

“Fear that does not take you to God, will take you away from God.”

On our recent vacation, we had an odd experience. Though this was our fourth year at a cabin in Tennessee, we’re still not familiar with the roads (think narrow country roads through mountains). As we neared southern Kentucky, thunder storms pummeled the area. Our phones began beeping with warnings of flash floods. Not only were we unfamiliar with the roads, we were off the main roads and uncertain of our location. We didn’t know where creeks or rivers were which might potentially flood. We knew there was something to be afraid of, we just didn’t know what it was.

Fear is like that. Ours is the “terrified generation.” It seems there are more things to be afraid of than at any other point in history.

For the past two weeks, both political parties have attempted to terrify us into NOT electing the other party’s candidate, painting dark pictures of “doom, gloom and agony.” Put a \$10 spot in a jar every time you hear someone say, “This is the most important election of our lifetime,” and you’ll soon have enough for the down payment on your next car.

A few years ago, the only flu we worried about was, well, the flu. Not today. There’s A, B and C (there are probably more letters...those are the more common ones). There’s the H1N1, H3N2v, Avian and Swine flu. If those don’t cause you to google your symptoms, there’s always Ebola, SARS and now the Zika virus, to give you something to fret about.

In the winter it’s Snowmageddon; in the summer it’s Heatzilla. If the economy burps, investors throw up in a panic. Eventually, the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates. Sometimes you wish they’d just do it and get it over with. The media has kept us in a state of anxiety for several years now over “they could raise interest rates.”

The word “possible” used to be a positive word. Not today. It’s loaded with angst. “Possible terrorist attacks...” “Possible connection between cancer and...” “Possible outbreak of...” If you hear the word “possible” it’s probably not happening right now and may never happen. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be terrified it might happen. I mean, it’s “possible.”

Parents and children are needlessly being frightened. Kids today are watched 24/7 out of fear someone might abduct them. It’s so bad, “free range parents” (parents who let their children explore the world and learn about it unsupervised) are often ticketed and accused of child neglect.

Listening to the media, one would think a child predator is behind each corner. Yet, children taken by a stranger or slight acquaintance represent just one-hundredth of 1% of all missing children or a total of 115 annually. There are fewer missing persons – of all ages – today than 20 years ago.

“We have nothing to fear but fear itself” isn’t quite accurate. There’s a place for healthy fear. Fear can be a God-given warning system. It’s the fear of being killed that makes you look both ways before crossing a busy street. It’s the fear of being bitten that causes you to stay away from a rattlesnake. Healthy fear releases adrenalin, preparing you to flee or fight. It’s a good kind of fear which protects you.

Most Christians need a healthier fear of sin and its potential to poison our souls. Too many are afraid of what we shouldn’t fear, yet are cavalier, if not brazen about that which should strike dread in our souls.

Yet, there’s an epidemic of toxic fear which damages us, resulting in a lack of faith. It paralyzes us. It’s timeless and universal. No one is immune. Though a powerful emperor, Julius Caesar was so afraid of thunder, he hid under his bed during storms. Peter the Great, the feared Russian Czar, was so paranoid of bridges he refused to use them. Many allow irrational fear to keep them from enjoying life. Worse, toxic fear handicaps us spiritually.

The first step in dealing with fear is to determine if it’s healthy or unhealthy. The best inoculation for unhealthy fear is God’s Word. Faith is the antidote for fear. Faith comes from immersing ourselves in Scripture. Those who suffer with unhealthy fear are rarely people of the Book.

King David struggled with fear, usually healthy fear. He had powerful enemies plotting to kill him. David wrote one of my favorite verses, Psalm 56:3: *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.”* As a boy, when I struggled

with childish fear my Mom gave me that verse. Do you struggle with fear? The book of Psalms is powerful, spiritual medicine that you need. In Psalm 55 David shares the cure for some of our common fears.

Are you afraid of bad people? David was afraid of the “*enemy*,” “*the wicked*” and those with a “*grudge*” against him. Last week a priest in France was murdered by terrorists. Churches used to be sanctuaries of safety; every church today must consider security issues unheard of a few years ago. David knew it was God who kept him safe. No one can touch us unless God allows it. Our safety is in our omnipotent Heavenly Father.

Are you afraid of the future? David was afraid of what might happen. “*Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me*” (vs. 5). Most of us fear the future. As you look toward the rest of this year, are there feelings of dread? What about the next few years? Is there uneasiness in your spirit? Those feelings aren’t from God. 2 Timothy 1:7, “*God has not given us the spirit of fear.*” David’s solution is found in verse 22 of Psalm 55, “*Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you.*” Give your fears to God so it’s no longer your “worry.”

Are you afraid of death? David wrote, “*The terrors of death have fallen upon me*” (vs. 4). Christians don’t need to fear death. Paul wrote while we experience sorrow at the death of a loved one, we don’t sorrow in the same way as those with no hope. The Bible promises death, for the Christian, is a transfer, a promotion. You’re not ready to live until you’re ready to die.

Only a fool goes through life, unprepared for something everyone knows is inevitable. “*For, to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” (Philippians 1:21) It’s a win-win for the believer. If we live, it’s in the spiritual presence of Jesus now. If we die, it’s gain because it’s the literal presence of Jesus!

Faith and fear can’t co-exist, so feed your faith with God’s Word and your fears will starve to death! The answer isn’t found in running from your fears, it’s found in running to the Father you can always trust!