

Life Group Devotion

FEAR NOT - Week of December 7

This American Folk Hymn speaks of the Lord's gift of love toward us:

What wondrous love is this! O my soul, O my soul
What wondrous love is this, O my soul
What wondrous love is this
That caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul

Love that comes from God comes to rescue us from the curse of sin and death; it is a love that covers a multitude of sins, according to 1 John 4:7 and 1 Peter 4:8. Scripture says the *only* way we can love, is because *He* – our God and Savior – first loved us. As interruptions or unexpected change of plans alter our routines or agenda, may we not allow fear or anger to drive out love. Be attentive to interruptions and how you respond to them. Ignoring or cursing them may cause you to miss the gift.

Are you obsessed with yourself these days, or over-focused on the challenges before you? Relying on self can open the door to doubt. And doubt opens the door to fear. Fear is a thief that takes advantage of our weakness and steals the good things out of our minds and hearts. As many of us have experienced, fear also creates confusion and twists the truth of God's love and purpose over our lives. Yet, there is Good News! We have a Savior who came to this earth to rescue us from the grip of fear, despair, sin and death.

- When has fear nearly capsized your hopes, dreams and prayers?
- How did the Lord show up for you?
- Has God ever changed your plans? How did you respond? What was the outcome?

If you are currently experiencing a re-routing of sorts, it may be that God's change of plans is a divine invitation. It certainly was for Mary. When the angel Gabriel was sent by God to this virgin in the village of Nazareth in Galilee, the first words the angel spoke to her was: "Fear Not!" The message that followed, though glorious, was surely a surprise. And Mary had questions. Yet her ultimate response to the angel's news regarding God's change of plans exemplified great faith.

Read Luke 1:26-37

*Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant.
May everything you have said about me come true" (Luke 1:38).*

How about in your life today? Are you willing to yield to God's direction and say, *I am the Lord's servant. Lord, have your way in me.* Or are you driven by fear, attempting to control things over which you have no control. If fear is learned, perhaps fear can be unlearned by changing the way we think:

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

A resolve to trust God is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Pray and ask the Lord to help you learn to live by faith. Spend time with the Lord, like a son or daughter with their Daddy. *Fearing Not* is trusting your Heavenly Father like a little child, even if we don't have all the answers. The future can be uncertain and frightening ... so can the appearance of Angels and the Hosts of Heaven. But as we learn from heroes of faith throughout Scripture: i.e. Abraham and Sarah; Joseph; David; Jonah; Daniel ... God's change of plans are often divine interruptions.

In Closing

Four times in the Christmas story, key individuals are told: "*Fear Not!*" Close by reading **Luke 1:13, 30; Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:8-12** and briefly discuss the response of each.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Pray

Fear Not

for a Savior is born

Text: Luke 1:26-38, 2 Timothy 1:7, Romans 12:2, Joel 2:20-27

Plain Truth

Practice _____ and leave the _____ to _____.

Power Point: Try not to be the person who says, “**I want God’s will...until it is different from mine**”.

1. Some of us today need to _____ as the _____ of controlling everything in your universe.
2. Have a _____ Christmas not a _____ Christmas.
3. Our present _____ are _____ by remembering _____ of the past.
4. Understand you’re _____ to God and given _____.
5. Place your _____ in a powerful _____.

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

December 7: Hosea 6:1-9:17, 3 John 1:1-14, Psalm 126:1-6, Proverbs 29:12-14
December 8: Hosea 10:1-14:9, Jude 1:1-25, Psalm 127:1-5, Proverbs 29:15-17
December 9: Joel 1:1-3:21, Revelation 1:1-20, Psalm 128:1-6, Proverbs 29:18
December 10: Amos 1:1-3:15, Revelation 2:1-17, Psalm 129:1-8, Proverbs 29:19-20
December 11: Amos 4:1-6:14, Revelation 2:18-3:6, Psalm 130:1-8, Proverbs 29:21-22
December 12: Amos 7:1-9:15, Revelation 3:7-22, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 29:23
December 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 29:24-25

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