

The Encourager

Helping People Live Courageously

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The Emotional Roller Coaster— Face Off With **FEAR**

by Dave Dravecky

I sought the LORD and he answered all my fears.

PSALM 34:4

When I began radiation treatment for my cancer, I discovered what it was like to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. As I spent weeks without eating solid food, I began to realize that the physical and emotional trauma coming my way could only be met by taking the hand of the Lord and walking with Him. Even so, being led through the valley of the shadow is frightening. Its uncertainties keep you alert to every changing scenario. I began to cling to every nuance of the doctors' words, shrugs, and grimaces; I experienced the full range of emotions that go with a life-threatening illness. I wept as I saw my utter need to depend on God. The fear of the unknown often gripped me.

A Cancer Survivor

Nothing can cause us to lose heart more quickly than fear. It can render the strongest heart faint and the most courageous soul cowardly. In one devastating swoop it can take away your breath, your peace, and even your hope.

At one time or another, fear stalks every human heart. Its icy fingers touch us all, old or young, rich or poor, black or white, clergy or layperson. It is the first emotion most of us remember. And those who battle cancer rarely escape a chilling encounter with this powerful enemy.

The waves of fear faced by those who battle cancer can be overwhelming, sometimes even debilitating. I know those fears all too well from my own experience with cancer. I have felt the fears that came with my diagnosis of cancer—the fear of uncertainty about what my life would be like after cancer, the fear of painful treatments, the fear of losing my arm. And I discovered that nothing strikes fear into our hearts more than the possibility of death. I couldn't bear the thought of having to leave behind my kids, my wife, my life.

But life goes on despite our fears. So when we feel fear's clammy grip, what can we do? How can we prevent it from causing us to lose heart? The first thing is to face our fears—whatever they might be. A small example from my early baseball career illustrates what I mean.

When I was first called up to the big leagues, my first eight to ten days as a San Diego Padre were a nightmare. I struggled so badly that management was toying with sending me back to Triple-A ball. We were in Los Angeles preparing to play the Dodgers, and Jan came up with our daughter, Tiffany, to stay with me at the hotel. After the first game of that series I returned to our room, obviously upset. But when Jan asked me what was wrong, I replied, "Nothing. I'm fine." Of course, deep down inside I was scared to death. Finally I blurted out, "Jan, I'm scared. I'm afraid. Everyone who comes to the plate is like

Babe Ruth. I don't know whether I can pitch at this level."

With that, the dam was broken. By facing my fears and openly admitting them, I was freed to move forward as a baseball player to go out and pitch to the best of my ability. And the worst that could happen? We'd return to Triple-A ball in Hawaii, where all our friends were. Strengthened by that new outlook, I took the mound with confidence and went on to a satisfying major league career.

"But that's just baseball," you might rightly be saying. "What about the biggest fear of all—the fear of death?" I discovered that the same process works there, too. I had to face my fear of dying, admit it, and go from there. And the worst that could happen? I'd take up residence in heaven, where my Savior Jesus is.

Don't get the wrong idea, however. While that conviction finally won out over my fears, it did so only after a long and intense battle. Through that battle I discovered the truth of something C.S. Lewis wrote in *A Grief Observed*: "You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you." For me, the ultimate question was, did I really believe God's promises? Did I really believe God when he said,

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... Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
 I have summoned you by name;
 you are mine.
 When you pass through the waters,
 I will be with you;
 and when you pass through the rivers,
 they will not sweep over you.
 When you walk through the fire,
 you will not be burned;
 the flames will not set you ablaze. For
 I am the LORD, your God,
 the Holy One of Israel, your Savior . . .

ISAIAH 43:1-3

Only after a prolonged and grueling struggle did I at last realize that I really did believe these words. No matter how things turned out, I had the assurance of going to heaven. In that way, my fear of death actually led me into a deeper place with God and I felt His embrace as never before.

If you are fighting that same long, grueling struggle with fear, my heart goes out to you. At the Outreach of Hope, we hear your painful cries every day. We know that riding the emotional roller coaster of a serious illness is tough, especially when fear has a stronghold on your heart. But as an experienced rider on that roller coaster, I can share with you what I learned about God on that ride. It's my personal commentary on Isaiah 43: "Fear not, for I am with you. When your emotions take you on a wild ride, I know it is hard to feel My presence. But I'm sitting next to you, and I never leave."



***Fear can
 keep us up all night,
 but faith makes
 one fine pillow.***

PHILIP GULLEY,
 HOMETOWN TALES

Article adapted from *Do Not Lose Heart* by Dave and Jan Dravecky with Steve Halliday, published by Zondervan Publishing House. Autographed copies are available for purchase from the Outreach of Hope. Refer to the envelope inside this issue for ordering instructions.

FEAR - a Seed of Faith

by Max Lucado

Great acts of faith are seldom born out of calm calculation.

It was fear—the suffocating, heart-racing fear of a man who has no way out—that propelled Peter out of the boat.

If Peter had seen Jesus walking on the water during a calm, peaceful day, do you think that he would have walked out to him?

Nor do I.

Had the lake been carpet smooth and the journey pleasant, do you think that Peter would have begged Jesus to take him on a stroll across the top of the water? Doubtful.

But give a man a choice between sure death and a crazy chance, and he'll take the chance . . . every time.

It wasn't logic that caused Moses to raise his staff on the bank of the Red Sea.

It wasn't medical research that convinced Naaman to dip seven times in the river.

It wasn't common sense that caused Paul to abandon the Law and embrace grace.

And it wasn't a confident committee that prayed in a small room in Jerusalem for Peter's release from prison. It was a fearful, desperate, band of backed-into-a-corner believers. It was a church with no options. A congregation of have-nots pleading for help.

And never were they stronger.

At the beginning of every act of faith, there is often a seed of fear.

Biographies of bold disciples begin with chapters of honest terror. Fear of death. Fear of failure. Fear of loneliness. Fear of a wasted life. Fear of failing to know God.

Faith begins when you see God on the mountain and you are in the valley and you know that you're too weak to make the climb. You see what you need . . . you see what you have . . . and what you have isn't enough to accomplish anything.

Moses had a sea in front and an enemy behind. The Israelites could swim or they could fight. But neither option was enough.

Naaman had tried the cures and consulted the soothsayers. Traveling a long distance to plunge into a muddy river made little sense when there were clean ones in his backyard. But what option did he have?

Paul had mastered the Law. He had mastered the system. But one glimpse of God convinced him that sacrifices and symbols were not enough.

The Jerusalem church knew that they had no hope of getting Peter out of prison. They had Christians who would fight, but too few. They had clout, but too little. They didn't need muscle. They needed a miracle.

So did Peter. He had given it his best. But his best wasn't enough. He was aware of two facts: he was going down, and Jesus was staying up. He knew where he would rather be.

There is nothing wrong with his response. Faith that begins with fear will end up nearer the Father.

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NOTE: The stories of these Bible heroes are located in the following Scripture portions:
 Peter, Matthew 14:22-33; Moses, Exodus, 14:5-31; Naaman, 2 Kings 5:1-15; Paul, Romans 3:21-28; Jerusalem believers, Acts 12:1-17

Rx for *FEAR*

We were rapidly descending through a night of thick fog at 200 miles per hour, but the seasoned pilot of the twin-engine Aero Commander was loving every dip, roll and lurch. At one point he looked over at me, smiled and exclaimed, “Hey, Chuck, isn’t this great?” I didn’t answer. I was sweating it out on my knees.

As the lonely plane knifed through the overcast pre-dawn sky, I was reviewing every Bible verse I’d ever known and re-confessing every wrong I’d ever done. It was like hurtling 200 miles an hour down the Santa Ana Freeway with a white bedsheet wrapped across the windshield and your radio turned up just beneath the threshold of audible pain.



Our flight record may have indicated two passengers on that eerie Monday morning, but I can vouch for at least three. An unyielding creature called Fear and I shared the same seat.

I couldn’t believe my companion-in-flight. He was whistling and humming like it was all a bike ride through the park. His passenger, however, had ten fingernails imbedded in the cushion. I stared longingly for something—anything—through the blanket of white surrounding us. Our flight record may have indicated two passengers on that eerie Monday morning, but I can vouch for at least three. An unyielding creature called Fear and I shared the same seat.

Fear—the phantom giant. Drifting in through cracks in the floorboards or filtering down like a chilling mist, the fog called Fear whispers omens of the unknown and the unseen. Surrounding individuals with its blinding, billowy robe, the creature hisses, “What if . . . what if . . .?” One blast of its awful breath transforms saints into atheists, reversing a person’s entire mind-set. Its bite releases a paralyzing venom in

its victim, and it isn’t long before doubt begins to dull the vision. To one who falls prey to this attack, the creature displays no mercy. It falls full weight on its back, laughs with glee at its crippled plaything and circles for another savage assault.

Fear. Ever met this beast? Sure you have. It creeps into your cockpit by a dozen different doors. Fear of failure. Fear of heights. Fear of crowds. Fear of disease. Fear of rejection. Fear of unemployment. Fear of what others are saying about you. Fear of moving away. Fear of height or depth or distance or death. Fear of being yourself. Fear of buying. Fear of selling. Fear of financial reversal. Fear of war. Fear of the dark. Fear of being alone.

Lurking in the shadows around every imaginable corner, it threatens to poison your inner peace and outward poise. Bully that it is, the creature relies on scare tactics and surprise attacks. It watches for your vulnerable moment, then picks the lock that safeguards your security. Once inside, it strikes quickly to transform spiritual muscle into mental mush. . . .

David’s 27th psalm, however, is known to contain an unusually effective antitoxin. With broad, bold strokes, the monarch of Israel (the first giant-killer on record), pens a prescription guaranteed to infuse iron into our bones. He meets Fear face-to-face at the door of his dwelling . . . then whistles and hums to himself as he walks back into the family room, kitchen, office or bedroom, reminding himself of the daily dosage required to counteract Fear’s repeated attacks:

by Charles Swindoll

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his
tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, LORD, I will seek.

Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

PSALM 27:1, 3-5, 7-8, 14

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Does God care about your fears? Yes! The Bible has nearly 100 reminders to not be afraid, and most of those also promise that God is with us.

The *FEAR* of Recurrence

by Robert Flatt



Twenty-six years of pastoral ministry did not prepare me for what was about to happen. After five months of tests and treatment for cancer, I was in complete remission, and I thought, *Now life is going to return to normal.*

My euphoria was replaced with a growing uneasiness. It was the beginning of a struggle for my emotional and spiritual well-being like no other struggle I had ever fought. I found myself postponing personal decisions about buying new furniture, clothes, and plans for vacation. I kept saying, “Let’s wait until after the next series of tests.” After each round of tests, I experienced a variety of aches and pains that only increased my level of anxiety.

Every day, I would experience moderate to severe pain in my left temple area (where my tumor had been). My anxiety level started to increase until I experienced an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual paralysis. Then in early December, a sharp pain radiated from between my shoulder blades. I thought, “Oh, no, my cancer has returned.” I flew to Anchorage for an MRI and a CT scan. The tests were negative.

My anxiety level continued to increase, however. Nine months before, a CT scan did not detect the original tumor. I was an emotional wreck and a spiritual cripple. Indecision, frustration, and tears accompanied every decision, every task. I continued my withdrawal from people except for casual conversation. The only safe place was the pulpit, where I turned my attention to subjects that didn’t affect me emotionally.

My faith in God was slipping away. During my treatments, I had had my moments of doubt, but they came during times of physical fatigue. My personal faith in God provided the strength I needed to endure the weeks of chemotherapy. Now I was in complete remission, and my faith had given way to fear.



*I was
an emotional wreck
and a spiritual cripple.
Indecision, frustration,
and tears accompanied
every decision,
every task.*

I asked myself questions. Why was it so difficult to trust God? Why was fear having such a paralyzing effect in my life? Why wasn’t I able to rejoice in God’s marvelous healing? As I continued my search for answers, God met my need.

First, I listened to myself talk. I found my conversation focused on the tests—past tests, future tests. The tests in the beginning had not detected the tumor. No wonder I had doubts. My faith was in the tests which failed me, not in my faithful, unfailing God. This failure of faith opened the door for fear’s destructive power. Instead of being happy about being in remission, I was in a state of paralysis.

Second, I began to understand how fear affected my communion with God. One day I picked up a magazine article I had written during the weeks of treatment. It reminded me of the intimacy, trust, and dependence I had in the Lord at that time—a relationship that no longer existed. My time with God was now incidental. This directly impacted my ability to deal with my fears. The less time I spent with God in His Word and prayer, the greater my fear.

Now, fear was threatening to destroy me, but God was drawing me back to Himself by reminding me of His loving kindness and faithfulness. The renewal of my faith was bringing an end to my spiritual stagnation. One afternoon I was alone reading my Bible and praying when the Lord directed me to a passage in the Old Testament—Habakkuk 3:17-19:

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength.”

It was then that I bowed my head and prayed, “Lord, thank you for the joy and peace that comes from knowing You and not from my circumstances.”

Finally, there was a growing awareness of the negative effects my fears were

having on my personal relationships, especially with my wife Mabel. We had grown very close during the weeks of treatment. Now she would ask, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I would reply, "I'm just tired." As I kept shutting her out, the tension between us grew. Unwilling to talk to Mabel about my fears, I continued to turn inward. I was preoccupied, even hysterically absorbed, with my physical well-being.

In desperation I began to share my fears with Mabel. I found she understood what I was experiencing. She was no stranger to pain—two back surgeries, chronic back pain, and her own battle with breast cancer prepared her to be able to help me face my fear. The more we talked, the more insight I gained as to why fear had such a grip on me.

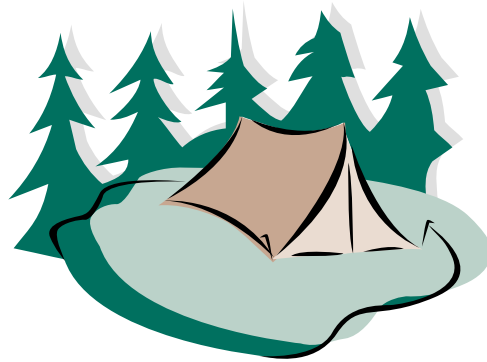
Mabel helped me realize that it is normal to be concerned about new aches and pains. It was my obsession with them that was abnormal. She encouraged me to talk to the doctor about them. Daily, she reminded me of my spiritual resources. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7).

Mabel also helps me recognize and deal with the circumstances that make me most vulnerable to fear, such as periods of fatigue and stress. For protection, she encourages me to get proper rest and exercise, go fishing with her, and use all my new power tools. I'm not sure who benefits the most from the power tools—you see, she had this list. In the long run, I know I am the beneficiary.

The implementation of these lessons into my daily routine is a slow process. My renewed intimacy with my Lord and my wife, along with a new awareness of God's personal presence, has brought peace and joy. There are still moments when I am fearful, but fear no longer has free access to my heart. God gives me victory over my fear. What a wonderful change has taken place! With Nehemiah, the prophet, I can say, "the joy of the Lord is your (my) strength."

An ordained Baptist minister, Robert Flatt is currently working on his Master of Ministries at Baptist Bible Seminary. In addition to writing several articles on his experiences with cancer, he and his wife have developed a "Living with Cancer" seminar.

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Mr. Tentmaker

It was nice living in this tent when it was strong and secure
and the sun was shining and the air was warm.

But Mr. Tentmaker it's scary now.

You see my tent is acting like it is not going to hold together;
the poles seem weak and they shift with the wind.

A couple of the stakes have wiggled loose from the sand;
and worst of all, the canvas has a rip.

It no longer protects me from beating rain or stinging fly.
It's scary in here Mr. Tentmaker.

Last week I went to the repair shop and some repairman
tried to patch the rip in my canvas.

It didn't help much, though, because the patch pulled away from
the edges and now the tear is worse.

What troubles me most, Mr. Tentmaker, is that the repairman didn't
even seem to notice that I was still in the tent;

he just worked on the canvas while I shivered inside.

I cried out once, but no one heard me.

I guess my first real question is: Why did you give me such a flimsy tent?

I can see by looking around the campground that some of the tents are
much stronger and more stable than mine.

Why, Mr. Tentmaker, did you pick a tent of such poor quality for me?

And even more important, what do you intend to do about it?

*Oh little tent dweller, as the Creator and Provider of tents,
I know all about you and your tent, and I love you both.*

I made a tent for Myself once, and lived in it on your campground.

*My tent was vulnerable, too, and some vicious attackers ripped it to pieces
while I was still in it.*

*It was a terrible experience, but you will be glad to know they couldn't hurt me;
in fact, the whole occurrence was a tremendous advantage
because it is this very victory over my enemy that frees me
to be a present help to you.*

*O little tent dweller, I am now prepared to come and live in your tent with you,
if you'll invite me.*

*You'll learn as we dwell together that real security comes from
my being in your tent with you.*

When the storms come, you can huddle in my arms and I'll hold you.

When the canvas rips, we'll go to the repair shop together.

*Some day, little tent dweller, some day your tent is going to collapse;
you see, I've designed it only for temporary use.*

But when it does, you and I are going to leave together,

I promise not to leave before you do.

And then free of all that would hinder or restrict,

we will move to our permanent home and together, forever,

we will rejoice and be glad.

ANONYMOUS

The *Monster* in the Closet

by Kim Jones

Those who ride the emotional roller coaster of life with cancer unanimously agree on the worst section of the track. It's that long, downhill, out-of-control, white-knuckled, hang-on-for-dear-life, when-will-this-ever-end ride with fear. Even the stout-hearted find themselves braced against the seat, clenching their jaws and squinting their eyes tightly shut. While all of us careen down that section of track at one time or another, many cancer patients and their families are detoured onto that part of the ride all too often. The repeated plunge leaves them exhausted, confused, and sometimes hopeless.

Fear is one of the most intense and powerful emotions God has given to us. It serves the invaluable function of protecting us from potential harm. Psychologist Gary J. Oliver explains that fear "alerts us to and helps us stay away from dangerous places, things, and people." It gives us the opportunity to think through what we're doing, to avoid panic, and to take action.

But the powerful nature of fear can turn against us, causing us to perceive danger and feel overwhelming feelings of dread when there is no real threat or rational basis for those feelings of emotional panic. Many cancer patients encounter this dark side of fear. Every ache or pain becomes a recurrence, a routine doctor's appointment becomes a death sentence, a friend's expression of concern becomes the question, *What do they know that I don't?*

Beve, a cancer patient, described her feelings of intense fear as the "tidal wave that comes from behind and knocks you face first into the sand. You don't see it coming, and you can't get out from under

it." Like so many others, she tried to fight and claw her way up for air, but the harder she fought, the more hopeless and frightened she felt. Sometimes the wave of fear would be so overwhelming that her heart would race out of control and send shock waves of panic coursing through her body. Her doctor called these episodes "panic attacks" and prescribed anti-anxiety medication. The medication helped, but Beve needed more. She needed to work through her fear—and she needed help doing it.

God gave Beve one of His best gifts and tools to employ in her battle with fear. He gave her a friend: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up! But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Sometimes her friend would simply sit beside her and be a physical reminder that God had not abandoned her. At other times, when her faith was weak and wavering, Beve would call her friend who would pray with her, read Scripture, and remind her of all the times that God had been faithful. Bolstered by the support of her friend, Beve rediscovered the faith she so desperately needed but had temporarily lost.

Battling cancer, like most trials we face, can rock our faith. It can cause us to question our beliefs about God. It can send us on a search for the truth about who He is and what He is doing in the midst of our suffering. It can eventually strengthen and deepen our faith, but during the strengthening process, fear often lurks like a predator just outside the door. But that predator is not as powerful as it would like us to believe. An

Fear can eventually strengthen and deepen our faith, but during the strengthening process, it often lurks like a predator just outside the door.

An inscription over the mantle of the Hinds' Head Hotel in England reveals our ally in the battle against fear: "Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there." That is our hope. When faith answers the door, fear will flee.



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The Grip of Guilt

Unfortunately, fear is often accompanied by its nasty cousin: guilt. Feelings of guilt regarding one's inability to manage excessive fear can be a great source of condemnation, especially for Christians. Colleen, for example, felt the grip of guilt first-hand when her husband was diagnosed with cancer. "At times I felt so alone," she explains. "The fear came in uncontrollable waves. My heart would race and the room would spin. I felt like a failure and was unable to understand why I couldn't rely on God completely as I knew I should."

Guilt causes us to shrink away from the very God who can help us. We must remember that God cares about more than

just the finished product—He is with us through the whole process. Jesus, the Master carpenter, not only knows how to rebuild our broken souls, He knows first-hand how frail and fragile we are: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity” (Hebrews 2:14a). God stepped out of eternity and into humanity! He became one of us in order to fully share in our human condition. For Colleen, that is a comforting thought because “it helps to know that God understands us in our human weakness.” The Psalmist found it comforting as well and wrote, “As a father has compassion on His children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13-14).



The Monster in the Closet

Fear can be so overwhelming that we try to run away from it. Like the child who imagines a terrible monster in the bedroom closet, we choose not to open the door. Instead, we leave the bedroom lights on (sacrificing our rest and peace), we surround ourselves with stuffed animals and books (providing distractions that enable us to live in denial), or we spend as little time as possible in the one room that was designed for our enjoyment (we run away).

But when monsters are ignored, they grow larger, not smaller. It is the same with

our fears. When we don't face them, they tend to grow larger, requiring increasing amounts of energy to manage. Eventually they require more energy to manage than to face! So, if we want to experience freedom from our deepest fears, we must face them.

Like the frightened child who stares anxiously at the closet door, we need help to break fear's grip. God doesn't expect us to do it alone. He is there to help us. We need only to take His hand and rest on His promise: “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with my gracious hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Turn on the Lights

The courage to turn on the light, open the closet door, and face the monster inside comes when we know that the God who stands beside us is greater than the monster we fear. It comes from knowing that God loves us so much that He would never abandon us to face the monster alone—no more than we would leave our child alone to face the monster in the closet. It comes from knowing that God's love for us compelled Him to hang on a cross and buy back our souls from the monster in the closet.

That monster, the monster we fear the most, is death. Our fear gives it more power than it deserves. Our fear can cause us to “cower through life, scared to death of death” (Hebrews 2:15b, *The Message*). Our fear can blind us to the truth that God, not death, has the final say. Death will not hold us in its grasp. God will hold us in His arms.

Cancer survivor Susan Strong once stood at the closet door and dared to open it. “Late one night,” she says, “I lay in my hospital bed and wrestled with my worst fear: death. I imagined what it would be like to die. I knew that death would bring me into the very presence of God. I closed my eyes and imagined being held and comforted by Jesus. A deep peace and joy enveloped my soul. God's love replaced every anxious thought and fear.”

When we grapple with the fear of death, we can gain a hard-won freedom. In her book, *A Joy I'd Never Known*, Jan Dravecky shares how, when her panic attacks were at their worst, she learned to

face them head-on. “When I feel a panic attack coming on,” she writes, “I admit this fear of death to God, and then I surrender. I say something like, ‘Lord, if you're going to take me, you're going to take me. I guess there's not much I can do about it.’ By surrendering myself to God and facing my fear, I can relax.” Such boldness causes fear to lose its icy grip. Faith then takes its place.

The Secret Weapon

Our secret weapon in the battle against fear is nothing less than God's love. The apostle John knew and experienced God's love in such an intimate way that he could say, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” (John 4:18). He knew, deep in his soul, that God loved him—regardless of how he felt at any given moment and regardless of his circumstances.

We, too, can experience God's perfect love in our lives. We can be honest with Him about our fears, weaknesses, doubts, and sins. We can read His love letters (the Bible) and ask Him to reveal His love to us. We can receive His love through the actions of others. We can invest time in our relationship with Him.

As it has for many others, Beve's battle with fear caused her to seek God with a vengeance. She knew difficult days lay ahead and that she needed to “get up close and personal” with God. One day, while lying in a hospital bed shortly before she stepped into eternity, Beve had a dream. She dreamed that the Lord Himself stood by her bedside and held her hand. She never shared the details of their conversation. She didn't need to. The evidence was written all over her face. Fear didn't have the last word, faith did.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may . . . grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge . . . (Ephesians 3:15-19).

Like the frightened child who stares anxiously at the closet door, we need help to break fear's grip.

*People
of all ages
of history have fought
their fears in one way or another,
but the only thing that really conquers
fear is faith in the Lord:
"I will trust and not be afraid"
(Isaiah 12:2). Only he who can say,
"The Lord is my strength,"
can say, "Of whom
shall I be afraid?"*

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