

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Twenty-three - How can I overcome my ungodly fears?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Fear can cause physical sensations in our bodies that we can react instinctively to.
- Our fears can end up ruling our thoughts, reactions, choices, physical health, spiritual life, and family life. It is neither God or we who are in control, but our fears.
- Some fears are based on our imaginations, with thoughts beginning with “what if...?”
- We need to rededicate our gift of imagination back to God for the Holy Spirit’s use.
- Our fears can be triggered by unhealed emotional wounds from past bad experiences, which cause us to form self-centred inner vows beginning with “I can’t ...”
- We need to replace such inner vows with God’s truths and forgive ourselves or anyone who caused us to make up such inner vows.
- There is a right place for fear, that is to fear God. The fear of God has many benefits and is a sign of a true believer who is saved.

Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/G3lJ2F4dcas>

Transcript

Welcome to lesson 23 of Love the Lord where we talk about the right use of fear and how the wrong use of fear can be harmful to us. Please set aside at least one hour to go through today's lesson.

We will begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let’s thank God for His perfect character and perfect will for us.

Next, please tell Him about the things that have been stressful and ask for His help and guidance.

Let us put down our burdens of sin and confess the ways we have sinned against God and against others, and ask for His forgiveness.

Please confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, "In Jesus' name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen."

Let us begin the lesson for today. How can I overcome my ungodly fears?

We all face things in life that make us fearful. Fear causes us to feel stressed or anxious. Our hearts start to beat a little faster, we go on high alert, and we may react instinctively to protect or defend ourselves. We may feel like running away or even attack other people, including those we love.

Fear also stops us from being sober-minded. It distracts us from praying with faith. Fear can feel overwhelming for some of us because of the physical sensations it sends our bodies.

1 Peter 4:7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. (NIV)

Here is a list of physical sensations we experience from stressful emotions, as shown in an earlier lesson, as a reminder to us.

Strong emotional and physical reactions motivate us to jump into action — we fight back or we run away. It is an inbuilt instinct that God has given us to protect us when we sense very real physical dangers, such as from attacks from wild animals or explosions, for example. We don't think twice, we simply react in a matter of seconds. Unfortunately, we can end up applying our fight or flight reflexes for all other situations as well, whether the dangers are real or not.

If we are not careful, our fears will end up ruling our thoughts, reactions, choices, physical health, spiritual life and also our family life. It is neither God or we who are in control, but our fears.

Therefore, it is crucial that once we turn to Jesus, that we renounce our fleshly fears and learn to exercise self control over our anxious feelings, so we can remain sober-minded and hear from God clearly. For 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 tells us, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*" (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT)

Fear is a fleshy response from our human bodies. Let us read Romans chapter 8 verses 13 to 15 together, "*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again...*" (Romans 8:13-15 NIV)

Children of God do not live in fear because a spirit of fear is not from God. Those who belong to Abba Father will not remain enslaved to fear.

What are your fears? Are you afraid of not having enough, of being looked down on, or ending up all alone? And who are you afraid of? Why don't we click pause here and take as much time as we need to reflect on and list our fears.

Welcome back. Now, do take a look at your list. You may notice that there are fears which are based on imaginations of the bad things that might happen to us. These can be based on unpleasant experiences from our past, which have left unhealed wounds that have made us particularly sensitive to certain emotional triggers, or anxieties we have picked up from other people because of what they have taught us to fear.

Most of all, our anxieties reveal the people or circumstances of this world that we have come to fear and therefore, put on a pedestal and idolise. Any fear that has more power over our hearts, thoughts, and actions than the Holy Spirit is an idol. When we exalt and trust God first, we will not fear anything. God is the rightful Ruler of our hearts, and not our fears.

Let's start by looking at some of the fears we imagine up. These usually begin with "what if ...". Here are some examples.

1. "What if I lose this job?"
2. "What if people abandon me?"
3. "What if this illness is serious?"
4. "What if this is too hard for me?" "What if my parents disapprove?"
5. "What if I look stupid?"
6. "What if I don't enjoy this?"
7. "What if they take away my fun?"

Such thoughts enter everyone's minds once in a while because they are based on very real and legitimate needs and desires. Can you name what these may be?

If you recall our lesson on "Our desire to sin", we explained that we can meet our fundamental desires for security, pleasure, self-worth, and comfort either through God or through our sinful nature. We all become fearful when our security, pleasure, self-worth, and comfort are threatened in some way. This is normal. What is sinful is when we allow our sinful nature to take over and to have more power over how we think and what we do next, rather than the Holy Spirit Himself.

When we allow our fearful imaginations to hijack and dominate our thoughts, they become the gods or idols that rule over our minds and lead us away from God. Yes, our imaginations can become an idol when they block us from seeking God first.

Genesis 3:6 The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. (NLT)

Just think back to the Garden of Eden where Satan placed false imaginations into Eve's mind. She didn't think about consulting God Himself, she followed her imaginations of what it would be like to eat the forbidden fruit and the wisdom it might give her.

Matthew 6:31-32 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. (NLT)

Jesus has said that if we persistently worry about our fears, we are simply behaving like unbelievers. If we truly believe that God knows what we need and will supply all our needs, we will have no reason to be anxious.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. (NLT)

This is one reason why the Bible teaches us to take all our rebellious thoughts captive to obey Jesus Christ.

In other words, we need to learn a new way of thinking, one that is obedient to Jesus Christ and trusts in His faithful goodness. Only God has the power to meet all our desires and keep us safe in His secure hands.

We should not allow our fearful imaginations to rule our lives. We need to remember that every imagination is simply that, an imagination. It has no power over us unless we give it power. Here is a suggestion of how you can re-dedicate your gift of imagination to Abba Father. He has everything under control, even when it seems like bad things are about to happen.

1. Take the time to pray and repent, and offer your gift of imagination back to Him for His use, and not our own use. The Holy Spirit can use our gift of imagination to give us visions and words of knowledge. This is powerful for God's Kingdom when we allow the Holy Spirit to be in the lead and not for our own flesh to be in the lead, to lead us in different directions that cause us fear.

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2. The next time our minds run ahead of us and we are tempted to imagine the worst, let us arrest and capture our thoughts and submit them to Jesus for His guidance. Let us not let our minds run any further but turn to God immediately.
 3. It is important we always ask the Holy Spirit for His guidance and wisdom whenever fearful imaginations pop up, so that we can be led to the truth.

Next, let us move on to look at the fears that are triggered by unhealed emotional wounds from past bad experiences. These usually lead us to form inner vows in self-defence that begin with “I can’t ...” Here are some examples.

1. “I can’t let anyone hurt me.”
2. “I can’t let people know how I feel.”
3. “I can’t let people down.”
4. “I can’t trust anyone.”
5. “I can’t look stupid.”
6. “I can’t be seen as a failure.”

Have you ever thought in any of these ways? Such statements make a lot of sense to us, don’t they? We may wonder, “So, what’s wrong with that?”

But we need to take a step back and reflect if such thoughts will bring us any peace. Or will they make us feel stressed and anxious, always second guessing our next step? Do they tempt us to manipulate and control situations or people? Do they block us from trusting in and experiencing God’s peace?

Remember that we need to replace our inner vows with God-centred truths if we are to follow Jesus.

For example, we need to be willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the gospel, to confess how we feel, and to let our close relatives down because we can’t follow their patterns anymore. We need to trust Jesus and be willing to look stupid for believing in Him and even be seen as a failure in the eyes of the world.

Let’s slow down here and examine the fearful, self-defensive inner vows that we have made for ourselves that begin with “I can’t...” Have we vowed, “I can’t let my family down,” “I can’t be seen without make-up,” “I can’t lose out to my siblings,” “I can’t accept changes,” or “I can’t be late”?

1. Can you list yours out, one by one? The more inner vows we have, the more anxious we naturally become. You may click pause at this point if you need more time to reflect and record your inner vows.

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2. Now, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you first developed such fears. Did someone hurt or frighten you? Did someone fail to comfort and teach you? Please take this time to reflect and write down your answers.
 3. Ask God to show you who you need to forgive. You may need to forgive yourself or give yourself permission to fail according to your own standards. You may need to forgive your parents, a teacher, an elder, or even someone from church.

In general, we fear the things that we cannot control. But the reality is that we can't guarantee that things will always turn out the way that we want. Later in this lesson, we will have an opportunity to pray and put down some of our fears.

Trusting God means we allow ourselves to let go of control to the One who knows everything and has ultimate say over everything that happens on earth.

Romans 11:33 Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! ... (NLT)

God is sovereign. He is always in control of all situations, no matter the good times or the bad times. Trusting in all of God's ways and following Him takes humility on our part.

Isaiah 45:6-7 ... I am the Lord, and there is no other. I create the light and make the darkness. I send good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the one who does these things. (NLT)

So often, we assume that the opposite of humility is pride, when more often, it is our worries and cares — and our desire to control them — that keep us from humbling ourselves before Abba Father.

1 Peter 5:6-7 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. (NLT)

Jesus Himself has said, “do not fear, only believe.” God repeatedly reminded His people through His Word not to fear and He does so for us today. This command is repeated over 300 times in the Bible.

Mark 5:36 ... Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” (ESV)

The Bible shows us that the fearful and unbelieving will be cast into the lake of fire one day, along with murderers. That may seem very harsh but we need to see that fear has no place in the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (KJV)

When we truly believe and trust in God's perfect love for us, we will not fear anything or anyone. We will still have our natural instinctive fear reflexes, and that is normal — but it is how we respond to our fears that separates us from unbelievers who don't have faith in an all-powerful, sovereign God.

1 John 4:16,18 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love... Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. (NLT)

There is one place, however, that we do need to place our fear in, and that is to fear God. This fear is one that is based on a deep and healthy reverence and high regard for God. Did you know that a healthy fear of God is a sign that you have been truly saved? It is a result of your salvation.

Philippians 2:12 ... Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. (NLT)

Let's read Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 to 16 together, "... Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people..." (Philippians 2:12-16 NLT)

When we have a healthy fear of God, we will bow our hearts down and worship Him with deep reverence and awe.

Hebrews 12:28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. (NLT)

We will obey His commands without complaining or justifying or giving excuses for why we can't follow His will. We won't look for loopholes and say things such as, "But other people are doing the same thing, why should I be any different?"

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 ... Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. (NLT)

We will hate the things that God hates, things that others may label as good, normal or even entertaining, but God calls evil. We will hate our own pride, the corruption in this world, and perverse speech so much that we can't go back to any of it.

Proverbs 8:13 All who fear the LORD will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech. (NLT)

We will seek to do what is right in God's eyes and not harden our hearts, particularly when the Holy Spirit moves to convict us of our sinful nature.

Acts 10:34-35 ... God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. (NLT)

Instead, we will seek to cleanse ourselves from everything that has defiled our body or spirit and live holy lives, set apart to be His holy representatives on earth.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God. (NLT)

We cannot misuse God's name and call ourselves, Christians, and live nothing like Jesus Christ. This would be considered a fraudulent misrepresentation in the court of law. God will not hold anyone who claims to be Christian and misuses His name, guiltless.

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. (NLT)

Let's read Hebrews chapter 10 verses 26 to 27 together, *"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."* (Hebrews 10:26-27 NIV)

Basically, a healthy fear of God must go hand-in-hand with a deep humility before Him. We can't mess around with His commands and expect Him not to notice.

Proverbs 22:4 Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life.(NIV)

Let us read Proverbs chapter 9 verse 10 together, *"The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment."* (Proverbs 9:10 NLT)

A healthy fear of God brings many rewards.

1. Firstly, God will be a Friend to us and teach us His covenant Law so that we will not sin against Him. | *Psalms 25:14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear him. He teaches them his covenant. (NLT)*
2. Secondly, He will ensure that we will have all that we need. We will lack nothing. | *Psalms 34:9 Fear the LORD, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. (NLT)*

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3. Additionally, He will bless us with spiritual riches, honour and a long life, | *Proverbs 22:4 True humility and fear of the Lord lead to riches, honor, and long life. (NLT)*
 4. He will prepare an abundance of goodness for us, and | *Psalms 31:19 How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. You lavish it on those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world. (NLT)*
 5. He will fulfil our desires and rescue us when we cry out to Him. | *Psalms 145:19 He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them. (NLT)*
 6. He will protect us from harm and even | *Proverbs 19:23 Fear of the Lord leads to life, bringing security and protection from harm. (NLT)*
 7. prosper us and our future generations. | *Deuteronomy 5:29 Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendants would prosper forever. (NLT)*

When we fear God and magnify His holy name, He will deliver us from all our fears. The challenge for some of us is that we have magnified our fears so much that we have made them bigger than God Himself. Therefore, we don't see or experience any of these privileges and blessings.

Psalms 34:3-4 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. (ESV)

We can't live in victory when we continue to obey our anxious thoughts and imaginations, and have become slaves to our fears. We need to remember that every fearful thought or imagination is simply a thought or imagination. Neither can rule us unless we let it.

Romans 6:16 Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? ... (NLT)

Jesus has already set us free from slavery. He offers us His hand as our Teacher, Helper, Defender, Provider, and Saviour. In response, we need to make conscious steps to step out of our cage of slavery to fear to follow Him. The challenge for ex-slaves is that we can feel more comfortable inside our cage of fears than walking out free.

Fear is very much a mind game and God can transform us into fearless warriors if we allow Him to change the way we think.

Romans 12:2 let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. (NLT)

For this, we certainly need God's truths as well as the Holy Spirit's help. God knows our anxious thoughts better than we do and He will show us what fleshly fears we need to crucify to the cross so that we can follow the Holy Spirit's lead in every part of our lives.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (NLT)

Galatians 5:24-25 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. (NLT)

If you are ready to begin their journey, here is a short prayer. Please refer back to your list of fears and we can pray this prayer together.

Ready? Let's begin.

“Abba Father, I have allowed many fears to rule my life for many years. Please forgive me for these idols. They have only brought me spiritual death, not life. Today, I crucify my fears to the cross, (at this point, please list them one by one), and die to each one of them in Jesus' name. I will no longer allow my flesh or physical reactions to lead me. I choose to live by a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline through the Holy Spirit. I die to a fear of people, and command the spirit of fear to leave me now in Jesus' name. I choose to only fear my Lord God.”

We celebrate with you that you are learning to cast your anxieties to God. Please take the time now to wait on the Holy Spirit further and ask Him to search your heart and show you any other fears that you may not have been aware of. Let us stay still for another three to five minutes and wait to see if the Holy Spirit has anything else to show us, and if He does, we can pray to crucify them like we just have.

Praise God that when we crucify our fears to the cross,

1. we will no longer fear people, because God is our Helper, | *Hebrews 13:6 So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?” (NLT)*
2. we will no longer fear conflict or persecution, because God is our Defender, | *Psalm 3: 3-6 But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high. (NLT)*
3. we will no longer fear poverty, because God is our Provider when we seek His Kingdom first, and | *Matthew 6:25,33 ... not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear... Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (NLT)*
4. we will no longer fear death, because Jesus is our Saviour who has overcome death by resurrecting from the grave. | *Hebrews 2:14-15 ... by dying could he break the power of the*

devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (NLT)

Indeed, we can live a victorious life!

Psalm 112 says, *"Praise the Lord! How joyful are those who fear the Lord and delight in obeying his commands. They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly... Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor."* (Psalm 112:1,7-9 NLT)

We have now come to the end of today's lesson. Here are the reflection questions for you to prepare your answers to before your small group meeting as well as a testimony to watch. We pray that you will be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. What did the Holy Spirit reveal to you about your fears?
2. What safety boundaries do you need to install around your thoughts?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes