

25 January 2016
 By Ken Korkow

THINGS THAT STRIKE FEAR IN OUR HEARTS

What are the things that strike fear in your heart? ISIS and global terrorism? Disease epidemics, like ebola or some other cure-resistant virus? The always-present threat of nuclear warfare? Gun violence? National and global economic turmoil? So-called climate change?

Those issues confront people all around the world, fears we share whether we live in Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, or the Pacific Rim. Then there are the even more personal fears that hover in our subconscious: Is my job secure? What happens if we lose that client? Can our company survive in this highly competitive environment? Will I get that promotion that I desperately want and need? What will my (or a loved one's) biopsy reveal? Can I pay the bills? Will I age gracefully – or tragically?

The media do little to quell our fears. If anything, they fan our fears into roaring fires of anxiety. Newspapers present a record of what evil accomplished yesterday, whether in our local communities, our nation, or around the world. Television tells the terrible things that happened today. The Internet, with its immediacy (which is both good and bad), shouts about the dangers happening right now.

And this is all by design. Media outlets strive to get us hooked – and keep us hooked – on watching as the terrible events unfold. This is what maintains viewership and helps sell advertising. “If it bleeds, it leads” has been the long-time mantra of the news media.

So what do we do in response? Many people stockpile food and guns and ammunition, hoping to defend themselves against enemies seen and unseen. We worry, sometimes seeking psychological and emotional counsel in attempts to cope with our ever-present, growing fears. We curse the darkness and the evil that it conceals. And Satan, whom the Bible calls the author of evil, smiles.

All of these reactions seem natural. After all, we are only human, right? But for those of us who profess to be people of faith, there is a different question we must ask: What would God have us do? Here are some things the Bible says about how we deal with fear in an ever-fearful world:

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Realize anxiety is a sin. If God says, "do not murder" and we murder, that is a sin. So here is what God says about anxiety: "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).

Realize fear is also a sin: God says, "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).

Realize "perfect love cast out fear" as we are told in 1 John 4:18, and because of that we can trust we are safe in God's hands until we have finished what He has designed us to do. "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6). "He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7).

· Rather than wasting time and effort cursing the darkness, instead we should strive to reflect His light, simply by doing the next thing He has for us to do. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is your greatest fear? If more than one, then what are your greatest fears?
2. How has this fear (or these fears) affected you – at work, as well as in your everyday life? Would you like to be freed from your fears and anxieties? Do you think that is even possible? Why or why not?
3. From your observation, how do other people respond to those things they fear the most? Do you think fear and anxiety can be useful, productive emotions? Explain your answer.
4. Mr. Korkow points out the Bible teaches that fear and anxiety are sins, unacceptable to God. Why do you think the Scriptures tell us this? Do you think it is reasonable for us to be told not to fear, not to be anxious, despite circumstances in our lives – or around the world? What is the role of faith in this?

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NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalms 118:5-9, 13-14; Jeremiah 29:11, 33:3; Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4:6-9

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