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Breaking Free from Fear



Kay Arthur

PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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BIBLE STUDIES

Breaking Free from Fear



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BREAKING FREE FROM FEAR

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mothers' group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you, as a leader, choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.

- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the “insight boxes,” which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.
- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember, the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week’s lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week’s discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don’t want to slow the pace too much. It’s much better to leave everyone “wanting more” than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

BREAKING FREE FROM FEAR

Life is filled with all sorts of fears, isn't it? Fears of terrorism and natural disasters. Fears about the economy, the safety of loved ones, dreaded diagnoses. Fears of losing a job, a home, a relationship, our savings, our dreams, our independence, our health, our lives. We can find so many reasons to be fearful.

And in these days of instant news, we seem to hear continually about the latest disasters, calamities, and tragedies striking our world—a world that seems to be shrinking, bringing each dangerous development closer and closer to us.

How do we free ourselves from the grip of fear and the accompanying stress that takes a toll on our lives physically, emotionally, mentally? In this study you'll discover the answer—an answer that will enable you to walk in faith and freedom, no matter what circumstances loom in your life.

God has promised us that nothing would ever overtake us that we could not handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore He has a way of escape—and when you see it for yourself and, in faith, order your life accordingly, you'll find yourself able to break free from fear's bondage.

As you begin this study, why don't you take just a moment to tell God you are ready to hear what He says and ask Him to speak to you through His Word, the Bible.


WEEK ONE

Fear can be paralyzing, confusing, wreaking havoc in our body and mind. When it hits, the best thing you can do is ask the question Jesus asked of His disciples: “Why are you afraid?” That question is also a good place to begin our study.

OBSERVE

Let’s look at the occasion that prompted the question. Using the gospel of Luke as our chronological timeline, we can know that this event took place near the end of Jesus’ second year of public ministry. By this time, Jesus’ disciples had seen Him perform all sorts of miracles, from healing the sick to raising the dead to feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes.

Leader: Read Mark 4:35–41 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...

- underline all references to ***the disciples***, indicated in this passage by the pronouns ***them, they, we, and you***.
- put a cross like this **†** over all references to **Jesus**, indicated in this passage by the pronouns **He** and **Him**.
- draw a jagged circle around **afraid**, like this: 

MARK 4:35–41

35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.”

36 Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.

38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

40 And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?”

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

DISCUSS

- What were the disciples experiencing? What did they think was going to happen?
- Where was Jesus and what did He do? Describe what happened.
- From what you've just read, would you describe the emotion displayed by the disciples as normal—a natural response given the circumstances? Explain your answer.
- What point was Jesus making when He asked the disciples, “*Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?*”

- How should they have responded in this stormy crisis, and why?
 - What did you learn from marking the two occurrences of *afraid*? Or to put it another way, why did the disciples become “very much afraid” in verse 41?
 - Which should be the greater fear: fear of the storm in which we might perish or fear of the One who has authority over the storm? Why?
 - Now, what are some fears you or other Christians you know are dealing with?
 - From what you’ve just read, what is the appropriate response to these fears?
- 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

MATTHEW 14:24–33

24 But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

28 Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

OBSERVE

Let’s look at another rough night on the Sea of Galilee and see what we can learn about the *why* of our fear. Jesus had sent His disciples ahead in a boat while He went alone to the mountain near the sea to pray.

Leader: *Read Matthew 14:24–33 aloud and have the group...*

- *put a cross over every reference to **Jesus**, including synonyms and pronouns.*
- *underline the references to **Peter**, including pronouns.*
- *draw a jagged circle around any reference to **fear, being afraid, frightened, or terrified.***

DISCUSS

- Describe the situation in general.
- For each place you marked a reference to fear, discuss the fear, its cause, and what you learned from it.

- What happened with Peter and Jesus?
- What, if anything, can be learned from the way Peter handled his fear?
- Look at the places where you marked the references to Jesus. What did you learn from—or about—Jesus that can help when fear hits you, when you're afraid or terrified? What did Jesus do and say? How did He handle Peter?
- What do you think it means “to take courage” (verse 27)? What does this look like in a person's life?

29 And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God's Son!”

PSALM 56:1–4, 8–13

¹ Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; fighting all day long he oppresses me.

² My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me.

³ When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.


⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?...

⁸ You have taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?

OBSERVE

Life wasn't easy for David, the man anointed by Samuel as the next king of Israel. While attempting to escape from jealous King Saul, who wanted to kill him, David was seized by the Philistines in Gath. David wrote Psalm 56 during this difficult situation. Let's see what we can learn from his words.

***Leader:** Read Psalm 56:1–4, 8–13 and have the group...*

- underline every reference to **David**—every **me**, **I**, **my**.
- mark every reference to **God**, including pronouns, with a triangle: 
- draw a jagged circle around every reference to **being afraid**.

DISCUSS

- First discuss David's situation, nothing else. Get the facts: What was David dealing with? How did he feel? Don't miss any aspect of this situation.

- Now, how did David handle these circumstances? (Remember David knew God had anointed him to be the next king.) What reasoning, what thinking shaped his response?
- What did you learn from David that you can use in times of fear? Be very specific.
- What did David know about God?
- What role, or part, did the Word of God have in this situation?
- Do you know what David knew about God? Or are there aspects of what David wrote that you are not as certain about? Discuss them as a group.
- So bottom line, what have you learned that can help you personally when you are afraid, fearful?

⁹ Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; this I know, that God is for me.

¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise,

¹¹ In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

¹² Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You.

¹³ For You have delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

WRAP IT UP

When we face life-threatening situations, fear is natural. We live in a body of flesh, which shrinks from pain, runs from death. Yet, in each of the situations we studied this week, we saw that fear was not to be entertained or allowed free rein. Rather fear was to be tamed—harnessed by faith. For the disciples, fear was tamed by remembering that Jesus was there—in the same boat or walking on water. He was in control of the storm and flattening the waves. He reminded His disciples of the choice between fear and faith. Faith conquers fear.

Then we looked at David, a man who confessed that he was oppressed, trampled on, shedding tears—afraid. Yet he recorded for posterity that “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You” (Psalm 56:3). The future king didn’t minimize his situation or deny his feelings; rather he described how he conquered fear’s bondage: David put His trust in God. In doing so he declared, “I shall not be afraid” (verse 11). Man is merely man, while God is God—and “God is for me” (verse 9). His confident words are later echoed in the apostle Paul’s divinely inspired words in Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who is against us?”

So when fear comes, ask yourself, “Why am I afraid?”

Then decide whether you’ll move forward in fear or in faith.