There is fear that makes you feel helpless; sometimes it's rooted in parental criticism or a bully's threats, and although it's groundless, it still haunts you. There's the fear of failing, which if left unchallenged becomes the father of failure. Job said, 'what I feared has come upon me (Job 3:25). There is fear of the unknown where your imagination runs amok. What if you never meet the 'right person', or you lose your job, or the biopsy confirms the worst? Paul Tournier notes: 'life and faith always insist on moving on – and I cannot move forward without leaving something behind. Faith calls us out of our comfort zone to learn new skills.

One of the greatest breakthroughs in modern psychology is the law of reversibility. It works like this: when you feel a certain way, you act accordingly. And when you don't feel like doing something, but you do it anyway, that same dynamic creates the feeling consistent with your actions.

Dallas Willard put it like this: you can live opposite of what you profess, but you can't live opposite of what you believe. Invariably what you believe is revealed by what you do. Because fear is a learned response, it can be unlearned. There are two kinds of courage. The first kind calls for action. When the time for action comes, stop thinking and act. One man with courage makes a majority. The second kind of courage calls for patience: the tenacity to keep persevering after you have done your best and before you have seen results. Often the difference between a hero and a coward is that a hero hangs in there five minutes longer! When you run from intimidating situations, fear multiplies until eventually it controls your life. But when you tackle your problems head on, your confidence rises until you reach a point where you are no longer controlled by fear.

RELEASE YOURSELF FROM ANGER

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger (Ephesians 4:31)

Anger is often the product of frustrated expectations. We expect something, and when we don't get it we end up disappointed and angry. And our anger leads to a dysfunctional personal, spiritual and relational lifestyle. Frustrated expectations are often rooted in early experiences with our parents, siblings and authority figures. Perhaps our needs for love, acceptance, security and significance were never met; then later we experienced broken commitments in marriage, business and friendships. Ultimately, prolonged anger becomes a weapon in our arsenal, threatening to hurt everything and everybody we care about. We become bitter people – avoided, excluded and lonely.

How to get rid of anger

1. By accepting and acting on the word of God. Without a scriptural foundation, old emotions will repeatedly undermine your efforts to overcome them. To get rid of all bitterness is an order that implies the promise of success when you obey it.
2. By choosing to be released from bitterness. Choice is not an emotion, and it does not require an emotional response. God will not control your emotions nor will He let them influence Him. Start strengthening your will and your faith by obeying God and practicing every day until it becomes a lifestyle rather than being mastered by your mood.
3. Releasing yourself from bitterness calls for choosing to forgive people. Whether or not the person who hurt you apologises, is dead or alive, or is still hurting you; your only option is forgiveness. By forgiving, you set yourself free to enjoy life.
4. Releasing the wrongdoer from all expectations. By changing your expectations, you reclaim your peace of mind. Whether or not the other

person changes, is his or her business – move on! Requiring a certain response keeps you bound to them.

5. Transferring to God all expectations for your needs. He will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phillipians 4:19). He can supply the people, resources and opportunities you need to live a joyful life.
6. Doing something nice for your offender (Romans 12: 20 – 21). You defeat anger and bitterness by believing and acting on God's Word.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FRIENDS

'Friends sharpen the minds of each other.' (Proverbs 27:17)

You are the same today as you will be in five years except for the people with whom you associate and the books you read. When it comes to choosing friends, Dr. Charles Townsend says look for:

1. People who influence you to be the person God intended. As iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other. Relationships are the tools God uses to do this. When you are with somebody, ask yourself, 'Do I like who I am when I am around this person?'. Choose people who make you a better person.
2. People who provide grace for the energy drain. When you are empty you need to be refueled physically, spiritually and relationally. So surround yourself with friends who will listen, encourage and be there for you.
3. People who let you be real. A friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17). The best relationships are those where you know you are loved, you are free to be yourself, you do not have to put on an act and you be honest about the difficult aspects of life. There is comfort and normality in friendships where you can be authentic.

4. People who help you grow in faith. You need friends who will encourage you to pray, read the Bible and help you see to the **big picture** concerning what is important in your life

Remember that God uses all kinds of friendships to fulfill His purpose. Do not try to do it alone. Ask God for a friend, then reach out to friends who will reach back.