

Text: Joshua 1:9

Theme: Conquering the Fear Factor

June 25, 2017

What creates perceived limitations, causes numerous health issues, and prevents us from using our full potential on a daily basis? Surprisingly, the answer is fear. The fear factor wreaks more havoc than any factor or event we face. Jesus knows all about the fear factor because more than a hundred times throughout Scripture, we find the words, “fear not.” In fact, we find those words multiple times in today’s Gospel. Since fear creates a magnitude of issues, we focus today on “Conquering the Fear Factor.”

I. Jesus has said, “Fear not,” repeatedly, yet we are still fear-filled people. 1. We are fear-filled people because we don’t know. In our text, Moses, the greatest leader the people had ever known has just died and Joshua is informed that he will now lead the people of God. Put yourself into Joshua’s shoes for a moment. He was petrified because he didn’t know. We’re still wearing his shoes today for the same reason. What we don’t know creates fear and because there are so many things we don’t know, the fear factor increases exponentially. In our minds, if we only knew x,y,and z, our fears would subside and everything would be better, so we think.

2. We are fear-filled because we aren’t in control. As God speaks to Joshua, Joshua felt totally out of control. “I can’t do that. I don’t have the respect Moses had. My life is so out of control that I don’t even know which way to turn!” Sound familiar? Of course it does, because we’ve all been there. We want to call the shots, to make the decisions, to control the outcome, to make sure everything always unfolds just as we intended because when it doesn’t, fear is the result. The devil loves to play with the control factor because he knows that he can cripple us any time he can get us to believe that control is a requirement for living.

3. We are fear-filled because something could happen. Step back into Joshua’s shoes and image what could happen. “Lord, the people could turn on me. They might kill me if the enemy doesn’t kill me first. I might fail and how would that look? There are so many things that could go wrong that I think You need to find a more qualified leader!” Fear does the same thing to us. There could be an accident. Something could happen to my kids. Someone could... By the time we finish our lists of coulds, we’re afraid of our own shadow! Anything could happen, but if that kind of fear controls us, we will live a life of regrets because we were afraid to step out in faith.

B. Since fear is crippling us, what is God’s solution to fear? 1. His solution is, “Stop it!” Sounds pretty direct, doesn’t it? What were God’s words to Joshua, “Do not be terrified.” God was saying, “Stop the brain pattern that is debilitating you. With My power, you can do it whenever you decide to make it happen!” God could have just as easily been speaking to us. To conquer fear, we must stop the brain pattern. We must use the power God gives us, realize and believe it is possible, and focus our energy on making it happen. “Do not be terrified” isn’t a suggestion; it’s a command and if it’s a command, it can be done or He wouldn’t ask you to do it.

2. Stop viewing the cup as half empty. God’s next fear crusher statement to Joshua was, “Do not be discouraged.” Did He leave the door open even a crack or give Joshua permission to have his moments? Once again, this is a command not a suggestion. If you were Joshua, how many days could you have been discouraged?

In our discouraging world, it's so easy to do, but God says, "No more of that! Discouraged isn't what I called you to be, so go and find the positive. See the good!" Discouragement is the devil's favorite sport. When he can get us to see the glass as half empty, he has us on the edge of the cliff where he can push us into despair.

3. Be strong. It sounds so simple, doesn't it? "Hey, Joshua, be strong. Ok?" Joshua was shaking in his boots because he forgot that he already possessed the strength he needed. To us, God says, "Be strong. You have the power, the potential because I have already given it to you. So use My strength to go. Use My power to move forward." What happens so often is that we forget we already have the power. Instead, we're busy begging God for strength. God didn't tell Joshua to ask for strength. He told him to be strong. Likewise, God says to you, "Be who you are. Be strong because I have already empowered you with sufficient strength for your task."

4. Step out in faith. Let's look at Joshua's situation realistically for a moment. Apart from God guiding, could Joshua have done it? Did he have the courage? Absolutely not! If Joshua had stepped out and left faith behind, Joshua would have become one of history's greatest failures. God's entire message to Joshua and to us is wrapped in faith. To conquer the fear factor, we must step out in faith because it's faith that crushes fear; it's faith that says, "I will do what God has laid on my heart because I'm convinced that this is my task, that God will bless what I do." When we step out with that kind of confidence, we will see mountains of fear step out of our way.

5. Act like God is with you. What was God's reasoning to Joshua for why he should do what God told him to do? It's found in the words that follow the tiny word, "for." "For I will be with you." There it is, God's single reason for Joshua to step forward as the next leader, His single answer to the question, "How can I?" Today, you are Joshua and God is speaking to your heart as He says, "For I will be with you." Do we need anything more? When we resolve to remember that God is with us, we will be strong, courageous, unterrified, and undiscouraged. It can be no other way because God has spoken.

6. Never underestimate the power of God. Take a journey through the Old and New Testament and you will see countless records of God stepping into impossible situations and making them possible. As God completed His instruction to Joshua, He said, "I will be with you wherever you go." "Wherever you go." Wherever you find yourself, whatever you face, no matter the battle, the challenge, the magnitude, the perceived impossibility, never, never, never forget God's words, "Wherever you go." If Joshua could step into the shoes of Moses and lead the people of God, you can step into your own shoes and know that the same God will make incredible things happen in you.

7. Fear has power to debilitate, to stop us in our tracks, to convince us that it can't be done. But before you listen to fear's foolishness, stand boldly with God at your side and say, "I will be strong; I will be courageous. I will conquer the fear factor because I possess the power of God!" Amen.