

PROGRAM 53 TEASER

Today's wild, immoral, "anything goes" society fosters fear. It's spreading everywhere. Women fear rape and murder. Older folks fear loneliness, growing old and dying alone. Young people fear bullies, rejection, failure and the future. Fear is everywhere! Is there an answer anywhere? Of course there is! Someone came who faced all that life can throw at us. Then He didn't die and disappear and take His secret with Him. He crushed death, lives forever and says He wants to live in you and me. How to break fear's grip. The only answer is Jesus Christ. That's where we're going today on "More Than Talk".

BREAKING FEAR'S GRIP

Page 1 Where Did Fear Begin?

We all have to contend with fear. Webster describes fear thusly: "... a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence or nearness of danger, evil, pain, etc.; timidity, dread, terror, fright, apprehension—to be uneasy, anxious or doubtful."

Ever experience those emotions? Of course! Now it's one thing to define fear--but how do you break its grip? Many Christians get lost in the voluminous reading of books on fear and never get off the ground with a workable plan. That's why I offer you this lesson as a simple, practical plan that has become part of my life in helping me face many fears and, one by one, to break their grip.

Where Did Fear Start?

Fear was launched all the way back in the Garden of Eden. It came because a young couple could no longer say with certainty that they were in the will of God. Our first parents sinned, tried to hide from God, and answered His "Where are you?" with, "I was afraid because I was naked ..." From then on, the Bible is one long story of man succumbing to fear and God trying to show him how to break its grip.

Both Old and New Testaments reveal that we are part of a fear-ridden society. Throughout Scripture comes the appeal from God, "Fear not!" Lest we get the idea that fear is sent by God and thus accept it as a necessary part of life, we're told in 2 Timothy 1:7; "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

You're Not Alone

Today's wild, immoral, "anything goes" society fosters fear. It's spreading everywhere. Women fear rape and murder. Older people fear loneliness, growing old and dying alone. Young people fear their elders will ignite the world in a

nuclear war. People barricade themselves behind fortress homes, fearing robbery and murder.

Add to those a host of other fears such as fear of death, disease, rejection, failure, criticism, etc., and the problem is monumental. I don't know all the fears you're facing. But I want to share some of my own—hoping you'll draw from my experiences, compare them with your own, and learn that you possess the awesome power of God within you to break every one or those fears. Only one "fear" is justified in a Christian life and that is one of reverential awe where God says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge ... " (Proverbs 1 :7).

Fears I've Faced

For this, I would need a book, but I'll list the biggest. As a Christian, I have feared death, sickness, and failure. I have feared the past affecting me, the present infecting me and the future rejecting me. I have feared God, family and friends turning against me. I have feared possible crashes in airplanes, ships and cars. I have feared cancer and heart attacks. I have feared stepping out on faith to obey God for fear of failure and looking like a fool. I have even feared standing by the Jews and other minorities with a "high profile" when there is so much hostility and hatred all around.

I can almost hear what you're saying, "Frank, it sounds like you've feared just about everything." You're right! That's why there's hope for you! Now I'm going to tell you how I've learned (and am still learning) to break fear's ugly grip and expel it out of doors from my life. I'll do these in simple, numbered steps that you can follow.

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Page 2 Identify Your Fears

Love Is The Key To Defeat Our Fears

I must know that I love the Lord with all my heart, mind and strength. I must know that I'm in His will and performing that which He's called me to. I must know that there is no light that God has given me that I'm failing to walk in. I must know that I will obey Him in whatever He tells me to do, no matter how much that would grate against my own human desires. I must know that there is no known sin in my life that I have not confessed, made restitution for (if necessary) and asked God to give me victory over.

This is not as hard as it sounds. It's simply spending sufficient time in the Word of God to find out what He says about every important aspect of life—and then obeying Him. “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...” (John 14:21). “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts... ” (Hebrews 3:7, 8). The voice of God is the Word of God, and obedience is better than any sacrifice you and I can make. No matter how hard you try to break fear's grip, if you are not abandoned to God's will in your life (or at least willing to do His will as He shows you), you'll keep fighting a "win-lose, win-lose" battle with fear.

Identify Your Fears

Once you know your heart is clear ("If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God" 1 John 3:21), go to work on the fear that has tried to embed itself in your life. First, isolate the fear by admitting it's there and calling it by its name. I used to live in "Christian fantasyland" by only "confessing the positive." This went to wild extremes, like claiming I wasn't sick even though I couldn't get up. That wasn't being honest and facing the facts, in order to go to work getting God's answer.

For example, suppose a terrible fear of death grips your mind. How can you break its grip? I went to work seeing what God said about death; "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4); "Christ... has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," (2 Timothy 1:10); "... absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8). Then I admitted that the reason I feared death was because I had grown distant from the Lord, and asked Jesus to become as real to me as a human being because, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)

Check out your own fear in light of what God has to say about the subject. Get His opinion and tell Him you want to adopt His thinking until it permeates your life and evaporates the fear.

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Page 3 Don't Buy Satan's Line

In 1979, God told my wife Norma and me to leave a "ministry nest" we had feathered for some 18 years and journey east to a new call He would make known to us. We obeyed, but had a hundred different reasons for turning back, such as the death of two partners, the "impossible" task facing us to rebuild a run-down, 50-acre resort into a headquarters and center, and financial needs that made the Grand Canyon look like a pothole in the road.

I confess there were times we looked for the slightest reason to run—it didn't matter what direction. But God gave us honest hearts that cried out in the crisis, "Father, in the human, we might want to run and give up. But Lord, we're more afraid of getting out of Your will than failing while trying to do it. As long as you want us here, make us stay. Give us the toughness to hang in one day at a time—and a few signposts to let us know that we're still where you want us."

God answered abundantly, the storm passed and fears gave way to the bright sunshine of God's promises and events. Did you catch in that point another method for attacking fear? It's to never buy Satan's line that God's will is a miserable one. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome," (1 John 5:3). When tempted to run from the storm, force yourself to remember that it's safer being in God's will in the storm than being out of His will in what appears to be calm. And remember, whenever God has another door of action for you, He will generally open a bigger and more effective door for your life (Revelation 3:8).

Focus On The Cross

What about the fear of rejection and what other people will think of you? There is no way to be in the ministry and not experience rejection. Sometimes people love you—sometimes they hate you. You think you have a loyal colleague only to find that when the newness wears off or the going gets tough, he tells you, "God is leading me elsewhere." (And at times that's true).

Those moments can be misunderstood by the uninformed who think or say, "If you were in the will of God, how come 'so and so' left you?" It's easy to justify yourself. I know. I've done that. But now I'm learning to just love, always speak good of the other person, and commit what other people do or say to the Lord. Besides, time is on the side of love and truth. If you have done nothing to be ashamed of and another person lies about you, time and events have a way of vindicating. That's why I love Jesus and what He did in the fires of testing.
1 Peter 2:23

Realize that you're called to love—even if sometimes that love has to have the teeth of a corrective rebuke that may be misunderstood and used against you. It's hard to quietly suffer rejection by another. It's easy to want to get even. But the payment for getting even is too big a price to pay. No peace! A cold relationship with Jesus.

Instead, take a walk and sit down somewhere as if you're at the foot of the cross. Then just look up into those loving, forgiving eyes as He hangs there saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do," (Luke 23:34). Measure everything you could ever go through by what Jesus suffered (Hebrews 12:2, 3) and your fears of rejection will be replaced by an acceptance and even an embracing of suffering. The key is to make sure you're not suffering for some foolish or unkind word or deed you've done. And even if that's the case, apologize and go on from there.

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Page 4 You Have A Sword. So Use It!

What about the fear of murder, robbery or sexual assault? We live in a vile world, and it isn't getting better. What's the answer? Again, make sure you're in God's will. That will also mean using common sense such as not walking through Central Park, New York, at midnight or allowing my wife or daughter to jog alone down a deserted road. It might also mean a few lessons in self-defense that can send indicators to the would-be aggressor to "bug off!"

But the bottom line is Scripture guaranteeing my constantly being in the presence of the Lord; "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You," (Psalm 56:3); "Fear not, for I am with you; ... " (Isaiah 41:10); "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them," (Psalm 34:7)

Using wisdom in your living habits by taking proper precautions, not hoarding earthly goods for thieves to steal but instead constantly checking to make sure you're both keeping and giving according to the will of God, and claiming the Lord as your shield and bodyguard, can still that fear of evil people. But catch the thought behind this point because "faith without works is dead," (James 2:26). I must cooperate with God by doing the human things He expects, in order to help develop new habits to counteract fear.

For example, now that I'm an old warrior, I'm tackling new things such as new courses to sharpen my intellect, new workouts to keep my body in shape, and reaching for new heights in the Word of God and closeness with the Lord. That is simply the disciplining of body, mind and spirit to conform to the will of God (Hebrews 12: 1, 2; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Recognize that you are constantly being talked to by two voices throughout the day (and sometimes the night). The voice of God speaks with love, joy and peace. The voice of Satan comes as doubt, worry and fear. These voices are like radio waves—you can tune them in or out. Obviously, Satan's voice can be very insistent. One of your main methods of attacking fear is to meet Satan head-on. I know of no other way. When his fear pierces your soul and won't let up, you'll find that if you cower, those fears will only grow worse.

God has given you a sword. Use it! Counter-attack Satan according to James 4:7, "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. "Satan, this fear comes from you and has no place in God or me. I will not tolerate it. Take your fear of (name that fear) and get out of here—NOW! I resist you in the name of Jesus Christ, for it is written ... "(and then quote a verse of Scripture as a direct counter to that fear).

For example, if I find myself fearing the future, I resist Satan in the name of Jesus and quote God's orders to me. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34).

Or two of my other favorite scriptures to resist worry or fear are Romans 8:38, 39, " For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" Satan fears the name of Jesus and the Word of God—especially when both are used by an indignant Christian who is fed up with fear!

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Page 5 One Step At A Time

The only way to break fear's grip is to face that fear and, if it's something God wants you to do, to do it even if it's one tiny step at a time. For example, I knew God was calling me to stand by the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. The problem? All of my past years of ministry to the Gentiles had left me rather ignorant concerning the Jews. What to do?

I immediately went to work reading, researching and taking helpful courses. I studied the Bible and history from a Jewish perspective. Every time I learned something, I tried to transmit it to others, which made it more real in my own life. I went to synagogues and temples and met Jewish people. I asked loads of questions, admitted I didn't know the answers, and expressed my willingness to learn. I also read as much about Israel as I could and then journeyed there. My fears resulting from lack of knowledge vanished and what had been a weak area of my life was transformed into one of my greatest strengths.

Do you see what I mean? The longest journey begins with a single step—and that includes the journey out from fear and into faith. Remind yourself that God loves you in spite of your problems. He possesses the number one evaporator of all fear—and that is His love. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment...." (1 John 4:18). That's the secret—God's love in your life that turns fear out of doors. Sometimes this is done quickly and other times it's a painfully slow process. We're all made differently.

I told you this lesson would not be complicated. I have shared some of my fears. Believe it or not, I even feared becoming 40, resented it and thought I was an old man and over the hill. Now "40" sounds like a teenager. But I like getting older. Each step I take just leads me closer home. Besides, it beats being 25 and having to go through all these lessons again!

I'm learning to face every fear that comes my way and, by finding out what God says in His Word and then obeying, I'm tasting the thrill of shattering fear's grip. My prayer is that you, too, will enjoy today as "the first day of the rest of your life" and learn, step-by-step, through trial and error, that fear need retain no hold on

your life. If God is for you, who can be against you? (Romans 8:31). And He is for you!