

## “FEAR & BEING AFRAID”

*Exodus 14:13 Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.*



As we face difficult issues in our recovery, we will find that sometimes we need to sit tight and wait on God, and other times we need to get up and take action, trusting him for strength. How did Moses know when to get moving? God told him. But Moses would have heard nothing if he hadn't been staying in constant contact with God.

*Deuteronomy 1:29-31 Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your eyes, 31 and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”*

**“We grow to feel comfortable with our LORD as a source of strength. As we learn to trust his WORD, we begin to overcome our fear of life,”**

Powerless as we are, living on self-will is a frightening, unmanageable experience. In recovery, we have turned our will and our lives safely over to the care of our LORD Jesus Christ. When we lapse in our program, when we lose conscious contact with the LORD, we begin to take control of our own lives again, refusing the care of the LORD. If we do not make a daily decision to surrender our lives to the care of the LORD, we may become overwhelmed with our fear of life.

Through working the Twelve Steps, we've found that faith in the LORD helps relieve our fear. As we draw closer to a loving God, we become more conscious of our Higher Power. And the more conscious we are of God's care for us, the less our fears.

When we feel afraid, we ask ourselves, “Is this fear an indication of a lack of faith in my life? Have I taken control again, only to find my life still unmanageable?” If we answer yes to these questions, we can overcome our fear by turning our will and our lives back over to the care of the LORD Jesus Christ.

*Deuteronomy 20:1-4 When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. 2 When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. 3 He shall say: “Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. 4 For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”*

Before coming to Recovery, many of us thought we were brave simply because we had never experienced fear. We had drugged all our feelings, fear among them, until we had convinced ourselves that we were tough, courageous people who wouldn't crack under any circumstances.

But finding our courage in drugs has nothing to do with the way we live our lives today. Clean and in recovery, we are bound to feel frightened at times. When we first realize we are feeling frightened, we may think we are cowards. We're afraid to pick up the phone because the person on the other end might not understand. We're afraid to ask someone to sponsor us because they might say no. We're afraid to look for a job. We're afraid to be honest with our friends. But all of these fears are natural, even healthy. What's not healthy is allowing fear to paralyze us.

When we permit our fear to stop our growth, we will be defeated. **True courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the willingness to walk through it.**

*Proverbs 3:21-24 My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; 22 they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. 23 Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; 24 when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

As recovering people, we begin to develop sound judgment and the ability to discern. Because our addiction or codependency robbed us of soundness of mind, we could not properly discern or judge. Recovery begins to restore what we had lost, and our maturity becomes a lovely ornament attesting to the grace of God in our lives.

His grace has changed us so much that we can travel on our way knowing he will keep us safe. His grace in our recovery will make our steps steadier. One of the fringe benefits of recovery is that we begin to enjoy times of rest from fear and anxious thoughts. Holding onto sound judgment and discernment in the midst of stormy and rocky places seems difficult at best, but if we continue to call out to God for help and continue to reach out to others in recovery, we will be able to make wise decisions.

*Isaiah 12:2-4 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.*



Many of us find that our old ways of thinking were dominated by fear. We were afraid that we wouldn't be able to get our drugs or that there wouldn't be enough. We feared discovery, arrest, and incarceration. Further down the list were fears of financial problems, homelessness, overdose, and illness. And fear controlled our actions.

The early days of recovery weren't a great deal different for many of us; then, too, fear dominated our thinking. "What if staying clean hurts too much?" We asked ourselves. "What if I can't make it? What if the people in recovery don't like me? What if recovery doesn't work?" The fear behind these thoughts can still control our behavior, keeping us from taking the risks necessary to stay clean and grow. It may seem easier to resign ourselves to certain failure, giving up before we start than to risk everything on a slim hope. But that kind of thinking leads only to relapse.

To stay clean, we must find the willingness to change our old ways of thinking. What has worked for other addicts can work for us-but we must be willing to try it. We must trade in our old cynical doubts for new affirmations of hope. When we do, we'll find it's worth the risk.

*Daniel 10:12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.*

In our active addiction, fear of the future and what might happen was a reality for many of us. What if we got arrested? Lost our job? Our spouse died? We went bankrupt? *And on, and on, and on.* It was not unusual for us to spend hours, even whole days thinking about what might happen. We played out entire conversations and scenarios before they ever occurred, then charted our course on the basis of: "What if..." By doing this, we set ourselves up for disappointment after disappointment.

From listening in meetings, we learn that living in the present, not the world of "What if," is the only way to short-circuit our self-fulfilling prophecies of doom and gloom. *We can only deal with what are real today, not our fearful fantasies of the future.*

Coming to believe that the LORD has only the best in store for us is one way we can combat that fear. We hear in meetings that our Higher Power won't give us more than we can handle in one day. And we know from experience that, if we ask, the God we've come to understand will surely care for us. We stay clean through adverse situations by practicing our faith in the care of a Power greater than ourselves. Each time we do, we become less fearful of "What if" and more comfortable with "What is."

*John 14:1-4 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."*

The movie E.T. was loved by millions. When masses of people exhibit such energy for something, there's often some deep similar pattern it has stirred up. In the scene when the abandoned E.T. whispers, "Home, Elliot, Home," his words touch the exact symbol that evokes our deep longings. When E.T. whispered that word "Home" millions of every age in every culture wept.

We weep because we are still divine infants in exile. No matter how we work to reclaim and champion the child within us, there remains a level of emptiness and absence in us all.

There is surely rejoicing when we reclaim and champion our inner child. For many of us, finding our inner child is like finding home for the first time. But no matter how secure and how connected we all become, there is a dark journey we all still have to take. As fearful as it is, there's a longing for it inside us all. For no matter how completely we fulfill our earthly goals and dreams, even when we arrive just where we have longed to be, we always experience a slight disappointment. So much so that even after Dante, Shakespeare and Mozart, we say: "Is that all?"

I believe this sense of disappointment arises because we have another home where we all belong. I believe we came forth out of the depth of being, and being calls us back. I believe we came from God and we belong to God.

No matter how good it gets, we still are not home. The wounded child Augustine said it well: *“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O LORD, and our hearts are restless till they repose in Thee.”* That will be our true homecoming at last.

*Acts 18:9-10 One night the LORD spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”*

### Fear of Change

Life is a series of changes, both large and small. Although we may know and accept this fact intellectually, chances are that our initial emotional reaction to change is fear. For some reason, we assume that each and every change is going to hurt, causing us to be miserable.

If we look back on the changes that have happened in our lives, we'll find that most of them have been for the best. We were probably very frightened at the prospect of life without drugs, yet it's the best thing that's ever happened to us. Perhaps we've lost a job that we thought we'd die without, but later on we found greater challenge and personal fulfillment in a new career. As we venture forth in our recovery, we're likely to experience more changes. We will outgrow old situations and become ready for new ones.

With all sorts of changes taking place, it's only natural to grab hold of something, anything familiar and try to hold on. Solace can be found in a Power greater than ourselves. The more we allow changes to happen at the direction of the LORD, the more we'll trust that those changes are for the best. Faith will replace fear, and we'll know in our hearts that all will be well.