

YEAR ONE

MY JOURNEY



MAN IN THE MIRROR

WELCOME TO MY JOURNEY

Man in the Mirror ('MIM') welcomes you to *My Journey*!

The American philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “*Life is a journey, not a destination.*”

The Apostle Paul compared our journey to a race, urging us to “*run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:1-2). If we want to finish well, we must fix our eyes on Jesus.

No man can succeed alone on his journey through life. With that in mind, we have carefully curated *My Journey* to help you navigate your challenges as a man and disciple of Christ. We want to help you move beyond survival mode with the ultimate goal of *fighting the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith.* (see 2 Timothy 4:7).

This workbook is Year One of a three-year curriculum structured for discussion in MIM Small Groups. Your group will help you reflect honestly, pursue God wholeheartedly, and live vibrantly. No matter where you are on your spiritual pilgrimage, *My Journey* will lead you into a season of building meaningful relationships that change lives and build the kingdom of God.

Through your MIM men's group, you will be encouraged to establish accountability with your fellow brothers and learn to engage in life-on-life discipleship. As part of MIM's mandate for “no man left behind”, you will learn to care, pray, and encourage one another to grow into spiritual maturity and Christlikeness.

Above all, by pointing each other to Christ, you will become a disciple and a disciple-maker—beginning in your own home.

So, buckle up, enjoy the ride, and have a great adventure!

The MIM Asia Team

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PATRICK MORLEY

Patrick Morley is the Founder of Man in the Mirror, a global men's ministry impacting thousands of churches and millions of men.

After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies by the age of 35, Patrick Morley began his own journey in search for meaning, purpose, and a deeper relationship with God. In doing so, he started a weekly Bible study in a bar with a handful of guys in 1986—a study that now reaches thousands of men around the world every week.

Inspired and challenged by those studies and conversations, he wrote *The Man in the Mirror*, named one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the 20th century. The deep hunger he saw in men for a more authentic life led him to start *Man in the Mirror* as a men's ministry in 1986. Patrick says "the ministry of *Man in the Mirror* exists in answer to the prayers of all those wives, mothers, and grandmothers who have for decades been praying for the men in their lives."

Widely regarded as a leading authority on men's issues, Patrick has written 23 books and more than 750 articles—all focused on helping men solve their most compelling problems. His books have been translated into numerous languages and printed in 48 countries.

He graduated from the University of Central Florida, earned a PhD in management, completed postgraduate studies at Harvard Business School and Oxford University, and graduated from Reformed Theological Seminary. He and his wife live in Winter Park, FL. They have two married children and five grandchildren.

MAN IN THE MIRROR

VISION & MISSION

Man in the Mirror equips Christian men around the world to engage in meaningful relationships that change lives and build the kingdom of God.

At Man in the Mirror, we want to see every man reflect honestly, pursue God wholeheartedly, and live vibrantly. Here's how:

PERSONAL

Creating and curating resources for men who want to live abundant lives in Christ.

ONE-ON-ONE

Inspiring and equipping mature Christian men to guide another man toward the goodness and grace of God.

GROUPS

Providing opportunities for men to connect with a group of brothers, where together they navigate the Christian life.

CHURCHES

Training, supporting, and consulting with men's leaders in local churches as they build disciple-making ministries.

For further information on Man in the Mirror ministry including MIM's Statement of Faith, please visit www.maninthemirror.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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MIM SMALL GROUP
OBJECTIVES

M & M (MISSION & MULTIPLICATION)

MISSIONAL

Mission to reach men and build a relationship together with them to follow Christ.

MULTIPLICATION

Multiply the Gospel in the lives of men through the experience of a life-changing journey in the MIM Small Group.

FIVE FOR CHRIST

Commit 5 names to Christ and pledge to reach out to them in prayer and deeds.

No.	Name	Relation
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

MIM SMALL GROUP MEMBER'S COVENANT

MIM Small Group covenant to Christ and fellow brothers:

- To commit to spiritual growth by having regular personal devotional / quiet time with God, studying the Word, praying daily, worshipping, and serving others.
- To make it a priority to attend and be prompt to all meetings, to prepare for the meeting in advance by reading the chapter, answering questions, and memorising the scripture verse.
- To participate in group discussions and activities.
- To be truthful & honest in my sharing and not be judgemental of others.
- To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the Small Group. Whatever is shared in the group stays with the group.
- To pray for one another, our families, and salvation of our pre-believing relatives & friends.
- To support the MIM ministry in sharing the vision, engaging through mission, and giving to multiply
- To adhere to no part of this workbook may be reproduced in any form by any means electronic, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author or the publisher.

.....
Signed by member
Date:

.....
Signed by group leader
Date:

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CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY: SETTLING WHO I AM AND WHAT MY LIFE IS ABOUT

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*
2 Corinthians 5:17

Sample

OBJECTIVES

The key learning points of this chapter are:

- To know and understand what men want.
- To identify the reasons behind us losing our identity.
- To discover our true identity and purpose from God's perspective.

*“When you seek your identity in Jesus Christ and His gospel,
you will find a deep, lasting satisfaction so infectious that others will want it too.”*

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

MISSING IDENTITY: IN CONUNDRUM

The questions “who am I and why do I exist?” are not easy to answer.

When we talk about identity, we often associate it with the term “seeking” or “finding” and aptly so, as our identity seems to be repeatedly lost or missing. In the search for our identity, we need to know where to find it, and to do so, one needs to know what men want.

Men are wired to want three things:

- **A CAUSE: Something to live for.** A cause is something we can give our lives to that will make a difference. This is our need to be significant, to find a purpose and a mission – to die for a worthy cause instead of living without a reason at all.
- **A COMPANION: Someone to share life with.** This is the sphere of relationships, love, family, friends, or a wife. A man goes off to hunt his bear (his cause) and then returns home to be congratulated or consoled by his wife and the community that loves and supports him.
- **A CONVICTION: Something to stand for.** This is a belief system or worldview that explains why the first two are so difficult. We all want a belief system or worldview that is true and coherent and makes sense of God and life.

There are essentially four worldviews — **secular, moral, religious, and Christianity**. Of these four worldviews, all eventually fail except Christianity, and usually at the worst possible moment. The Christian worldview is the only conviction that makes more sense as time passes. All other worldviews make less sense over time because of the unexplainable anomalies that keep piling up.

Once we satisfy these three wants, everything else we want (and need) generally falls into line.

Question: *What belief system/conviction do you currently live by?*

STOLEN IDENTITY: IN CRISIS

THE FALL

OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

There are many reasons why the big questions of “who I am and what my life is all about” are tricky and hard to answer, but two require a mention— what is commonly called “the Fall” and our cultural moment.

THE FALL

“The Fall”, described in Genesis 3, refers to the story of how sin and suffering pervasively entered the world through the sins of Adam and Eve.

Because of the Fall, there are forces constantly trying to throw us into an identity crisis – the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We must manage our lives against the Fall which had significantly distorted our outlook. There is a war going on inside each of us between the Spirit and the flesh to define our identity. However, the Bible makes a great pair of glasses for correcting our outlook. Just as we’re warned to take precautions against cyber-hacking, consider these scriptural warnings about getting hacked by our enemies on the spiritual battlefield: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The World	The Flesh	The Devil
<p>The enemy without - Entrenched around us.</p> <p>Anything that conflicts with Christianity, such as materialism and consumerism.</p>	<p>The enemy within - Entrenched inside of us.</p> <p>Our own sinful natures.</p>	<p>The Hacker-in-Chief.</p> <p>The devil is the Deceiver and Accuser – making us feel false condemnation, shame, and guilt. He robs us of our identity and makes our life miserable.</p>
<p><i>“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever”</i> (1 John 2:15–17).</p>	<p><i>“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person”</i> (Mark 7:20–23).</p>	<p><i>“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies”</i> (John 8:44).</p> <p><i>“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”</i> (1 Peter 5:8).</p>

OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

The Fall also leads to cultural upheaval where men today are under a cloud of suspicion. Regrettably, entertainment, news, and social media have created “a great mass of common assumptions”¹ about who men are—mostly negative.

As a result, the male identity has taken a beating.

But the vast majority of us get out of bed every day and try to do the right thing. Of course, some men do wicked things, and their sins have given rise to stereotypes about men.

These pejorative assumptions about men have been repeated millions of times. Often enough to become an “outlook.” Christian author C. S. Lewis put it so well:

“Every age has its own outlook . . . All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook—even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united— united with each other and against earlier and later ages—by a great mass of common assumption²”

You can fully become the man God created you to be. God’s promise to you is that you don’t have to be caged in “the contemporary outlook.” Jesus Christ has come to set you free:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Jesus has provided a way of escape, which we’ll explore in this workbook.

Question: *Why do you think most men struggle to find their true identity?
In what ways do you struggle with your true identity?*

TRUE IDENTITY: IN CHRIST

Our Identity and Purpose can be viewed from the perspective of Psalm 8:3-6:

- **Our Identity—Who We Are**
You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.
- **Our Purpose—What Our Lives Are About**
You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet.

You will never know “who” you are until you answer the question of “Whose” you are.

You will never know “what” the purpose of your life is, until you can answer the question “Who” is the purpose of your life.

Now it’s time to clarify what we mean by “identity” so we know we’re talking about the same thing.

YOUR “OBITUARY” IDENTITY

The man we see (The Visible You)

Part of your identity is like the clothes you wear. These make up your “obituary” identity—the visible things others remember about you when you’re gone.

When you see yourself, who do you see? Is it based on:

- **your roles** — like husband or father?
- **what you do** — your work or ministry?
- **what you have** — like your home, money, and car?
- **what you look like** — your appearance, your physique, or the color of your skin?
- **who you know** — your relationships, acquaintances, or friends?
- **where you’re from** — your family background or your birthplace/origin?

Here's the problem:

If all the above things that define you are gone, does that mean your identity is lost?

And how closely do you think the man you see compares to the man God sees?

YOUR "NAKED BEFORE GOD" IDENTITY

The man God sees (The Hidden You)

The other part of your identity is like the body under the clothes: what men say really matters most when they take stock of their lives—your wife, your children, your friends, your faith, your heart, your calling, your character, and how you conduct yourself. These make up your “naked before God” identity.

When David was picked to be the king of Israel, the Lord sent Samuel to the home of Jesse. When Samuel arrived, he saw Jesse's handsome oldest son and was ready to offer him the job. But the Lord said, “No, not him.”

“But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. **People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**” (1 Samuel 16:7, emphasis added)

People will judge you by your appearance. But God looks at your heart.

Who you are in Christ is who you really are.

King David, the man after God's own heart, asked the ultimate question about our identity—who are we, and why do we exist? His answer, echoed throughout Scripture, gives us the Christian answer to who we are and what our lives are all about:

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them?” (Psalm 8:3-4)

IDENTITY AS “ROLES”

One way we can think about our identity is in terms of “roles.” For instance:

- **Sons and daughters:** Is there any greater joy than to “feel” completely loved and accepted without reservation?
- **Disciples:** To be a disciple is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. For now, let's define a disciple as someone who believes in Jesus and wants to model their life after his teachings and example.
- **Friends:** In John 15:15, Jesus says, “*I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*”
- **Servants:** Because of the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus, we feel like we can no longer be happy unless we serve him as an expression of our deep gratitude.
- **Temples:** The Holy Spirit lives inside us. We “house” the presence of God.
- **Vessels:** When we draw close to God, the Holy Spirit fills us with so much love, grace, mercy, kindness, and generosity that we have enough for ourselves and an “overflow” that we can share with others through love and acts of service.
- **Charges:** In John 14:26, the Holy Spirit has been charged to teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus told us.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list.

IDENTITY AS “ATTRIBUTES”

Another way we think of our identity is in relation to “*character and conduct*” — or “*attributes.*”

God has not left this to chance. He has told us which attributes to prize most, and He has promised to give us those attributes freely through His Spirit out of the overflow of abiding in Christ:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23 ESV)

The fruit of the Spirit is what God does for you, not what you do for God.

It is also appropriate to add humility to any list of desirable identity attributes:

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Does this list do justice to the identity attributes you would like to exhibit?

If so, consider memorizing the two verses above so you will always have them on the tip of your tongue.

A HUG AND A DECLARATION

To tie off this chapter, let’s go with these two ideas:

A HUG	A DECLARATION
Something God can do for you	Something you can do for God

There are many great speakers trying to inspire men to go change the world by making appeals to their courage, pride, inner strength, moral obligation, sense of duty, willingness to make a sacrifice, and “this is what you really need to do.” Those appeals, especially when emotionally charged, can get men amped up, jacked up, and fired up. But in most cases, their effect is only temporary.

There is one thing, though, that really and truly changes men’s hearts. That is to bring men into the real presence of Jesus, even if only for a brief moment, to get a little larger glimpse of the God who is.

What changes men's hearts is when they feel in their emotions what they believe in their minds—that God really loves them without reservation, unconditionally, just as they are.

A Hug From God:

(Something God can do for you)

God loves you very much. In fact, He wants to give you a hug.

Listen carefully to what God has to say to you:

“I love you very much.

***I know your name. I knit you together in your mother’s womb.
All the days of your life were ordained before one of them came to pass.
I have determined the exact times and places where you should live.***

***Your times are in my hands. I know every thought you have from afar.
I know every word you speak before it forms on the tip of your tongue.
You are my new creation. You are the full expression of my creative genius.
I was at my very best when I made you.***

***I will never forsake or leave you. No one will be able to snatch you out of my hands.
I began a good work in you and will carry it on to completion.
When you are a battered reed, I will not break you off.
When you are a smoldering wick, I will not put you out.
Two sparrows are bought and sold for a penny, yet not one of them falls to the ground
without my knowing it—and you are worth more than many sparrows.
I am patient, not wanting anyone to perish.
My word that goes out from my mouth to you will accomplish all this and achieve what I want.”***

These words are adapted straight from God's Word. How do we respond to such wonderful news?

A Call to Action: A Declaration
(Something You Can Do for God)

We now give you an opportunity to declare your identity “in Christ” and what your life is all about. By making the following declaration, you can affirm, “The old has gone, the new is here!”

MY DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Heavenly Father, I am tired of weak, unsatisfying faith. I am weary of leading a divided life. I want to be so fully “in Christ” that others want to catch what I have. As a “new creation,” I long to know Your love for me as a son, disciple, friend, servant, temple, vessel, and charge of the Holy Spirit. I want to experience and infectiously exhibit all the fruit of Your Spirit, with all humility.

So here today, I take my stand. I repent of all my worldly and sinful ways and put my faith in Christ alone. I hereby declare that from this day forward, I will stop seeking the God, or gods, I have wanted and will start seeking the God who is. I pledge to lead a Bible-saturated life of devotion and study of God.

My desire is to renew my mind, to be a man after God's own heart, to live out of the overflow of a vibrant relationship with Jesus, and to fully follow Jesus Christ with my whole heart each and every day. I will make it my business to live in a right relationship with God and in a right relationship with all people, and to exercise my gifts to fulfill Your calling on my life.

My true identity is “in Christ.” I commit to live openly for the glory of God in all my ways. I openly confess that I can do none of this apart from Your grace, Father, through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I pledge my allegiance this day to a life of Christ-centered manhood. If they cut me, I want to bleed Jesus. Amen.

(Signature)

Name :

Date :

The background of the page is a scenic landscape featuring rolling mountains and a valley. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds against a light blue background. The mountains in the foreground are dark and silhouetted, while the valley below shows some greenery and a small town or village. The overall tone is peaceful and serene.

CHAPTER 9

MARRIAGE: FINDING A NEW BEST FRIEND IN MY WIFE

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:25-28

Sample

OBJECTIVES

The key learning points of this chapter are:

- To understand the way God made women and what is a wife's greatest need.
- To know men's primary role in marriage as husbands.
- To learn how to make our wives our top priority.

"Most marriage problems would disappear if we would simply speak to our wives with the same kindness, courtesy, forethought, and respect with which we speak to our coworkers."

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 18:22

MOMENT OF TRUTH: HONEYMOON IS OVER – WHAT'S NEXT?

In every marriage, when the honeymoon is over, adjustments need to be made. It's a new season to settle down, set up a home, build a life together, understand each other's needs, synchronize your lives, and find a rhythm for living together.

The two of you are setting up some ground rules, figuring out each other's hot buttons and how not to push them. You're answering questions such as:

- What's going to be the division of labor in our home?
- How are we going to support each other?
- What is my mate's love language?
- How can we best encourage, comfort, and console each other and take the time to do that?

On top of that, you're working out a sex life, having children, going to work, and figuring out how you're going to deal with money. You're learning how to resolve conflicts, discovering that you can't control each other and be happy, and working out the important skill of asking and giving forgiveness. Plus, learning how to leave time for having some fun together.

It's a lot to handle.

MARRIAGE 101: MEN'S #1 PROBLEM & OPPORTUNITY

No man plans to fail in marriage. No man ever went into a marriage thinking, *I wonder how quickly I can blow this up.*

Every man who ever exchanged vows pictured himself heroically providing for and protecting a woman for whom he would willingly give his life. Yet, in spite of our intentions, if we put men's marriage problems in one stack and all the other problems men face in a second stack, the marriage stack alone is higher than all of men's other problems combined.

Easily the number one problem for most men is that their marriages are not working the way God intended.

But there's more. The issues most couples struggle with during their first year of marriage are, by degrees, the same issues they'll still be struggling with five, ten, or twenty years down the road.

How about you? If you could peer into a crystal ball and see ten or twenty years down the road, what do you think your marriage will look like if you continue your current course?

Here is some great news for you. The number one opportunity for most married men is how a surprisingly few, but strategic, course corrections can dramatically alter where your marriage will end up in ten or twenty years. But first, let us understand *why men get married and the way God made women?*

WHY DO MEN GET MARRIED?

The Bible has given a succinct explanation on why men get married:

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
Genesis 2:18

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.
Genesis 2:24

Men don't like to be alone, and we need help - It's in our nature. So, God created women and instituted the miracle of marriage.

Marriage is the beautiful, mysterious fusion of a man and a woman into what the Bible intriguingly calls "one flesh." For those God calls to marry or remarry, marriage is the Eiffel Tower of human relationships, majestically towering high above every other relationship.

By doing marriage God's way, you can be your wife's best friend, and she yours. The starting point is to understand how she processes differently than you do and why.

THE WAY GOD MADE HER

Genesis 3:16 says, *"To the woman he said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. **Your desire** will be for your husband, and he will rule over you'"* (emphasis added).

As part of her "nature," your wife is going to give you the first place in her life.

A wife's greatest need is for intimacy with her husband. That's her natural instinct.

When her "desire" for you is led by the Holy Spirit, nothing is more beautiful and precious. However, the full sense of the Hebrew word for desire is best understood as "a desire bordering on disease." Because of the Fall, her desire for you can be corrupted or taken advantage of. For example, she might be susceptible to manipulation, jealousy, being too clingy, too needy, worry, or wanting to control.

No doubt that's why the Bible instructs husbands,

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (Colossians 3:19)

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)

Cut her some slack. The Fall has affected her just as profoundly, though differently from you. For you:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground. (Genesis 3:17-19)

Just as you need her support when you feel the prick of thorns, she needs you to be tender with her. Now that you know what she needs, how do you give it to her?

MEN'S PRIMARY ROLE IN MARRIAGE: SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Not long after my wife's parents moved to Orlando to live near us, my mother-in-law, June, needed to permanently move into the nursing care wing of their retirement community. My father-in-law, Ed, turned his apartment into a campsite. He slept there but spent as much of every day as he could in his wife's room. For her part, June said, "I just want to be with Ed."

She was his top priority, and because of that, they were best friends. **As the shadows of twilight fell across them, the only thing they really wanted was to be together.**

Ed's love illustrates the primary, longest, almost only, and definitely most elegant instruction the Bible offers a man about his role as a husband:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:25–32)

In theology, Jesus, in His role as the “Christ,” occupies the classic threefold office of **prophet, priest, and king**. According to Ephesians 5:25, “in the same way” you have been ordained as your wife’s and family’s prophet, priest, and king. Let’s explore these three roles:

The Role of a Prophet	The Role of a Priest	The Role of a King
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents God to people. • Speaks for God. <p>As a husband:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are anointed to be your family prophet. • you represent God to your wife and your family. • you are a messenger from God to your family. <p>Some practical examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you calm your wife with God’s wisdom when she reacts emotionally. • you proclaim the gospel of faith to your family. • you provide biblical instruction and training to your wife and children without becoming legalistic. • you prepare family devotions and encourage private devotions. • You insist on regular church attendance. • you are the arbiter of family values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents people to God. • Mediates before God. <p>As a husband:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are anointed to be your family priest. • you represent your wife and children to God. • you are a mediator to God for your family. <p>Some practical examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you spend time in prayer each day, remembering the needs and concerns of your wife. • you pray for the salvation of your children and the forgiveness of their sins. • you set the spiritual temperature in the home. • you sacrifice your life for theirs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents God to people. • Speaks for God. <p>As a husband:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are anointed to be your family king. • you lead and protect your wife and children. • you are the provider for your wife and family. <p>Some practical examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you work diligently to earn enough for food and shelter. • you administer discipline with fairness in your family. • you quickly forgive and overlook offenses. • you act in a manner worthy of receiving honor. • you treat your wife with consideration and respect. • you are careful not to be harsh with her.

Question: *What kind of love does the Bible command us to have for our wives? How is it different from the world?*

MEN'S TOP PRIORITY IN MARRIAGE

Most marriage problems would disappear if we would simply speak to our wives with the same kindness, courtesy, forethought, and respect with which we speak to our coworkers.

That said, here are some practical ideas to help you do just that:

- Adopt the 70 percent mind-set
- Make deposits into her emotional bank
- Make your wife your best friend
- Pray for and with your wife

In other words, after God, make your wife your top priority.

Do these and you'll be well on your way to making your wife your top priority. And by God's grace, a wife who one day many years from now might say, *"I just want to be with you."*

THE 70 PERCENT MIND-SET

Where does marital disappointment come from? Somewhere in the relationship you have an expectation of your wife that isn't being met—appearance, level of effort, sex, and so forth. And to keep it real, some days you feel like you're going to explode. Of course, your wife does too.

How do we keep a few disappointments from ruining an otherwise good thing?

As a general rule, all disappointment is the result of unmet expectations.

So, my first suggestion to help you make your wife your top priority is to adjust your expectations. If you set realistic expectations, you won't feel like you're getting "less" from each other than you expected. So, what's realistic?

Family systems scholar Edwin Friedman said, *"In reality, no human marriage gets a rating of more than 70%."*²⁷ What he meant was that humming along at about 70 percent of potential is the norm.

In terms of days, you will experience marital satisfaction for five out of seven days in a normal marriage and family system. But a couple of days a week are likely to be a little off—mood swings, job woes, money pressure, the stress of children. In other words, even the most successful marriage will only be symptom-free about 70 percent of the time.

Why just 70 percent? It's the Fall.

We see each other through the veil of our sinful natures. It takes grace to make a marriage work. No person is ideal. Our wives can be controlling, neglectful, strong-willed, pouty, unexpressive, unappreciative, and on and on. So can we.

The main way I have personally put "the 70 percent mind-set" into practice is by repeating a sentence for which I have paid a big price. But before I tell you the sentence, let me tell you how it came about.

One day my wife said out of the blue, "I don't feel safe with you anymore." I was devastated, but I knew why. For a few years, I had been putting a lot of pressure on her to exercise more—one of my personal values. My repeated "encouragements" were instead taken as jabs that made her feel like she wasn't good enough for me the way she was. That pressure made her feel like she had to perform—that my love for her was conditional.

When she said that, I figured I could apologize, change course, and that would take care of it. And so that's what I did. But to my complete surprise, she didn't respond. In fact, it took three very long years until one day she said, "I feel safe with you again." During those years, the Lord repeatedly revealed my sinful nature to me. I repented for pressuring her and also for assuming I could fix it overnight. And now, here is the sentence I came up with during those three long years:

“I let you be you, and you let me be me.”

Today, after many years of repetition, it’s just part of who we are—both of us. It’s a habit. It’s part of my worldview. A guiding principle. Consider giving it a try. It’s an easy-to-remember way to manage your expectations.

Question: *Why do you think for marriage to work, after God but before all others, make your wife your top priority?*

THE EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT

The most practical idea concerns the *emotional bank account*. The concept is quite simple:

Every human being—you, your wife, or the woman you’re going to marry—has an emotional bank. Everything about your relationship is either a deposit or a withdrawal.

Picture a vault in your wife’s chest. With every interaction you have with her – whether in speech or gesture, you are either making a deposit into her emotional bank account or making a withdrawal.

Let’s look at a couple of examples. You come home from work. It has been a long day. You’re exhausted. You don’t want to engage with anyone. You have felt this way before, and you have developed a system—a way of letting your wife know that you don’t have anything left to give. And so, as you walk through the door, you let out a deep, heavy growl that resembles the sound of a large zoo animal, signaling to her, “I’ve had a tough day. I really don’t want to be bothered by anybody and anything. Whatever you had to go through today, I’ve had to go through a lot worse so don’t bother me.”

So, is this a deposit or a withdrawal from your wife’s emotional bank account? Okay. You get the picture.

Now let’s suppose it’s the next morning, and because you feel so guilt-ridden for being so grumpy, you decide to bring her breakfast in bed with an apology. Is that a withdrawal or a deposit? Obviously, that’s a deposit.

Although everything is a deposit or withdrawal, a few deposits are better than others. Focus your deposits where your wife most appreciates them. To accomplish that, you’ll need to know her love language. Gary Chapman wrote that there are five love languages²⁸:

- words of affirmation
- quality time
- receiving gifts
- acts of service
- physical touch

Of these, we each have one or two main ways we prefer to be loved. However, a cautionary tale is in order! *That’s because our tendency is to love the way we want to be loved, not the way our mate wants to be loved.*

For example, my wife loves running errands for me, like going to the store or picking up dry cleaning. That gives her great pleasure, because that’s her love language. And I appreciate it so much, but my love language is quality time. In other words, I feel most loved when we’re together, not because she ran to the store—as nice as that is.

On the other hand, since I know her love language is service, I try to do chores that come up around the house without procrastinating, such as changing bulbs, unloading the groceries, fixing things, etc. Since I'm not handy, those chores are not high on my list. I have to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest. But when I see how much loving her in her love language means to her, it's more than worth the effort.

Couple the emotional bank account with Chapman's five love languages, and you have a focused way to make deposits.

BE YOUR WIFE'S BEST FRIEND

Possibly the most important idea is to intentionally set out to be a best friend to your wife.

Once I conducted a survey among the wives of the men in our Bible study to find out what they thought were the most important issues facing their marriages. The primary response was, "We don't spend enough time together." Many also responded, "When we are together, I wish our conversation was more meaningful."

Time and talk—these were the two top issues on the minds of the wives of our men.

Perhaps the biggest deposit of all, what can most signal that you want to love your wife sacrificially, that you want to make her your top priority after God, is to just say, "I want to be my wife's best friend."

This happened to me at the thirteen-year mark of marriage. We had two awesome kids, a beautiful home, and the dream job. Everything should have been great. But it wasn't. Here's what was confusing. We had a good marriage. And because it wasn't a bad marriage, I had lulled myself into thinking it was better than it really was. We were just drifting.

One day, I remember praying, "God, what has happened here? I can remember when I first saw that woman walking down the street and my heart would thump and I would feel like it was going to pound out of my chest. I remember how my knees would wobble and my legs would feel like they were going to buckle.

"God," I said, "I want that back! I want to have that feeling back again. What can I do?"

God spoke to me. Over the next few days, the thought formed, Why don't you make Patsy your best friend? I said, "God, I'll do that! But, God, I have a problem. I have no idea how to do that."

After praying for a couple more weeks, the idea came to me one day:

After the children leave the dinner table and go off to do homework, why don't you hang around at the dinner table for about twenty minutes and just talk. Listen without giving an overly quick reply. Just talk, but not about balancing the family checkbook, not doing family business, but just really getting to know or re-know this fragile flower that has been entrusted to you, a woman who wants intimacy, who is vulnerable with a desire for you. Why don't you just spend that time with her?

And that's what I did, without mentioning why. I started hanging around the table for an extra twenty minutes after dinner. You know what? She stayed.

A few months later, I came home from work one day and she had bought me a present—a little plaque. It says, "***Happiness is being married to your best friend.***"

PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE AND WITH YOUR WIFE

Pray for Your Wife

David Delk and I wrote a book, *The Marriage Prayer*²⁹, in which we outlined a sixty-eight-word prayer that captures the essence of the Bible's teaching about marriage. There is a version for husbands to pray for their wives and a version for wives to pray for their husbands.

Here's the husband's version of the Marriage Prayer:

*Father,
I said, "'Til death do us part"—I want to mean it.
Help me love You more than her, and her more than anyone or anything else.
Help me bring her into Your presence today. Make us one, like You are three in one.
I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her— so she would love you more and we can bring You glory.
Amen.*

In my human pride, I didn't think I "personally" needed to pray this prayer, but felt I had a duty to pray for my wife because I was, after all, recommending it to men!

Within weeks, strange things started to happen. I began asking, "Can I get you another cup of coffee?" "Would you like me to take out the trash?" and dozens of similar questions that were new for me. One day, I saw empty Splenda packets stuck to the bottom of the wastebasket and made it my business to retrieve them. The next thing I remember was standing there wondering, *What just happened?*

And then it dawned on me. A phrase from the marriage prayer went through my mind: "I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her—so she would love you more."

After a few months of praying "*I want to mean it*" and "*Help me love you more than her, and her more than anyone or anything else,*" another change came over me. I realized I didn't merely "want" to mean it. I did mean it! And I didn't need God to "help" me to love him and her. I did love them both most of all!

So, I changed the first two sentences and started praying:

"Father, I said, "'Til death do us part"—I want to mean it. Help me I love You more than her, and her more than anyone or anything else..."

At that point, I was sure God had shown me all there was to see. But there was more! Two years ago, I had an epiphany while reading the Lord's Prayer. I was struck by how "other-ish" the prayer sounded. Jesus taught us to pray "us" and "we" prayers, not "I" and "me" prayers. So I adjusted and started praying the marriage prayer with a spiritual wide angle lens, this time in the key of *we*, and then it further evolved from "*we want to mean it*" to "*we mean it*", as seen below:

The Evolution of the Marriage Prayer

'I mean it' Version	'We' Version	'Pro' Version
<p><i>Father,</i></p> <p><i>I said, "'Til death do us part"—I mean it.</i></p> <p><i>I love You more than her, and her more than anyone or anything else.</i></p> <p><i>Help me bring her into Your presence today.</i></p> <p><i>Make us one, like You are three in one.</i></p> <p><i>I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her — so she would love You more and we can bring You glory. Amen.</i></p>	<p><i>Father,</i></p> <p><i>We</i> said, "'Til death do us part"—<i>we want to mean it.</i></p> <p><i>Help us</i> love You more than each other, and <i>each other</i> more than anyone or anything else.</p> <p><i>Help us</i> bring each other into Your presence today.</p> <p><i>Make us one, like You are three in one.</i></p> <p><i>We</i> want to hear each other, cherish each other, and serve each other — so we both would love You more and bring You glory. Amen.</p>	<p><i>Father,</i></p> <p><i>We</i> said, "'Til death do us part"—<i>we mean it.</i></p> <p><i>We</i> love You more than each other, and each other more than anyone or anything else.</p> <p><i>Help us</i> bring each other into Your presence today.</p> <p><i>Make us one, like You are three in one.</i></p> <p><i>We</i> want to hear each other, cherish each other, and serve each other — so we both would love You more and bring You glory. Amen.</p>

Pray with Your Wife

In addition to praying for your wife, you can also pray *with* her. You may find it surprising, but also a relief, that not many men actually pray with their wives.

Praying with your wife sounds more intimidating than it is in practice. You don't need to pray together for a long time. For example, Patsy and I pray for about one to three minutes in the morning. And if we miss a morning, we don't worry about it. I'm usually the one who prays. She'll pray if I ask, but that's not her thing and she really would rather have me pray. Still, every now and then I will say, "Why don't you pray today," and she does.

You don't need a special place or time. For example, we just pray on the spot when we're ready to start our day. You can pray about anything you want, and you don't need to do much, if any, preparation. We always pray for our children and grandchildren. We pray looking back with thanks and gratitude, and then pray forward in supplication for people, situations, and daily tasks.

Also, we pray over the dinner meal, though we usually eat breakfast and lunch on our own. As you can see, it doesn't take a lot of effort, but it can make a profound difference.

Praying the Marriage Prayer with Your Wife

I pray the marriage prayer **for** my wife virtually every day, but once or twice a month, I pray it **with** her. Adjust to your own taste, but I've found about once every two weeks is a nice interval. That's often enough to really have an impact but not so often that it becomes rote.

You can pray either the 'WE' version or the 'PRO' version.

Caution: You may find it nerve-racking to pray the marriage prayer out loud with your wife at first. That's understandable. Because this prayer can do so much good, the spiritual opposition is so fierce. Go ahead and push through the fear.

I can't think of anything that has warmed my heart toward my wife and made me feel more connected to her than praying the marriage prayer with her out loud. Give it a try!

Question: *Which of the four practical ideas in making your wife your top priority do you need to work at and how are you going to do it?*

CONCLUSION

Some men believe it is impossible to please their wives and know what they want. But loving your wife and enriching your marriage is not really rocket science provided you don't overthink it.

In line with the Biblical truth from Ephesians 5:25, the way Jesus loves His bride is the template for how we should love our wives: *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy"*

Notice the exhortation to sacrificially love your bride **just as** ("equal to" or "in the same way as") Jesus loved and gave Himself to His bride, the church (the body of Christ).

The church (His bride) means everything to Jesus:

- He held nothing back from her.
- He sacrificed everything He had to serve her.
- He was willing to die for her.

In short, His bride was His top priority, and that's what Scripture wants us to imitate:

After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

REVIEW STATEMENTS

- A wife's greatest need is for intimacy with her husband.
- The way Jesus loves his bride is the template for how we should love our wives.
- You have been ordained as your family prophet, priest, and king.
- After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.

MEMORY VERSE

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:25-28

Question: *If Christ is our model to imitate, how did He love the church?
What does it mean to cleanse her by the washing with water through the word?*

PRAYER

Sample



CHAPTER 13

FEAR

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.
For fear has to do with punishment, and
whoever fears has not been perfected in love.*

1 John 4:18

Sample

OBJECTIVES

The key learning points of this chapter are:

- To understand what fear is and how it comes about.
- To learn to obey Jesus and move from fear to courage.
- To know that trusting God and having faith in Him will deliver us from fear.

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.

Jesus, Matthew 14:27

THE PROBLEM

What are you afraid of? What makes you worry?

- Is it the job jitters? Maybe you work under the constant tension of a boss who is always trying to outsource and downsize.
- Perhaps you have just learned you have a disabling illness, and you don't know how you will support your family. Death might look better to you than life.
- Some of you have a business deal that is hanging on by a frayed thread. You've been working on it for months. If it falls through, you will have to severely alter your lifestyle — you may lose everything. The thought of having to start over makes your hands tremble.
- You may have a son or daughter on drugs. Embarrassed and frightened, you don't know where to turn for help.
- You may be worried you're about to lose an important account that will devastate your cash flow.
- Maybe people intimidate you, and your relationships are filled with anxiety.
- Some men sense no direction for their lives, and they fear God has abandoned them.
- Some fear an uncertain future. Some do not have an assurance that when they die, they will actually be in the presence of God.

Every man struggles with the emotion of fear. *Fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of sudden disaster, fear of men — fears of all sorts elbow their way into our stream of conscious thought. Yet most of us are conditioned to deny we even have these fears.*

While some fears are constructive — many heroes are born by their reaction to a life threat — most fears handicap men.

And while fear itself is certainly not sinful, if it leads to not believing God, it can become sinful.

For most of us, how fear affects us is taking place through a process we barely comprehend. So, let's spend this chapter exploring and understanding what fear is all about, and how to cope with it.

Fear and courage are opposites. The dictionary defines:

- **“Courage”** as the state of mind that **enables** one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution.
- **“Fear”** as the agitated state of mind that **cripples** us from looking any further than the hardship itself.

The Bible repeatedly encourages us to not be afraid. For instance:

- When Jesus speaks, He often begins, *“Don't be afraid!”*
- We are told that God has not made us timid or fearful but gives us power, love, and self-discipline (see 2 Timothy 1:7).
- We are even told that the man who fears has not been made perfect (complete) in love (see 1 John 4:18).

If everywhere in the Scriptures we are encouraged to not be afraid, why do we constantly struggle with all types of fears?

FEAR FACTOR: WHY AM I AFRAID?

I've Been Lied To

There is no Free Lunch

We really are Guilty

If we are to understand why we do fear, we must understand why we don't trust God.

Three reasons stick out why we choose to be afraid rather than trust God:

- I've been lied to all my life
- There is no such thing as free lunch
- We really are guilty

I've Been Lied to All of My Life

Everyone lies. You are a liar. I am a liar. My wife is a liar. My parents lie. My business colleagues lie. My children lie. All of our lives we have been lied to.

Because of that, should we be surprised that when we read the Bible, we can hardly believe it is true?

Even though the Bible says to *"not be afraid"* and trust God, we wonder, at least occasionally, ***if it is really true*** because we have been lied to all of our lives.

There Is No Such Thing as a Free Lunch

The Bible promises, among other things, that:

- If we trust God with our lives, He will meet all of our needs and direct all of our paths.
- If we will confess our weaknesses and sins, God will not only forgive us but also cleanse us from all of our unrighteousness.
- If we confess our sins and follow Him, He will give us everything we have ever wanted: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

In other words, God will give us everything we have ever wanted, in exchange for everything we have ever wanted to get rid of.

However, most men find this hard to swallow the first time they hear it. Men find trusting God difficult because our experience tells us there is no such thing as free lunch. Instead of taking God at His Word, we keep looking for the angle, the loophole.

Where's the catch? we wonder. The end result is that we don't trust God fully, and that sets fear loose to roam the hallways of our minds.

Nevertheless, God did offer us a "free lunch," paid in full by Jesus Christ.

For this free lunch, all we have to do is allow Him to blot out the memory of everything we have ever done that is wrong.

Is it any wonder that so many men find the gospel hard to understand? The gospel really is unique. Jesus Christ came because men were unable to keep God's laws. But because God is just, someone had to receive punishment for our sins, so Jesus substituted Himself for us. It was our sins — yours and mine — for which Christ died. It wasn't His sins, but our sins!

That's what Scripture means when it says, *"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:7-8).

We Really Are Guilty

The third reason we don't trust God revolves around our moral guilt.

Our moral guilt is what convicts us that we are sinners:

- We know we have been guilty of moral depravity in our thought lives, our speech, and our actions.
- We find our sins contemptible; we despise our unrighteousness; we grieve over our incurable and wicked hearts.
- We really do deserve God's punishment and wrath.
- We really should be afraid of God, who has the power to give us what we justly deserve.

But in God's hard-to-fathom love, He has withheld His punishment from us and brought it on the Lord Jesus instead. The Bible assures us that *"perfect love [Jesus Christ] drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love [Jesus Christ]"* (1 John 4:18). God has withheld His punishment, so we don't have to fear — so that we can trust in Him.

However, you may find trusting God difficult because you know you really are guilty, and you simply can't believe that God would be so gracious that He would actually forgive you and remove the guilt you feel for your sins. Yet, that is exactly what He does.

When men do not accept God's forgiveness for their moral guilt, they have not been "made perfect in love," and the fear of their guilt remains with them.

So then, many men find trusting God difficult because *we have been lied to all of our lives; we don't believe in getting a free lunch; and we have difficulty accepting God's forgiveness.*

And men who don't trust God often find themselves stuck in the Cycle of Fear.

Question: *What are your fears?*

FEAR CYCLE

Reality	Response	Result	Return	Rescue
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The Cycle of Fear can be illustrated by the encounter of Peter with Jesus when he saw Him walking on the water. Here is the setup:

One day Jesus needed some time alone, so He instructed His disciples to get into their boat and go ahead of Him to the other side of the lake — and they set sail. Sometime during the evening hours, a storm came up, and the boat was buffeted by the waves and wind (see Matthew 14:22-31).

About that time, Jesus came walking toward them — walking on the water. They were terrified at the sight of Him, thinking He was a ghost! Fear gripped them.

Immediately Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

In response, Peter blurted out, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus told Peter, "Come."

Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water. We always think of Jesus walking on the water, but Peter, a man like us, also walked on water. That must have really taken some faith.

But just as Peter was on his way to becoming a hero and media celebrity, the Cycle of Fear began: “He saw the wind.” Reality set in. Suddenly he realized the crazy thing he was doing — he was walking on water! He saw the wind and realized he was in the middle of a fierce storm.

Below is the breakdown of the Cycle of Fear from this encounter:

Steps	Summary	Synopsis
1. Reality	We see the wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many times have each of us started out on a project — maybe a new job — with great faith, only to find ourselves in the middle of a fierce storm? • Maybe we set sail when the skies shone brightly, maybe we sensed the Lord sent us on our mission, but then the storm came. • We looked around and we “saw the wind.”
2. Response	We become afraid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When reality sets in and we lose sight of Jesus, we respond in fear. • We may have had big plans to raise godly kids. Or we dreamed about the glory of owning our own business. • But when we are forced to face reality, and the kids go off the rails or sales are not enough to cover the costs, our response is to be afraid.
3. Result	We begin to sink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we respond to reality and allow fear to overwhelm us, we often begin to sink. • Our faith kept us afloat, but when the winds came up and buffeted our career or business or family, we soon saw that our faith was too little; and we start to sink in the swirling waters of our problems.
4. Return	We return to Jesus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter returned to his source. His faith was not enough to keep him afloat, so he wisely acknowledged he needed help and returned to his source of power, Jesus. • When you are beginning to sink in the deep waters of your fears and problems, do you remember to return to your source? • When someone is in dire straits, they usually never call on anyone else but God. You don’t hear a greedy businessman who is falling on hard times say, “Money, please save me!”. Even the purported atheist, when his life is threatened, cries out, “Oh, my God!”
5. Rescue	Jesus rescues us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately upon hearing Peter crying out for help, Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter without any hesitation. • No matter how much wind we see, how big the storm, how afraid we become, or how deep we are sinking, when we return to Jesus, He will rescue us. • Jesus doesn’t promise to save your business, get your son off drugs, bring your wife to Christ, or keep you from losing your job, but He does promise to save you.

Everyone struggles with the Cycle of Fear. No once-for-all cure exists. But you can decrease the amount of time you spend in this cycle by following this charge from Jesus: **“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”**

Let’s learn how to obey Jesus and move from fear to faith.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR TO FAITH

Fog to Faith Bridge

Cliff of Fear to Cliff of Courage

Submit to God

Wait For God

STEP 1: FROM FOG TO FAITH BRIDGE

Step 1 to overcoming fear is to feel our way through the fog to the Bridge of Faith.

Often, we become fearful and anxious because we are unable to see what lies ahead – just like a fog that cuts our visibility and prevents us from seeing far. At the outset, it will be helpful for us to unbundle our emotions and differentiate between fear and other emotions of anxiety and dread.

Let us look to Jesus to see how we should respond despite the reality that we are in.

Was Jesus ever afraid? *No. Emphatically. Absolutely. Never. Not once.*

The fact that Jesus was never afraid offers us hope. He was tempted to fear, but He never succumbed. If ever a situation merited fear, it was Jesus at the Mount of Olives on the night He was betrayed by Judas (see Luke 22:39 – 46).

Jesus knew His fate — His destiny. All of His life pointed to the inevitability of that night. So, He withdrew with His disciples to their usual place on the Mount of Olives. Jesus knew the temptation to become afraid that would beset Him. He said to His disciples, *“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”*

Then Jesus withdrew a stone’s throw and prayed His well-known prayer: *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* To ask God to change His mind is our first clue to the torturous condition of Christ. He was sitting on death row. He knew that tomorrow He would die. He was being tempted to fear.

At this point, the agony of Jesus reached its peak, because He began to sweat drops of blood. This medically documented phenomenon, hematidrosis, only occurs in rare instances of extreme anxiety.

The Bible describes Jesus’ condition as one of *agonia*, which translates as “agony” or “anguish” as the result of a struggle. According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, this is the only time *agonia* is used in the Bible. We can say conclusively that Jesus underwent the most terrifying temptation ever encountered, yet He neither feared nor sinned by not believing His Father.

Just then, God sent an angel to strengthen Him. Since Jesus had been strengthened, He was standing on the Cliff of Courage. *His circumstances did not change, but His attitude did.*

God did not remove the source of agony, but He did strengthen Jesus so that He did not become afraid. Agony – yes. Fear – no. That’s our hope.

Have you ever been in the clutches of fear and asked God to deliver you from the temptation to give in and become afraid? When we ask Him, He will always strengthen us, just as He did Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we find the promise, *“When you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”*

Jesus told the disciples, *“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”* Because Jesus overcame this temptation, we have His power to overcome it too.

STEP 2: FROM CLIFF OF FEAR TO CLIFF OF COURAGE

Step 2 is to crawl across from the Cliff of Fear to the Cliff of Courage.

In the story of Peter walking on the water, Jesus expressed great patience and saved Peter from the Cycle of Fear. But can a man move past the Cycle of Fear and overcome his fears?

We often find ourselves standing on a Cliff of Fear peering across a wide, deep chasm to a Cliff of Courage where we wished we could stand. But how do we get there? **Figure 13.1** illustrates the dilemma. Jesus gives us the answer.

Right after Jesus saved Peter, he said, “*You of little faith. Why did you doubt?*” Faith is how we traverse from one cliff to the other. We cross from the Cliff of Fear to the Cliff of Courage on the Bridge of Faith. **Figure 13.2** shows how faith bridges the gorge between fear and courage.

The Cliffs of Fear and Courage

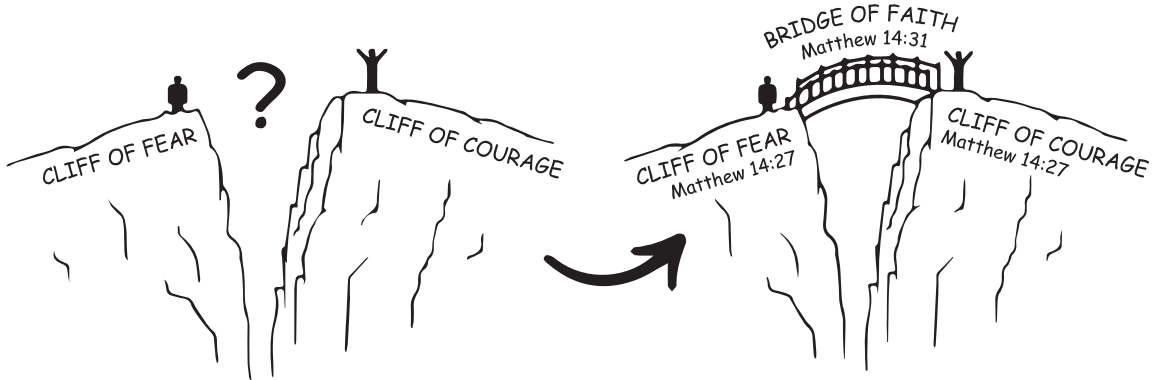


Figure 13.1

Figure 13.2

What Is Faith?

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is always oriented toward the future. We don't need courage to face what we already know. It is an uncertain future that gives birth to doubts and fears.

We don't know the details of what will happen in the future, but we do know God will take care of our needs and unite us with Himself forever. That's what faith is.

An old saying sums it up, “*We don't know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future.*”

Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2). As we fix our eyes on Him, He increases and perfects our faith. Many times, I heard Dr. Bill Bright say, “*Faith is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the bigger it grows.*”

So, when we find ourselves standing on the Cliff of Fear, peering across the wide expanse toward the Cliff of Courage, let's remember that faith in Jesus and the certain future He controls is our bridge across.

Question: *Why is it so hard to trust and have faith in God when you are afraid?*

STEP 3: SUBMIT TO GOD

Step 3 is to submit our circumstances and attitude to God and His will.

For us to fully understand the significance of submitting to God, we need to know the difference between being fearful of God and having the fear of God.

Godly Fear vs. Secular Fear

One of the most misunderstood principles of the Bible is the fear of God. What is the difference between the fear of God and secular fear (the other fears) with which we struggle?

The fear of God is not merely reverent thinking about Him, but involves an understanding of who God really is and a hatred of everything that is not of God.

Proverbs 8:13 reads, *“To fear the LORD is to hate evil.”* To effectively hate evil, a man must be able to differentiate between good and evil.

We fear men for very practical reasons:

- Men have the power to give us what we don’t deserve or to withhold from us what we do deserve.
- Men have the capacity to do the wrong thing.

We should fear God for equally practical reasons:

- God has the power to give us what we deserve.
- God does not have the capacity to do the wrong thing.

What we deserve is punishment for our sins. But God chose to withhold His punishment and instead sent Jesus to die a substitutionary death in our place for our sins. God is just, unlike men, and He demands that evil be punished. But thank God, He developed a plan for us to escape His wrath — Jesus Christ. And because of our faith in Christ, we now deserve eternal life, which God has freely given us.

Do we know whom to be afraid of?

We fear men, but they have no genuine power over us. We become concerned that they will cheat us in a business deal, withhold the pay raise, fire us, or rob our house.

But God has genuine power:

- He has the power of life and death;
- He has the power to judge our sins;
- He has prepared an eternal home for us;
- He promised that *“in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28);
- He says we will be *“more than conquerors”* (Romans 8:37).

So, whom are we better off fearing — God or man? The answer is rather obvious:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).
John Witherspoon wisely wrote, *“It is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of man.”*³⁵

We are much better off fearing God, who can give us what we do deserve, than fearing men, who — though they can give us what we don’t deserve or withhold what we do deserve — are unable to harm us in any permanent way.

STEP 4: WAIT FOR GOD

Step 4 is to wait patiently for God to act.

Waiting for God to act requires faith because most men are impatient and eager to see quick outcomes to their circumstances.

There are two sides to Faith:

- **“Even As” Faith** - Believing that God is ever *ready and able* to meet our needs **even as** we stay faithful in seeking Him and His promises.
- **“Even If” Faith** - Trusting that God is still sovereign and in control **even if** our circumstances don’t change and/or haven’t changed yet.

As you wait on God to give you strength and courage to trust Him, be reminded that *“those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* (Isaiah 40:31).

Question: *How are you going to partner with God to overcome your fear?*

CONCLUSION

To be afraid is to not fully trust God. Fear and lack of trust go hand in hand; where you find one, you will find the other.

God instructs us to not be afraid, promising that if we cast our anxiety on Him, He will take care of us (see 1 Peter 5:7).

For us to fully trust God and choose faith over fear, we need to take Him at His Word against the reasons why we are afraid in the first place:

Reasons	Revelations
It is hard to trust God – Everyone lies.	Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
There is a catch – Nothing is free.	Jesus has paid it all for us.
I'm guilty – I don't deserve His love.	Nothing can ever separate us from God's love.

We can unbundle our emotions and eliminate fear. We may not be able to change our circumstances, but we can restrict our emotions to the agony and anguish of the situation.

Faith in the promises of God will render fear impotent, even if circumstances don't change.

Remember this:

No temptation [fear] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Every opportunity to fear is also an opportunity to trust God and move from the Cliff of Fear across the Bridge of Faith to the Cliff of Courage.

Sooner or later, we all “see the wind.” We all become afraid and begin to sink. Those are the opportunities we have to trust God, and call out to Him, “*Lord, save me!*”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

REVIEW STATEMENTS

- **Fear itself is certainly not sinful, but if it leads to not believing in God, it can become sinful.**
- **It is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of man.**
- **Faith in the promises of God will render fear impotent, even if our circumstances don't change.**

MEMORY VERSE

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

1 John 4:18

Question: *Why is there no fear in perfect love?
How does fear and love relate to each other?*

PRAYER

Sample