

## SESSION 2

# Confidence in the Face of Fear



### QUESTION 1:

***What are some things others might fear that cause you no fear at all?***

## THE POINT

Trust God when you are overwhelmed with fear.

## THE PASSAGES

Genesis 12:10-13,17-20; 13:1-4

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Fear. Whether we want to admit it or not, fear is something we all have to wrestle with.

- I The fear of standing on a ladder that's two stories high
- I The fear of spider crawling on your skin
- I The fear of standing on a stage with the spotlight beaming on you
- I The fear of getting sick and battling a future disease
- I The fear of losing a job
- I The fear of something happening to one of your children or grandchildren
- I The fear of being alone
- I The fear of death and not being completely certain what will happen after you die

While some fears may seem small, any fear can have a crippling effect. Our minds and bodies can seize up, becoming almost paralyzed. For some, just thinking about it—like imagining that spider crawling on your skin—can fill us with fear.

What do we do when the ugly little head of fear begins to creep into our lives? An example from Abram's life shows us what we should do—and what we shouldn't do.

**Genesis 12:10-13**

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

A great famine swept across the land of Canaan. God had called Abram to Canaan and made a covenant with him to provide land and offspring; because the famine was so severe, however, fear kicked in and Abram chose to take his family to Egypt. Some would say Abram's survival instinct may have led him to do what he thought was wise, but let's call it what it is: fear. Since God had called Abram to Canaan, surely God would take care of him in Canaan, but fear and uncertainty led Abram to resettle his family down in Egypt.

As Abram approached Egypt, his mind began to zero in on his fear. He began to envision the circumstances that potentially awaited him and his family. In Egypt they would be considered sojourners, foreigners with no rights or protection. Abram had fled the famine in fear, but he seemed to have traded that apprehension for the fear of being oppressed by the Egyptians. That fear led him to respond irrationally. That should not surprise us since fear has the ability to reduce our sound judgment and logical reasoning. Because fear is relentless in its power over us, it can cause us to act erratically. We see this on display as we see Abram's fear inducing

him to hand over his beautiful wife Sarai to the Egyptian pharaoh so that his own life would be spared. We might think Abram was being totally irrational in passing off Sarai as his sister and not his wife, but perhaps it was in line with the cultural thinking of that time. Abram may have truly thought he was protecting his own life and doing the right thing even though this was a lie.

When I was a little boy my dad tried to teach me how to swim. That was the first time I'd be swimming without a life jacket. I was terrified. I feared being under the water for too long, and the thought of drowning haunted me. And for some reason I was scared my dad would let go of me. When he finally was able to loosen the death grip of my arms around his neck, I'd like to tell you I calmly began the butterfly stroke with no assistance from my dad, swimming laps gracefully around the pool. It was quite the opposite. I was thrashing around hysterically, screaming at the top of my lungs. I was a picture of pandemonium. In the midst of my panic, I clearly remember my dad calling out to me, "Travis, look at me. Focus on me. I've got you, so focus on me." As difficult as that was to do in the moment, I slowly began to focus more on my father. As long as I focused on my father, the less I focused on the fear splashing around me, and I simply treaded water. My dad taught me a principle that applies to all of life: When we focus on our Father, the less we focus on our fear.

The apostle Peter modeled this principle. He and the other disciples were in a boat when a storm came up and began to pummel the boat in the waves. To their amazement, Jesus came to them walking on the water. Peter had the courage to ask Jesus to command him to come to Him. With Jesus' command to come, Peter did just that—he stepped out of the boat and walked on water! But when Peter began to look around at his surroundings and took his focus off of Jesus, fear swept in, and he began to sink (Matt. 14:22-33).

Fear and uncertainty strike at all of us. In those moments, we need to remember what Abram seemed to forget: God is with us

and He will take care of us. In those moments, we must take our attention off of the fear and focus instead on the Father. Let me state it another way: turn your worry into worship. Reasons to fear will always be around, but we have far more reasons to worship God. When we change our worry to worship and carry our fear to the Father, our perspective becomes clearer—and we'll avoid an unnecessary journey to "Egypt."

**QUESTION 2:**

***What are some situations that can cause us to fear instead of trusting God?***

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**Genesis 12:17-20**

17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

When Abram arrived in Egypt, the beauty of his wife Sarai captured the attention of the palace officials. Sarai went along with her husband's scheme. The officials then raced to Pharaoh with the news that a beautiful new woman was available in his land. Pharaoh was not about to turn down such an opportunity, so he had Sarai brought to his palace. In exchange for Sarai, the Pharaoh lavished Abram with many valuable gifts.

Imagine what Sarai must have been feeling in that moment. The text is silent regarding any response from Sarai, but she surely must have felt betrayed by her husband. Confusion, hurt, and fear were probably not far off. She likely questioned any confidence she had in God's promise to Abram.

This brings up another important truth: fear not only can reduce our faith, but it also can affect the faith of those around us. By relying on his circumstances instead of putting his confidence in God's promise, Abram affected the faith of Sarai and also forced her to lie. Admittedly, Abram's statement, "She is my sister," was technically not a lie. Abram and Sarai had the same father but different mothers (Gen. 20:2,12). This may sound strange to us, but in the ancient world, endogamy—marriage within a family or tribe—was common. It wasn't until the establishment of the law that certain practices of endogamy were prohibited.

So here we have Abram and Sarai, half-siblings, telling a half-truth. We must remember that a half-truth always equals a full lie. There is no way around it. Concealing the truth with a lie keeps us from healing and moving forward. The fear of getting caught or the fear of telling the full story only shows the lack of confidence we have in God to go before us. Those fears can lead to lies, and those lies only lead to hurting ourselves and those around us.

Abram's fear-induced lie also impacted Pharaoh and his entire household. Innocent people who had no idea what was going on were affected, as "the **LORD** plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife." Scripture does not reveal the specifics of the plagues, but they were intense enough for Pharaoh to react and get to the bottom of Abram's lie. How ironic that we see a pagan Pharaoh calling out the great, faithful patriarch Abram. How humbling that must have been for Abram to get a moral lesson from a pagan Pharaoh. Shouldn't it have been the other way around?

Abram might have been a great influence among the Egyptians, pointing them away from their idols toward the one true God. But

the opportunity for Abram to exercise any leadership was being dismantled by his fear and lack of faith. The level of our fear and faith today can have a ripple effect on others either for good—or bad. **Fear and faith** are both highly contagious. When chaos or trouble strikes, or when we have the opportunity to lead or influence others, we should consider how our attitudes and actions will impact them. Am I spreading fear or encouraging faith?

**QUESTION 3:**

*How does the enemy use fear to wreak havoc in our lives?*

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**Genesis 13:1-4**

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had make there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

After Pharaoh gave the orders to leave and get out of Egypt, Abram took Sarai, his family, and all his possessions and started the journey back into Canaan. What could have been going on in Abram's mind as he traveled through the dry desert of the Negeb after such a spiritual defeat? We can only speculate of course, but when I think of my own seasons of defeat, I imagine he may have felt insecurity and guilt over his failure.

When Abram heard the words from Pharaoh to go, he might have recalled God's promise when He said to him, "Get thee out of thy country" (Gen. 12:1). Abram seemed to forget God's promise

when he felt threatened, but that's true for most of us. We quickly forget or doubt God's promise and calling on our lives in fearful circumstances. Unfortunately, when we come face-to-face with our failures, we often think God no longer can use us for ministry. In those moments, we must remember that, even when we are unfaithful, he remains faithful. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). God defines faithfulness by His very character; that is just who He is. When He makes a promise, He will keep it.

After we fail, it can be so easy to wallow in our failure and to stop moving and allowing God to move in us. Abram did not stop, nor did he leave his faith in Egypt. He moved back to where he came from—the place where he knew and worshiped God. The enemy loves to grab a shovel and bury us with the guilt of our past failures. We must keep moving so the dirt of guilt doesn't cover us, and we must keep moving toward the One who loves us and is ever faithful to us. We must return to Christ, remembering this wonderful truth: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Abram went back to where he first built his altar. "there Abram called on the name of the LORD." Perhaps Abram retraced his steps back to that place to show humility, to express remorse for his misconduct, to renew his allegiance, to remind himself of the original promise, to show his gratitude for God's mercy, or a combination of all these. The important thing is that he understood who he was and who God is. Abram's act of worship reflects his recognition of the incredible mercy God granted to him instead of the incredible judgment He could have granted.

While we recognize that fear reduces our faith and confidence in the Lord, one form of fear actually strengthens our faith. It is a fear we must increase, not decrease, in our lives: a healthy, reverent fear of the Lord. "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence" (Prov. 14:26). The more we deepen our reverent fear of God, the more our faith and trust in His mercy grows. As we truly



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**THE POINT**

Trust God when you are overwhelmed with fear.

understand the depths of God's magnificent power and holiness, the more confident we become—and we are overwhelmed by the heights of His undeserving mercy that He offers to all.

**QUESTION 4:**

*What are some obstacles we face to returning to God after failure?*

**QUESTION 5:**

*What are some ways our group can help us overcome our fears and failures?*

**ENGAGE**

*Consider the following situations. Describe the road of fear and the road of faith in each situation:*

**Encountering difficult circumstances**

Fear:

Faith:

**Meeting dangerous people**

Fear:

Faith:

**Facing personal challenges**

Fear:

Faith:

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## LIVE IT OUT

We are to trust God when we are overwhelmed with fear. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Reflect.** Be honest. Take some time and ask yourself how your level of faith and level of fear have been affecting you and those around you. Identity a specific fear that you need to focus less on, and then shift that focus more on the Father.
- I **Confess.** Take a quick break and self-evaluate if there are any half-truths that you may be covering up due to fear. Confess it today. Remember concealing keeps you from healing.
- I **Worship.** Search for a list of different names of God that are found in the Scriptures. Take some time and **contemplate each title. Allow each name** of God to deepen your understanding and fear of Him, while at the same time increasing your faith in His mercy.

