FEARLESS
Why Are We Afraid?

Introduction

There’s a stampede of fear out there. Let’s not get caught in it. Let’s be among those who stay calm. Let’s recognize danger but not be overwhelmed. Acknowledge threats but refuse to be defined by them. . . Let’s be numbered among those who hear a different voice, God’s.
—from Fearless

Imagine your church wholly untouched by angst. What if faith, not fear, was your congregation’s default reaction to threats? If you could hover a fear magnet over your community and extract every last shaving of dread, insecurity, and doubt, what would remain?

Envision a day, just one day, absent the dread of failure, rejection, and calamity within the walls of your office or sanctuary. Can you imagine a life where the ones you love don’t fear?

This is the possibility Fearless offers. By examining what makes us afraid and drawing closer to God we can abandon those fears. And as a teacher, you’re in a unique position to help those struggling to find the light at the end of the dark tunnel of fear.
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Objective

To introduce and remind your church or group of the following realities:
1. Life isn’t meant to be a luxury ride—it’s filled with difficult experiences.
2. Fear can be healthy, but an inappropriate response to fear is sinful.
3. Our Father is capable of calming the storms in our lives.

Preparation

Read Chapter 1 in Fearless and record your thoughts in a journal. Meditate on all that it stirs in your heart and mind. Pray for an extended amount of time, asking God to show you what he wants your listeners to hear.

Supporting Scripture

“Jesus got into a boat, and his followers went with him. A great storm arose on the lake so that the waves covered the boat.” (Matthew 8:23–24 ncv)

“Suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea.” (Matthew 8:24)

“In the world you will have tribulation.” (John 16:33)

“Jesus was sleeping.” (Matthew 8:24 ncv)

“Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26)

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

“Jesus got up and gave a command to the wind and the waves, and it became completely calm. . . . ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’” (Matthew 8:26–27 ncv)
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Outline

I. The Great Seismos

II. Jesus Remains Unstirred in the Storm

III. Fear Can Be Healthy

IV. The Father Is Capable of Calming Our Storms

Opening Question: Why are you afraid?

I. The Great Seismos

   A. Life is stormy.

      “Jesus got into a boat, and his followers went with him. A great storm arose on the lake so that the waves covered the boat.”
      (Matthew 8:23–24 ncv)

      B. Matthew used the word seismos—a quake, a trembling eruption of sea and sky (also used in Matthew 27:51–54 at Jesus’ death at Calvary and in Matthew 28:2 when Jesus arose from the dead).

      C. This storm came suddenly.

      “Suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea.” (Matthew 8:24)

II. Jesus Remains Unstirred in the Storm

   A. The absence of storms doesn’t set us apart.

      “Don’t Christ-followers enjoy a calendar full of Caribbean cruises? No. This story sends the not-so-subtle and not-too-popular reminder: getting on board with Christ can mean getting soaked with Christ. Disciples can expect rough seas and stout winds.”

      “In the world you will [not ‘might,’ ‘may,’ or ‘could’] have tribulation.” (John 16:33, brackets mine)
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B. The difference for Christians is whom we discover in the storm.

“Jesus was sleeping.” (Matthew 8:24 ncv)

“Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26)

III. Fear Can Be Healthy

A. Fear can keep us from danger, but an inappropriate response to fear is sinful.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

“Fear will always knock on your door. Just don’t invite it in for dinner and, for heaven’s sake, don’t offer it a bed for the night.”

IV. The Father Is Capable of Calming Our Storms

A. Jesus handled the great quaking with great calming.

“Jesus got up and gave a command to the wind and the waves and it became completely calm.” (Matthew 8:26 ncv)

“What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:27 ncv)
EXAMINING FEAR

1. "Imagine your life wholly untouched by angst. What if faith, not fear, was your default reaction to threats? If you could hover a fear magnet over your heart and extract every last shaving of dread, insecurity, and doubt, what would remain? Envision a day just one day, absent the dread of failure, rejection, and calamity. Can you imagine a life with no fear?"
   a. Try to answer the questions above. How would your life be different today if all fear were erased from your heart?
   b. Which are you more prone to - dread of failure, rejection, or calamity? What does that indicate about you?

2. "Getting on board with Christ can mean getting soaked with Christ. Disciples can expect rough seas and stout winds."
   a. Why does getting on board with Christ mean getting soaked with Christ? Why doesn't it mean blue skies and clear sailing?
   b. Why do so many believers not expect rough seas and stout winds? What often happens to them when they have to weather such conditions? How would you counsel them?

3. “Fear corrodes our confidence in God’s goodness. We begin to wonder if love lives in heaven.”
   a. How does fear corrode our confidence in God's goodness? How has it done so in your own life?
   b. When did you last wonder if love lives in heaven? Describe the circumstances.

4. “The fear-filled cannot love deeply. Love is risky. They cannot give to the poor. Benevolence has no guarantee of return. The fear-filled cannot dream wildly. What if their dreams sputter and fall from the sky? The worship of safety emasculates greatness.”
   a. Why does fear make it harder to love? Why does fear make it hard to give generously? How does fear stifle our dreams?
b. Have you ever found yourself worshiping safety? If so, what prompted you to do so? How does fear emasculate greatness? How has fear stopped you from attempting something great?

5. “The one statement Jesus made more than any other was this: Don’t be afraid.”
   a. Why would Jesus make this statement more than any others? Does this tell you about human nature?
   b. How can you stop feeling afraid? What takes away the emotion of fear?

EXPOSING FEAR

1. Read Matthew 8:23-27.
   a. What connection does Jesus make between fear and faith in verse 26?
   b. React to the following statement: “If Jesus is in your boat, whether he seems wide awake or sound asleep, you have nothing to fear.”

2. Read John 16:33.
   a. What promise does Jesus give here about living in this world?
   b. What does Jesus offer his followers? On what is this offer based?

   a. What kind of spirit has God not given to his children? What does this imply about the origin of most of our fears?
   b. What kind of spirit has God given to his children? What difference should this make to us when fear strikes?

BATTLING FEAR

1. Analyze your fears from this past week. What did they concern? What caused them? What did you do with them? How did you involve God in facing them? What patterns, if any, can you detect?

2. For one whole week meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7 in the translation of your choice. Repeat the verse in your head as often as you can.