

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR

LESSON TWO: FEAR DEFINED

by Sandy Harber

The dictionary defines "fear" as "an unpleasant, often strong, emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger." Fear is not a pleasant emotion. It doesn't make us happy. It can run the gamut of mild concern to stark terror. What causes this emotion? Either anticipation or awareness of danger. Either you think there is going to be a problem or you know there already is one.

Someone said that 99% of the things they worried about never happened. How many times have you worried about a situation or outcome that never came to fruition? How much of your time and energy was wasted on nothing? We all know we're supposed to take our burdens to the Lord and leave them there. But how many times do we hold on to these burdens? Yes, we pray. But we don't let go. We say we trust God to take care of our issues but our actions prove we are liars. We worry because we doubt that God will engineer the solution we want, the way we want it. We lack faith in His judgment. "He will do what is best for us," we say. Then we continue to worry.

Fear caused by the awareness of danger is another story. This type of fear can be beneficial. God programmed an alarm system into our make-up to protect us. Would you stick your hand in a pot of boiling water? Of course not! Why? You are afraid of being burned. And that's a good thing. Your fear of being burned protects you from injury. What happens when you walk down a dark street at night and suddenly hear footsteps behind you? Your God-given internal alarm system goes off. You feel fear. Your mind starts looking for solutions to your situation. Is there a public place nearby to seek shelter? Should you run or turn around and confront whoever is behind you? Call 911 or wait and see if you're over-reacting? It's the old fight or flight instinct at work.

The dictionary also acknowledges that, as a verb, "fear" can mean "to have a reverential awe of." The object of this awe is, of course, God. The most prevalent use of the word "fear" in the Bible references the fear of God (185 times). That we should fear the Lord is not a suggestion. It is a command (Deuteronomy 10:20).

The subject of fear has been on the minds of many people in my church lately. It's amazing how many people have suggested that we study fear as presented in the Bible in our various Bible studies. We are looking for ways to combat the bad kind of fear. In spite of our faith and trust in God we still struggle with worry and stress.

So I pulled out my Strong's Concordance and studied every verse with the word "fear" in it. I'm documenting what I found in these lessons on fear. What I did not find is an easy cure-all. However, I did find ways to combat fear. You probably already know many of these but just need a reminder. For example, prayer, trusting in God, cultivating an awareness of His presence, remembering His promises, and resting in His sovereignty come to mind. I have found that God has equipped us with everything we need to overcome fear. We just need to use the tools that He has provided.

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 54:17