

SESSION SIX: CRYING OUT IN FEAR

What Fear Does...there is nothing to fear but FEAR ITSELF. What we should fear is the CUMULATIVE EFFECT of what fear does to us, how it distorts reality, and leads us to make unwise choices. Fear defeated the Jews faster than any enemy. They roamed the wilderness for years and a generation died because they feared those who lived inside Jericho. Without warning fear seizes us; it distorts reality; it puts us in a STRAIGHT JACKET from which we feel helpless to react. Most of us go from ZERO to 60, from calm to panic, in seconds. This incredible speed is part of the problem; our reactions can become overreactions. Sadly 90% of what we fear never happen. Most of the threats are IMAGINARY.

STILLING MANY STORMS...the Disciples seem to be scared of everything. They were often helpless/confused. Jesus even scared them: his scary words, his battle with evil, and his expelling demons. Fear was present BEFORE/AFTER Jesus arrived. Even Peter, who took the steps that now live in infamy, was seized by fear as the WINDS/WAVES unnerved him. Watching Peter sink sent the others into full-blown panic.

Question: recall the times when fear seized you? When did it happen and why did it happen?

LIVING BEYOND FEAR...fear can't be AVOIDED but it can be REPLACED. We can't LIVE WITHOUT FEAR, but we can LIVE BEYOND IT. There are real fears. In this world, there are reasons to be alarmed; the alarm of fear isn't a call to panic but a call to prayer. We need to be people who are more afraid of missing opportunities than making mistakes, more afraid of lifelong regrets than temporary failure. God's plan isn't to REMOVE OUR FEARS but to IMPROVE THEM. To move us beyond our LITTLE PRIVATE FEARS and to be alarmed by RIGHTEOUS FEARS. What should scare us most isn't walking to our cars at night but living in a SELF-PROTECTED BUBBLE.

A CONSTANT COMPANION...if fear only happened when it was warranted, we'd live better lives. Fear is fine as a WELCOME GUEST in emergencies, but it is lousy as our CONSTANT COMPANION. Then we cross the line: we become WORRIERS. Worry is a special fear: fear is caused by an EXTERNAL SOURCE, worry/anxiety is produced from within. If we battle constant fear/anxiety, our prayers ought to be that they not become VICTIMS of our making.