

Fighting Fear

Mother Fears

by Nicole Whitacre

Anyone out there afraid for your kids? I thought I saw a few hands go up. Mine sure did.

These fears come in all shapes, sizes and packages. I don't need to suggest any for you. You know what your fears for your children are. You were probably thinking of them just this morning.

In his book *Running Scared* (which I highly recommend), Ed Welch gives us the biblical solution to our fears: we need to fear more. We need to fear God more. For "when you fear the Lord, there is not much else to fear." The fear of the Lord banishes our fears for our children. Dr. Welch illustrates:

"If you are trained in medicine and have parented five children, you aren't going to worry when your neighbor asks you to watch her ten-year-old for twenty minutes. If you really want to fight fear, learn to fear Someone who captures your attention in such a way that your other fears suddenly seem pedestrian and unimportant."

But there's more. When we learn to fear God, we will actually be protecting our children. Proverbs 14:26 says, "*He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.*"

So if you want to be rid of those nagging fears and be a means of God's protection for your children, fear the Lord today. Allow His wisdom, goodness, love, power and holiness to capture your attention. Then tell your kids about the awesome God we serve.

Grace When We Need It

by Carolyn Mahaney

Tell me you can't relate to this scenario. You talk to a woman who is in the middle of a trial. She testifies to God's overwhelming and sustaining grace. You marvel at her peace and joy that belies her suffering. But instead of praising God for His evident faithfulness, you begin to imagine yourself enduring her ordeal. *How would I cope? I don't think I could handle it. I*

hope it doesn't happen to me! With high-definition clarity and color you see yourself in the midst of her ordeal. Grace is nowhere to be found, and you are gripped by fear and dread.

So often we ignore the awesome displays of God's faithfulness to people in trials and instead imagine ourselves in their situation, minus the grace of God. We would do well to heed Elisabeth Elliot's wise reminder *that there is no grace for our imaginations*. None. It's simply not available. God is not waiting in the wings to help us through whatever horrible imaginary trouble we can conjure up today. But His goodness is stored up and will be abundantly poured out whenever we walk through a real trial.

I've passed along this piece of advice to oodles of women. Maybe that's because there are so many like me who easily submit to fear. So let's resolve together: the next time we observe someone going through a trial, let's turn off our imaginations and instead fix our gaze on the marvelous, abundant, overwhelming and timely grace of God—the same grace that will be available to us when we actually need it.

"...do not fear anything that is frightening." 1 Peter 3:6

Me and My Crystal Ball

by Nicole Whitacre

As I admitted the other day, I am often tempted to fear for my children. But that's only the beginning of my fears and anxieties. I'm what Ed Welch, author of *Running Scared* calls "an advanced worrier." Unfortunately, worry is the only thing this average girl has ever been advanced in! It's not something I'm proud of.

If a family member fails to call me back I worry that they've been in a car accident. If I hear sirens I think the church might be on fire (we live a block away). If an airplane flies overhead (like they do all day) I'm afraid the terrorists have come back to DC. Yep, I'm certifiable.

"Where worriers show their irrationality" Welch observes (and my husband often reminds me!):

"...is in their success rate: they are always wrong, at least in the specifics. They think the worst about tomorrow and it doesn't happen. [But] if you worry about everything you will occasionally stumble upon an approximation to a real event. Suddenly you are a gifted prophet and it is your God-given duty to worry. You see the future, others are blind to it.

You must sound the alarm for the people you love. Compassion demands that you worry."

I'm *compassionate*. That's what I am! But no, Dr. Welch then exposes me for who I really am--nothing better than a back-room fortune-teller:

"Worriers are certifiable *false prophets*. Their peer group is not so much those with psychiatric diagnoses as they are astrologers, tarot card readers, and Ouija board devotees. How much better off we would be if all our future predictions were declared illegal and we were forever banned from making any others."

So, I'm declaring my fears illegal today. I'm putting away my crystal ball and turning in my "advanced worrier" certificate. I wasn't very good at predicting the future anyways. To be honest, I was terrible. Maybe I'll try writing fortune cookie inserts for a change. Just kidding!

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11, emphasis mine)

The Arithmetic of Fear

by Nicole Whitacre

I think it is fair to say that women (at least it's true of the four women that write for girltalk!) can be prone to fear. And oh what ludicrous thoughts and images we can conjure up! So preposterous, we'd laugh at ourselves... that is, if we hadn't worked ourselves into such a frenzy of fright.

Puritan John Flavel comments on this habit: "The rules of fear are not like the rules in arithmetic, where many nothings make nothing, but fear can make something out of nothing, yea, many things, and great things out of nothing at all."

Now, I'm no math expert, but I do spend many evenings helping my teenage son with Algebra homework. I know that if x and y both equal zero, then the answer is zero. Not so when it comes to the irrationality of fear.

Take Psalm 53:5 for example, says Flavel: "There they are, in great terror, where there is no terror!" He writes: "Here was a great fear raised or created out of nothing at all; had their fear been examined or hunted home to its original, it would have been found a pure creature of fancy."

How many of our great fears have been created out of nothing at all? And proved, in the end, to equal nothing at all?

But in Scripture we find something real and rational and comforting. Here's Flavel one more time. "In the written word are found all sorts of refreshing, strengthening and heart-reviving promises prepared by the wisdom and care of God for our relief"

So let's find relief with this refreshing, strengthening and heart-reviving promise: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Is. 41:10).

Today's Trouble Eased

by Kristin Chesemore

"*Sufficient for the day is its own trouble,*" it says in Matthew 6:34. Granted, my troubles aren't very big. Lately it's been things like the unexpected bill, the disobedience of my four-year-old or snags in the house-buying process. Nothing like the troubles several of my friends have experienced recently.

Because of fear, however, my minor daily troubles can sometimes seem worse than they really are. John Flavel (whom Mom quoted yesterday) explains:

"The grief we suffer from evil felt would be light and easy, were it not incensed by fear....If the face of *things to come* be threatening and inauspicious, fear gains the ascendant over the mind; and unmanly [or in our case "unwomanly"] and unchristian faintness pervades it; and, among the many other mischiefs it inflicts, this is not the least, that it brings the evil of *to-morrow* upon *to-day*, and so makes the duties of to-day wholly unserviceable to the evils of to-morrow."

My four-year-old's disobedience is exacerbated by my fear for the state of his soul. The bill seems larger than it really is if I'm worried about our family's financial future. The snags in the house-buying process appear ominous if I'm anxious over the current housing market.

By fearing the future, I'm bringing in unnecessary and imaginary trouble and piling it onto today's trouble. No wonder today's trouble seems worse than it really is! What's more, by fearing the future, I make today's duties

“wholly unserviceable to the evils of tomorrow.” I can’t effectively prepare for tomorrow’s trouble if I’m not trusting God today.

Matthew 6:25-34 doesn't simply tell me there will be trouble tomorrow. It also gives me reasons to trust in God. He is sovereign, caring, wise, and loving, and He has promised to provide everything that I need. I can face today’s troubles knowing that His grace will be there for me tomorrow.

Strength to Overcome

by Janelle Bradshaw

Fear can feel so overwhelming and impossible to overcome. Oh, but the Bible brings some wonderful news. The battle is not ours to fight alone. No, there is One who goes before us and He has already won. The power of sin has already been broken.

As Ed Welch writes in *Running Scared*: “God’s deliverance means he will be with us; we will be able to with stand temptation without giving in to sin; and we will be able to stand firm even when attacked by our fiercest adversary, Satan the Accuser.”

I love 2 Chronicles 20:15: “Thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.’” Read this verse again. Allow it to sink into your soul. Whatever fear you are facing today, you aren’t fighting it alone. The same Savior that died for your sin of unbelief, fights this battle with you. He will supply you with the strength you need to conquer.*

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