

Surviving Fear

By Maria Houston

The news headline that appeared on my phone brought reality to a long-held fear. In an instant, my heart was terrified. I began imagining this tragic health event happening to my child. My mind went down this rabbit hole and I put myself in these parents' shoes. My entire body felt fear.



For as long as I can remember, I have struggled with fear and anxiety. My mom would comfort me as a child with the idea that my fear probably would not occur. I could rest assured that since my fear was so unrealistic, I had nothing to fear. Once I was a young adult, my friends would comfort me with the fact that since God is good, my fears would not come true. Both strategies would comfort me for a moment, but soon my fears would reappear. I knew deep down that although my friends and family meant well, they were wrong.

The longer I live here on earth the more I realize that I actually have reason to fear. This year alone has been filled with traumatic life-changing events for many of my friends. We live in a scary world where devastating circumstances can occur at any moment. In actuality I have more reasons to fear, not less. Whatever I fear, I can look out into the world and see someone facing my worst-case scenario.

When I saw the disturbing headline, the two strategies my loved ones gave me were exposed as lies. This fear actually can happen and does happen to people. How was I to combat this fear? I needed a weapon.

Understanding scripture has been crucial in fighting my fear and anxiety. In Ephesians 6: 17 we are told that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Scripture is an offense tool vital in our fight against fear. So what does this mean practically? How can scripture fight my fears against my child dying? Children die all around the world every day. How can scripture reverse this fact?

The truth is that scripture doesn't reverse the fact that children die, but it is the pathway to knowing the heart of God. Scripture teaches us wise theology, showing us who God is. It is the only way we learn what kind of God we serve, how much He loves us, and why we should trust Him.

Scripture provides us with real stories filled with tragic events where we see how God continues to love and provide through every moment of pain and sorrow. We learn that tragedy will occur, but God's love is greater. We learn that tragedy wounds God's heart more than it does ours. We learn that God can be trusted with our pain. We learn that God knows tragedy will occur on earth, but He has an eternal life prepared for us that is greater than we can ever imagine. He tells us over and over in scripture to "fear not." How? Because we have a God who

will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and we are to look forward in time and not dwell in the present.

Each time fear paralyzes my soul I combat these earthy worries in four ways. I pray, I read scripture, I read strong theological texts from trusted authors, and I listen to biblically-sound sermons. I tend to require all four ways to bombard my soul with God's truth.

I never deny that my fear is real. God does not ask us to be stoic and emotionless people. Instead, I ask God to hide me in Him. I acknowledge my dependence on Him. I ask for Him to be so great that my fear is diminished in comparison.

And then, something amazing happens. It happens every time. I experience what Psalms 119:50 says "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me and given me life." (AMP). My fear no longer seems so terrifying, because my hope is not in preventing my fear. Instead, my hope is based on who God is. Scripture has reminded me again of the living God, allowing God, not fear, to become Lord of my life again.