

## Trusting God means life without fear

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Have you ever been afraid? I mean really afraid. Raw fear is among the most powerful of emotions. Some people like to be scared. When I was a teenager I would watch horror movies. I would squint my eyes at the scariest parts but never shut them tight. Looking back, I don't know if I enjoyed being frightened as much as I desired to prove that I was brave. In reality, today I see fear as enslaving many people's lives.

As a kid I would shudder on The Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyland. All of the sets and sounds were "imagineered" to plant deep emotion in me. When I got older, I was invited by a friend who worked there to go "behind the scenes" and learn how all of the effects were done. I went through every piece of The Haunted Mansion with the "lights on" and the whole experience became quite different indeed. They took me through room-by-room and explained each effect and technology. They showed me the master control room where it all was powered. They explained how the ghosts were projected; even the secrets that seemed most mysterious I now understood. It is an interesting thing to grasp something with the "lights turned on"; you gain a whole new perspective.

As I woke up this morning, CNN had more world news that is quite startling; wars and rumors of wars, bloodshed and terrorists. There seems to be many people who have carved out a living for themselves promulgating fear. Whether for political, military, or profit gain, votes, volunteers, or viewers, rioters, recruits, or readers, creating trembling hearts apparently advances the cause. Both locally and abroad, fear is a huge motivator of a lot of decisions that are made. From an international relations perspective, most negotiations use fear as the negotiating tool; fear of military actions or economic sanctions or political loss. Terrorists get their name because they use "terror" as their primary weapon. Locally, we may lock our doors or adjust our itineraries in order to accommodate concerns for personal safety. And internally, many people are so filled with stress and anxiety over their own personal futures that they are losing relationships, jobs, economic opportunities, and their health as a result.

Did you know that decisions that are made out of fear are oftentimes the wrong decision? When we are anxious, it is very difficult for us to see problems from a clear perspective. Please let me explain. Fear acts like a magnifying glass; everything looks much bigger than it really is. This is why the terrorists and local gangs have such a powerful weapon; they thrive on fear. "Anxiety" and "reason" work in opposition to one another. Studies have shown that most of our decisions are "emotion based" rather than "logic based." I'll say it again; fear is among the most powerful of emotions and decisions that are made out of fear can often be the wrong one.

Please make no mistake here. I am not giving a political opinion. My message today is neither to government, nor terrorist, nor media, but to the individual, the people in our own community who are incapacitated in life due to fear. Whether you are stuck on the couch glued to the news, avoiding someone else with whom you have a disagreement, worrying about your job or business or what the future may hold, distressed or dismayed that you might live alone, apprehensive about a major life decision, or fainthearted over health and safety

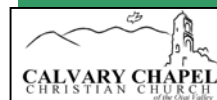
concern, God doesn't want you to live in trepidation. The enemy of our souls is a "terrorist" and uses fear to knock you out of commission.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible what would usually happen when God intervened in a unique and miraculous way with humanity? Fear would grip people's hearts. Whether it be God speaking to Abraham, or the angel speaking to Mary, or Jesus to the woman, or one of the apostles to the church, from Genesis to Revelation, the message for God's people to "Fear not" is found over 60 times. Deuteronomy 31:6 is just one example: "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord your God, He that goes with you, He will not fail you, nor forsake you."

"But how do you do this?" one might ask. How does one live without fear? You put your trust in God; the only one worthy of true "awe"! You simply put your life, decisions and future into the hands of Jesus. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" the Bible says. Yes, it is a daily decision, sometimes hourly, for others it may seem moment by moment in overcoming the spiritual battle for God's peace. But you discover the truth of Scripture that says God's "perfect love casts out all fear." In the same way that I could never be scared in The Haunted Mansion at Disneyland again because I know what is "behind the scenes," God wants us to have "the lights turned on" when it comes to fear. The answer is not self-empowerment but God-reliance. This is the spiritual paradigm shift that can change your life. Second Timothy 1:7 says: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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### Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

### Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View