



RONKELLEHER
Equipping, Enabling, and Encouraging Marketplace Leaders

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Transforming Fears in your Life

Who's afraid of the big bad wolf? The three little pigs were, and they had good reason. In the story of the three little pigs that Walt Disney popularized in 1936, the wolf huffs and puffs and blows down one little pig's perfectly good house made of straw. Determined to stand their ground two little pigs hid out in the house made of sticks. When the house made of sticks came apart the two little pigs ran to the house of their brother. All the huffing and puffing from the wolf didn't matter, they were safe once inside the brick house. Eventually the three little pigs had the wolf for dinner. There is a lot of wisdom in this story about how fear affects us in our lives.

The First Fear

The word "fear" is found throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Adam is the first to express fear when God confronts him in the Garden of Eden after he and Eve ate the forbidden fruit; *"I heard the sound of Thee in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself"* (Genesis 3:10 NAS). Given the circumstances Adam and Eve's fear of being naked was justified. God banished them from the Garden, condemned mankind to a life of toil, and increased the pain of childbirth (Genesis 3:16-17). Fear is like a two-edged sword; in some cases it motivates people to achieve, and in other cases it cripples. Seasoned actors who give legendary performances confess to having stage fright. Executives who manage large companies fail to discipline their children for fear of losing their love. What is it about fear that motivates some and cripples others?

What is Fear?

Mr. Webster defines fear as, *"an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger, a profound reverence and awe especially toward God."* The Bible uses the same word, *yare*, to express both the fear of danger, and reverence for God. The Israelites provide an example of the fear of anticipated danger. Recall in Numbers 13, Moses sends 12 spies into the land of Canaan to find out if their cities are fortified, if the people are strong or weak, and whether the people are few or many (Numbers 13:18-19). The spies returned after a month and ten of them said, *"We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us"* (Numbers 13:31). The result of this report was that the entire nation of Israel was afraid to go in and take the land that God had promised them, so they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years before they got a second chance. The irony of this example is that after wandering for 40



years Joshua sent two spies into the city of Jericho where they spoke to Rahab, the harlot. Rahab tells them, *“I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt...And when we heard it our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is in heaven above and on the earth beneath”* (Joshua 2:9-11). Fear kept the nation of Israel from taking their land when God first wanted them to so they wandered in the desert for 40 years. All the while the Canaanites who had only heard stories about the Israelites had their hearts melt away with fear.

The Effects of Fear

Dr. Rick Warren (Senior Pastor, Saddleback Valley Community Church) identifies the effect of fear on us.

1. Fear paralyzes our potential

Fear kept the entire nation of Israel from entering into the Promised Land. If they had not been afraid of the Canaanites they would have saved 40 years of wandering in the desert. The Israelites told Moses, *“Have you brought us out here to die in the desert because there were not enough graves for us in Egypt? ... We said it would be better to be slaves to the Egyptians than dead in the wilderness”* (Exodus 14:11-12). The Israelites would rather have been slaves in Egypt than face their fears. Have you even been so afraid of a situation that you retreated instead of charging forward? Do you know anyone who is so afraid of their personal computer that they refuse to learn how to tap into its amazing power? Instead they dictate memos, hand write presentations, and use a calculator on long columns of numbers.

2. Fear ruins our relationships

Because Moses exhorted the Israelites to take the Promised Land, the people fearing failure wanted to kill Moses, *“But all the congregation said to stone them with stones”* (Numbers 14:10). They also wanted to appoint other leaders and go back to slavery in Egypt (Numbers 14:4)! Fear also hurt their relationship with God. If Moses had not intervened on their behalf God would have judged them right then, *“I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you (Moses) into a nation greater and mightier than they”* (Numbers 14:12). Have you ever been afraid of a customer or a boss? Perhaps a very important customer threatened to discontinue your product. You feared the loss of sales and profit, of having to lay off employees, and perhaps even the loss of the business. Have you ever had a boss threaten you? *“If you don’t fix this business you’re fired.” “If you don’t increase widget production in your unit up I’ll get someone who can.”* What happens with relationships when fear enters in? Chances are your level of trust declines, you keep things to yourself, you blame others for your trouble, and you may even look for ways to hurt the other person. Not exactly the best conditions for building strong relationships!

3. Fear hinders our happiness

Fear kept the Israelites from finding happiness. They did not get into the Promised Land, and in fact they wanted to go back to being slaves. They weren’t happy being slaves either, but they thought that was preferable to facing the Canaanites. Think about a business situation when you



were afraid. What were you like? Were you a happy, encouraging manager? Or were you sullen and short-sighted like the Israelites? There's a saying, "Don't worry, be happy." Perhaps a little flip but the point is happiness and fear do not go together. It's hard to be happy when your heart is full of fear. If you want to be happy you need to learn to control your worries and fears.

4. Fear sabotages our success

Job said, "*What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me*" (Job 3:25). Job feared, past tense, and his fears became manifest. The Israelites feared the Canaanites so the entire generation wandered in the desert, never having the chance to see the Promised Land. What fears have kept you from success? Has the fear of expanding your business kept you small? Has the fear of new technology kept your business in the dark ages? Fear often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. What Job feared most became true. Do you want what you fear most to come true?

Getting Started

Dr. Harold Sala, on his radio program "*Guidelines for Living*" notes seven guidelines for overcoming fear.

1. Recognize and admit your fear

The first step to dealing with fear is to realize that some things get to you. The Israelites may have realized that it was fear that kept them out of the Promised Land but they never admitted that their actions were motivated by fear. They blamed Moses for everything.

2. Analyze your fear

Franklin Roosevelt said, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself". Why are you afraid? Think about it. Get the facts. Proverbs 13:16 says, "*Every prudent man acts out of knowledge.*" Dissect your fear. Is your fear justified? The Israelites had reason to be afraid of the Canaanites but they forgot God was fighting for them. Is your fear unfounded? Are you worrying about what might happen without considering the facts?

3. Act upon your fear

There is a Greek proverb, "The beginning is the half of every action". Many times the reason fears become reality is because we don't act. "*We should make plans – counting on God to direct us.*" (Proverbs 16:9 LB). Once we have made plans we need to act. When Israel was at the Red Sea waiting for the Egyptians to overtake them God told Moses, "*Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.*" (Exodus 14:15). I know a woman who has had a lump in her breast for nearly four years. She is afraid to go to the doctor because it might be cancer. The fear that has kept her from taking action may one day be the cause of her death. Your fears will control you if you don't admit them, analyze them, plan, and take action.

4. Commit unresolved fears to God

My six-year old is a bit afraid of the dark. My wife will drive 15 miles on side streets to avoid a freeway. I am afraid of not being able to provide for my family. We all have some fears that aren't rational. We need to commit these to God. We need to realize that God is always with us, "*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 Saviour.” (Isaiah 43:2-3).

5. Overcome fear by faith

There are over 700 verses in the Bible that refer to fear or being afraid. God understands our fears. Somewhere in those 700 plus verses is an answer to your fear. Do a study of the words fear and afraid. You will be enriched with such powerful verses as Hebrews 13:5-6, “...*God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*”

6. Stand upon God’s promises

God promises over and over that He will be with us in our times of trouble. Paul gives a powerful promise writing to the Romans, “*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:37-39). Study God’s word. Keep his promises close to your heart so that when fear grips you, you can call on God’s promises for strength.

7. Remember the source of fear

Paul, writing to Timothy says, “*For the Holy Spirit, God’s gift, does not want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them.*” (II Timothy 1:7). God is not the source of our fear, the devil is. God’s plan for us is to be wise and strong, and to love people. The next time you feel fear realize that it is not from God.

One Final Thought

Once safely ensconced in the brick house the three little pigs were not afraid of the big bad wolf. They had the confidence of knowing that the brick house could stand up to all the huffing and puffing the wolf could muster. We can have this confidence if we build our own brick house. But rather than a real brick house we must build ours from a knowledge of God’s Word. There are 366 “fear nots” in the Bible. That’s one for every day of the year including leap years. Memorize verses of the Bible that give you strength. Each verse is like a brick in your house that will protect you from the fears in your life. Remember those fears are not from God, and the devil cannot blow down a house made from God’s Word.